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Submission to Ireland's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security
13 December 2018

This submission primarily addresses the participation and representation of women in decision-making and the promotion of the broader women, peace and security (WPS) agenda aspects of the 3rd Irish NAP on WPS. Ireland's current chairing of the Committee on the Status of Women going into the 2nd year now and its' campaign bid for election to the Security Council provide unique political opportunities for leadership of the state on the WPS agenda.

Preliminary analysis of the findings of my current research shows the lack of specific accountability for the implementation of the WPS agenda (despite recent DPKO/DFS policy guidance: "Gender Responsive UN Peacekeeping Operations" of February 2018 review date of Feb 2021, and "UN Strategic Results Framework on WPS 2011-2020"), is a main contributor to non-implementation on the ground. In addition, both quantitative and qualitative structural adjustments are necessary in order for the WPS agenda to be successfully implemented via gender-main-streaming. In other words, for women to be able to contribute as equally empowered partners in peacekeeping. This applies equally to domestic arenas as well as the international peacekeeping context, both areas of focus for the current NAP.

Quantitative = Increase in number of female peacekeepers as strategy for implementation of UNSCR 1325-gender balance or gender quotas. (Numerical, quantitative adjustment to redress gender imbalance in short run & affect institutional character in long run. Good step in the right direction. *Critical mass theory postulates that percentages past 35% can equal institutional/societal change, so some change will occur solely with numerical increase.

Qualitative = Fundamental, structural changes to inequitable institutional structures/hierarchies that disempower & subordinate women. A move towards women's genuine equality & equal participation as equal partners with equal access to decision making & the resources to implement those decisions.

Additional policy coherence with UNSCR 1325 by UN Member States may lead to an increased participation of women in the armed forces, which is a step forward but a deep change to discriminatory structures & entrenched norms which perpetuate gender inequality remains necessary for women to be able to participate fully and equally. Peacekeeping presents a unique opportunity to disseminate the WPS gender equality agenda widely and internationally and affect change. The larger political project of genuine gender equality at the heart of UNSCR 1325, asks if women in the institution (the UN, domestic military or any other institution, take your pick), have real access to resources and decision-making.

Simply increasing the numbers of women in fundamentally discriminatory structures does nothing to achieve long-term, structural change. How can it be achieved? An excellent, effective and quintessentially practical guide for gender mainstreaming is the "Gender-mainstreaming Manual, A Book of Practical Methods from the Swedish Gender-mainstreaming Support Committee JamStod." (Swedish Government Official Reports SOU 2007:15) The Swedes developed "practical methods and models in this manual for mainstreaming gender into central government activities". "As a supplement to this practical manual, we have produced a book of ideas for managers and gender strategists, as well as a separate offprint from it, entitled *Gender Equality in Public Services*, specifically targeting managers and management groups. We have also delivered a final report to the Government containing our recommendations (SOU 2007:15)" (from page 3 of the manual.)

The Irish Defence Forces

On 22 November 2018 at NUIG, The Chief of Staff of the Irish Defence Forces made a statement post panel presentations at the conference to launch the annual Defence Forces Review, in which he said that he was open for more women to participate in the Defence Forces and that political leadership was

necessary to increase gender representation in the forces.

To what extent 1325 been integrated into the military strategic concept of operations? How have the Irish Defence Forces fared in terms of the implementation of the WPS agenda? (See also [Eimi Harris, The Canadian Armed Forces: Integrating Gender perspectives into Military Culture, From Susan Harris Rimmer: Barriers to Operationalizing the “Women, Peace and Security” Doctrine in United Nations Peace Operations. 2016. & Edward Burke and Jonathan Marley, Walking Point for Peace: An Irish View on the State of UN Peacekeeping, Centre for International Cooperation: NYU. June 2015. \)](#)

The Irish Defence Forces has continued to be an active contributor to UN peacekeeping and reform efforts. The Irish, Danish and Finnish Defence Forces, are to date, the only militaries in the world with stand alone plans, in addition to their respective National Action Plans for the implementation of UNSCR 1325, itself an indication of the priority afforded to the issue by those Defence Forces.

The Irish Defence Forces First Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security of 2013 was updated by the Second Action Plan in November 2016, for the period 2016-2018. “The Defence Force continues to take a unique approach to implement a gender perspective in military training and operations. The command structure which has placed Gender Advisors in BDE/FMN HQ and DFHQ are a valuable resource in bringing the women, peace and security agenda forward.” [Irish Defence Forces Second Action Plan on Women Peace and Security, p.2 Authorized by Patrick O’Halloran Brigadier General, Assistant Chief of Staff, 18 November, 2016](#)

A 2017 UN Security Council Report of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations suggested just such a relocation of reporting lines for Gender Advisors in peacekeeping operations, so that they might be able to directly contribute to policy at the highest levels of the mission and HQ administrations. This strategy was also applied by the Swedish Forces in the UN Peacekeeping mission in Mali. At the political-strategic level, the DPKO gender unit moved to the Office of the Chief of Staff and reports directly to the DPKO leadership. Similarly, at the mission- strategic level, from September 2017, the gender unit has been part of the Office of the SRS. [Eva Hagstrom Frisell and Helene Lackenbauer: “Still a long way to go: A Review of the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 by United Nations Peacekeepers in Mali”, Swedish Defence Research Agency FOI-R-4573-SE, February 2018, pp. 31-32.](#)

Commandant Gillian Collins, The current Irish Defence Forces considers one of the main successes of the Irish Defence Forces Action Plans to date, have been “the appointment of qualified Gender Advisors throughout the forces with a full-time post at the Defence Forces Headquarters level.” (email exchange with me on 23 August 2018.)

The Irish Defence Forces current numbers for women’s participation equal 6.5% of 9,057 personnel in the army, navy & air corps. (2018)

The Australian Defence Forces current numbers for women’s participation Equal 17% (2018)

How did the Australians achieve 17% female participation? In 2014, based on examination of successful interventions in other male dominated industries/institutions, a target was set of 25% women in Navy & Air Force & 15% Army by 2023.

Cultural change is a necessary factor. While every institution/society must address this in the context of their own structures and history it is a prerequisite for advancement of the WPS agenda.

Cultural change: “an acknowledgement that gender inequity is not only a moral issue. It is also an issue that impedes organizational capability because it does not maximize the potential of female ADF members or the potential of half of the Australian labour force.”

How to overcome barriers to change?

Special policy measures: flexible working arrangements with guide for Commanders, Chief of the ADF, highest military post has Gender Advisor, removal of gender restrictions from all employment categories. The Australian Air Force is now the first military organization in the world to achieve the accreditation of “Breastfeeding Friendly Workplace.” (From: Women in the ADF Report- 2016-2017)

Domestically, although the DF have introduced initiatives to target female recruitment such as shorter overseas deployments and the introduction of a DF Women's Network with the aim of increasing participation of women at all levels of the organization, this has in fact not yet achieved the stated aim of increasing participation of women at all levels of the organization. [See also Bronagh Hinds and Debbie Donnelly: Midterm Review of Ireland's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2015-2018](#)

Despite targeted recruitment strategies with the aim of increasing the number of women in its' ranks "only one in 15 members of the Irish Defence Forces are women" (The Irish Examiner article 9 April 2018). The latest figures for 2018 show there are 591 women in the Irish Defence Forces, making up 6.5% of the 9,057 personnel working in the army, naval service, and air corps. "Like Sweden, policy coherence and implementation has not yet lead to greater recruitment of women into the armed forces in Ireland". [Susan Harris Rimmer: Barriers to Operationalizing the Women, Peace and Security Doctrine in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.](#) *Journal of International Peacekeeping* 20 (2016) 46-68

As the National Action Plan is grounded in women's lived experience in Ireland, I wanted to add a few points on women's visible participation, changing societal perceptions and assisting the fundamental paradigm shift which must necessarily occur for women to participate on an equal and equally valued footing.

To contribute equally, entails being fully empowered to do so. That requires fundamental structural change as mentioned earlier in this submission. Real equality means being free from fear and being visibly and equally valued in all spheres.

Consider in that light, the UN Committee Against Torture's response to Ireland's July 2017 submission: "The Committee considers that its recommendations to investigate allegations of ill-treatment of women at the "Magdalen Laundries" operated by Catholic Church orders, prosecute perpetrators and ensure that victims obtain redress and have an enforceable right to compensation, have not been implemented.." Elizabeth Coppin, a survivor of the Magdalene Laundries, is taking a case to the UN Committee Against Torture in respect of human rights violations in the industrial school that she was placed in as a child and in the Magdalene laundries where she spent five years as a young woman.

Similarly to consider, is the treatment of the survivors of the Mother and baby homes and the publicity and public presentation of these issues. The Irish Government sent a powerful and clear message about how it perceives bullying in its compensation of 5 million Euro to the Garda Whistleblower, Maurice McCabe. What message is being sent about women's place and importance in society with how the laundries and mother and baby homes are being dealt with? History teaches that there can be no real societal healing without a clear admission of guilt. (I served on a Truth and Reconciliation committee in my early UN career in Haiti) An apology was made to the survivors of the laundries by Ende Kenny and some compensation given but what has the publicity been like around these issues? A human rights based approach must be increasingly employed. Any ideology that condemned women to be interned against their wills, forced to work and to have had their children forcibly removed needs to be acknowledged as a violation of human rights and all such places of torture commemorated in some way (a plaque at least!).

Media and women's visibility is a crucial tool to changing societal perception. What are the images and words used to portray women and women's issues? Do they challenge the cultural norms that disempower women? Do they portray women as leaders, presidents, change-makers, peacekeepers, diplomats, politicians, decision makers, professors, deans and president's of academic institutions? How is violence against women and gender-based violence reported on? How are young people perceiving and experiencing all of the above? Research has shown that human rights education is most effective at the primary and secondary levels of education. Equality, inclusion and non-discrimination could be added to the curriculum of a basic human rights class that could be included in the "well-being" classes currently held in secondary schools. (My eldest child is 14.)

Lastly, on a personal note, in a recent exchange with a head of human resources for a third level institution in regards to the implementation of the Athena SWAN equality framework, I was told that there was no problem at all and research funding was not their main concern. Bronze level Athena SWAN accreditation is required for third level institutions to continue to be eligible for research funding by the 3 main public research institutes, the IRC being one, by end 2019. The IRC itself, has no maternity leave provision for its' scholars.