



National Women's  
Council of Ireland  
Comhairle Náisiúnta  
na mBan in Éirinn

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Submission to Department of Foreign Affairs and  
Trade consultation on Ireland's second National  
Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

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## Introduction

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The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) welcomes the opportunity to submit to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) consultation process for Ireland's second National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). We wish to commend the DFAT and all those involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of the first NAP on the achievements to date. Implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and subsequent UNSC WPS resolutions is a demanding and ambitious task, but one which has begun to be progressed in earnest by Ireland.

Ireland has been recognised internationally as a leading advocate on gender mainstreaming women's equality and the WPS agenda through its foreign policy and engagement in multilateral institutions such as the UN and the European Union (EU). The first NAP has been held up as an example good practice due, in particular, to the significant efforts made towards meaningful consultation with civil society and women who have experienced conflict in Ireland and elsewhere. The cross-learning initiative with women in Liberia and Timor-Leste, the formalisation of a multi-stakeholder monitoring group, and an all-Island domestic as well as an international focus have contributed to this. Given the results of this methodology, it is advisable that the second NAP is developed and implemented in a similar spirit.

The NWCI regrets the timeframe and the timing of this consultation process, which has precluded a more comprehensive deliberation among our members on the priorities for the next NAP. Though we appreciate the flexibility the DFAT has shown in extending the deadline, as a membership organisation it is crucial that we have sufficient time to ensure meaningful consultation with women affected by conflict and violence and with women's groups that have proven so integral to the women, peace and security agenda. We very much hope that this written call for submissions by the DFAT is one step in a more rigorous consultation process, involving measures to ensure accessibility for marginalised groups, which is more likely to secure the positive outcomes of the previous drafting process.

2015 will see the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of UNSCR1325 and the UN Secretary General's global review of its implementation, the global commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Fourth Beijing World Conference on Women (Beijing+20) and the process of elaborating the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Framework to be adopted at Summit-level next September. It will be a year of favourable opportunities for all relevant actors to take transformative decisions and actions to promote and advance gender equality, to fully reflect and reinforce the role of women, peace and security in national, regional and international processes, and to advocate for adequate financing at each level. It will also present a valuable chance for Ireland to disseminate further the lessons it has learned throughout the development and life of the first NAP and to learn from the experiences of other States.

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## How can Ireland help empower women affected by conflict?

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Initiatives aimed at women's empowerment must ultimately be aimed at increased participation of women in conflict resolution and peace negotiations, peace-building initiatives, and political life. This must be underpinned with services which assist in overcoming obstacles to participation and provide the necessary prevention and protection measures for women at risk of gender-based violence as well as culturally- and gender-appropriate response supports to those who have experienced violence in conflict.

It is essential that Ireland's second NAP on WPS recognises the extent of its responsibilities to those women affected by conflict both overseas and on the island of Ireland. While it is clear that Ireland, in its foreign policy, has made some significant achievements in engaging with women in conflict or post-conflict environments through peace-keeping missions, humanitarian assistance and development programmes, sufficient attention has not been given to the needs of women affected by conflict residing across the island of Ireland. Women affected by the conflict in Northern Ireland are addressed below. However, a growing number of women, having sought or awaiting asylum in Ireland, remains without the necessary supports.

### Recommendations:

- As originally recommended in the good practice guide *UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security: Towards an Effective and Inclusive Irish National Action Plan*, the DFAT should ensure that women's human rights defenders (WHRD) participate in political dialogues and reconstruction initiatives. It is essential that the protection and promotion of women's human rights form an integral part of the agenda of all peace processes and post-conflict governance processes. Increasing financial/technical support to local and international women's CSOs to support on-going capacity building and engagement of women in decision making at all levels will be crucial in this regard.
- While integrating WPS principles into Irish humanitarian interventions, it is important to recognise the full range of supports that will contribute to speedier recovery and (re)engagement in daily and political life of women, namely sanitation, health and livelihood needs and leadership programmes. It is the view of NWCI that meeting the health needs of women and girls requires that the NAP commit to adopting a Minimum Initial Service Package for sexual and reproductive health interventions.
- Any efforts to increase appropriate supports for women affected by conflict to increase their participation or to assist in recovery must be informed by meaningful consultation with local women's organisations and communities. Therefore:
  - Due to the lack of progress in this regard during the implementation period of the first NAP, the DFAT should renew its commitment to providing financial support to civil society partners including locally-based CSOs to

develop and undertake surveys, including an initial pilot survey, on how women in local communities regard their treatment by peacekeeping personnel and how they perceive their levels of security. Those findings collected by the NWCI in Ireland on the same subject should be incorporated as an initial step and are provided as an appendix to this document.

- In cooperation with civil society organisations, ensure the continuation of a systematic and inclusive process of dialogue, solidarity and cross-learning among relevant stakeholders between Ireland and Timor Leste and Liberia.
  - The Department of Justice and Equality (DJE) should provide financial support to Irish women's organisations to carry out extensive consultations assessing the degree to which women arriving in Ireland from conflict-affected areas are provided with the information and support required to address their specific needs, including the full range of medical, legal, psychosocial and livelihood services, including access to sexual and reproductive health services without discrimination.
  - In State agency posts where direct work with migrant women who have experienced violence takes place every effort should be made to ensure that migrant women with relevant experience, skills and expertise are recruited to undertake this work.
- Reaffirm implementation of mainstreaming of 1325 and the needs of women affected by conflict into all relevant national policies and strategies as a core element of the NAP, including assigning responsibility for doing so.

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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?

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The NWCI recognises efforts made to date to increase gender balance and women's participation in Ireland's diplomatic missions, outlined in brief in the DJE report *Towards Gender Parity in Decision-Making in Ireland: An Initiative of the National Women's Strategy 2007-2016*, and within the Defence Forces, elucidated in the form of a dedicated action plan on Women, Peace and Security. However, the achievement of gender parity in senior decision-making positions remains distant. Gender mainstreaming policies through the introduction of appropriate recruitment and retention strategies, family-friendly working conditions, mentoring programmes, quotas, and sexual harassment and bullying training continue to be crucial to achieve gender balance in all areas of public service. The integration of gender and the needs and roles of women must be done not just at an institutional level, but throughout research, planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

Though the *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (NSD-S-GBV) 2010-2014* acts as a blueprint for actions to be taken against abuse and violence occurring in Ireland, it does not tackle the cross-over with the WPS NAP which would assist in the

identification of appropriate responses for women from conflict affected areas – in Ireland or elsewhere – who have experience gender-based violence. Despite the key role of the DJE in both strategies, there is little more than a brief reference to ‘ongoing co-operation and contact between Cosc and the [DFAT] on work of mutual interest’.

The *fourth Strategy Statement for the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner* (ORAC) covering the period 2013-2015 also offers an opportunity to ensure that, when they arrive in Ireland seeking refuge or asylum, women who have experienced conflict have their special protection needs fulfilled, including ‘protection against manipulation, sexual and physical abuse and exploitation, and protection against sexual discrimination in the delivery of goods and services’, as required under the *Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women* prepared by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, July 1991. According to 2012 primary research *No Place to Call Home: Sexual Harassment in Direct Provision Settings in Ireland* carried out by AkiDwA with stakeholder groups, there is evidence to suggest that women have experienced sexual harassment in direct provision settings in Ireland and that a hostile environment exists for women in direct provision accommodation centres.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Where a relevant national policy or strategy is scheduled for review or enters a new phase – such as the *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010-2014*, the *fourth Strategy Statement for the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner 2013-2015* and the *Department of Defence and Defence Forces Strategy Statement 2011-2014* – the relevant department or unit must be tasked with mainstreaming UNSCR1325 and the needs of women affected by conflict therein.
- Every effort should be made to integrate more fully commitment from the WPS NAP into the next NSD-S-GBV.
- The Government must require organisations providing services to individuals seeking asylum and protection to implement a safety and security framework, with independent oversight, that provides effective policies and procedures to address sexual misconduct occurring in direct provision settings. AkiDwA’s report details important recommendations that should be incorporated into ORAC’s strategy.
- Ultimately, however, the NWCI calls for the abolition of the direct provision system.

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#### **How should the National Action Plan approach actions relating to Ireland-Northern Ireland?**

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The NWCI recognises the stated limitations of the Irish government to influence the full adoption of WPS standards, obligations and principles in relevant Northern Irish processes, including the UK National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security. However, the position of the UK government not to recognise Northern Ireland as a conflict or post-conflict

territory continues to result in a shameful neglect of the rights of women and girls in Northern Ireland and the border counties of the Republic. Despite the integral role played by women in providing essential services to women and communities throughout the conflict as well as securing and negotiating a peace agreement in Northern Ireland, women's participation in politics remains low across the board, further compounding the marginalisation of women made most vulnerable by the conflict. This erroneous policy position places a heightened responsibility on the Irish government, through the support of women's organisations throughout Ireland, to assess and address these needs where possible.

**Recommendations:**

- Increase financial and technical support to Irish civil society organisations to underpin capacity-building among women to participate in decision making in all aspects of peace agreement implementation.
- Commit to advocating at bilateral and multilateral levels for dedicated, appropriate policies and services which take into account the particular experiences of women who have lived, worked and often raised families in highly militarised, patriarchal communities.
- Commit to advocating for sustained and increased commitment by the Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement as well as Ministerial Councils set up under the Good Friday Agreement to ensure that WPS remains an integral element of the work carried out.
- Identify avenues for increased engagement with the committees of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly and the all-party committee to advance the principles of UN Resolution 1325 to highlight the impact of the UK's refusal to include a domestic element within their own NAP.

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How can the existing monitoring mechanisms of the first National Action Plan be improved?

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The matter of monitoring and evaluation of activities and their impact arising from the first NAP has been attentively addressed within its mid-term progress report. Though the report recognised that 'there has been a high level of activity in progressing objectives across the Pillars of the NAP with a number of noteworthy achievements', it nonetheless expressed difficulty in competently assessing the impact achieved based on the identified indicators and the lack of baseline disaggregated data. The rectification of these shortcomings in the second NAP will be essential to ensure a more effective strategy and guarantee intended outcomes for women. .

**Recommendations:**

- Indicators in the development of the new NAP should be identified through meaningful, thorough consultation and must focus on the qualitative nature of

actions undertaken to the greatest degree possible, with quantitative indicators used only where absolutely necessary for effective assessment. The NAP must include specific measurable achievable realistic and time bound (SMART) indicators. Where indicators do not allow for effective assessment of impact (whether positive or negative) and progress, they must be revised and strengthened. In order to allow for accurate assessment of progress, the NAP must clearly identify evidence-based solutions, the responsible parties to undertake those activities, required outputs and outcomes (impact of outputs) and realistic deadlines.

- Actions or tasks outlined in the NAP should be assigned to a specific team or unit within a department to provide clarity for those required to undertake those tasks and to ensure accountability during monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Furthermore, as proposed during initial consultations in preparation for the first NAP, a thorough independent audit must be carried out to identify activities already underway which qualify as fulfilling WPS obligations, as well as gaps and challenges in do so. This audit would provide the baseline data needed to carry out effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the second NAP. In the interim, however, data gathered under the mid-term review process may act as baseline data where appropriate. Additionally, independent consultants should continue to be used for regular and mid-term evaluations.
- The collation of data, however, must be complemented with both the means to analyse findings from within a gender-sensitive, culturally-appropriate framework and must be made available, at a minimum, to those involved in monitoring the NAP's implementation, i.e. the Monitoring Group and relevant members and committees of the Oireachtas. To ensure the safe and effective management of data collection and utilisation, a dedicated unit should be established within the DFAT, staffed by those with expertise in gender analysis and reporting.
- Integral to the success of the second NAP is an effective, cohesive multi-stakeholder Monitoring Group. This will require, *inter alia*, transparency in the workings of the relevant government units and Departments through improved communication, regular meetings, full and meaningful engagement by all members of the committee, including civil society, academic and government representatives and resourcing of the Monitoring Group with reports and briefings it requires to make a concrete contribution.
- Information on progress and the impact of the NAP must be collected and shared with transparency to facilitate accurate evaluation.
- Independent consultants with expertise in the area of women, peace and security (WPS) to undertake an annual review of progress and triennial impact evaluations of the NAP in conjunction with the Monitoring Group.

- Establish a Women, Peace and Security Monitoring Unit within the Department of Foreign Affairs with responsibility for ongoing data gathering, recording and synthesis and analysis of data across all arenas of government activity identified in the NAP and to support all review processes, staffed by at least one half-time appropriately qualified senior person and 1-2 fulltime research assistant/interns.
- A review should be carried out of the NAP's first monitoring process and findings should be incorporated into the next process.
- Include specific budget lines and allocation of financial resources to support implementation and M&E of NAP.

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

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- Ensure genuine and broad mainstreaming of 1325 into discussions at UN and other multilateral institutions and fora, including, for example, at UN Human Rights Council thematic and country-specific discussions such as those on arbitrary detention, enforced disappearances, business and human rights and natural resources.
- Ensure, whether bilaterally through its permanent missions in Geneva and New York or within formal or informal voting blocs at multilateral institutions, that Ireland continues to urge all States to sign and ratify international human rights treaties and further upholds its obligation to fight against impunity for the most serious crimes of international concern against women and girls by promoting ratification of international humanitarian law instruments, particularly by conflict-affected countries, without recourse to prioritising political expediencies over legal obligations.
- Lobby the OHCHR to specify issues related to Women, Peace and Security, outlined in the various UNSC resolutions, as an area of particular interest when drafting and disseminating regulations/guidelines for civil society on the provision of shadow reports and submissions to UN treaty bodies and charter bodies, including subsequent mechanisms.
- Through WPS cooperation at EU level, dedicated effort must be made to achieve greater cohesion between Member State NAPs and strategically link it to the EU's Comprehensive Approach.
- Advocate for the regular, public demonstration of steps taken by States to ensure the increased representation and participation of women throughout the EU PEACE Programme".

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## APPENDIX

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### **National Women's Council of Ireland Consultation Workshop To inform Peacekeeping Questionnaires on Gender In fulfilment of the Irish Defence Forces Action Plan on UNSCR 1325, Women, Peace & Security**

**4<sup>th</sup> February 2014**

The NWCI hosted a consultation with civil society members to discuss personal and professional experiences of coming into contact with peacekeepers. The learning from this consultation is gathered below. The consultation's aim is to inform the Irish Defence Forces (DF) of women's perspectives on peacekeeping and the issues that they want to raise awareness of to the DF, its gender advisors, the drafters of pre-deployment gender training and post-deployment questionnaires. Attendees at the workshop are listed at the end of this document.

#### **Culture**

- Culture and communication were raised as two of the most important issues to take into concern by peacekeepers.
- Understanding and acknowledgement of culture both within the host countries and within different peacekeeping forces is a key issue. However, all parties should be cognizant of not using cultural norms in the host nations to reinforce gender stereotypes or to devalue women's contribution to the mission or society more broadly.
- The use of culture as a rationale to gender stereotype or to position women coming out of conflict as 'victims' should be avoided at all times.
- Culture must not be used as an excuse for violations of women's human rights. Positive aspects of culture which support safety and empowerment and give protection should be acknowledged and reinforced.
- Women who are more traditional (e.g. veiled) and who may be most marginalised are frequently not the ones who are consulted with; instead it is the local women who speak English and are seen as more 'westernised' who are invited to meetings. This is not always helpful as more traditional women also have a lot to contribute to discussions. In fact, they may be the women who need change the most and may actually know more about what is happening at a grass roots level. Therefore, ALL the different women/groups/communities should be engaged with. Sometimes issues that address women in conflict (especially gender based violence) go unreported and unrecognized not because women don't report, but because they are not asked the right questions in the first place.

### **Mission Mandate/Communications with Local Population**

- It is important to clearly communicate the mission mandate to local populations (outlining what civilians can/cannot reasonably expect from peacekeeping forces and mission staff).
- Serious issues arise in relation to the wearing of uniforms by civilians and ex-soldiers and this instils fear amongst women and communities of anybody in a uniform. This is an issue peacekeepers need to be cogniscent of and another reason why their roles and responsibilities need to be clearly communicated to civilians within the host nation.
- One example cited by a workshop participant was her experience of working in Cote d'Ivoire where she witnessed women being controlled by men in uniform, because the women assumed those men were supported by weaponry and comrades. If the women knew which groups were still operational, and which were totally disbanded, it would have given them a degree of protection. They might have been able to stand up against the violence in at least some cases.
- The mission needs to be cogniscent of the fact that community engagement on a day to day basis is often diminished due to the location of peacekeeper camps and headquarters away from villages and communities. This disconnection from civilians needs to be resolved through pre-planning and prioritizing communications and outreach initiatives before the mission arrives in the country.

### **Human rights**

- As part of the communications process, human rights and women's and girl's rights need to be clearly and effectively communicated to the local population. For example, huge billboards aimed at ending gender based violence (GBV) are prominently raising awareness of a zero tolerance policy on violence against women in Liberia. When people know their rights they are more likely to individually and collectively recognize their right to become agents of change for themselves and their communities, in seeking justice and access to resources.

### **Gender does not mean 'women'**

- Gender discussions and analysis must be broadened to encompass relationships between women and men; both within the host nation and within peacekeeping forces. Male dominated organisations will not proactively look at issues such as GBV unless they are required to report on it. Peacekeepers must communicate directly with women to ascertain their experiences and needs, as well as men's needs and experiences. Gathering data on women and recording and reporting on communications with women are key to including gender perspectives that encompass the views of diverse groups within that society, not only men's views.

### **Gender Advisers**

- Gender advisers are generally women. Civilian and military (senior level) male and female gender advisers are needed to demonstrate the importance of a gender analysis of a conflict situation and to role model egalitarian attitudes and behaviours. If only civilian gender advisers are present on a mission, the gender component of the mission will lack authority and the local population will not take it seriously. It is also essential that Mission Readiness Exercises (MREs) contain a gender dimension.

### **Institutional ownership of gender**

- It is important that gender awareness/sensitivity/mainstreaming is owned at an institutional level, with institutional accountability. For example, gender issues must be mainstreamed and permeate through all levels of the military/peacekeeping mission by being included at every stage in the planning of missions.
- This necessity to gender plan and strategize also applies to the military police, administrative processes and throughout all mission functions.
- The Irish Government has a huge responsibility not just in terms of the behaviour of their own peacekeeping troops but also that of the organisations they fund or contribute to. The Irish Government must commit to speaking out against violations that are being committed by peacekeepers from other troop contributing countries, especially those countries/troops that Ireland is involved in the training of. All violations must be recorded and reported and actions taken publicized both at home in the country of origin of the peacekeeper and abroad, in the host country. This will ensure that a zero tolerance policy and practice towards any violations of the peacekeepers code of conduct and other humanitarian laws is communicated to everybody affected by a mission.

### **Opportunities to lead and role model new behaviours**

- By highlighting 'best practice' the DF can act as agents of change internationally and amongst their troop contributing peers. Peacekeepers can play an important role in role-modelling and demonstrating behaviours that support gender equality. Women peacekeepers must be visible in senior ranking roles with decision-making/leadership responsibilities. Mixed patrols that include women and men peacekeepers are key to providing security for all civilians in host nations.

### **Monitoring & Evaluation**

- There can be a disconnection between planning and policy-making bodies and the evaluators and the work being done on the ground. The infrequency with which committees such as the Monitoring Group on UNSCR 1325 meet creates further difficulties in enabling accurate evaluations and timely and effective actions.

## **Shirley Graham and Rachel Doyle**

**2014**

### **List of Workshop Participants**

Ollie Barbour, Director Personnel Support Services, Irish Defence Forces

Réiseal Ní Chéilleachair, Humanitarian Policy Officer, Trocaire

Rachel Doyle, Head of Development & Outreach, National Women's Council of Ireland

Jane Dundon, Policy Officer, Rape Crisis Centre

Shirley Graham, PHD on Gender & Peacekeeping, Independent Consultant

Debby Kluczenko, MA, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Rosemary Masinga, MA, National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Salome Mbugua, CEO, AkiDWA

Karen Murphy, Gender Advisor, Independent Consultant

Rachel Vannice, Intern at Médecins Sans Frontières and MA student, Trinity College Dublin

Olivia Wilkin, PHD candidate, Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin