

Seventh Meeting

1st March 2017, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Harcourt Street

Minutes: Thematic Meeting

Presentation by Midterm Review Consultants, Bronagh Hinds and Debbie Donnelly

The consultants praised the openness and enthusiasm with which individuals had engaged in the review process and noted that bodies with commitments under the plan had clearly welcomed constructive criticism. The overriding observation of the consultants was that statutory bodies tended to under- rather than over-report on actions taken under the NAP commitments. On methodology- the consultants had carried out extensive desk research and prioritised an engagement strategy- holding focus groups with INGOs and CSOs both North and South of the border. They thanked Concern Worldwide and Jacqueline Healy of NWCI for facilitating these.

The Consultants then proceeded to summarise the content and main findings of their Report. One overarching concern which emerged was the lack of easily available disaggregated data with which to measure progress of WPS programming and guide the design of future policies. The consultants praised the embedding of the WPS agenda in the DFAT's Statement of Strategy 2015-2017 and Ireland's Programme for a Partnership Government 2016, but identified a need for better strategic planning across other government departments and agencies. Other concerns raised included: the lack of gender equality proofing in budgets; the limited involvement of the Departments of Health and Education under the NAP; a need for broader policy engagement on WPS within the DJE; as well as for greater clarity on the function of the Oversight Group itself. The Consultants suggested that the recent CEDAW review could usefully be employed as a tool to enhance awareness of the NAP within Government Departments and Agencies.

Discussion

The Chair suggested that the findings of the Report demonstrated the need to involve a wider audience in the aims of the NAP by clarifying how their work relates to the WPS agenda and noted that the NAP was clearly an underutilised tool in the work of CSOs in general. The Reference Group for the Midterm Review had determined the previous week that the Report met the Terms of Reference and was strong from a technical perspective.

On the lack of disaggregated data, it was noted that the new Public Sector Duty is a powerful tool to incentivise the collection of robust statistics as they relate to gender equality. Disaggregated data collection is also necessary to capture the intersectionality of gender, ethnicity and international protection status. Many vulnerable groups are not adequately identified in current practices. Ms Donnelly noted the efforts already underway within DJE to improve data collection. The Expert Working Group on Crime Statistics meets regularly with the Court Service, An Garda Síochána and the Central Statistics Office. It was noted however that change will be slow given rules around data protection. It was also noted that Ireland's progress against the Sustainable Development Goals will be assessed in July 2018. This includes a domestic obligation regarding disaggregated data collection and again could provide a useful opportunity to advocate for a revised approach.

It was suggested that some of the recommendations could only be applied to a 3rd National Action Plan; and as such timelines should be attached to each of the recommendations to anticipate longer term action. The process of establishing baselines against which to measure progress should be

Oversight Group of Ireland's second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2015-2018)

prioritised. Evaluation and Audit Unit responded positively to the suggestion that they attend some of the Oversight Group meetings to provide expertise on use of data and support the NAP Theory of Change process going forward.

Barry Lavin DoD and Ger Considine DCD had to leave the meeting at this point

Presentation on Analysis of Indicators, Bronagh Hinds and Debbie Donnelly

The consultants opened their presentation with a brief summary of the definition and requirements of indicators. Indicators are used to reflect progress made against a strategic aim. There should therefore be a clear link between the strategic aim and the chosen indicator and the indicator should be measurable in some way. Baselines for each indicator are essential in order to meaningfully gauge progress. The consultants noted that in the case of the NAP there was often confusion between indicators and actions and there was a significant gap in terms of baselines. For some the reporting process was little more than a tick-box exercise, while the meaning of other indicators was unclear. There was a general need to address the vagueness of the language used in the indicators. The 3rd NAP should focus on rethinking the commitments in terms of desired outcomes and the indicators chosen in order to demonstrate the difference the NAP has made. The Consultants then summarised the main findings of their Report on analysis of indicators. Again the absence of disaggregated data was raised as a concern. It was noted that one simple and effective improvement that could be made over all would be to provide a timeline for achievement for each indicator. A number of consultation questions included in the report were then highlighted as a starting point for discussions. These are:

- Are there other indicators that should be amended or removed to aid implementation of the second half of the NAP?
- What would you do differently for a future NAP and what are the key elements?
- What expertise is necessary to help you develop a future NAP?

The Consultants noted that they had been keen not to overload the Report with suggested changes and stressed that proposals were made largely to influence planning for the 3rd NAP and to instigate early consultations with civil society to deliver a more strategic design process.

Discussion

It was noted that any implementation of recommendations in the report needs to be practical and conscious that changes at this stage in the 2nd NAP could be disruptive. It was noted that changing monitoring frameworks halfway through an Action Plan is doable by highlighting changes to interested bodies with some explanatory text, following consultation around achievable deadlines. It was noted that the NAP is a living document so it would be appropriate to integrate changes at the halfway stage. As the suggestions in the Report do not represent a radical overhaul of the indicators, such changes would be very realistic. It was noted that in some cases it is difficult to set a target for a given objective; for example, precise targets for increasing recruitment of women to the Defence Forces would be difficult to meet. It was suggested that a fresh approach to such ambitious goals might be necessary. An ambitious vision for the future could be set out, accompanied by stratified targets to build up from a baseline.

Ms Huggins suggested that from an E&A perspective the Midterm Review presented a very good opportunity to alter indicators. Significant consideration had to be given to how any new indicators could be measured, where the data would come from, who would collect it and when. A Theory of Change was of particular importance in this regard for testing assumptions around external factors

that may impact on an organisation's capacity to achieve a particular goal. It was clarified that a baseline is a measure of what we are currently doing- this can be either qualitative or quantitative. It was acknowledged that the process of selecting indicators for the present NAP had been undertaken in a short timeframe which had perhaps led to less ambitious targets than might otherwise have been the case. It was therefore recognised that statutory bodies should reflect on their commitments under the NAP and consider if and how baselines can be identified as well as where the data is coming from and whether it is being analysed appropriately.

It was suggested that there is a need to bring together agencies implicated in the plan on a more regular basis to coordinate actions. The commitments and actions should be restructured so that responsibility for accomplishing an objective is not assigned solely to one statutory body alone, but rather that all implementing bodies are encouraged to identify the ways in which they can contribute to making progress under each pillar. The Secretariat confirmed that there is no intention significantly to change the indicators for the remainder of the current NAP, but that the statutory bodies will look at the indicators relevant to their work and seek to refine them, including by establishing baselines, where possible. Improvements can also be made to the reporting template for the remainder of the implementation period. The Chair suggested that a significant individual from each unit within Government Departments should take it upon themselves to champion WPS policy.

Date and Theme of Q2 Meeting

The next meeting will be held in May; date to be confirmed. The Q2 meeting will involve discussion and planning on how to respond to and implement the Midterm Review recommendations, including with regard to indicators.

Action Points

- Colleagues will have a week to submit factual corrections and other comments to on the Reports.
- Secretariat to circulate possible dates for next meeting.
- Secretariat to prepare an action plan in collaboration with other Government Departments outlining proposed programme for implementation of the Midterm Review and Analysis of Indicators recommendations.
- Secretariat to reflect on how responses to consultation questions on analysis of indicators could best be collected.

Secretariat to the Oversight Group to the 2nd National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

9th March 2017