

**Ireland's Third National Action Plan - Women, Peace and Security
Submission by the Irish Bahá'í Community, December 15th, 2018**

1. What strategic objectives should be priorities for the Third National Action Plan?

- (A) More effective engagement with civil society organisations, both domestically and internationally.
- (B) Much more extensive engagement with migrants and asylum seekers in Ireland. One objective of this should be to enhance whole government understanding of supports needed for people who have suffered trauma. Another objective is to seek to gain insights from diaspora populations about their societies of origin. These insights can be used to improve the efficacy of work on the ground in conflict and post-conflict societies.
- (C) The education of girls and empowerment, participation and representation of women at all levels of society.
- (D) The education of men and boys on the proven, multi-faceted, whole society benefits of the education of girls.

2. Are the existing Pillars the most effective way to structure the NAP?

And

6. How can the plan better engage those who have a role to play in Women, Peace and Security, but may not feel directly impacted? (eg men and boys, faith leaders, victims of human trafficking)

We would like to suggest that consideration is given to changing the title of Pillar Two from -

Empowerment, Participation and Representation of Women in Decision Making.

to

Empowerment, Participation and Representation of Women at all levels of society.

If the objective of this Pillar is to empower women to participate and be represented in decision making institutions and processes, then it is necessary to empower women in every area of life and at all levels of society. While there has been a long history of women working for peace and security (from Liberia to Northern Ireland), these women have not typically held positions of power within their societies.

The effectiveness of these women has often come from the fact that they do not hold political office or allegiance but have decided to stand up and reclaim their society from the conflict that is destroying it. We understand that this is a generalisation but use the example simply to illustrate the fact that empowering women at all levels of society can help them to articulate a non-partisan, female perspective on a wide range of fundamental issues, including peace and security.

The education of girls is the key to this empowerment. Education is, naturally, a right of every human being. However, a specific focus on the education of girls is more than simply the provision of human rights for these individuals - important as that is - it is the key to the development and expression of a female perspective that is a vital component in the well-being of any society. In the context of WPS, the past two Plans have borne witness to the fact that this female 'voice' is an important support for peace, security and sustainable development.

When seen in this way, a focus on the education of girls takes on a new dimension and can likely be more easily supported and presented as an issue not embedded in Western ideas about gender. If the education of girls is promoted as being for the welfare of the society in general (e.g. educated

mothers have healthier children etc) then it is likely to better engage not only men and boys but also all those interested in the wellbeing of their society (e.g. faith leaders)

To this end it is vital to include men and boys at every level and every stage of any WPS plan. There is important training that can be done with men and boys and it was heartening to see that DFAT has funded a range of NGOs working with men and boys on gender and GBV.

However, while not taking from the fact that women are often amongst the greatest casualties of any war, it is vital not to see women as just passive victims. To see and engage with women as potential partners in finding and implementing the solutions needed is essential. To simply 'fix' the problem without finding ways to support women in finding and using their voices is simply a benign version of the power structures that have already led to war. A view of woman as passive victims will neither help the women nor their societies in the long term. To this end, along with other measures to tackle the effects of GBV and other trauma, education can help women to find their voices and then to speak up for themselves and for their children which will, in turn, protect and enhance the societies in which they live.

3. How can the Third National Action Plan reflect the commitments in Ireland's Policy for International Development and other relevant government policies and strategies?

And

4. How should the National Action Plan apply to the Ireland-Northern Ireland context as well as migrants, asylum seekers, and others living in Ireland who come from conflict and post-conflict affected areas?

As exciting and innovative as it is that Ireland is the first state to include domestic elements in its NAP, it would appear that engagement and policy alignment domestically is an area that would benefit from being upgraded to a priority.

This could usefully include more effective engagement with civil society organisations, both domestically and internationally, as is mentioned in Recommendation Number 8 of the Midterm Review of the Second National Action Plan.

It could also seek to find a way to effectively engage in on-going consultations with migrants and asylum seekers living in Ireland. This latter process, if conducted in a whole government way, would be valuable in learning how to put in place the supports needed by people now living in Ireland as they seek to recover from GBV and other traumas they may have survived.

As a support to the work being undertaken internationally, engagement with diaspora populations could also provide valuable insights into how WPS plans can best be implemented on the ground in conflict-ridden and fragile societies. The experience and cultural knowledge of those who have lived in these areas could provide valuable insights that can only come from being part of a culture/society. Taking note of these insights in the formulation of plans and actions might increase the efficacy of the DFAT work on the ground.

It is also the case that another benefit from prioritising domestic engagement would be greater credibility in international situations, as noted in the Mid-Term Review of the present Plan, "Through the inclusion of domestic elements in the NAP, Ireland provides the opportunity for domestic policy and programme response on issues such as human trafficking, GBV, sexual exploitation and gender equality to contribute to the authority of its international work." (p.34)