

Report of the Public Submissions for the Development of Ireland's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

Introduction:

On the 15th November, the Tánaiste and Minister of Foreign Affairs launched a call for public submissions for the development of Ireland's Third National Action Plan on the Women, Peace and Security Agenda. Submissions generally focussed on either the domestic and international dimensions of the plan, although several individual submissions made reference to both. The submissions focussed on themes spanning the WPS agenda, from Sexual and Gender Based Violence to Youth, Peace and Security and masculinities.

Many submissions reflected the developments that have been seen in the agenda since Resolution 1325 was adopted in 2000 following the suite of 7 further resolutions and the Global Study in 2015. A theme which underpinned many of the submissions, even if not directly referenced, is to consider women as agents of change rather than solely victims of conflict. Equally changes in the nature of conflict and violence and thus its impact were reflected across submissions.

A summary of the views expressed in 49 submissions has been compiled and are presented in this document and a link to the submissions can be found on the DFAT website [here](#).¹

The Structure of the Third National Action Plan:

Overall submissions were supportive of the continuation of the pillar structure although some made reference to the greater development of themes and/or more established overarching objectives of the NAP. There was also a call for better clarity on how the four strategic aims/pillars link to departmental commitments.

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Better map the intersecting nature of the pillars, particularly the importance of participation.
- Include a specific reference to gender perspectives as an overarching link across the pillars.

¹ The views and opinions expressed in these submissions are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or the Government of Ireland.

- Consider the prevention pillar beyond SGBV and focus on root causes and wider drivers of conflict (including social, economic and cultural).
- Address the lack of coherence regarding the prevention and protection pillars regarding actions on SGBV.
- Improve how the international dimension of the plan interlinks regarding prevention and promotion.
- Separate protection and prevention from relief and recovery. Perhaps with the inclusion of 5 pillars.
- Under the pillar of participation to consider women as not just participants but active agents.
- Include direct reference to the OECD language regarding “gender equality and women’s empowerment in fragile and conflict affected situations”.
- Frame participation as being necessary at all levels of society (including HRDs, minorities, LGBTQI) and ensure it is not tokenistic.
- Better focus on economic empowerment/participation (particularly considering the structural barriers).
- Ensure that the corresponding actions when referring to Relief and Recovery do not re-instate stereotypes of women as caregivers.
- The pillar of promotion should incorporate better research, data and best practise. Research and information should be better disseminated through dedicated independent public activity and a specific learning portal.
- Better engagement with media and education in the promotion of the agenda including but not limited to high level WPS champions.

Framing the National Action Plan:

There was wide consensus among submissions for the NAP to better align WPS with other international frameworks, particularly CEDAW recommendation 30 and SDGs 16 and 5, alongside linking it with other government of Ireland policies. This would underpin a strong women’s rights and gender equality focus to NAP activities and enhance the whole of government approach outlined in the Second NAP.

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Integrate the NAP within a more coherent humanitarian, development and peacebuilding approach.
- Using a gender lens and strengthen response to conflict and fragility
- Ensure the NAP is compliant with the CEDAW, and that adequate budgets are allocated for their implementation.
- Integrate the NAP into state party periodic reporting obligations under CEDAW (through coordination of the Conflict Resolution Unit, DFAT and the Department of Justice and Equality).
- Support civil society shadow reporting on Ireland’s CEDAW reporting.
- Develop better Intersections with National strategy on women and girls.
- Ensure CRU/Oversight Group participation on the DFAT committee on human rights
- Explicitly include CEDAW obligations in NAP actions, including for example, article 2 obligation to amend all laws, policies and conventions that discriminate against women; article 4 permitting temporary special measures to accelerate gender equality; article 7 on improving women’s domestic political participation and article 8 on improving the number of women representing the state party in international affairs.
- Utilise Ireland’s Security Council Campaign as a platform for the promotion of the WPS agenda.
- Have direct synergies with Ireland’s new Better World development policy. (it was noted that only 3 of the 9 partner countries in the previous Irish Aid policy had NAPs)
- Build on the energy of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- Distinction between culture and religion- no part of religion which prevents participation of women.

Participation of stakeholders:

The call for better inclusion from Civil Society and more in depth consultation with stakeholders was recommended for every level and every stage of the National Action Plan from development, review and implementation. This was particularly within the context of highlighting the importance of meaningful participation of those from conflict affected regions—‘the essence of inclusion is not presence but ability to participate fully and influence a process’.

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Identify WPS targeted countries for dedicated support to deliver concrete benefits, clarify Ireland's impact internationally and cross government policy. This would include more in-depth consultation in country consultation groups in target countries.
- Have ongoing consultation with migrants and asylum seekers, particularly regarding trauma and SGBV.
- Create a forum to bring together young migrants and further the involvement of women on the ground.
- In the context of mediation- create links between international and local networks –help broaden scope of actors focussing on general inclusion.
- Ensure that the constitution of oversight group should reflect commitment to diversity
- Regularly reviewed and evaluations of partnership with women's groups in conflict affected and post-conflict contexts to ensure their needs are captured and local priorities are established.
- It was suggested that the NAP include better commitment regarding the participation and protection of human rights defenders. This would acknowledge the multiplicity of risks and discrimination that exist for women HRDs due to their gender, and the nature of their work.
- Women led organisation including in monitoring and evaluation, including in participatory research

Mediation:

Mediation and women's involvement in peace processes is a growing dimension of the agenda.

- It was suggested that the NAP:
- Acknowledge women's participation in mediation and peace processes as a means of prevention
- Take into account the importance of gender provisions in peace agreements.
- Helping translate global protocol and conventions for responding to and orienting gender violence.
- Furthering the engagement of men and women together in mediation networks-
- Considering Mediation a global priority in engagement in multilateralism and reconciliation in NI.
- Promoting actions regarding women's appointment to high level mediation positions.
- The inclusion of religious actors and youth in mediation.

- Consider how Ireland could effectively establish a Network or Consortium of women mediators.
- Linkages between grass roots activities and high level peace initiatives.

Engagement of Men and Boys:

The concept of addressing violent masculinities and furthering the engagement of men and boys was addressed in many submissions from international and domestic contexts.

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Consider men and boys as active agents, advocates and beneficiaries of WPS.
- Contextualise the engagement of men and boys within the context of masculinities and gender norms. This should particularly relate to addressing the harms of violent masculinities, particularly as drivers of conflict and transforming negative masculinities and gender roles.
- While targeted projects and budgets are needed it was noted that this could not come at the sake funding for women and youth or making women invisible in projects related to the agenda.
- See the importance of men's engagement in all of the pillars, from promotion to the combatting of SGBV.

Disarmament:

The connections between gender and disarmament are a growing priority for Ireland and this was reflected in the submissions. Some submissions questioned the possibility for the achievement of women's equality when Ireland's neutrality was brought into question.

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Make demilitarisation a priority, acknowledging impact of military deployment; affirm a human security integrated approach to sustainable peace. Ireland should take lead in challenging militarisation in line with women's demands.
- Acknowledge the specific effects explosive weapons in populated areas have on women- destruction of civilian infrastructure, social inequalities-women as head of household, risk of SGBV in the context of displacement.
- Have a commitment to end use the use of explosive weapons in populated areas as means of prevention.

- Support data collection on gendered impact of use of explosive weapons.
- Build capacity for women, on binary and LGBT people to engage in disarmament.
- Address the prevention of GBV through the possession of domestic firearms.
- Consider the links between Nuclear disarmament and challenging violent masculinities
- Support the inclusion of women and non-binary people in nuclear weapon discussions and negotiations.
- Gendered impacts of emerging technologies of violence (such as how fully autonomous weapon system could violate international law).
- Uphold the pillar of participation of women and LGBT people across the disarmament fora.
- Consider how the international arms trade is used to facilitate SGBV and gender inequalities.
- Inclusion of women in Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programmes and acknowledging that women can be perpetrators of violence.

Engagement of Youth

Submissions reflected the growing call for intersections of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda with Youth, Peace, and Security.

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Adopt both a gender and age lens to all conflict assessment and youth building program
- To consider young women and girls not as victims. (Young women can often become invisible in peace building programs which prioritise young men).
- The importance of education for all, particularly youth (as it is necessary for participation and empowerment).
- To avoid portraying young people (particularly men as extremists) and to consider security as more than hard terms (noting the importance of social inclusion).
- Include youth at every stage (prevention, ongoing conflict, humanitarian support, consolidating peace and reconciliation processes, reintegration following conflict).

Monitoring and Evaluation

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Have measurable outcomes, baseline measures and indicators, and better involvement of state implementers.

- Better coordinate and make available sex and gender disaggregated data (also include age, ethnicity). This should come with the acknowledgement that women are not an homogenous group.
- Improve accountability and transparency in funding mechanisms and sustainability of programmes- more targets and indicators.
- Ensure implementation is resourced via a cross-Departmental senior focal point who could champion the WPS Agenda, and bring together the different elements required to achieve Ireland’s NAP3 commitments, including technical expertise (on WPS, gender and protection), managing strategic partnerships and ensuring a coordinated and coherent approach across Government.
- Address the lack of translation of reports.
- Include local consultation (see section participation of stakeholders).
- Consider a theory of change or logic based model.
- Ensure the qualitative reporting and changes for example while there needs to be an increase in the number of women peacekeepers, there also needs to be structural changes in hierarchies and on the ground activities which relate to empowerment of women within the defence forces.
- Adopt Gender Budgeting, which would include:
 - Financial allocations and technical expertise to fulfil action on protection.
 - Mobile Technical Unit within DFAT, to strengthen staff and impact in emergency situations.
 - Budget reports across governments.
 - More explicitly set out core vs multi-year funding.
 - Incorporate dedicated budget on WPS as well as gender mainstreaming, with a focus on women’s participation and gender equality.
 - Having an annual funding report.
 - Acknowledge that policy planning and budgets are made in traditionally male dominated settings.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence:

SGBV has been a priority of WPS since the adoption of Resolution 1325 in 2000. However it was acknowledged that the Beijing Declaration, the World Humanitarian Summit and Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies have been slow to translate into meaningful change.

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Consider GBV not only as a mode through which women are oppressed but as a conflict driver.
- Better address GBV through integration of peacebuilding humanitarian and development policy and programmes including under WPS.
- To consider SGBV as a security issue.
- To be wary that PCVE has linkages with WPS but is also perceived as a competing agenda, particularly regarding budget and funding.
- Consider gendered funding gaps along with funding gaps in protection work more broadly leading to disproportionate harm to, both physical and psychological, and increased vulnerability of, women, girls and survivors of SGBV in conflict.
- The Protection Pillar needs to include the delivery GBV response services in line with international standards.
- GBV is norm around the world (regardless of the jurisdictions where they take place) In this regard, recognition of SGBV within the domestic sphere will inform and prevent outside borders.
- Women are often in a unique position to overcome violence as they are often the first point of contact regarding SGBV.
- Acknowledge that in conflict affected areas there is lack of Trust in institutions such as the police.
- Commitments under call to action on protection from GBV in emergencies.

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:

- Address SEA beyond military and police response to humanitarian and international development sectors.
- Safeguarding to be mirrored in local partners need for an Irish study to identify an appropriate strategy for Aid workers.
- Draw on the inter agency standing committee minimum operating standard for protection from SEA or the Core Humanitarian Standard Alliance, PSEA Implementation Quick reference guide.

Human Trafficking

- Improvement of the integration of internal and external policy perspectives.
- Better awareness training for those working on human trafficking.
- Adopt a human rights based approach to human trafficking.
- Protect survivors of human trafficking in collaboration with civil society, trade unions, private sector and international organisations.
- Gender dimension of trafficking in conflict and post conflict settings (particularly minors, who should be appointed a guardian).
- Better focus on the prevention of trafficking for labour purposes.
- Social inclusion programmes for survivors of human trafficking.
- Link with the Global compact, particularly regarding child trafficking referral mechanisms.
- Ensure that trafficking victims are not housed in Direct Provision Centres but are placed in safe and specialised accommodation facilities (this should also include effective early identification procedures).
- Ensure the protection of witnesses and improve impunity mechanisms for trafficking.
- Address trafficking between the United Kingdom and Ireland following Brexit.

Domestic Application of the Plan:

There are multiple cross-sections and synergies with the already outlined points regarding the domestic application of the plan. Below are some specific points that were raised in the context of the relevance of the plan to people living in Ireland from the conflict/post conflict affected areas.

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Provide better coordination of policy across the government in order to capture all supports and services available particularly regarding victims of SGBV.
- Better promote and raise awareness of the WPS agenda across communities and direct provision centres (particularly the actions under the pillar relief and recovery). This should be reiterated at every level of the process.
- Ensure better provision for refugees with disabilities. For example there is a language barrier regarding difference in sign languages which mean that deaf refugees no form of communication which escalates already existing problems. There are only schools with provisions for deaf students in Dublin only-high cost of living. Equally there is a lack of awareness regarding access to interpreters.

- Greater acknowledgement of the trauma that is experienced by women living in direct provision centres (including the loss of land, tradition, economic resource, self-esteem)
- Better consider the lack of privacy for young girls, barriers to practicing family life (including the ability to cook), the need for mental health and counselling services, childcare, language classes and interpretation.
- Better training for those working with women from conflict affected areas including cultural awareness.
- Address the lack of complaints system for gender related issues within the centres (including but not limited to SGBV and violence). This system should be gender and LGBTQI audited.
- Incorporate the removal of barriers to access Third Level education for asylum seekers and refugees.
- Training of staff and those living in the system regarding homophobia, biphobia and transphobia.

Northern Ireland Dimension:

A high proportion of the submissions came from NGOs in or working on issues relating to Northern Ireland. Many of the submission referenced the importance of the agenda particularly in the context of Brexit and acknowledged intersectionality between the domestic application to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees from conflict affected areas and to that of the Ireland-Northern Ireland context.

It was suggested that the NAP should:

- Greater clarity on how migrants and asylum seekers will be facilitated, cross border activities will continue (including PSNI and AGS collaboration) and possible changes to human rights and employment rights will impact women in a post Brexit context.
- Maintain the “whole of government” approach as a priority and ensure women and girls in Ireland, including Northern Ireland, are afforded the same standards of protection, access to services (particularly related to GBV) and aid.
- Acknowledge the difficulties posed when no direct implementers/ statutory bodies responsible for Northern Ireland are on the Oversight Group.
- Address the lack of women’s representation on the Commission on Flags identity and Culture and tradition.
- Better incorporate Sexual Health and Reproductive rights in the NAP more broadly but also in the context of Northern Ireland.

- Acknowledge the Mental health difficulties, trauma, alcoholism, and social isolation which continues.
- Recognise the continued existence of para militarism which leads to the intimidation and silencing of women.
- Better inclusion of rural women, and women from different classes (in the acknowledgement of the link between gender and poverty), backgrounds and communities.
- Take into account the absence of gender as a relevant consideration in initiatives to deal with the past in the 2015 Stormont House Agreement.
- Further this commitment to gender specific legacy concerns.
- Better resourcing to NGOs working on women's issues, particularly relating to legacy
- Better engagement between relevant officials in Belfast/London and the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Implementation of the GFA.
- Consideration of gender in the bi-lateral government approaches for dealing with the legacy of conflict throughout the proposed Oral History Archive.
- Recognise the underrepresentation of Women in the Northern Ireland General Assembly
- Incorporate a gender perspective in transitional justice.
- Apply NAP TO border counties including the oversight group to meet in border counties
- Make workshops more accessible and for workshops to be organised in advance of submissions for future NAPs
- Better awareness raising of WPS and its Northern Ireland dimension.
- Better inclusion of young people and inter-generational approaches to peace building (including addressing young men and masculinities and the importance of LGBTQI inclusion).
- Continue and enhance lesson sharing in the Northern Ireland context.
- Acknowledge the application of CEDAW recommendation 30 in the context of Northern Ireland.

Conclusion:

This document should be considered as a general summary of the submissions as it was unable to capture the entirety of the points and recommendations made. The findings of the submissions will be considered by the Working Group for the development of the Third National Action Plan in the drafting of the Plan.

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