

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

**Third Meeting**

**10 February 2016, Iveagh House, Dublin**

**Minutes**

**Attendees:**

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**Oversight Group**

**Attendance**

1. Nora Owen, Independent Chair
2. Niall Morris, Development Co-operation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
3. Nicola Donnelly, Cosc (National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence), Department of Justice and Equality
4. Jaqueline Healy, National Women's Council of Ireland
5. Ruth Taillon, Centre for Cross-Border Studies
6. Kevin Kelly, Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
7. Rob Kevlihan, Kimmage Development Studies Centre
8. Jayne Lawlor, Defence Forces
9. Réiseal Ni Chéilleachair, Trócaire
10. Diane Nurse, Social Inclusion Unit, Health Services Executive
11. Catherine O'Rourke, Transitional Justice Institute, University of Ulster
12. Michael Rowan, independent expert
13. Louise Synnott, An Garda Síochána
14. Sarah McGrath, Northern Ireland, the UK and the Americas Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
15. Émer Deane, Permanent Mission of Ireland to the EU
16. Barry Lavin, Intl Security and Defence Policy Branch, Department of Defence

**Apologies**

- Colm Byrne, Oxfam Ireland
- Anastasia Crickley, Department of Applied Social Studies, Maynooth University (for morning session)

**Secretariat**

- Paula Molloy, Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- James Kelly, Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

**External Attendees (morning and afternoon session)**

- Susan Huggins, Evaluation and Audit, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (morning only)
- Julian Clare, Development Co-operation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Daniel Sissling, Development Co-operation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Evelyn Seigland, Development Co-operation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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- Pat McLoughlin, Development Co-operation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Andrea Finnegan, Development Co-operation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Sarah Cornish, Technical Advisor, International Rescue Committee

**External Attendees (afternoon session only)**

- Lisa Doherty, Development Co-operation Division, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Deirdre Campbell, Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence (ICGBV) Coordinator
- Rosamond Bennett, Christian Aid (ICGBV Chair)
- Brian Casey, Centre for Humanitarian Action, UCD
- Maayan Zohar, Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence
- Noreen Gumbo, Trocaire

**1. Minutes of Oversight Group meeting**

**1. Adoption of previous meeting's minutes**

The Chair welcomed the Oversight Group members to the meeting. Under matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting, the decision to highlight with key influencers the funding challenges faced by the women's groups in Northern Ireland was discussed. It was noted that lack of funding is an ongoing problem for groups in Northern Ireland, and that there might be potential for these groups to draw down from the PEACE IV funds, with the caveat that the criteria to draw from PEACE IV are somewhat restrictive. It was proposed and agreed that the Oversight Group would write to the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade on behalf of these groups to flag the funding issue.

The minutes of the Belfast meeting were approved.

**2. Q2 meeting**

Comdt. Jayne Lawlor updated the group on planning for the Q2 meeting, for which the Defence Forces, An Garda Síochána and the Department of Defence are the leads. The meeting will be held at The Curragh and will examine at a strategic and operational level how the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is adopted and utilised by the Defence Forces. A precise date for the meeting has yet to be agreed but will be communicated shortly to the Secretariat and circulated to the Oversight Group for consideration.

**3. Letter from Minister Frances Fitzgerald to Oversight Group**

The Group discussed the letter received by the Oversight Group from Minister Fitzgerald in relation to the Irish Refugee Protection Programme taskforce and the Oversight Group's intention to examine the commitments made under the National Action Plan.

Ms. Diane Nurse, who sits on both the Oversight Group and on the Taskforce, spoke about possible synergies and linkages between the two bodies. During the discussion, concern was expressed that Ireland's systems to accept refugees are already under strain and will come under more pressure as

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greater numbers are resettled here. In particular, it was noted that no additional funds have been allocated by the Department of Health to the Emergency and Orientation Centres (EROC) where refugees are housed on arrival in the country. There is increasing pressure on GPs who work at the EROCs, including in treatment of women and girls who have experienced a range of traumatic situations and require specialist targeted support.

It was noted that the recent implementation of improvements on the WPS agenda in Direct Provision could be of use. The concerns raised over helping refugees settle and integrate were echoed by members of civil society organisations, along with concern over tensions arising between 'fast-tracked' refugees and those in the Direct Provision system or on housing lists. The idea of 'host communities', commonly used in overseas programming, was proposed.

It was agreed that the Q3 meeting on this theme should provide a full opportunity to examine how effectively Ireland is responding to the challenges. It was also agreed that the Group will respond to Minister Fitzgerald's letter following this meeting.

#### **4. Midterm Review**

The Group was informed by Kevin Kelly of recent consultations between the Conflict Resolution Unit and the Evaluation and Audit unit, both part of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to discuss the NAP midterm review which is due in Q4. It was proposed that the review contain a qualitative analysis of the implementation of the plan to date, and a refinement of some measurable indicators of the National Action Plan pillars which can guide implementation in the second phase, and lay the ground for a more comprehensive final evaluation in 2018. It was agreed to establish a small taskforce of volunteers from the Group, to create a Terms of Reference for the midterm review. The taskforce will be comprised of: Niall Morris, Jaqueline Healy, Catherine O'Rourke and Réiseal Ni Chéilleachair along with the CRU Secretariat and a nominated officer from the Evaluation and Audit Unit of DFAT.

#### **5. Themes for Q1 2017**

The Chair postponed discussion of themes for quarter one of 2017 until the June meeting.

#### **6. AOB**

Kevin Kelly informed the Group about a recent mission to Colombia undertaken by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. A tangible interest from Colombian statutory and civil society bodies in advancing a WPS agenda was noted by the delegation. There may be opportunities for Ireland to share lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process and from our National Action Plan on WPS with Colombia counterparts.

#### **7. Action Points arising from the meeting:**

- Chair of the Oversight Group to write to Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade to highlight the challenges women's group face in accessing funding in Northern Ireland.
- Chair of the Oversight Group to offer to brief the next Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade on the work of the Oversight Group.
- Selection of suitable date in June 2016 for Q2 meeting.
- Chair of the Oversight Group to respond to Minister of Justice after Q3 2016 Oversight Group meeting

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- The midterm review taskforce to be set up, and make progress on the review, ahead of the Q2 meeting.

## 2. Thematic Discussion of 'Gender-Based Violence in Conflict-Related Emergencies'

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### 1. Presentation by Daniel Sissling on reviewing Irish Aid's progress in implementing its National Action Plan commitments relating to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in conflict-related emergencies

Irish Aid Development Specialist and one of the Deputy Directors of the Humanitarian Unit, Mr. Daniel Sissling presented a review of Irish Aid's progress in implementing its commitments under the four pillars of the National Action Plan, with particular reference to GBV in conflict-related emergencies and pillars 1 and 3. The presentation described Irish Aid's prioritisation of gender in its core policy documents; its engagement on gender topics with external bodies; its strong funding record on gender; and its advocacy role.

A Q&A session followed. The Group discussed the question of impunity, noting that it is a symptom of the larger problem of gender inequality and skewed power dynamics. Impunity within the UN, specifically for crimes committed by UN peacekeeping personnel, was raised, and a recent decision by the UN to name the home countries of peacekeepers who committed GBV-related crimes was welcomed. The work of Irish-funded Justice Rapid Response in deploying gender experts immediately after mass crimes of GBV to gather evidence for use by the International Criminal Court was noted.

The Group discussed GBV in Northern Ireland. The legacy issues of GBV in the North, including the continuing phenomenon of domestic violence, are being forgotten, and the Chair noted that the issue was not raised during the Group's Belfast meeting.

The Q&A concluded with a discussion on the challenge of prioritisation in a crisis situation where every need is urgent, advocating the mainstreaming of gender considerations across all humanitarian interventions, cross-cutting across healthcare, sanitation, shelter etc.

### 2. Presentation by Sarah Cornish, Technical Advisor, International Rescue Committee (IRC)

Technical Advisor for Irish Aid strategic partner International Rescue Committee Ms. Sarah Cornish presented an outline of her organisation's work on GBV. IRC is currently active in 25 countries, including in 'new European refugee crisis countries', as well as states affected by fragility. IRC's programming has four pillars: GBV emergency preparedness, GBV recovery, GBV emergency response and European policy and advocacy.

The need for 'safe spaces' for women and girls was explored in the Q&A, with the example given of such designated spaces being made available to women and girls traveling through Europe fleeing conflict. These spaces provide access to safe medical care and psycho-social support. It was noted that despite human rights reports published in the past two months tracking instances of GBV in the refugee crisis, the issue has received little media attention.

The issue of male victims of GBV, and the lack of recognition they receive, was raised. It was noted from the floor that to deal with the root cause of GBV we must look at the type of masculinities that encourage, or at least allow, for GBV to take place.

It was noted by various speakers that despite an increased focus on GBV in recent times, there is still a 'gender unawareness' in the humanitarian system architecture which, coupled with the often conservative values in communities in humanitarian crisis zones, makes progress on GBV difficult.

### **3. Overview of the World Humanitarian Summit and the Irish Consultative Processes**

Project Manager for the UCD Centre for Humanitarian Action Mr. Brian Casey gave a short overview of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS), due to take place in Istanbul in May, and the Irish Consultative Process that took place before Ireland's submission in 2015. Ireland is one of the few countries to have formed clear objectives at a national and a global level for the WHS, and Ireland has developed a clear set of actions to which we can be held accountable.

### **4. Overview of Recommendations Relating to GBV in Emergencies**

Ms. Rosamond Bennett, CEO of Christian Aid Ireland and Chair of the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence, provided an overview of recommendations and suggested undertakings relating to GBV in emergencies. The prevalence of GBV in all kinds of crises was noted, as was the lack of public awareness on this issue. A 'wall of silence' surrounds survivors of GBV, particularly in the context of the refugee crisis, and Ireland has a responsibility to keep GBV on the agenda. Ireland must ensure that gender and GBV are a core focus for the WHS, and be a strong voice on gender issues. Following the presentation, the Group discussed the extent to which Irish Aid adopts an integrated approach in its development and humanitarian programming in programme countries that are susceptible to emergencies (e.g Sierra Leone, Uganda, Ethiopia etc) with respect to GBV, in particular the extent to which government health and other systems could be supported through development programming to have the capacity to respond to GBV issues when emergencies occur. Colleagues from Irish Aid responded that in the case of Uganda some work had been done, but it may be that in general, Irish Aid is not taking a systematic approach to this across countries.

### **5. Group Discussion on Linkages between the World Humanitarian Summit and the National Action Plan**

The group broke into smaller group discussions on linkages and potential synergies between the World Humanitarian Summit and the National Action Plan.

A number of recommendations emerged from the discussions:

- Ireland should act as a leader on the issue of impunity. Victims of GBV by peacekeeping troops must have legal recourse and access to the global justice system.
- The WHS should consider the impact of GBV on women and girls' access to education
- The WHS should consider the issue of women's empowerment and participation in conflict resolution
- Ireland's National Action Plan is a 'global leader' and could be replicated and possibly utilised as a mechanism for follow up to WHS commitments
- Ireland should engage in post-conflict lesson-sharing globally. Through the Defence Forces, Ireland can provide examples of best practice in peacekeeping and crisis response.
- Ireland should leverage its position as a gender champion to further gender issues at the WHS
- There is a need for a 'whole of government' approach and to be self-reflective in combating GBV

### **Chair's Concluding Remarks**

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The Chair summarised the day, noting the progress Irish Aid have made on their commitments under the National Action Plan. The Chair noted a number of recommendations arising from the day:

1. **Funding:** Donors and pooled funding should consistently support GBV in emergencies. Irish Aid, as a contributor to pooled funding, should advocate strongly for this.
2. **Prioritisation:** Staff involved in crisis response at every level and in every thematic sector need to be aware of the priority of addressing SGBV.
3. **Quality of Proposals:** Encourage all partners to design programmes and comprehensively plan for addressing gender inequality and where necessary, GBV.
4. **The role of men:** Engage with men as partners and survivors, not just as perpetrators. Explore and challenge masculinities and attitudes which lead to GBV.
5. **World Humanitarian Summit:** maintain lobbying; ensure gender and the importance of addressing GBV is not lost. Continue to reflect on the WPS agenda and the WHS.

**James Kelly**

**Secretariat to Oversight Group on Women, Peace and security**

**Conflict Resolution Unit**

**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**16<sup>th</sup> February 2016**