

Irish 1325 NAP Comments – International Alert

Ireland has long played a highly commendable role in terms of furthering the principles that underpin UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. The first Irish UNSCR 1325 National Action Plan (NAP) was exemplary and innovative in a number of ways, such as in having, importantly, both internal and external elements; piloting both north-south and south-south learning through the trilateral exchange between Ireland, Liberia and Timor-Leste; expanding the understanding of different forms of gendered post-conflict violence (e.g. by supporting the work of Fermanagh Women's Aid on non-militarised violence) and, through the work of Irish Aid, integrating broader gender perspectives and working with both women and men on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) issues. We strongly encourage Ireland to continue in working on these issues both internally and externally as well as continuing to adopt a holistic perspective that incorporates different forms of violence and working with both women and men to promote gender equality.

Over the period of the last NAP, Irish state actors have also been instrumental in terms of consistently and meaningfully working together with civil society and academia in continuously and meaningfully developing the plan, ensuring that it is indeed a living document. The Irish Defence Forces, An Garda Síochána and DFAT have been active in promoting and pro-actively implementing the 1325 principles in their activities, be it through the development of its own Action Plan in the case of the Defence Forces or its relatively high number of female staff deployed abroad in the case of the latter two. We strongly encourage Ireland to continue its pioneering role with its second National Action Plan and continue its comprehensive approach that involves Irish state actors, partner governments as well as civil society both in Ireland and abroad.

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

Given the numerous strengths of the first Irish NAP, we would recommend firstly to build on these, such as:

- The openness to on-going and meaningful dialogue between state actors, civil society and academia both in Ireland and in partner countries;
- The high degree of public accountability and opportunities for cross-learning which this provides;
- Retaining and strengthening the internal and external elements of the NAP as these greatly enhance the credibility and quality of the efforts;
- Exploring innovative learning approaches; and
- The openness to broadening the understanding of what gender, peacebuilding, and violence/non-violence mean in contexts of fragility and transition.

Three key challenges that 1325 NAPs have been facing in the countries that have been implementing them and which Ireland also faces are:

- The discrepancies between very high-level goals and the much smaller-scale of activities that can be implemented giving limited resources;
- Developing meaningful monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms for the activities, and
- Bringing the different pillars of the NAP together rather than have them as unrelated strands.

We believe that Ireland, given its comprehensive approach to date, can build on its achievements so far and help bridge the gaps between aspirations and realistic outputs as well as between the various pillars. In doing so, Ireland should continue its policy of on-going dialogue between different actors, bringing together Irish experiences with those from other contexts. This engagement will allow for the various implementing agencies to draw on the extensive knowledge among various actors, such as CSOs and local partners, on issues of women, peace and security but also in developing relevant M&E approaches. Given that other countries' NAPs have also been struggling with tying the different pillars together and in measuring impacts of their respective plans, there is scope for mutual learning and sharing of potential best practices among various countries in this respect.

2. How can Ireland help empower women affected by conflict?

To date, one of the strengths of the Irish NAP has been the work on SGBV, but as noted in the mid-term evaluation report, the implementation of the fourth pillar (Relief, Recovery and Rehabilitation) has been relatively narrowly focused on DDR and SSR efforts. In order for these efforts to be successful in terms of empowering women affected by conflict, they should be approached in a comprehensive manner and be based on thorough gendered analyses, drawing also on the knowledge of local partners, of how different women are differently affected by conflict and peacebuilding and how women and men jointly create spaces for agency and/or vulnerability in a given society.

As mentioned above, Ireland has played a unique role in not only combining internal and external elements in its NAP, but also bringing its own experiences of transition and conflict into its dialogues with southern partners. We believe that this openness to mutual exchange and learning gives the Irish approach a high degree of credibility, especially given the prominent role played by civil society actors in this process. We strongly encourage for the second NAP to build upon these strengths.

Furthermore, we would encourage Ireland to continue and deepen an element which is already emergent in the first NAP, which is working also with men and on issues of masculinities. This includes examining links between notions of masculinity and violence as well as on male vulnerabilities. This should not only be limited to combating SGBV, but also more generally in promoting comprehensive gender equality and women's rights. An area not explicitly covered by the NAP but one that we would strongly encourage to be included is that of discrimination and violence against sexual and gender minorities, be it for example in the form of targeted raping and killing of (suspected) lesbians in transitional societies or endemic structural and physical violence against transgender persons.

3. How can the second National Action Plan reflect the commitments in Ireland's Policy for International Development, "One World, One Future," and other relevant government policies and strategies?

Ireland's "One World, One Future" policy focuses Irish aid geographically on Ethiopia, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Vietnam and Zambia and thematically on the issues of global hunger, fragile states, climate change and development, trade and economic growth, essential services as well as human rights and accountability.

Of the Irish focus countries, three (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda) currently already have their own 1325 NAPs and, with the exception of Vietnam, the others have signed up to regional commitments to UNSCR 1325 through the Maputo Declaration, the SADC Protocol on Gender and

Development and/or the AU Gender Policy documents. These policy frameworks offer Ireland entry points for engaging with its partners on gender, peace and security issues and to create synergetic effects between the Irish NAPs and its partners' action plans.

Thematically, all of the focal issues have clear connections to the pillars of the NAP and we would strongly encourage a continuation and deepening of Ireland's approach of bringing together various actors who work on these issues – different government departments, security sector institutions involved in peacekeeping but also in providing services to refugees and migrants in Ireland, civil society organisations and academia – to better understand and work together on the linkages between the issues but also geographically between the global North and South.

4. How should the National Action Plan approach actions relating to Ireland - Northern Ireland?

The Ireland - Northern Ireland component of the NAP is unique and, in spite of and because of its inherent challenges, successes and inevitable set-backs, something that gives the Irish NAP process a different kind of credibility and offers very real, complex learning experiences about what the issues 1325 seeks to address in a transitional environment mean 'on the ground' in the everyday lives of people. We therefore strongly support a continuation of this work and that it continue to actively engage with and support local civil society organisations.

5. How can the existing monitoring mechanisms of the first National Action Plan be improved? How can the Oireachtas play a greater role?

Measuring impacts of policy decisions in complex and volatile environments can be exceedingly difficult, but given the relatively moderate scale and focused approach of the various Irish interventions under the NAP, be it through peacekeeping operations, DFAT deployments, Irish Aid support or CSO activities supported, it would not be impossible to have more or less tailor-made monitoring mechanisms for the various activities. These will, however, need to be contextualised, as the ways of monitoring the impact of Irish participation in peacekeeping operations in Southern Lebanon will by necessity be different from giving psycho-social support to migrant women in Ireland. Furthermore, in all cases, monitoring should be internal as well as external, i.e. are the institutions/organisations both attending to the needs of the beneficiaries and are they, in their institutional cultures, living up to the values they are promoting? This internal/external approach has been a strong undercurrent in the first NAP, and we strongly encourage that it be developed further in the second NAP, bringing in more possibilities for the intended beneficiaries and implementers to co-define the parameters according to which progress is to be measured.

One practical possibility at the national level would be more clearly ear-marked funding for NAP-related activities, or the use of other budgetary tracking tools, such as gender markers.

We would greatly welcome an active role by Oireachtas, especially in terms of the participation pillar of the NAP. From our past experience, it is often the personal, hands-on, peer-to-peer support that can be one of the most fruitful ways of giving support, e.g. parliamentarians formally or informally exchanging experiences and challenges on issues such as making space for women's voices to be heard in a meaningful way in legislative processes, dealing with reconciliation, or, more mundanely, issues such as budgeting or forming caucuses.

6. How should Ireland promote Women, Peace and Security in multilateral organisations?

Ireland's commitment to the concerns underpinning UNSCR 1325, its neutrality, willingness to try innovative approaches and readiness to work in coalition with like-minded countries has, we feel, given it clout and credibility upon which it can capitalise in promoting the women, peace and

security agenda. Much of this strength relies on the inclusiveness of the Irish approach, genuinely bringing state and civil society actors, both in Ireland and abroad, together and having an openness (such as in this consultation process) that is often not a given.

We encourage Ireland to continue to play an active role in the UN and EU with like-minded countries working on women. Peace and security issues. We also encourage Ireland to continue engaging actively with local, national and international civil society actors in implementing and developing its NAPs and sharing experiences and challenges.