



20th August 2014

Dear Ciara,

Please find attached the submission of the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence (ICGBV) regarding Ireland's second National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. The submission represents the views of civil society ICGBV members only.

While the second National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 will address the Irish government's priorities and commitments within both the domestic and international spheres, this submission deals with international engagement only. While the ICGBV fully endorses the importance of addressing women, peace and security within the Irish domestic context, its membership is comprised of organisations that work primarily in overseas development and humanitarian contexts. Thus, it is appropriate that the ICGBV submission reflects the expertise, knowledge and experience of this work.

This submission is intended as a conversation starting point on issues that require analysis and consideration before the National Action Plan (NAP) is finalised, and not as a comprehensive set of recommendations and inputs. The submission includes the following **key proposals**:

- Building on the successes of the first Irish NAP on UNSCR 1325, **the Irish government should move beyond bureaucratic processes and invest in targeted engagement that will add value** and will ultimately lead to demonstrable positive change for women and girls within the lifetime of the NAP.
- **A commitment to engaging in a meaningful way with women and girls affected by conflict** should be articulated in the NAP, and gender & conflict analysis should form part of the NAP planning and implementation phases.
- Ireland's limited resources should be used strategically to maximise impact. The Irish government should consider **focusing on priority themes and geographic locations**, and rolling out a small number of pilot programmes and approaches, in specified geographical areas, with a specified focus, to develop and refine working methods skilfully and effectively. **A narrow focus which achieves a measured and positive outcome** would be more beneficial than a broad set of principles or actions from which no discernible change for women and girls can be observed.
- Given the complexities of responding to SGBV in emergency and conflict affected situations, **the Irish government could consider piloting support programmes and policies in one or two locations only**, to be expanded elsewhere on the basis of positive outcomes, lessons learned and available capacity. The pilots could include a range of actors and actions, with a role for the defence forces and the political division of DFAT, as well as Irish Aid and humanitarian/development partners.
- Further, **the policies, programmes and approaches articulated in the NAP should be coordinated with partner donor agencies, states, partner governments and CSOs**, to ensure that Ireland's efforts are part of a holistic and comprehensive prevention, protection and response framework.

- **Ireland should maintain its role as a global advocate on Women, Peace & Security**, using its diplomatic staff world-wide, in addition to its role within UN and EU mechanisms.
- **The NAP should include an implementation plan**, detailing how its objectives will be reached, and providing base-line data, targets & objectives, activities foreseen, indicators & benchmarks, timelines, budgets, roles and responsibilities, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and a summary of resource availability within the lead agencies.
- **Within the lead government departments, in-house capacity (skills and expertise) to advise and oversee complex work under the banner of UNSCR 1325 must be assured.**
- **Strengthening local capacity should be a core principle of the NAP 2015.** A commitment to social change requires a commitment to locally and nationally based organisations and networks that facilitate participation of women and girls.
- **A robust accountability framework must be an integral part of the NAP.** Accountability must extend beyond Irish government agencies and Irish partners funded by the Irish Aid programme; it must also extend to international organisations in receipt of humanitarian funding from Ireland, such as UN agencies. It should also extend beyond humanitarian funding to include bilateral funding to partner governments and funding to UN agencies for structural development work.
- **The ultimate barometer for success of the NAP should be the impact that it has on women and girls in conflict affected situations.**



**Irish Joint Consortium on
Gender Based Violence**

Ireland's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security

Submission on behalf of civil society members of the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence

August 2014

This submission is intended as a conversation starting point on issues that require analysis and consideration before the NAP 2015 is finalised, and not as a comprehensive set of recommendations and inputs. It highlights strengths of the NAP 2011-2014 that should be maintained and presents a range of issues for consideration, including the consultation process, the scope, priorities and content of the NAP and the accountability framework. Drawing on the experience and expertise of civil society members of the ICGBV, it provides a discussion on key challenges and considerations that can inform NAP development.

The submission does not recommend which branches of the Irish government should lead or engage on specific elements on the NAP, because the NAP requires an all of government commitment, and it would be premature to assign responsibilities before commitments and objectives are agreed.

I. Building on the strengths of the NAP 2011-2014

Key strengths of the NAP 2011-2013 included:

a) International advocacy:

Ireland has a recognised role to play in international advocacy on women, peace and security, as committed to in the dedicated fifth pillar in the NAP 2011-2014. This should be strengthened in the NAP 2015 through renewed focus on advocacy around ending impunity and supporting accountability for grave rights violations, and sustained engagement with processes including the post-2015 MDG framework and the planned review of UNSCR 1325 in 2015. To date, Ireland's focus has been on international advocacy; this should be complemented by advocacy at national and regional levels (section III (d)).

b) Participation and Empowerment:

NAP 2011-2014 articulated the centrality of participation of women, which is central to the UNSCR 1325 agenda and its effectiveness. Regardless of its priorities, participation, social change, and empowerment of women should continue to be a central underlying process in all aspects of the NAP.

Commitment to social transformation requires a commitment to engaging with women/girls, including through sustained long-term commitments to civil society organisations and networks, particularly in partner countries (sections III(c) and IV(c)).

c) Effective Partnerships:

CSO members of the ICGBV note that the constructive relationship between Irish Aid, the Defence Forces, and CSOs through the ICGBV has facilitated mutual learning, development and coordination.

The consultation process prior to adoption of NAP 2011-2014 actively included the perspectives of civil society and women affected by conflict, which was a progressive and important step. This process should be maintained during the current consultation process (section II).

Particular agencies of the Irish state have shown exceptional commitment, leadership and demonstrable will to implement UNSCR 1325. The Defence Forces have been pioneers in articulating the priorities of UNSCR 1325 through the Defence Forces Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and engagement with the ICGBV. Support for ongoing work to develop and refine good models and practice should continue. Irish Aid has supported the development of policies and programmes that promote protection and participation of women and girls affected by conflict, particularly protection from GBV. This should be strengthened by moving beyond policy development and commitment to a sharply focused strategic agenda (section IV).

d) From process to practice:

Ireland's first NAP was ambitious in its remit, and it included many bureaucratic and policy-focused processes, such as development of guidelines, provision of training and increasing female participation in military and civilian missions overseas. These efforts established a framework for critical engagement with UNSCR 1325. Now, however, is the time to move beyond bureaucratic processes and invest in targeted engagement that will add value and will ultimately lead to demonstrable positive change for women and girls within the lifetime of the NAP. This will require detailed articulation of objectives, activities and accountability frameworks for specific targeted situations (sections III and IV).

II. The Consultation Process

a) Consultation with Irish & international CSOs:

The short time-frame allowed for submissions on the NAP limited the ability to conduct an extensive consultation process within the ICGBV and development/humanitarian/human rights community. Within the framework of the process agreed by the NAP consultative group, opportunities should be provided for meaningful engagement with these sectors to capture the wealth of learned experience available, and to draft a NAP that is tailored to fit with the experience and capacity within Irish state and non-state organisations. The draft NAP should be shared within these sectors, and practitioners and experts should be invited to review and provide comments on it.

b) Consultation with CSOs in priority countries:

Participation of women and girls in conflict situations is a central feature of an effective NAP and UNSCR 1325 architecture. The lived experience and perspective of women and girls affected by conflict should inform the drafting of the NAP and its commitment, particularly in countries prioritised in the NAP 2015 (if applicable). Meaningful engagement should be facilitated through the sustained engagement of Irish diplomatic staff worldwide with networks and organisations that represent the perspectives of women and girls. (This relies on the engagement of diplomatic staff during consultation and drafting). However, tokenistic or ad hoc consultation

processes that engage with women and girls should be avoided, as these can serve to disempower women and girls in the longer term. Consultation processes should avoid promoting the views of more empowered women and girls over the disenfranchised and marginalised.

c) Use existing learning tools:

In 2013, the European Peace-building Liaison Office reviewed 20 countries in which a NAP has been developed, and a midterm review of Ireland's NAP 2011-2014 was published in the same year. These, and other available materials, should be reviewed and relevant lessons incorporated. Using the final evaluation of NAP 2011-2014 (due in February 2015), objectives which were not met should be identified, and explanations offered. A mechanism should be put in place to allow for these lessons to be incorporated into NAP 2015 and to inform its implementation. The government should communicate to external stakeholders how these lessons have been incorporated.

The consultation process that informed the NAP 2011-2014 allowed for useful discussion and development of recommendations, many of which remain valid. Those resources should be consulted (See Appendix).

III. Scope of the NAP: Priority countries, Priority Themes

a) Select priorities strategically

Transforming the progressive commitments of the NAP into transformative action and social change is challenging, as evidenced from the midterm review of the NAP 2011-2014, which recommended "a more strategic and rights based approach".¹ While the principles of the NAP should apply to all of Ireland's interactions with state, non-state and commercial actors in situations of conflict, as a small country with limited available resources, Ireland cannot expect to implement the wide range of specific programmes or policies envisaged by the UNSCR 1325 architecture in each international setting in which it operates/engages. The Irish government should consider focusing on priority themes and geographic locations, rolling out a small number of pilot programmes and approaches in specified geographical areas, with a specified focus, to develop and refine working methods skilfully and effectively.

Links should be built within Ireland's own policies and with partners globally to maximise the impact of efforts: i.e. where Ireland invest in programmes, it should leverage strategic and expert influence to guarantee impact. Ireland's influence and capacity should be used strategically to deliver results, recognising that Ireland's resources are limited, but can be used effectively.

A targeted set of priority countries/themes would allow government departments to undertake a resource and capacity audit internally, and a gender and conflict analysis in the focus country/ on focus themes. This would facilitate the development of specific and actionable targets and objectives, supplemented by a robust accountability framework. Thus, Ireland's role in furthering the UNSCR 1325 will be clearly articulated, and its impact will be clearly identifiable and evidence based.

¹ Hinds, Bronagh and McMinn, Karen, "Mid-Term Progress Report: Implementation of Ireland's National Action Plan for Implementation of UNSCR 1325, 2011-2014," (2013), p 11.

A narrow focus which achieves a measured and positive outcome would be more beneficial than a broad set of principles or actions from which no discernible change for women and girls can be observed. The ultimate barometer for success of the NAP should be the impact that it has on women and girls in conflict affected situations.

Criteria for selection of a country/region/thematic focus should be developed transparently and reinforced by existing and future policy documents and priorities. The government could consider prioritising ‘fragile and insecure states’ or Irish Aid priority states, or criteria including: Irish Aid/DFAT presence in-country; established partnerships with state and non-state partners; trade and economic ties with the country; and current need for support.

If Ireland does select one or a few priority geographical areas, relevant government agencies should engage in a concerted effort to coordinate and streamline activities and policies with other donor agencies/states and local actors to avoid duplication and erosion of indigenous structures. Ireland should consider partnering with states that have prioritised the same geographical area within their own NAPs, and/or with the target country itself to establish connection between the Irish NAP and the partner country’s NAP (if one has been developed). This would respond to a key criticism that has been made of NAPs across Europe regarding a lack of concerted coordination.²

b) Responding to, and preventing, sexual & gender based Violence (SGBV):

Responding to SGBV in emergency and conflict-affected situations is a complex process, requiring a long term presence and appropriate human resources, skills and knowledge base. It requires prevention, protection and response approaches, and prioritising one aspect over others is self-defeating.

Response to SGBV requires a thorough understanding of the support structures needed to support it. A response that is not informed and driven by a gender and conflict analysis, an audit of existing indigenous service provision, and an adequately resourced team with relevant skills, knowledge and financial resources, can cause further harm to victims of SGBV in the short term and can undermine indigenous service provisions mechanisms in the medium and longer terms.

This does not mean that Ireland must work on all three elements or none at all. Rather, wherever and whenever Ireland does engage, it should align its programmes, policies and approaches within the wider context- working with partner states, organisations and local actors, to contribute to an effective and durable approach to preventing SGBV in conflict.

In its work with Irish development/ humanitarian partners, the Irish government should identify partners that are best placed to respond through projects directly dealing with SGBV and gender empowerment, and/or those that respond indirectly to SGBV prevention through other protection/human rights projects, acknowledging that different institutions (faith based, non-profit, international versus national organisation, public body, direct service providers versus advocacy, training and capacity building organisations) have different priorities, strengths and

² Annie Matundu Mbambi (Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom) proposed that Ireland support pillars of DRC NAP. See Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence, “Round table event: Lessons from DRC for Ireland’s National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security,” Galway, (2nd July 2014) Available at www.gbv.ie

working methods, and space should be identified for each to contribute to sustainably eradicating GBV in a suitable way.

Given the complexities, the Irish government could consider piloting support programmes and policies in one or two locations, to be expanded elsewhere on the basis of positive outcomes, lessons learned and available capacity. The pilots could include a range of actors and actions, with a role for the defence forces, the political division of DFAT, Irish Aid and humanitarian/development partners.

Prevention can be supported in advance of, or during, conflict situations. For example, where a risk of SGBV is foreseen in advance of elections, Ireland can support awareness-raising through advocacy and programmatic interventions.

c) Participation of women and girls:

Participation of women and girls in domestic, local and national decision making processes is essential to achieving gender equality and ending SGBV. Empowerment of women can lower the risks of SGBV, while in turn the experience of SGBV can undermine an individual's ability to participate in decision making regarding their own lives, due to stigma, marginalisation and disempowerment. Women and girls affected by SGBV require support to engage in decision-making, and assistance in overcoming trauma and organising is key to increasing participation.

Understanding gender power dynamics requires a conflict/gender analysis, and an audit of existing services, particularly through indigenous structures. This should be included within existing humanitarian assessment systems coordinated with other responding actors.

The NAP 2011-2014 midterm review noted that “engaging women as ... agents of change ... demands understanding what equal and meaningful inclusion of women means in the context of unequal power relations.”³ To avoid tokenistic inclusion, the NAP 2015 should embed gender balanced participation, linked to tangible indicators that address how women and girls were engaged and included in planning and decision making on implementation and evaluation. This includes accountability structures to measure the level of *influence* in decision making: Where women and girls fail to influence processes, the objectives will not have been met. Furthermore, the selection process for women and girls is important: meaningful participation means that all women and girls have an equal opportunity to participate, regardless of economic or social status, ethnicity, religion or other defining characteristics.

Men and boys who are willing and able to engage in furthering the Women, Peace and Security agenda should be provided with opportunities for meaningful relationship-building with women's and girl's networks/representative groups.

International progress in including women in peacebuilding has been slow. However, peacebuilding offers an opportunity to achieve long term social change for women and girls, providing opportunities for structural reform and embedding inclusive and gender-equitable principles and practices. Ireland can advocate for inclusion of women in peace-building, and can direct tangible resources to up-skilling women to support their participation, building on its record in supporting women's political participation.⁴

³ Hinds & McMinn, p 11.

⁴ Hinds & McMinn, p 21.

Many international peace-building efforts take place within the context of regional peace-building, such as the peace framework for the great Lakes Region. The government should consider supporting regional initiatives such as this.⁵

d) Ireland as a global advocate:

Global advocacy on UNSCR 1325 should be a continued priority. In line with ‘using Ireland’s influence and capacity strategically to deliver results’, the government should advocate in a holistic manner, by engaging with *all relevant parties* – including traditional actors such as state governments, UN agencies and organs, EU organs, and civil society; and non-traditional actors such as private commercial actors with links to Ireland. (The NAP 2011-2014 midterm review suggested a number of recommendations on targets for high level advocacy, which should be considered.)⁶

Diplomacy alone is not always sufficient. Where dialogue fails, the Irish government must be take follow up action to ensure an end to human rights violations. It’s commitments in this regard should be linked to strategic objectives and measurable indicators, and supported by analytical evidence.

The government should consider its role in advocating on ending impunity and accountability for gross rights violations, including gender-related violations. The linkages in trade and aid, as envisaged by the ‘One World, One Future’ policy paper, provide an opportunity to engage in internal and external discussions regarding impunity and accountability in countries with which Ireland has an economic partnership. In the absence of reference to enforced minimum standards regarding to human rights protections in bilateral trade agreements, Ireland’s standing as a global leader in tackling human rights abuses and impunity will be compromised.

A strength of the NAP 2011-2014 was advocacy at international level; however, there is less evidence of advocacy carried out at regional (apart from EU) or national levels. This should be addressed in NAP 2015.

Given Ireland’s recognised role as a key contributor to UN pooled funding, it should ensure that the goals of UNSCR 1325 are enshrined in the spending of these funds, by assigning highly skilled officials to attend pooled-funds related monitoring meetings, to raise key question/issues for follow up with UN partners.

Despite the relatively small size of Irish embassies overseas, diplomatic teams can support UNSCR 1325 by seeking out and developing new avenues for engagement and advocacy.

The government should consider its potential to support advocacy led by civil society actors at partner country-level, for example by providing technical capacity building support to strengthen indigenous accountability and advocacy structures.

IV. An Effective NAP 2015: Implementation Plan

a) Implementation Plan:

⁵ See ICGV round-table (see footnote 2).

⁶ Hinds & McMinn, p 36.

Measurable objectives/indicators should be presented within a comprehensive analysis of what is needed to translate the proposed activity into a durable impact for women and girls. While the plan will depend on available resources, a whole of government approach requires detailed planning (including designating responsibility and leadership, funds tracking, stakeholder participation). To this end, the NAP should include a detailed implementation plan, detailing in practical terms how objectives will be reached within the lifetime of the NAP by providing base-line data, targets & objectives, activities foreseen, indicators & benchmarks, timelines, budgets, roles and responsibilities, a monitoring and evaluation framework, and a summary of resource availability within the lead agencies.

Targeted interventions for specific country situations outlining strategic measurable objectives could be included. Activities could be implemented on a pilot basis initially, with a built-in mechanism for ongoing learning, and with the potential to scale these activities outwards in the subsequent years.

The implementation plan should be updated during the lifetime of the NAP, drawing on evaluations, lessons learned and international/domestic developments, and supported by a workshop involving key stakeholders. This process could contribute to the “culture” around UNSCR 1325, promoting the language and spirit of the resolutions.

The NAP 2015 should be a living document, adaptable to capacity and resource changes and to policy developments across government. It should inform the priorities of other government documents and priorities (including ‘One World, One Future’ and its framework document, the Africa Strategy, Fragile States Policy, National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, and White Paper on Defence). The NAP should recognise and outline Ireland’s role in responding to international developments in a timely and appropriate way, such as the recently escalated conflicts, and the 2015 high level review of the 1325 agenda and formulation of the post-2015 MDG platform.

A short summary brochure explaining the NAP in brief should be disseminated widely across government departments.

b) Funding & Resourcing the NAP:

Clear budgets and costing should be articulated in the NAP/implementation plan from the outset, including a statement on where the budget will come from (department/budget line).

In-house capacity (skills and expertise) to advise and oversee complex work under the banner of UNSCR 1325 must be assured. Given the highly specialised skill-set and professional background that this requires, staff should be supported with professional training and development opportunities, or recruited externally. Additional time might need to be allocated to UNSCR 1325-related aspects of positions, without reducing time allocated to other aspects of gender-related work. As a starting point, DFAT should audit its capacity in Dublin/Limerick and at embassies abroad to assess current strengths/capacities and how this can support UNSCR 1325.

c) Engaging with stakeholders:

NGOs, including the civil society members of the ICGBV, are critically interested in the NAP because: (i) they will play an important role in implementing the NAP; and (ii) they are independent actors with experience and expertise in this area.

However, ICGBV members have raised concerns regarding the mismatch between the articulated goals of the NAP 2011-2014, and the realities of humanitarian work in complex environments. Effective work on UNSCR 1325, including SGBV, requires a specific set of skills and knowledge that is not available or in line with every organisation's mandate, and often adequate funding is unavailable. Recognition is needed of the varying roles, strengths and limitations of NGOs. Moving from the current situation of extremely limited work on SGBV in humanitarian crises to a complete and holistic response requires close engagement with partner organisations, ring-fenced funding for specific interventions, and clear and reasonable guidance for partner NGOs on monitoring and evaluation. INGOs wider work on protection (not specific to SGBV) should also be explicitly recognised as meeting some of the requirements set by Irish Aid.

In humanitarian response, focus should extend beyond ensuring sex disaggregated data and specific GBV projects, to including humanitarian planning that brings about meaningful long term social change. A discussion with humanitarian actors is needed to inform how this should be articulated in the NAP 2015.

Strengthening local capacity should be a core principle of the NAP 2015. A commitment to social change requires a commitment to locally and nationally based organisations/networks that facilitate participation of women and girls, using their connections and ownership at community level. In line with Ireland's commitments to good humanitarian donorship and aid effectiveness, intervention (policy or programmatic) should be preceded by a robust context analysis, including a review of indigenous capacity to respond through advocacy, education or service provision, and how these existing mechanisms can be protected and maintained, rather than undermined. Support to civil society should include skills transfer to ensure sustainability. The NAP 2015 should include a stated commitment to consult with women and girls affected by conflict through established or new processes.

Both CSOs and state agencies would benefit from shared learning and evidence based research and development of working tools and good models of practice. This should be seen as supplementary to the key activities of the NAP 2015, not as a core priority.

V. Monitoring, Evaluation & Ongoing learning

All stakeholders should have a role to play in holding government to account, including government agencies, CSOs in Ireland and internationally, and women and girls that are the intended beneficiaries of the Irish NAP 2015.

In its current form, the monitoring group for NAP 2011-2014 is not well placed to measure impact or provide extensive lessons, due to the limited number of meetings, lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of members and lack of baseline data and data collection.⁷ The role of CSOs on the monitoring group should be clarified (as observer, technical experts, or external monitors). Measurable strategic objectives and indicators should be outlined, to facilitate strategic technical advice on an ongoing basis.

This should be supported by data collection and analysis, which relies in part on the ability of partners to collect data. The NAP 2015 should strengthen partner's capacity to collect data, while restricting and streamlining data collection reporting obligations, and aligning these obligations with those of other countries NAPs to reduce inefficiencies. Evidence of impact in

⁷ Hinds & McMinn, p. 42-43.

conflict specific situations is crucial; outcomes, rather than activities/outputs, should be the barometer for achieving results.

Recommendations provided in the mid-term review of the NAP 2011-2014 should be implemented. The NAP 2015 should commit to ongoing learning, whereby lessons learning will be actively pursued and findings from ongoing evaluations will be followed by targeted actions.

The monitoring group has briefed 3 Oireachtas committees, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the President of Ireland. These activities should respond to political and security developments, such as current conflicts internationally, and trigger calls from the Oireachtas to DFAT and other departments to brief it and respond to specific situations.

The planned 2015 high level review of UNSCR 1325 presents an opportunity to learn from experiences elsewhere. The government should participate as an active advocate and learning participant. This will require dedicated resources from DFAT.

Accountability must extend beyond Irish government agencies and Irish partners funded by the Irish Aid programme; to include international organisations in receipt of humanitarian funding from Ireland, including UN agencies; and bilateral funding to partner governments and UN agencies for structural development work.

Appendix: Resources that informed the development of NAP 2011-2014 & additional materials:

- European Peace-building Liaison Office, “UNSCR 1325: 20 case studies on implementation,” (November 2013)
- Hinds, Bronagh and McMinn, Karen, “Mid-Term Progress Report: Implementation of Ireland’s National Action Plan for Implementation of UNSCR 1325, 2011-2014,” (2013)
- Institute for British Irish Studies, UCD, “Shared Learning: Implementing UNSCR 1325 in Ireland and in the USA,” (27 June 2014)
- Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence, “Round table event: Lessons from DRC for Ireland’s National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security,” Galway, (2nd July 2014)
- Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence, “Submission to the Conflict Resolution Unit on the Irish National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security,” (5th May 2010)
- McCormack, Inez, “UNSCR 1325 ON Women, Peace and Security: Ireland’s National Action Plan Development Process: October 2010-February 2011,” (2011)