



# Ireland's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security IRC's responses to the Public Consultation Paper

14 December 2018

## **INTRODUCTION**

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation on Ireland's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security.

The IRC is a global leader in addressing violence against women and girls in humanitarian settings. In addition to operating women's protection and empowerment (WPE) programmes in 30 countries, the IRC is the only humanitarian organization with a team of global experts that focuses on programme innovation, research, policy and advocacy to improve the humanitarian system's response on women's protection and empowerment and GBV. The IRC's WPE teams have decades of experience working in partnership with women-led civil society to deliver lifesaving services to women and girls, and to promote increased women's leadership in humanitarian spaces.

### **What action do you think Ireland should take on Women, Peace and Security?**

#### **1. What strategic objectives should be prioritised for the Third National Action Plan?**

Women bring critical and unique skills, knowledge, and experience to emergency preparedness and response efforts. However, efforts to expand the pool of women working in this field run up against a multitude of structural barriers that the humanitarian community has struggled to adequately address. Humanitarian response outcomes are more effective and inclusive when women are involved. Women are in a unique position – regardless of the specific sector or operational role they play – to observe and elevate concerns about safety and security that women and girls in an affected community are facing. They also are often the first point of contact for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) or other women and girls seeking information and assistance. Further, women who are part of emergency response have the experience and knowledge to think about emergency preparedness that creates stronger links with women and girls, promotes resilience and ensures that women and girls inform humanitarian action across the continuum of preparedness to recovery. Women are therefore critical actors that must be included in humanitarian responses from the planning stage, and they must be part of peace building processes.

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

Yes we believe that the existing Pillars provide the strategic directions the NAP needs to set out, and we fully support them.

While there has been increased political and social attention to gender inequality and women's rights globally, the pervasive and endemic nature of inequality means that women and girls continue to experience violence, discrimination, and disempowerment, particularly in humanitarian crisis. Further, there has not been sufficient recognition of the underlying gender inequalities and highly power dynamics within the humanitarian system that create an environment where abuse and exploitation is pervasive.

Therefore, we recommend that those pillars provide adequate recognition of the underlying factors of gender inequalities, and how that both fuels and is exacerbated by violence against women and girls. Without gender equality we will not make progress in the four areas Ireland is highlighting in the NAP. We would like to see investment in transformative violence prevention and behavior change efforts, particularly under pillars 1 and 2.

**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?**

Ireland has made strong commitments to reduce inequality, address discrimination and mainstream gender equality and protection into Ireland's humanitarian approach. The new Policy for International Development also proposes new priority areas of gender equality, including a stronger focus on giving "women an equal voice and end violence against women" and increasing efforts to "integrate gender across all of our interventions", alongside targeted efforts focusing on WPS and GBV including through the NAP.

These priorities should therefore be reflected in the NAP. In addition, the NAP should be fully aligned with Ireland's commitment towards the SDGs and the 'leave no one behind agenda', with a particular focus on violence against women and girls which hinders sustainable development. It should also directly align with Ireland's commitments under the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies (CtA) by looking to galvanise action and ensure greater prioritisation of violence against women and girls in emergencies.

**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?**

We do not have any comments on this section as we do not work in Ireland.

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

Evidence suggests that creating meaningful and sustainable change on a pervasive issue like gender inequality demands not only more investment in evidence-based programming but also an investment in building strong, feminist-grounded women's organizations that can contribute to vibrant women led movements. Despite the well documented advantages of working with local civil society, their engagement is frequently overlooked including by those addressing violence against women and girls, and in peace building processes. In addition, despite local actors' sustained efforts in reducing community vulnerability to disasters, their efforts remain largely under-resourced. Ireland needs to increase the participation of, resources towards women led organizations including in the NAP's monitoring and evaluation processes, including by using approaches such as participatory research and prioritization of learning priorities that are identified by women-led civil society and networks.

**6. 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)**

With the signing of UN Security Council Resolutions 2106 in 2013 and 2242 in 2015 there has for the first time been a direct reference to men and boys within the architecture of the WPS agenda. These resolutions call for new efforts to men and boys as part of efforts to prevent and address violence against women and girls. The WPS agenda must further understanding of the role of masculinities in forging conflict, and ensure that programmatic responses include engagement with men. However, greater engagement of men on the WPS agenda will require greater clarity on what men and masculinities are, what they have to do with violence, and what role they might play in preventing and responding to it.

Faith leaders must also be involved and participate in the WPS agenda, given their influential role in the communities. Whilst they are the keepers of traditions, they can also be agents of change, and need to be part of the responses towards ending violence against women and girls, and leading positive norm change in promoting gender equality and preventing GBV.

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

Ireland must champion the WPS agenda including through its engagement in relevant fora and initiatives, and through advocating for the effective implementation of the UNSC Resolution 1325 agenda. Ireland can lead by example by developing and implementing a strong and outcome focused NAP, which addresses the structural barriers to the development and implementation of a gender sensitive peace and security agenda. It must also contribute to ensuring the meaningful participation of women in the peace and security agenda including by strengthening the capacity and resources of women led organisations at the local, national, regional and international level, and bringing together the voices from women on the ground, groundbreaking cases and expert opinions on the WPS agenda.