



**Liberia Solidarity Group's Submission to the Consultation for the
Development of Irelands Second National Action Plan on UNSCR
1325/Women, Peace & Security**

The Liberia Solidarity Group agrees to the release of all of this response subject to data protection requirements and does not require any part of this submission to be withheld from Freedom of Information requests.

About Liberia Solidarity Group Ireland

The Liberia Solidarity Group Ireland (LSG) is dedicated to the creation of a mutual learning partnership between Ireland and Liberia which promotes justice, peace, equality and human rights through collective action and sustainable development. We are concerned to support those working in Liberia to achieve these goals through the development and implementation of education, enterprise and community development activities, including actions that promote or enhance the status of women.

Comprised of individuals and organisations with an experience of or interest in supporting progressive initiatives in Liberia, LSG supports projects to deepen established partnerships with community initiatives in Liberia. In doing so, LSG strategically raises awareness in Ireland and Europe regarding Liberia and advocates and promotes the needs of Liberian people with the Irish authorities and other relevant agencies.

Introduction

Liberia Solidarity Group Ireland welcomes this opportunity to make a submission towards the development of Ireland's Second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2015-2017.

We believe that Ireland's approach to WPS agenda should adopt flexible contours, recognising the fragile nature of the infrastructure and governance of some of the countries it aims to engage with, allowing the NAP and subsequent actions to create the conditions for swift responses to changing conditions. The need for such an approach is most recently evidenced by the impact of the Ebola crisis in Liberia and across West Africa.

In making this submission, we acknowledge and welcome the shift in focus from UNSCR1325 to encompass subsequent resolutions, including and particularly UNSCR2122, and to respond to the broader scope of the women peace and security agenda as it has taken shape in the international community and global institutions including the UN.

LSG believes that promoting and enhancing the status of women is central to promoting justice, peace, equality and human rights through collective action and sustainable development. We therefore particularly welcome recognition, through UNSCR 2122, of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment, including their economic empowerment, in achieving the aims of the WPS agenda and support this as a key framing priority for the upcoming NAP. We welcome this move from women as victims to women as agents of change. We welcome also the acknowledgment of the importance of engagement with and participation of civil society, particularly women's organisations, in all pertinent discussions.

Overarching Considerations

The content of the NAP should be developed with cognisance of the framework and actions outlined in the One World, One Future document. In addition, Irish Aid implementation of that plan needs to require inclusion of and action on the goals outlined in the new NAP in all relevant actions and funded initiatives.

In the allocation of Irish resources to WPS activities, local NGOs need to be supported directly and also helped, if necessary, with the complex application and evaluation processes involved. Ireland's overall funding and investment overseas needs to have a clearly articulated WPS agenda with associated goals and targets appropriately monitored.

1. What strategic objectives should be priorities for the second National Action Plan?

LSG believes that the new NAP should build on learning experienced during the implementation of NAP I and the on-going monitoring and review of this plan. To this end, and recognising budgetary constraints, LSG recommend that the scope and focus of actions outlined in the first plan should be streamlined for the NAP II. We believe that this should emerge in fewer actions, more focussed attention and the integration of NAP II goals into actions across existing frameworks for engagement, such as the One World, One Future and the Africa Strategy.

In this context, we believe that a focus on women's empowerment and increased participation at all levels of decision-making as the strategic objective of the next action plan would allow Ireland utilise existing resources and considerable standing to leverage actions on the other Pillars developed as the core of NAP I.

LSG recognises the significant demands made on statutory bodies during the last NAP. This has greatly enhanced existing infrastructure, awareness and actions in this sphere. These on their own, while important, cannot achieve the outcomes and transformations sought.

2. How can Ireland help empower women affected by conflict?

We believe that central to the empowerment of women affected by conflict is the recognition of on-going marginalisation of women in post-conflict settings. Bearing this in mind, we suggest the targeted allocation of resources in this area and a commitment to ensure that access to these resources and the determination of how they are spent addresses the needs of marginalised women and women from minority backgrounds.

We urge the Irish government to encourage and support the inclusive, participatory development of partner country NAPs that lead to gender responsive policies for social transformation of affected communities and build the capacity of women leaders in conflict and post conflict settings. One element of this work should be the on-going exchange of skills and information sharing, solidarity, lobbying and advocacy

LSG believe that particular attention should be paid to the circumstances of women from conflict affected countries now living in Ireland and we urge that their needs are addressed within a framework of women's human rights. We believe that these women should be provided with solidarity and services that recognise their experience as women from conflict-affected countries. Resources and support should be provided both for their own women's organisations and for their targeted inclusion in the actions and initiatives of

national and local women's groups. These groups need, in addition, to be supported and resourced, beyond traditional development education processes, to enhance awareness and action by Irish women and Irish women's organisations on the global women, peace and security agenda.

3. How can the second National Action Plan reflect the commitments in Ireland's Policy for International Development, One World, One Future, and other relevant government policies and strategies?

LSG believes that the goals of the NAP should be fully integrated and operationalised within existing goals, as outlined in the 'One World, One Future' document and commends the whole of government approach adopted in that policy. This also means that Irish Aid and other relevant actors, will need to take cognisance and directly support actions in line with the principles, goals and actions outlined in the upcoming NAP.

Given our particular area of focus, we suggest that the goals outlined in Ireland's Africa Strategy and the development of Ireland subsequent country strategy for Liberia take into consideration and integrate the recommendations of each of both the new NAP and the One World, One Future document.

4. How should the National Action Plan approach actions relating to Ireland-Northern Ireland?

LSG commends the continued recognition of and focus on the experiences of women living in Northern Ireland and suggests that consideration be given to its inclusion as one of the goals. We believe that Ireland is in a unique position to focus both inwards and outwards and that shared learning between women and organisations concerned with women north and south, as well as women in other countries should continue to be a focus of the NAP II. In particular, actions addressing the current conditions for women in Northern Ireland, including those who may be excluded from ongoing processes need to be included.

5. How can the existing monitoring mechanisms of the first National Action Plan be improved? How can the Oireachtas play a greater role?

LSG recognises on-going reflection on the implementation of the first NAP and the learning of the monitoring group. We suggest that further consideration be given to a more integrated approach to monitoring and evaluation of the upcoming NAP.

We commend the inclusion of 50% civil society representation on the Monitoring group and suggest that monitoring and evaluation of the next plan attempts to utilise more effectively the diverse expertise present in such a grouping. We suggest that the commitment of CRU to date is replicated and fully integrated across all associated agencies, including Irish Aid and the DFA Human Rights Unit.

6. How should Ireland promote Women, Peace and Security in multilateral organisations?

LSG recognises the significant efforts made by the Irish Government in promoting the WPS agenda within the UN system, including co-sponsoring of relevant proposals and activities.

We believe that these efforts should be replicated in regional fora such as the European Union, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. This is particularly important given on-going and emerging conflicts within this region.

We would welcome mainstreaming of the principles of enhanced empowerment of, participation by and leadership by women that underpin the WPS across all of Ireland's engagements with multilateral organisations. This includes the areas of conflict resolution and peace negotiation, as well as peace-building and conflict prevention activities.

A commitment to the WPS agenda needs to be included and monitored as a key requirement of all Irish Foreign Policy and Irish aid allocations.