

Trócaire submission to consultation on Ireland's National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security

Through its first National Action Plan (NAP) on Women Peace and Security (WPS), Ireland has demonstrated commitment to overcoming an enormous global injustice. Ireland has shown itself to be innovative and to play a leadership role internationally.

Ireland's second NAP presents the opportunity to learn from the experience of 2011-2014. Trócaire proposes an approach that prioritises greater focus, dedicated resources, and a commitment to build on and intensify Ireland's role as a champion for human rights.

Summary of recommendations

- **Greater focus:** Ireland should select areas of focus both thematically and geographically in order to ensure meaningful impact for women and girls affected by conflict. A small number of impact indicators should be selected, which can be monitored in particular countries. The number and scope of individual pillars should be reduced, with a continued emphasis on advocacy and participation of women.
- **Human rights:** The rights of women do not exist in isolation, and it is not possible to champion WPS without strongly advocating for human rights more generally. For example, the recent conflict in Gaza has been underpinned by a repeated failure to respect resolutions of the UN Security Council on the part of the Israeli state. Thus, promotion of WPS must be pursued on the basis of a human rights based approach to international relations.
- **Responding in emergencies:** In complex humanitarian emergencies, the scale of need and the challenge of accessing populations can be greater than the capacity of the humanitarian response. Multilateral actors play a crucial role, and should be subject to the same monitoring expectations as CSOs.
- **Operationalising the NAP:** For Ireland's second National Action Plan to make progress on the first, it requires some structural changes. In addition to greater strategic focus, a small range of high level indicators should be selected. The structure and operations of the Monitoring Group should be adjusted in line with the greater focus of the new NAP.

Introduction

This submission focuses on development and humanitarian contexts outside of Ireland, and not on women affected by conflict on the island of Ireland. A strength of the current NAP is that it is both informed by and addresses women affected by conflict in Ireland, and Trócaire strongly recommends the Irish NAP maintain this dual focus. Other actors are better placed than Trócaire to comment on domestic priorities.

The submission begins with a discussion of Trócaire's views and experience on key issues related to WPS from our experience¹. It continues with our recommendations to Ireland's next NAP.

1. Trócaire's experience of Women, Peace and Security: Key Issues

Establishing the relevance of WPS

Trócaire's experience in countries affected by conflict is of a disconnect between high level policy discussions about the WPS framework, and grassroots work on gender equality, conflict resolution and gender based violence.

This disconnect represents a failure of all champions for WPS to communicate the relevance of the WPS framework to people in countries affected by conflict. National Action Plans, if applied according to the spirit and provisions of WPS, can be a powerful tool to co-ordinate and harness the efforts of women and men across all sectors of society. The failure to adequately engage represents a missed opportunity: international human rights instruments are only useful if governments make active use of them, and civil society actors hold governments to account for them.

Example: Sierra Leone's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. The impact of Sierra Leone's National Action Plan has been fairly limited: it has enabled a small amount of advocacy around women's participation in UN peace keeping; and it resulted in the establishment of gender units in the police and military – but on the whole, the National Action Plan has not been embraced by civil society or government as a means of furthering the WPS agenda. Meanwhile, other policy areas such as the Gender Equality Bill and the Agenda for Prosperity are not directly associated with WPS or with the NAP. Linking these different policies and plans might strengthen the accountability for their implementation.

¹ The submission was written by Trócaire policy officers for gender equality and humanitarian action. It involved consultation with Trócaire staff and, where possible, partners in Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Kenya, the DRC and Myanmar.

Example: Somalia's NAP The Federal Government of Somalia recently presented its National Action Plan on ending sexual violence in conflict. This is an enormously important effort on behalf of the Somali government, symbolic of greater accountability and commitment to human rights. Ireland plays an important role in Somalia. In addition to humanitarian funding, Ireland has supported the EU Training Mission (EUTM) for Somali troops with ten personnel since 2010. The EUTM Somalia advisors provide strategic advice to the Somali authorities within the security institutions (Ministry of Defence and General Staff). Specific mentoring, advice and capacity building in the training domain and support and advice on security sector development issues is foreseen for 2014.

For this NAP to be meaningful, all donors engaging with the federal Government of Somalia, especially those supporting the EUTM, will need to work to ensure WPS is a core commitment, that impunity is addressed through the judicial system and that transparency and accountability exists within the Somali Defence Forces.

Leadership roles on WPS

WPS is poorly recognised and even less understood in many contexts, and it is hard to identify many countries where strong leadership is visible on the initiative. It is often a Gender Ministry that is tasked with leading on WPS. But Gender Ministries are rarely politically powerful or well-resourced, and they are often overstretched. As a consequence, NAPs on WPS often receive little recognition from other ministries.²

The UN has provided leadership, especially in countries with live and current conflicts (eg Myanmar, the DRC) through UNWomen, UNDP, and peacekeeping forces such as MONUSCO. Notably, in Sierra Leone, Ireland shows strong leadership among bilateral donors on gender equality, women's empowerment and GBV; concretely pushing for the pillar on women's empowerment in Sierra Leone's current Agenda for Prosperity. Nonetheless, this tends not to be explicitly linked to the NAP on WPS – which may be a missed opportunity.

Examples of civil society leadership on Women Peace and Security The greatest constant in Trócaire's experience is the leadership that comes from local civil society on WPS. In Kenya, local organisations working to prevent and respond to SGBV at community level are also active in influencing the development of national laws and policies that promote women's rights. The close link between conflict and high levels of SGBV was evidenced in Kenya during the 2007/8 post-election violence, and women's security is now a key concern for CSOs during political campaigns and the electoral cycle. In Ethiopia, civil society organisations work on both peace and women's rights, despite certain regulatory restrictions and in particular a severely restricted funding environment. Civil Society actors are also at the forefront of WPS in the DRC and Myanmar.

² Cordaid, 2011: Costing and Financing 1325, p 88

Clearly, Ireland can and does show leadership on gender equality and WPS, in countries where it has a diplomatic presence (e.g. Sierra Leone) – however, it is not clear that this is a matter of policy, rather than individual commitments of particular personnel. Ireland’s development aid has a significant focus on gender based violence. Internationally, Ireland spends by far the greatest proportion of its ODA on tackling GBV of any donor country: approximately 2.7%, or approximately €18 million annually³. By this measure, it is likely that Ireland has built up a portfolio of partners working on GBV, and some body of expertise on the area. Notably, none of this expenditure is associated with humanitarian assistance going to SGBV-related projects, although these are among the projects most relevant to WPS.

Ireland’s network of diplomatic missions provides an opportunity to have a positive influence on WPS issues at a very practical level. New embassies in Kenya, Turkey and Thailand open up potential for Irish influence in highly conflict-affected regions.

Relief, Recovery and Rehabilitation and WPS

Under the current NAP, Objective P1.O2 is “Strengthen capacity of partners and CSOs to effectively prevent and respond to GBV in conflict-affected countries and contexts”. This objective means that CSOs, including NGOs like Trócaire, are nominally expected to work on “obligations under UNSCR1325”, and to comply with Irish Aid’s funding, appraisal, and monitoring and evaluation guidelines on gender mainstreaming.

When this objective is applied to a humanitarian context, it is immensely challenging. Core response work on SGBV in a conflict setting is highly resource- and expertise-intensive. Referrals are often impossible, where there are limited or overstretched state services, and few external actors with the capacity to respond effectively to SGBV. While Ireland’s partner CSOs are expected to carry out an in-depth assessment of the context and an analysis of protection risks for women and children, it is not clear who is responsible for or capable of providing the necessary response, or if additional funding can be provided/allocated based on protection needs.

Example: Crises in South Sudan and the DRC In South Sudan at present, the scale of need and the challenge of accessing populations is a problem larger than the capacity of the humanitarian response. There is a real risk that donors will encourage poorly resourced actors to provide frontline services to women affected by SGBV without accompanying medium- to long-term funding. This can result in piecemeal approaches, undermine local service provision, and ultimately do harm. Meanwhile, donor responses to SGBV in the DRC tend to be extremely geographically focussed, and highly medicalised, with an emphasis on immediate health responses to violence, with almost no more holistic responses, and very limited work on protection or prevention of violence.

³ [http://devinit.org/policy-briefings/trends-donor-spending-sexual-gender-based-violence/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Development+Initiatives+Poverty+Research+Limited&utm_campaign=4203197_New+briefing+from+DI%3a+Trends+in+donor+spending+on+Sexual+and+Gender+Based+Violence+\(SGBV\)&dm_i=1E6I,2I37H,GDYUUI,94I5Q,1](http://devinit.org/policy-briefings/trends-donor-spending-sexual-gender-based-violence/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=Development+Initiatives+Poverty+Research+Limited&utm_campaign=4203197_New+briefing+from+DI%3a+Trends+in+donor+spending+on+Sexual+and+Gender+Based+Violence+(SGBV)&dm_i=1E6I,2I37H,GDYUUI,94I5Q,1)

Multilateral action vs local action

At a recent round table on Ireland's NAP convened by the ICGBV, there was a very useful discussion of the role played by the UN in Eastern DRC. It was observed that in 2006, recognising the horrors of GBV in the war, local actors had come together informally to address it. A coalition was in place including local organisations, police, and government officials. The emergence of international engagement with the crisis in Eastern DRC resulted in significant financial resources for GBV response, accompanied by a complete shift in organisational power and capacity from local to international actors. The UN cluster system saw GBV addressed by different sub-clusters, with conflict between lead agencies UNICEF and UNFPA. The cluster system led to the break-up of the existing coalition, and, through its complicated structure and demanding schedule, excluded most local actors, particularly the police.

Local ownership of all actions on WPS must be a fundamental prerequisite of all leadership and response. This must always mean support to and promotion of women organised to address their own problems.

Participation of women

Across all aspects of conflict, women and girls tend to be absent from decision-making. In order to turn this situation around, it is necessary for women and girls to be effectively organised, and for local organisations of all descriptions to be central to action in favour of conflict resolution, peacebuilding, governance, tackling GBV, and humanitarian responses.

The initiative piloted by Mary Robinson in her role as Special Envoy for the UNSG to the Great Lakes is an example of good practice. Through the Great Lakes Women's Platform, girls' and women's organisations are provided, first, with resources to build their ability to organise; and second, with access to important decision making spaces. This upfront recognition that concrete steps must be taken to enable the empowerment and participation of women is exactly the approach that governments and donors must take – across the board.

2. Recommendations for Ireland's NAP 2

2.1 Contents of NAP 2

Strategic Priority

Ireland is a small country with a small budget. It is neither desirable nor necessary to work on everything. Ireland should take advantage of its diplomatic, military and donor relationships with specific countries to allow for the greatest level of impact on women and girls affected by conflict.

There is a case to be made for adopting both geographic and thematic focus within the NAP⁴. Outside of Pillar 5 on International Advocacy (see next section), Trócaire proposes that either the number or scope of the other four pillars be reduced. In

⁴ For example, the second NAPs developed by the UK and the Netherlands both name focus countries, while the Netherlands focuses thematically on participation.

order to ensure that real impact can be seen, specific geographic locations should be identified under Ireland's next NAP as areas of focus, with a commitment to deep engagement, connecting programme interventions with policy and advocacy work at multiple levels.

Recommendations:

- Identify one or more countries where a focused impact will be achieved in the lifetime of this NAP (this will include Ireland, North and South). This should include at least one country where Ireland has an Embassy. The emphasis on fragile States presents a clear opportunity to deliver on this recommendation.
- Select a strategic thematic focus for NAP 2. Trócaire does not have specific recommendations for focus, but suggests that criteria should be selected, including: potential for impact; relevance to existing priority countries and regions; and consistency with Ireland's current focus on advocacy and human rights.
- Mainstream participation across all pillars – whether participation is retained as a standalone pillar or not. In particular, seek funding for women's organisations in conflict and post-conflict scenarios, and build the capacity of women's organisations.

Advocacy and Human Rights

Given Ireland's history and capacity, Trócaire believes that the inclusion in the current NAP of a pillar dedicated to international advocacy in favour of Women Peace and Security is strategic and should be continued.

In NAP 1, Impact Objective 5 is as follows: "Widespread awareness and observance of... WPS in policy and decision making forums at international, regional and national levels". To date, the emphasis has been strongly on the international level: steps should now be taken to bring a greater focus to regional and national levels.

The framework on Women Peace and Security can only be implemented in a wider context of respect for human rights. Ireland's commitment to WPS is contingent on Ireland's international obligation to respect, protect and promote human rights. The example in section 1 above of the current conflict in Gaza is instructive. Championing WPS in such a context means insisting on the observation of human rights law within this conflict – not only for women. Ireland's focus on Women Peace and Security can only be effectively pursued on the basis of a human rights based approach to international relations.

Globally, peace negotiations continue to take place in which women are systematically excluded. High profile processes of relevance in the last year include Syria and South Sudan. It would have been opportune for Ireland to take a stand on these situations under the auspices of the NAP – however, under NAP 1 this was not possible. This results in the National Action Plan seeming disconnected from the very situations it is intended to address.

Recommendations:

- Pillar 5 of the current NAP is strategic and relevant to Ireland’s potential to have influence. Trócaire recommends the retention of this pillar, and increased reference to regional and national advocacy, in addition to international.
- Irish diplomatic staff across all departments should be required to report on an annual basis on their actions in favour of WPS, particularly those based in countries affected by conflict. Where relevant, Ireland’s support for co-ordinated approaches to WPS should be contained in the Country Strategies of Irish Aid programme countries that are emerging from or experiencing conflict.
- Promotion of Women Peace and Security must be pursued on the basis of a human rights based approach to international relations, through advocacy for respect of all human rights in conflict.

Improving actions by multilateral organisations

In 2013, 24% of Ireland’s humanitarian expenditure went to organisations of the UN, and 18% to common humanitarian funds⁵. As outlined in the DRC case in section 1 above, UN agencies can crowd out the space for local civil society responses, and undermine locally-devised and locally-appropriate solutions (thus undermining the WPS principal of participation).

Objective P1.O2 in NAP 1 is to “strengthen capacity of partners and CSOs to effectively prevent and respond to GBV in conflict-affected countries and contexts”. The associated actions and indicators have a disproportionate emphasis on CSOs to the exclusion of multilateral partners. The new NAP should place a far greater emphasis on ensuring good practice and a clear evidence base by UN partners and pooled funds, which have greater reach than CSOs.

Recommendations:

- Advocate for and support local ownership of all WPS initiatives. “Local ownership” should be understood as incorporating civil society, local and national government, and agents of the state; and should always empower women leaders, women’s organisations, and gender experts.
- In as much as Ireland monitors the percentage of its funding to GBV channelled through CSOs working in fragile states, and mainstreaming carried out by CSOs; comparable monitoring should be directed towards UN agencies and common humanitarian funds.

2.2 Operationalising NAP II**Policy Coherence**

Ireland’s explicit commitment to Policy Coherence for Development – legally mandated under the Lisbon Treaty – is a welcome feature of this consultation process.

⁵ Irish Aid annual report 2013

In recent years, the emphasis of Ireland's foreign policy has shifted somewhat, as indicated by the change in the name of the responsible department to *Foreign Affairs and Trade*. There is a growing emphasis on Ireland's economic growth. Trócaire has observed this in countries where there is a real tension between economic opportunity and observation of human rights. Ireland's human rights obligations cannot be ignored in favour of an economic growth agenda.

The National Action Plan is being rolled out, not only in the context of One World One Future, but also the Africa Strategy of the DFAT; DFAT's new policy on Fragile States (under development); the new Department of Defence White Paper; the Foreign Policy (currently being reviewed); and the upcoming development of a National Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Recommendations:

- Ensure that WPS commitments are integrated in other policies related to foreign affairs (eg Fragile States; the Africa Strategy; Defence White Paper; NAP on Business & Human Rights⁶).
- Clarify procedures where Irish economic interests are in conflict with the rights of women within the WPS framework (Protection from abuses of women's human rights).

Monitoring and Evaluation

The NAP contains forty-eight actions and seventy-three indicators. In effect, what these represent is an action plan rather than a framework for reviewing results or impact. The second NAP of the UK, by contrast, contains fifteen indicators, although it still outlines detailed outcomes and activities.

For meaningful impact to be monitored, the indicators must be reduced in number, reflecting impact rather than outputs. While it is also important to monitor processes, this should be done through a detailed action plan/ implementation plan, overseen by the lead agency for the plan. In line with comments above about strategic focus, indicators should be identified that can be assessed at country level, so that specific progress on defined thematic areas is visible. Indicators for advocacy should focus on a real assessment of Ireland's influence, recognising that advocacy is both long term in nature, and rarely directly attributable⁷.

Recommendations:

- Alongside a more strategically focused set of pillars, select a small number of indicators of impact (not more than 15).
- Ensure that the indicators selected enable reference to specific contexts and conflicts.

⁶ Trócaire is preparing a submission to the consultation for the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights. It will focus, among other things, on the need for Irish companies to carry out human rights due diligence processes which should include issues pertaining to women's rights, especially in conflict-affected places.

⁷ Hinds and McMinn, 2013 p 39

Implementation structures

Trócaire participates in the Monitoring Group for NAP 1. Our experience of the Monitoring Group has been mixed; a fact that emerges clearly in the mid-term review of the NAP⁸. In particular, the exact mandate and decision-making power of the group is unclear. Participation is also slightly unclear: are members present in an individual capacity; as representatives of a specific body; or as representatives of a particular sector? While in the aftermath of the mid-term review some very positive changes were made to the ToR of the group, further clarity is necessary.

Ireland is to be commended for having an oversight mechanism which guarantees the independence of the roll-out of the NAP. If the monitoring and evaluation structure of the NAP is substantially revised, then this group could be tasked with reviewing a smaller number of more strategic indicators and highlighting major concerns which require reaction.

The role of the Oireachtas should be to connect Women Peace and Security to the wider political context in which Ireland participates. The work done by the current Monitoring Group, and the Independent Chair in particular, to ensure that all the relevant Oireachtas committees and the Minister for Foreign Affairs are fully aware of progress is highly laudable. It should continue – and building on this, the CRU should take the opportunity to brief the Oireachtas on WPS issues of relevance as they arise (for example, current conflicts in South Sudan, or Syria).

Recommendations:

- Maintain the independent Monitoring Group. The composition should remain balanced, with a mix of statutory and non-statutory actors, and those focused on the domestic and international spheres. Ensure that civil society members participate as representatives of a broad base.
- The Monitoring Group should be mandated to propose changes to the implementation framework as relevant.
- The final evaluation of NAP I should concretely inform NAP II. NAP II should not be published until the final evaluation of the current NAP is completed – and important findings incorporated in the new NAP. Both the Consultative Group and the Monitoring Group should have the opportunity to review the final evaluation, and recommend amendments to NAP II.
- The MG should continue to report to the Oireachtas, particularly committees on Foreign Affairs and Trade; Justice and Northern Ireland. The CRU should brief the Oireachtas on the relevance of WPS and Ireland's NAP to specific events as they arise.

⁸ Hinds and McMinn, 2013 pp 42-43

Annex: Key questions for consideration by the Consultative Group

- How does Ireland view the interconnectedness of human rights, and the relevance of WPS to the wider international human rights framework?
- In countries where Ireland is committed to promoting Women Peace and Security, how does it link programme interventions and funding with Ireland's policy and advocacy positions to address gender inequality and the root causes of conflict?
- What is the impact of Ireland's investment in GBV in recent years? What are the areas in which Ireland can be considered to have developed meaningful expertise? How could this be applied to improve Ireland's delivery on WPS?
- What guidance is issued to Irish diplomatic staff across all departments in overseas missions? What requirements are in place for Irish diplomatic staff to promote WPS issues?
- To what extent is Irish investment in humanitarian responses reinforced by strong policy positioning on the underlying causes of conflict, and gender inequality?
- What has been the impact of a global focus on SGBV in DRC? Has this focus resulted in meaningful change?