

Submission

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

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

The NAP should continue to provide access points for departments and agencies to deliver actions to significantly deepen engagement on gender equality, GBV and women's empowerment issues within and across individual units, government departments and partner organisations.

Progress on actions on two of the five pillars – women's representation and relief and recovery demonstrated particular challenges within the current NAP: more progress is needed to improve the position of women at strategic and policy levels and support women as agents of change; greater attention is needed to extend the NAP's current focus beyond disarmament, demobilisation and security sector reform. Actions to document the experiences and needs of migrant women and girls from conflict affected regions who are now living in Ireland have been particularly slow to progress as has the setting up of a mechanism to ensure the on-going engagement of women affected by conflict in the monitoring of Ireland's NAP.

The Strategic objectives for Ireland's second NAP on 1325 WPS should:

- Support the principle and actions to embed women's empowerment and participation/ women as agents of social change as well as measures to protect women and girls.
- Be guided by the need to add value: Actions need be additional and shift from a bureaucratic approach where departments simply to replicate existing commitments in departments strategies and action plans.
- Maintain the strategic influence pillar – this has demonstrated added value and should be maintained. Ireland's advocacy at EU and UN on the WPS agenda should continue to be a priority. NAP #2 should build on Ireland's contribution as an international advocate for human rights.
- Explore actions which intersect across themes eg. Relief and Recovery actions can also inform protection and participation themes.
- Consider the inclusion of commitments to a number of specific geographical areas. The outward (international) – inward (domestic) dimensions of the current NAP should be maintained.
- Building collaborative actions across actors: government departments, Defence forces and CSOs can support the deepening of WPS agendas, enabling greater quality and impact of actions and more effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms.

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

- The critical role and contribution of CSOs in empowering women needs to be strengthened; Irish Aid also has a significant role to play in guiding commitments to the empowerment of women in design and delivering of its programming within conflict affected states and regions; greater active engagement of womens CSOs and international development CSOs who prioritise and demonstrate support for women’s empowerment within conflict and post conflict regions is needed within the NAP.
- More consultation with intended and actual beneficiaries is needed to guide and improve ways to ensure empowerment of women in conflict affected states and regions.
- Work to support women’s agency during the transitions from conflict to post conflict period needs to recognise that post conflict period provides a unique opportunity for engagement and the importance of participation of gender equality commitments in peace negotiations and emerging institutions.
- Explore the potential to pilot a project for cross learning / CSO- MS engagement (single / multiple actors) on 1325 NAPs focussing on the theme of women’s empowerment within conflict / post conflict regions.
- The contribution of international development CSOs and national CSOs within Monitoring Group needs to be strengthened. Clarity is needed on the roles and contribution that CSOs can make to benefit from their expertise, advocacy, on the empowerment of women and additionally will strengthen accountability mechanisms within the Monitoring Group.
- Reference the opportunities offered by the recently adopted UNSCR 2122 to strengthen women’s participation on WPS.

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?

Gender equality provides a catalytic effect for humanitarian development work, good governance and sustaining peace and is core to sustainable development and human rights. The second NAP needs to deepen gender equality commitments in its policies, programming and actions in relation to humanitarian and conflict intervention work broadly and including:

- Protection of people
- Support for Displaced persons
- Humanitarian interventions
- Peace Negotiations
- Impunity from violations of GBV and sexual abuse

There is a need to coordinate actions nationally and internationally within the second NAP. This could include explore ways to in which Ireland's NAP could support coherence with a number of NAPs on 1325 in countries where it works or funds projects in fragile states, or conflict affected regions through the One World, One Future policy.

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

The recognition of Northern Ireland as a post conflict region (despite the refusal of the UK government to include a reciprocal action in their NAP) within Ireland's NAP provides critical acknowledgment and support for women engaged in peacebuilding and conflict resolution in Northern Ireland. However, greater engagement with women CSOs in Northern Ireland to strengthen their voices and engagement in peacebuilding policy and strategic roles is needed.

More should be done to promote UNSCR 1325 through the relationships, channels and activities resulting from the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and subsequent agreements and arrangements. The range of actions should be extended to cover, among other things, work with the Northern Ireland authorities, in cross-border intergovernmental fora, bodies and discussions, and bi-lateral approaches with the British Government on the peace process and on the application of UNSCR 1325 responsibilities (Pillar 2, Pillar 5) as well as support to CSOs.

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

- The Monitoring Framework for Ireland's NAP includes 73 indicators as well as outcome and impact objectives for each of the five pillars. Whilst most of the indicators are quantitative, they do not include specific numerical targets, making progress hard to measure. Indicators to measure qualitative aspects of actions / impact on the ground are limited and require further development.
- The monitoring framework needs to ensure there are systems to address: Inconsistencies in the level and nature of monitoring data; the lack of quantitative and qualitative data including information on financial expenditure. More evidence of the impact that interventions are making on the ground is required, along with regular consultation with women in local communities to assess the extent to which peacekeeping, development and humanitarian activities are meeting their needs.
- The NAP would benefit from shifting from its current somewhat bureaucratic approach where there is a disproportionate focus on quantitative indicators to actions which sustain impact and lasting change. A central issue is the extent to which the actions on prevention and protection can be attributed specifically to the NAP as opposed to on-going work on gender equality.
- Greater clarity and strengthening of roles within the Monitoring Group is required to lead and drive the NAP and coordinate, oversee and monitor NAP implementation across departments and agencies. While responsibility of the implementation of the NAP lies with

Governments, effective delivery needs more than Government involvement. CSOs are also critical actors in implementation, providing expertise on gender sensitive approaches to humanitarian and development interventions and ways to build empowering and socially inclusive agendas in conflict-affected countries.

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

Action on WPS needs to be informed by the current international / global strategic and policy context which offers a range of opportunities for engagement including:

- Need for the Intersection of WPS agendas with Post 2015 framework and the need for them to complement each other : The Post-2015 framework is the major UN process for the moment, and is expected to merge the sustainable development (Rio+20) and poverty eradication (Millennium Development Goals) agendas into one framework to be adopted at Summit-level in September 2015. In addition, the framework is to set the focus on global attention and resources over the coming 15 years. Ireland is well placed to contribute to place the WPS agenda at the forefront of this global policy context. Eg. at a post-2015 Summit in September 2015, UN Women will organise a Global Leaders' Commitment Forum on Beijing+20, aimed to push the agenda forward and to invite pledges from Heads of State on countries' commitments on Beijing+20.
- 2015 will be an important year with the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325, the setting of the post-2015 agenda and Beijing+20 anniversary. The UNSG Review of UNSCR 1325 is planned for 2014-15 with a Global Report on UNSCR 1325. Ireland's commitments to the WPS agendas including its engagement in Northern Ireland can provide a valuable contribution to these opportunities for dialogue and influence.
- EU member states individually and collaboratively, along with the EU as a regional actor can play critical roles in ensuring the shared learning from the development, monitoring and implementation of NAPs to date is more transparent and shared, for example through more structured engagement with CSOs on WPS issues. This can strengthen the capacity of NAPs to tackle the causes and structures of conflict and to improve the position and participation of women at strategic and policy levels in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.
- Within the EU, there is a focus on the Conflict Prevention agenda and early warning systems.

Ireland's work on the WPS agenda by the PMUN and at the PM at the OSCE provide good models of practice for engagement and should be strengthened and extended. Ireland's engagement in the Comprehensive EU approach to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 also offers a mechanism for sharing learning and building dialogue within EU member states and with CSOs.

Finally, strengthening the roles and engagement of women, women CSOs and international development CSOs who prioritise and demonstrate support for women's empowerment in Ireland and internationally will offer a range of benefits for NAP#2 including:

- A NAP informed and grounded in the reality of women's lived experiences and their communities
- Shared government – CSO learning and dialogue on issues and needs
- Strengthened collaboration and dialogue between government and CSOs
- Greater understanding of the distinctive roles of government and CSOs
- Strengthen voice for grassroots women and empowerment of women
- Strengthened advocacy role for CSOs to share their expertise to inform and guide political transitions, policy and embed peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes.