

**Peace and conflict experts' joint submission to the
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Public Consultation for Ireland's Third National Action
Plan on Women, Peace and Security**

14 December 2018

1. Introduction

We are a network of peace and conflict experts from across Ireland's humanitarian, development, peacebuilding and research sectors. We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of Ireland's third National Action Plan (NAP). Our submission is primarily focused on external aspects of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. However, as a group, we recognise the need for strong internal-facing elements of the NAP that also address the needs of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant communities.

Since the last Irish NAP, the global environment has seen changes in the nature of violence; increasing strain on multilateral institutions; a retreat from human rights norms and international humanitarian law; changing ideas of justice; greater recognition of diversity, intersectionality and identity; and a changing role for the UN.¹ Rising authoritarianism and populism, repression and attacks on human rights defenders,² and restrictions on democratic and civil society space compound peacebuilding challenges and present particular risks for women. Irish Aid's public consultation this year explicitly identified 'Peace, conflict prevention and fragility' as one of three proposed intervention areas; and reiterated equality, humanitarian action, and governance and human rights as priorities.

The new NAP therefore provides a welcome opportunity to reflect these new contextual realities, expand Ireland's leadership role in the WPS agenda globally, and provide clarity on strategic, policy and programing priorities.

2. What strategic objectives should be priorities for the Third National Action Plan?

An ambitious vision for transformation

Ireland's third NAP should outline an ambitious vision to transform gender inequalities in conflict-affected contexts. It should respond to critical gaps in the implementation of the WPS agenda, including:

- i) Conflict prevention

An ambitious and transformative WPS agenda seeks not only to protect women in conflict, but also to prevent conflict itself. To date, prevention remains 'the poor relative of better resourced peace operations deployed during and after armed conflict.'³ UN Women's 2015 global consultations

¹ UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Security the Peace*, <http://wps.unwomen.org/>.

² Frontline Defenders (2018), *Annual Report on Human Rights Defenders at Risk in 2017*, <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/annual-report-human-rights-defenders-risk-2017>.

³ UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict*, p. 194.

highlighted women's clear and emphatic call to end militarisation,⁴ unprecedented levels of military spending and the frequent use of military force to settle disputes.⁵ **Ireland should take a global lead in challenging militarisation, in line with women's demands.** The NAP should outline clear policies and actions for preventing armed conflict, addressing the underlying causes of violence, and promoting non-violent dispute resolution. **Ireland should champion women's participation and leadership in these approaches, supporting women's organisations and networks in conflict-affected contexts to develop locally owned, gender-sensitive conflict prevention action plans.**

ii) Women's economic and political empowerment

A transformative approach to WPS recognises the centrality of women's economic, political and social empowerment to participation and peacebuilding. While top-down peacebuilding ordinarily emphasises an end to formal hostilities, evidence shows women tend to associate peace with a wider range of needs and rights being met, including basic services, employment, political participation and cultural freedom.⁶ **Ireland should therefore strengthen links between poverty alleviation, women's empowerment and peace in the third NAP.**

iii) Protection and empowerment in conflict and post-conflict settings

Lastly, an ambitious WPS agenda requires high-quality, ongoing protection and empowerment of women in post-conflict contexts. Responses to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) are inadequate in every conflict and post-conflict setting. Violence continues in many women's homes and communities long after formal peace is (re-)established.⁷ Recent research from Northern Ireland shows how violence within the home is influenced by conflict dynamics, and highlights the gender-specific legacies of conflict.⁸ This affects women's participation in post-conflict recovery, as domestic violence can restrict women's capacity to participate fully in all spheres.⁹ Women must be meaningfully included in efforts to address these legacies and in post-conflict institutions and governance to ensure sustainable peace and effective, inclusive institutions.¹⁰ **Ireland should therefore increase its support to protection and women's empowerment efforts in post-conflict contexts.**

A clear theory of change for action in key target countries

As recommended by the mid-term review of Ireland's second NAP, and the practice of other international actors, a theory of change approach would clearly align activities under the NAP to ultimate aims.¹¹ **Ireland's new NAP should clearly articulate what the government wants to achieve**

⁴ Defined as the way a country or institution organises itself through military expenditure, military personnel and weapons <https://gmi.bicc.de/>.

⁵ UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict*.

⁶ Cardona, Ivan et al. (2012), *From the Ground Up: Women's Roles in Local Peacebuilding in Afghanistan, Liberia, Nepal, Pakistan and Sierra Leone*, <http://www.actionaid.org/publications/ground-womens-role-local-peacebuilding-afghanistan-liberia-nepal-pakistan-and-sierra-le>.

⁷ Concern Worldwide (2018), *Breaking the Cycle of Conflict, Hunger and Human Suffering*, <https://www.concern.net/insights/breaking-cycle-conflict-hunger-and-human-suffering>, p. 27.

⁸ Doyle, Jessica and Monica McWilliams (2018), *Intimate Partner Violence in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies: Insights and Lessons from Northern Ireland*, <http://www.politicalsettlements.org/publications-database/intimate-partner-violence-in-conflict-and-post-conflict-societies/>.

⁹ See What Works to Prevent Violence Global Programme, <https://www.whatworks.co.za/>.

¹⁰ O'Reilly, Marie et al. (2015), *Reimagining Peacemaking: Women's Roles in Peace Processes*, <https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/IPI-E-pub-Reimagining-Peacemaking.pdf>.

¹¹ Hinds, Bronagh and Debbie Donnelly (2017), *Midterm Review of Ireland's Second National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security*, <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/alldfawebsitemedia/ourrolesandpolicies/int-priorities/womenpeaceandsecurity/NAP-report-v2.pdf>; see for example, Government of Canada (2017), *Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*, <http://international.gc.ca/world->

and how that change could happen, and derive dedicated activities, with adequate allocated resources, to support those aims.

To achieve this, Ireland should follow the example of other NAPs that identify key target countries to receive dedicated WPS support.¹² To date, only three of Irish Aid's nine Key Partner Countries (KPCs) have NAPs.¹³ Even where KPCs have not recently experienced conflict, many contribute to regional conflict responses, and host women and girls affected by conflict. This suggests an implementation gap in countries with close ties to Ireland, and may undermine cross-governmental policy coherence. **Ireland should identify WPS target countries for dedicated support on UNSCR 1325 to deliver concrete benefits, clarify Ireland's impact internationally, and strengthen cross-government policy coherence.** These could include Irish Aid's KPCs, although factors such as the onset of major conflict could serve as alternative criteria.

A strong commitment to enhancing local ownership

Local ownership is vital to make the WPS agenda relevant for women in conflict-affected contexts. Although inclusive design processes are a recognised component of 'high-impact' NAPs, there is a clear gap between global frameworks and local realities.¹⁴ Design and implementation of Ireland's NAP should be in partnership with women in conflict-affected contexts. We commend that Ireland's first NAP was developed through an international cross-learning initiative involving Timor-Leste, Liberia and Northern Ireland. Since then, less emphasis has been placed on partnership with women in conflict-affected contexts beyond the island of Ireland.

In contrast, a number of NAPs have been developed through consultations in-country to ensure local priorities drive the WPS agenda.¹⁵ **The Irish Government should undertake more in-depth consultation in future WPS policy development, and establish in-country consultation groups for implementation in target countries,**¹⁶ connecting diplomatic, development and local civil society actors to generate gender-sensitive conflict analyses for policy and programming.

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?

A 'high-impact' NAP requires high-profile leadership across government.¹⁷ For example, Canada identifies champions for each National Action Plan Partner and intends to appoint a Global

monde/issues_developpement-enjeux_developpement/gender_equality-egalite_des_genres/theory_of_change-theorie_de_changement.aspx?lang=eng.

¹² See 1325 Dutch NAP Partnership (2016), *The Netherlands National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2016-2019*, <https://women.nl/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/FINAL-NAP-2016-2019.pdf>; Government Offices of Sweden (2016), *Sweden's National Action Plan for the Implementation of the UN Security Council's Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security 2016-2020*, <https://www.government.se/contentassets/8ae23198463f49269e25a14d4d14b9bc/women-peace-and-security-eng.pdf>.

¹³ WILPF (2018), 'Member States,' <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.

¹⁴ OSCE (2016), *Results-Oriented National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security*, <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/294731?download=true>; UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict*; EPLO et al. (2016), *National Action Plans: Challenges and Opportunities*, <http://eplo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Summary-Report-Workshop-NAPs-07-03-16-Amsterdam.pdf>

¹⁵ EPLO et al. (2016), *National Action Plans*.

¹⁶ 1325 Dutch NAP Partnership (2016), *The Netherlands National Action Plan*.

¹⁷ OSCE (2016), *Results-Oriented National Action Plans*; UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict*.

Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security.¹⁸ **Ireland should both mainstream WPS by appointing dedicated champions across government, and identify a high-profile focal point on WPS to drive change.**

As the third NAP coincides with Ireland's candidacy for a seat on the UN Security Council and the 20th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, coherent engagement with the UN matters. The *Global Study* suggests that the UN Security Council establish an expert group to brief it on 1325 implementation; and that an elected member of the Security Council co-lead on 1325 with a permanent member.¹⁹ **Ireland is well-placed to implement this recommendation and make it a policy priority of its NAP.** This would support institutional knowledge retention, and deliver renewed energy and resources.

Another recognised component of 'high-impact' NAPs is that they are costed and have allocated budgets.²⁰ As well as ensuring greater impact and fosters cross-government coherence by supporting gender-sensitive budgeting and concrete commitments across departments. Under 40% of all NAPs have an allocated budget for implementation,²¹ and budget and funding gaps across international aid generally, and protection and GBV responses in particular, are fundamentally gendered and disproportionately affect women.²²

Ireland performs strongly in gender-equality focused aid. At 4%, the proportion of its gender-focused peacebuilding funding is almost double the DAC average.²³ Nevertheless, this spend remains below the minimum target of 15% set by UN Women,²⁴ and countries, such as Canada, that commit 95% of peacebuilding funding to either target or integrate gender equality and empowerment.²⁵ Setting and meeting ambitious targets for funding women's equality would establish Ireland as a global leader in this area and support cross-government policy coherence. While Ireland's second NAP had a small budget, **the third NAP should include a larger budget dedicated to WPS activities, with clear budget commitments across government departments.**

Particular efforts should be made to promote policy coherence in areas overlapping with WPS, such as human rights commitments. **The NAP should outline specific actions to support local women peacebuilding actors and women human rights defenders using an integrated, whole of government approach to develop long-term mechanisms to protect and support women activists.** This should focus on promoting local capacity to manage conflict and open opportunities for social interaction, transitional justice and economic development. Given the importance of Agenda 2030, the absence of references to the NAP and broader WPS agenda in Ireland's National Implementation Plan is also critical gap. **The third NAP should highlight the connections between WPS and Agenda**

¹⁸ See, GoC (2017), *Canada's National Action Plan*; Keating, Cecilia (2018), 'Trudeau Government Strengthens Feminist Approach with New Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security,' 24 September 2018, *National Observer*, <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2018/09/24/news/trudeau-government-strengthens-feminist-approach-new-ambassador-women-peace-and>

¹⁹ UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict*, p. 194.

²⁰ OSCE (2016), *Results-Oriented National Action Plans*; UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict*.

²¹ WILPF (2018), 'Member States,' <https://www.peacewomen.org/member-states>.

²² See OECD (2018), 'Aid projects targeting gender equality and women's empowerment, 152: 2016,' <https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1>; UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict*, p. 380; COFEM (2017), *Funding: Whose Priorities? Feminist Perspectives on Addressing Violence against Women and Girls*, http://raisingvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Paper-4-COFEM.final_sept2017.pdf, pp. 2-3; NGO Working Group on WPS (2017a), 'Gender Mainstreaming Loses Out Under UN Peacekeeping Budget Cuts,' <http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/blog-gender-mainstreaming-loses-out-under-un-peacekeeping-budget-cuts-august-2017/> and (2017b), 'Gender Continues to be Overlooked by UN Peacekeeping,' <http://www.womenpeacesecurity.org/blog-gender-continues-to-be-overlooked-by-un-peacekeeping-october-2017/>.

²³ OECD (2018), *Aid in Support of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*, <http://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-topics/Aid-to-gender-equality-donor-charts-2018.pdf>, p. 17; OECD (2018), 'Aid projects.'

²⁴ UN Women (2015), *Preventing Conflict*, p. 16.

²⁵ GoC (2017), *Gender Equality: A Foundation for Peace*, <http://international.gc.ca/world-monde/assets/pdfs/cnap-eng.pdf>, p. 12.

2030, and outline a strategy for greater engagement with the WPS agenda in future Agenda 2030 policy and planning in Ireland.

4. How can the existing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of the previous National Action Plans be improved?

Since the first NAP, the Irish government has demonstrated its commitment to the WPS agenda, but high turnover and limited timeframes have contributed to short institutional memory and challenged integrating learning. **The third NAP requires a greater commitment to learning, in-depth engagement, and more consistent stakeholder consultation – in Ireland and internationally – to support better monitoring and evaluation.**

Ireland's second NAP does not use a theory of change approach, and many indicators remain at activity / output level. Coupled with a lack of baseline data, this makes it difficult to determine outcomes, progress, and discern what difference is being made to women's lives. This is consistent with findings of the mid-term review.²⁶ **The third NAP should set specific strategic objectives and priorities, and derive outcome-level indicators and dedicated action plans from these.** Following our recommendation for a clear commitment to enhancing local ownership, **the NAP should also be regularly reviewed and evaluated in partnership women's groups in conflict-affected and post-conflict contexts to ensure learning is captured and local priorities drive Ireland's policy.**

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

Several NAPs make explicit commitments to engaging men and boys in the WPS agenda. For example, Canada, Australia and the UK's NAPs recognise the importance of engaging men and boys as gender equality advocates, and (in the UK), as potential survivors of GBV.²⁷ **Ireland's third NAP should explicitly recognise the need to engage boys and men as advocates for, and beneficiaries of, gender equality. It should include commitments to support programming promoting sustainable, positive changes in gender relations in conflict-affected contexts.**

Support is required at multiple levels, from individuals to communities and institutions. **Ireland could make a specific contribution by funding women's groups' work with institutions that are traditionally male-dominated (such as ministries of labour or defence, or faith leadership) to develop gender-sensitive policies, plans and budgets.**

Many NAPs recognise the diversity of gendered experiences in conflict, including young women's role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention,²⁸ and the specific needs of former women

²⁶ Hinds and Donnelly (2017), *Midterm Review of Ireland's Second National Action Plan*, p. 26.

²⁷ GoC (2017), *Canada's National Action Plan*; Australian Government (2012), *Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, 2012-2018*, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/international-forums/australian-national-action-plan-women-peace-and-security-2012-2018>; HM Government (2018), *UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2018-2022*, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/677586/FCO1215-NAP-Women-Peace-Security-ONLINE_V2.pdf.

²⁸ Pacific Regional Action Plan (2012), *Pacific Regional Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2015*, https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/pacific_region_regional_action_plan_2012-2015.pdf.

combatants,²⁹ persons with disabilities, and sexual and gender minorities.³⁰ These groups remain under-represented or absent from Ireland's current NAP. **Ireland should promote greater diversity in the third NAP, and support diverse local women's groups' participation and leadership in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Ireland should leverage its international profile to champion the rights of marginalised women and minorities in conflict. At a policy level, the constitution of the NAP Oversight Group should also reflect this commitment to diversity.**

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

There is extensive knowledge, research and practice relevant to WPS across Ireland, but it is diffuse, not always easily accessible, nor widely disseminated. **Ireland's NAP should support collaboration between academic institutions and practitioners to develop research, collect data, and document best practice on WPS, and disseminate this through a dedicated, independent and public activity and learning portal.**

We value the opportunity to contribute to this important process
and submit this on behalf of the following:

ActionAid Ireland

Christian Aid Ireland

Concern Worldwide

Dr Catherine O'Rourke, Transitional Justice Institute & School of Law, Ulster University

Dr Dawn Walsh, University College Dublin

Dr Eamonn McConnon, Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction, Dublin City University

Dr Gillian Wylie, International Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin

Dr Jessica Doyle, Transitional Justice Institute, Ulster University

Dr Sinéad Walsh, University of Limerick

Dr Siobhán Wills, Transitional Justice Institute & School of Law, Ulster University

Dr Susan P. Murphy, Trinity International Development Initiative (TIDI) & School of Natural Sciences (Geography), Trinity College Dublin

Kennedy Institute Peace Group

Oxfam Ireland

Peace Brigades International (Ireland)

Self Help Africa

²⁹ Government of Nepal (2011), *National Action Plan on Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 & 1820*, https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/nepal_2011.pdf.

³⁰ White House (2016), *The United States National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1868/National%20Action%20Plan%20on%20Women%2C%20Peace%2C%20and%20Security.pdf>.