

OECD Crises and Fragility Unit: Ireland Third National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS)

2. Are the existing Pillars the most effective way to structure the NAP?

The existing Pillars could be improved, as well as NAP's strategic aims. Both almost exclusively and repetitively address the tie between gender-based violence as the main product of conflict and fragility. While physical and mental insecurity (i.e. SGBV) is a pervasive issue in both conflict and non-conflict contexts, the NAP could benefit from widening but not redirecting, the focus to preventing other gendered vulnerabilities also tied to conflict, such as economic security and equality, access to institutions, more care burdens, etc.

The language in Pillar 1 could be more ambitious to reflect broader scope as Ireland, a post-conflict country, aiming to mitigate the risk of conflict and SGBV both nationally and internationally. Likewise the text should make mention to women's role in preventing conflict both at home and abroad. Finally, the response to SGBV overseas in conflict states would benefit from including language to support a coherent response.

Regarding Pillar 3, the division between protection, and relief and recovery seems important as it often entails a different set of strategies, objectives and actors. Additionally the actions to support sub-point b "Working to protect women and girls in humanitarian crises, including those crises as a result of conflict" would be could be more powerful and impactful if informed by OECD's guidance in "GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT AFFECTED SITUATIONS."

Likewise, the structuring into thematic areas instead of pillars could convey more of a layered and complex relationship of intersections, instead individual entities operating in isolation.

An example of a strong and comprehensive NAP:

It is within these five thematic areas that the Australian Government aims to improve outcomes for women and girls through the National Action Plan. This work is done within relevant Australian agencies and in partnership with the international community, including partner governments, multilateral organisations and civil society.

1. **Prevention** – incorporating a gender perspective in conflict prevention activities and strategies and recognising the role of women in preventing conflict.
2. **Participation** – recognising the important role women already play in all aspects of peace and security, and enhancing women's meaningful participation, both domestically and overseas, through:
 - striving for more equal representation of women and men in Australian peace and security institutions, and
 - working with international partners to empower local women to be involved in formal peace and security processes in fragile, conflict and post-conflict settings in which Australia is operating.
3. **Protection** – protecting the human rights of women and girls by working with international partners to ensure safety, physical and mental wellbeing, economic security and equality, with special consideration for protecting women and girls from gender-based violence.

4. **Relief and Recovery** – ensuring a gender perspective is incorporated in all relief and recovery efforts in order to support the specific needs and recognise the capacity of women and girls.
5. **Normative** – raising awareness about and developing policy frameworks to progress the Women, Peace and Security agenda, and integrating a gender perspective across government policies on peace and security.

3. How can the Third National Action Plan reflect the commitments in Ireland’s Policy for International Development and other relevant government policies and strategies?

The WPS agenda plays a large role in fragile contexts and OECD-DAD members are crucial actors, providing almost 80% of development assistance bilaterally in fragile contexts. More coherent and coordinated efforts by humanitarian, development and peace actors in crisis and conflict affected contexts are more effective and a critical element of achieving lasting peace and reducing humanitarian needs. This also applies also promoting the goals of the Women, Peace and Security agenda abroad. Thus to maximize its capacity as a donor, Ireland would benefit from incorporating the ongoing conversations regarding a more coherent humanitarian, development and peace approach into its third NAP, especially in regards to Pillar 1.

Implementing the WPS agenda abroad should join actors across the humanitarian, development and peace framework along three axes: coordination, programming and financing.¹ Specifically, Ireland’s engagement in overseas aid and intervention would benefit from coherent coordination, meaning:

- joint analysis of root causes and structural drives of conflict
- identification of collective outcomes across the nexus
- empower leadership across the humanitarian-development-peace architecture
- use political engagement for cost-effective coordination across the nexus

In order for its programming to be more coherent in fragile context when implementing the WPS agenda it should:

- Prioritise prevention, mediation and peacebuilding
- Put people at the centre
- Ensure activities “do no harm”
- Align joined-up programming with the risk environment
- Strengthen national and local capacities with involvement of development-humanitarian-peace actors
- Invest in learning and evidence across the nexus

In terms of financing, the application of WPS should include:

- Evidence-based humanitarian-development-peace financing strategies at the global, regional, national and local levels with effective layering and sequencing of most appropriate financing flows
- Use predictable, flexible, multi-year financing where possible

Coherence along the humanitarian, development and peace nexus to implement WPS objectives abroad, must come from a gender perspective to include strategies for gender equality in fragile

¹ For more information, please refer to the draft DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

situations.² This means using a gender lens to understand the connection and strengthen response to conflict and fragility.

More specifically this includes:

- Understanding the local context and risks associated in engaging in fragile contexts
- Understanding and addressing links between gender, conflict and fragility such as specific gender-based challenges resulting from conflict (SBGV, increase in female-headed households, more care burdens, barriers to access of state institutions) and how gender equality-based solutions can fuel peacebuilding and statebuilding
- Addressing the complexities of social and political change and supporting women's control of resources and participation
- Addressing informal rules of discrimination because they often dictate formal institutions
- Tackle gender norms that fuel violence by looking at "masculinities"
- Work with a full range of stakeholders to support locally led change

4. How should the National Action Plan apply to the Ireland-Northern Ireland context as well as migrants, asylum seekers, and others living in Ireland who come from conflict and post-conflict affected areas?

Ireland has unique insight regarding the implementation of WPS agenda, a fact which is important and rightly highlighted in the current introduction concerning its application both domestically and abroad. Ireland's experience with conflict, post-conflict and reconciliation with Northern Ireland provides great insight. In the context of ongoing Brexit negotiations and the migration crisis issues concerning fragility, conflict and peacebuilding, which have a distinct gender element, are still incredibly relevant and could be further addressed in the third NAP.

The background text contextualizing Pillar 2 is comprehensive touching on fragile and post-conflict situations in Ireland, Northern Ireland and overseas, but could include more ambitious language in the commitments to reflect the wide scope. While Ireland is not currently in an armed-conflict state, taking action to tailor gender equality to support post-conflict fragilities at home would be beneficial in achieving WPS goals, especially considering the link specifically between gender and post-conflict fragilities. The third NAP should go beyond including Northern Ireland in the consultation process and include it in the legal framework. In light of current Brexit negotiations it is important to consider how women could be included in the negotiation and state-building process as well as mitigate the risk of disparate impact outcomes from Brexit for women (e.g. analysing any possible the effect of reignited ethno-national conflict on women in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland).

Women are crucial to the peace-building process in post-conflict contexts and thus, the NAP should support women as **active** agents, not just participants, in peacebuilding and statebuilding. Especially regarding discussions that will determine the future relations between the Republic and the North, which affect Protestant and Catholic women alike, women should be playing an active role in the decision-making processes as agents of social change to avoid women serving as token presences.

² For more information, please refer to the following OECD publications: "States of Fragility" and "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Fragile and Conflict Affect Situations: A Review of Donor Support."

Likewise, the NAP should consider the vulnerabilities (for both men and women) produced by rigid masculine identities, which are often present in conflict states and linger in post-conflict settings. INCAF/GENDERNET research has shown that this is important in fragile contexts because of the direct link between masculine identity and military violence. This has direct implications in Ireland due to the “warrior” masculine identity perpetuated by the former paramilitaries in many of the working-class communities, which characterised the cross-border violence in Northern Ireland.³ Looking at the promotion of positive masculinities would have an effect in both the public sphere (e.g. male-dominant politics) as well as the private sphere (e.g. Sex and Gender Based Violence). OECD research on Masculinities has also shown that the process of promoting positive masculinities and “unlearning” violent masculinities sometimes entails providing a space for men to discuss their vulnerabilities caused by toxic masculinity, while liaising with both men and the women who play a role in the lives of these men, to do so.⁴

Migrants and Asylum seekers constitute a population that is both touched by fragile contexts and directly concerned by the WPS framework. With Ireland committed to share the weight of the refugee crisis it is important that the application of the NAP takes into account the vulnerabilities specific to migrant and refugee women. The question of migration is a question of gender equality. Forcibly displaced women face specific vulnerabilities in addition to the rejection, stigma, vilification and stringent border security that most displaced people face. As such, the NAP should address how refugee and migrant women specifically could benefit from the NAP framework of prevention, participation, protection, and relief and recovery, whether in movement, at the border, at refugee camps or in direct provision centres, awaiting status.⁵

6. How can the plan better engage those who have a role to play in Women, Peace and Security, but may not feel directly affected? (E.g. men and boys, faith leaders, victims of human trafficking)

In achieving the goals of WPS both domestically and internationally, it is crucial to liaise with a full range of local stakeholders to support gender equality. Understanding where there will be resistance to gender-equality initiatives and who, in this context, is receptive to change to support locally led initiatives. To understand this, Irish actors must do analysis to understand how gender identities are constructed through power relations within the local community. Engaging with men, community norm-setters or others who might resist the desired changes (e.g. religious authorities, local officials, central or local level political party leaders) can be instrumental. Such members who often hold a position of power and influence, and dictate women’s relation to the state. OECD GENDERNET policy paper on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations identified a successful example in Ethiopia where the civil society support programme and the peace and development programme worked together with male leaders, in particular religious authorities. They made the social leaders, key partners ensuring buy-in and sustainability of the initiatives to challenge harmful traditional practices. The program engaged them on these issues through capacity

³ Ward, M. (2006) ‘Gender, Citizenship, and the Future of the Northern Ireland Peace Process’, *Éire-Ireland* 41: 262–83. P.6.

⁴ Refer to OECD’s policy paper, “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Fragile and Conflict Affected Situations: A Review of Donor Support,” for further information.

⁵ UNHCR Guidance on different considerations to ensure protection of refugee women:

<https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/3d4f915e4/guidelines-protection-refugee-women.html>

building and dialogues highlighting conflicts between harmful practices and religious principles. This work led to wider mainstreaming of positive gender norms and globally transformed attitudes towards gender equality.