

Public Consultation Paper for Ireland's
Third National Action Plan
Women, Peace and Security
Submitted by *The Next Chapter* project¹

14th December 2018

Given the short timeframe within which to draft a submission, it was decided that the best approach was to survey the women in the 10 Chapters across Cavan, Monaghan, Louth, Donegal and Northern Ireland via SurveyMonkey.

The survey was developed around the seven issues for consideration outlined in the public consultation paper and it reached approximately 600 women in the southern border counties listed above and Northern Ireland.

90% of respondents were from the southern border counties.

The responses contained herein are raw but real and I hope I have conveyed this through use of quotes and summaries.

¹ *The Next Chapter* is a new project targeting women in Cavan, Monaghan, Louth, Donegal and Northern Ireland to develop their ideas, build communities and support the transition out of conflict. *The Next Chapter* aims to improve the representation of women in public and political life and contribute to a more gender-sensitive society in Northern Ireland and the border regions of the Republic of Ireland.

The project is delivered in partnership by Politics Plus, Irish Rural Link and Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA), and is supported by the European Union's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). *The Next Chapter* will contribute to SEUPB's overarching programme output of regional level projects that result in meaningful, purposeful and sustained contact between persons from different communities. Match funding for the project has been provided by the Department of Rural and Community Development in Ireland and the Executive Office in Northern Ireland.

Q1

What Strategic objectives should be priorities for the Third National Action Plan?

The objectives outlined in the Second National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security, 2015-2018 are as follows and for this survey the respondents chose which they thought was the most important and why for the Third NAP:

- 1) Strengthen women's leadership and participation in decision-making in conflict and post-conflict situations
- 2) Ensure that a gender perspective is incorporated into Ireland's engagement in overseas humanitarian and development aid, peace-keeping, governance, post-conflict activities and interventions
- 3) Bolster Ireland's ongoing work on protection from and prevention of gender-based violence
- 4) Leverage Ireland's participation in global and regional fora to champion the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security resolutions

82.5% of respondents believed that the first objective was the most important for the Third NAP.

Strengthening women's leadership and participation in decision-making in conflict & post conflict situations *"should be prioritized. It is worrying to see so many women resigning from local & national politics in Ireland. Differing opinions on matters relating to women's health in recent times has been a very significant catalyst in a number of resignations. The Abortion Referendum is just one such example. The many issues raised by the Cervical Check scandal is another. In a political world that is traditionally male dominated, women at both local & national level of political life seem to feel pushed out - particularly from the main political parties and this is surely a step backwards.*

It was also expressed that greater female participation in politics would *"shape the policies that will be hopefully reduce gender-based violence"* and *"support women to take a leading role in building more resilient peace processes both at home and abroad"*.

Q2

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

The respondents gave their opinion as to which Pillar was most important to them and why.

Pillar 1: Prevention. Prevention of Conflict including Gender Based Violence and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Pillar 2: Empowerment and Participation. Empowerment, Participation and Representation of Women in Decision Making

Pillar 3: Protection, Relief and Recovery. Protection from Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Other Violations of Women's Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law, and Relief, Recovery and Rehabilitation

Pillar 4: Promotion. Promotion of Women, Peace and Security agenda in International, Regional and National Arenas

50% of respondents felt that the Second Pillar was the most important as it is the one which will lead to changing the establishment from within, *"if this pillar [isn't prioritised], women's concerns & views would be in danger of being completely ignored"*.

Pillars 1 and 3 were also seen as vital to keeping women safe. It was felt that in order to reduce and prevent violence against women in Ireland and Northern Ireland the judiciary ought to take more appropriate and consistent response to rape and sexual assault, through more serious sentencing with less emphasis on victim blaming.

"The absence of this (appropriate and consistent approach) may see a return to a culture of non-reporting. Recent high-profile rape trials, both North & South of the border have shown this. It was reported recently also that 225 women have been murdered in Ireland since 1996 and that 9 out of 10 were murdered by a man known to them. The battle against violence against women is far from over".

Q3

How can the Third National Action Plan reflect the commitments in Ireland's Policy for International development and other relevant government policies and strategies?

As outlined in the Midterm Review of Ireland's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2015-18) there are challenges to the implementation of the National Action Plan which reflect negatively on the government's commitment, just two of which include:

- i) Lack of gender and ethnic disaggregated data
- ii) Lack of equality-informed budgeting.

The Government's commitment will be enhanced if it includes equality-informed budgeting and develops gender and ethnic disaggregated data across the whole-of-government to embed WPS in a deeper and more concrete way. It was felt that additional funding should be provided to achieve this.

In addition, the Public Consultation Paper for Ireland's Third National Action Plan Women, Peace and Security highlights the need "to develop a plan to engage with government departments responsible for education and health to ensure that all relevant parts of government know of and contribute to NAP".

WSP ought to become part of the national curriculum in order to promote knowledge of Women, Peace and Security.

The majority of respondents felt it was crucial to raise greater awareness about the National Action Plan among the general population, elected representatives and civil servants.

There were queries around whether or not the NAP was legally binding.

Q 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?

This question has 2 elements:

- i) The UK does not and never will acknowledge the conflict in Northern Ireland as a 'conflict' so its NAP is external looking solely. The majority of the respondents believed that as outlined under Pillar 3, the Irish government can implement the NAP in the context of Ireland-NI solely in its own jurisdiction by actively applying the NAP to deal with the consequences of the conflict on women in the counties of Monaghan, Louth, Cavan, Leitrim, Donegal and Sligo.

However, it was also suggested that women in Northern Ireland could benefit from NAP WPS by availing of supports provided under the Irish NAP.

Dundalk and Monaghan town took in refugees from Northern Ireland in the 1980s and some respondents suggested that the NPA WPS could also extend to counties further south that also took in refugees from Northern Ireland

- ii) As described under Pillars 1 and 3, the Irish Government has successfully provided comprehensive training to personnel deployed overseas (eg soldiers, CSOs) in order to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence in conflict affected countries. In the Third NAP this training could be delivered domestically to those working with asylum seekers, refugees and other cultures, for example, in direct provision centres, HSE, Tusla, GPs and teachers in relation to Female Genital Mutilation and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence.

However, in light of recent scandals the issue of trust was raised when dealing with the HSE and Tusla

Q5

How can the existing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the previous National Action Plan be improved?

The respondents felt that the monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the Third National Action Plan WPS could be improved as follows:

- i) Facilitate a meeting of the Monitoring Group in a southern border county, in Monaghan, Louth, Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim or Sligo.
- ii) An indicator ought to be feedback from women's organisations in the southern border counties listed above and their feedback should be actively sought.

"I believe both, the more feedback we get from Women the better picture we get and the stronger the collective voice we have to monitor and evaluate and make real recommendations".

Q6

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

The responses were as follows:

- a) There should be a longer lead in time to making a submission
- b) There should be workshops in advance of submission in order to facilitate not only those groups listed in Question 6 but grassroots women's organisations and community and voluntary organisations
- c) Ruhama, which trains both An Garda Síochána and the PSNI, is the organisation best placed to advise on engagement with victims of human trafficking for sex
- d) There should be much more awareness raising about the NAP WPS

"There has to be a recognition of the fact that issues which have been flagged as "women's issues" should be presented as issues which impact on the whole community - including men & women. Women's issues cannot be isolated. That has been seen in the Cervical Check scandal with the husbands of some of the women involved finding that they have had to step up to campaign on behalf of their fallen spouses".

Q7

How should Ireland better promote knowledge of Women, Peace and security locally, nationally, regionally and internationally?

As outlined in the Midterm Review of Ireland's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2015-18), there remain "challenges, not least in sustained and deeper engagements with civil society".

Solutions to this challenge could be:

- a) Make it more accessible for women from grassroots organisations to take part in workshops pre and post submission and to be facilitated to make submissions to the National Action Plan.
"Constant engagement by interested groups at regional level will lead to greater awareness and less chance of mistakes at national levels".
- b) To include representatives from the National Collective of Community Women's Networks, the National Women's Council Ireland, Safe Ireland and Ruhama. Annex II The Second National Action Plan for WPS, Members of the Consultative Group and Annex I Public Consultation Paper for Ireland's Third National Action Plan Women, Peace and Security did not have representatives from these organisations. Groups representing young people in the Republic of Ireland were also absent.
- c) As referenced in Q3, were WPS part of the national curriculum that would greatly raise awareness among young people, their parents as well as among the general population.
"To have someone working for WPS come to schools, church groups, sports clubs, youth centres etc to provide information about its importance and what can be achieved through it".