

Ireland's Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

Saferworld submission, December 2018

Introduction

Saferworld welcomes this opportunity to provide inputs to the Government of Ireland (GoI) on its future National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) 2019–2024. Saferworld also welcomes the continued collaboration between the Irish Government and civil society on WPS, as well as the trailblazing “whole of government” approach which ensures coherence and integration of WPS policy and practice in domestic and international spheres.

This submission builds on Saferworld's organisational commitment to gender and gender equality and its expertise on WPS at global, regional and national levels,¹ based on Saferworld's policy work and its gender-sensitive programming in nearly 20 fragile and conflict-affected countries.

1. What strategic objectives should be priorities for the Third NAP?

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

a) Structure and prioritisation of strategic objectives

Although the current NAP has four strategic aims, it is not clear how these link to specific departmental commitments within the four pillars. This could be one of the reasons why the mid-term evaluation identifies a lack of coherence, coordination and integration between the different departments implementing the NAP. The current pillar by pillar approach may result in siloed and disjointed responses that do not fully recognise the interdependency of the pillars (e.g. see below re gender norms and gender-based violence (GBV)).

To address this, the new NAP would benefit from a broader strategic objective and a Theory of Change that clearly articulates the impacts that the Irish NAP on WPS wants to achieve domestically and internationally. Sub-objectives or priorities should then set out specific areas of impact and who leads on delivering them.

The Dutch NAP on WPS 2016-2019 is a good example of this methodology, with three specific objectives that feed into the broader general objective: enhancing women's protection; decreasing harmful gender norms that drive gender inequality, violence and conflict; and contributing towards equal participation in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, relief and recovery.

The current UK NAP lacks a specific Theory of Change, but sets out strategic outcomes in seven areas that are reflected under one or more of the four WPS pillars. A visual example of this can be found in the UK NAP on WPS.²

b) Recommended areas of focus for the strategic objectives

Addressing the gender norms that drive inequality, violence and conflict (including GBV) should be prioritised as a strategic objective/outcome in the Third Irish NAP on WPS.

¹ Saferworld is part of the following WPS advocacy networks: the UK Gender Action for Peace and Security (GAPS); the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) GPS Working Group; the NGO Working Group on WPS; and the US Civil Society Working Group on WPS (CSWG) (which Saferworld co-chairs). Saferworld heavily invested in advocacy efforts to ensure that the Sustainable Development Goals included a focus on gender (SDG 5) and peace, justice and inclusion (SDG 16) and has also recently increased its advocacy efforts to the African Union.

² See figure 1 in https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/677586/FCO1215-NAP-Women-Peace-Security-ONLINE_V2.pdf

We believe that these drivers need to be addressed in order to: a) open a safe space for women in FCAS to participate in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, relief and recovery; b) promote transformative change at home, community and higher levels, from a gender equality and peacebuilding perspective; and thus c) increase women's participation in all these efforts.

This analysis of discriminatory gender norms and gender inequality as giving rise to different types of violence, including GBV, is lacking in the current NAP. Although it has a very strong and needed focus on GBV, the NAP appears to address GBV solely as an impact or consequence of conflict from a mainly humanitarian perspective. The new NAP should improve understanding of the links between gender norms, GBV and conflict, by:

- Identifying the common drivers of GBV and conflict

Gender inequality and violence-generating gender norms cause GBV and in many cases aggravate or fuel conflict. In South Sudan, for example, causes of GBV include economic insecurity, criminality, displacement, the normalisation of violence and a breakdown of the rule of law.³ In Yemen, Saferworld identified gender norms as a cause of both inequality and conflict. The absence of economic opportunities for men and their refusal to engage in 'low status' jobs are forcing Yemeni women to leave their homes and provide for their families. While this enables women to become more active in their communities, it has also increased GBV and fuelled broader conflict, because men are becoming more violent towards women to maintain their power and status, and are joining armed groups to be able to live up to gendered expectations of men as strong protectors and providers.

- Understanding that GBV itself is also driving violent conflict

Our research in Yemen also found that GBV is being used to not only oppress women and limit their participation in public and political spaces, but that it is actually driving violent conflict. Many women are being forced – through the manipulation of gender norms and the threat of GBV – to support different sides of the conflict as their husbands, sons and brothers are recruited into fighting and women are pressured to breed patriots and raise martyrs. Furthermore, women who are vocal against the authorities are being repressed and exposed to risk in ways that draw on gender norms, such as detention after dark, which can have life-threatening implications for women, as this is directly linked to their families' honour.

- Addressing GBV through better integration of peacebuilding, humanitarian and development policy and programmes, including under the WPS umbrella

The new NAP should start from an understanding of GBV as a human and community security issue, affecting women and girls in FCAS and driving other forms of violent conflict. The way to address it effectively, sustainably and holistically is by better connecting humanitarian and peacebuilding efforts. Saferworld's community security work shows that bringing conflict-affected people together to address peace and security challenges often brings to the fore issues of GBV, and creates space to address these in holistic ways.

For example, in Somalia, Saferworld and partners have strengthened the relationship between police and communities to tackle GBV, and are also working with young men, women and artists to develop plays, poems and music on GBV in a culturally-sensitive way. This helps address GBV while also giving women and girls a stronger voice in broader peace and security responses. Linking these programmes with those funded by Irish Aid in Somalia, for example, could create not only a more comprehensive response to GBV, but also prevent wider violence and conflict in communities, which affect GBV survivors.

Saferworld developed a **Gender Analysis of Conflict Toolkit**, which aims to help national and international civil society and peacebuilding practitioners integrate gender perspectives into conflict analysis and provide a foundation for more gender-sensitive peacebuilding programmes. It focuses on how gender norms – the ways in which societies pressure their male and female members to behave – can either drive conflict and insecurity or be resources for peace.

Saferworld and Conciliation Resources also designed a **gender-sensitive conflict analysis methodology**, which has been piloted in South Sudan, Somalia, Pakistan, Nagorno-Karabakh, and other contexts and in partnership with the International Crisis Group, with EU support.

³ See DfID research on these links: <https://www.rescue-uk.org/report/intersections-violence-against-women-and-girls-state-building-and-peace-building-lessons>

3. How can the Third NAP reflect the commitments in Ireland's Policy for International Development and other relevant government policies and strategies?

The five priorities of Ireland's New Development Policy are intimately connected. The policy is right to 'recognise the crucial linkages between sustainable development, humanitarian action, disaster preparedness, conflict prevention, gender equality, peacebuilding and political solutions'. Indeed, deepening investment in conflict prevention overall can help address the impacts of conflicts on women's rights at source.

The 2030 Agenda and the SDGs provide a helpful framework for addressing the interplay between conflict and gender inequality. SDG16 and related targets from SDG5 on gender equality, and SDG10 on reducing inequality that make up the 'peaceful, just and inclusive societies agenda (SDG16+)' offer a sound basis to catalyse progress in contexts around the world. SDG16+ has demonstrated some traction, but a massive step-change in attention, effort and investment is needed for the agenda to live up to its transformative potential.

The Gol played a substantial role in the formulation of the SDGs, and should build on this legacy, its development priorities and the NAP to champion SDG16+ at the European and international levels and scale up work to ensure implementation at national and local levels. The NAP can ensure that the interaction between efforts to achieve SDG16 and SDG5 is championed and resourced through Ireland's development, humanitarian and diplomatic efforts. Saferworld's experience in Sudan and Somaliland indicates that support to a SDG16+ localisation process can have positive dividends for two key areas of cross-over with the WPS agenda: responsive, inclusive and participatory decision-making (SDG16.7); and effective, accountable and transparent institutions (SDG16.6).⁴

Other NAPs on WPS have priority countries, which provide good opportunities to focus implementation efforts and measure impacts. Such an approach could be useful to strengthen policy coherence and impact between the NAP and other relevant policies, including the Policy for International Development. Country analysis and plans should incorporate WPS objectives that also relate to SDG targets.

4. How should the NAP 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?

The new NAP should maintain the "whole of government" approach as a priority and ensure women and girls in Ireland from FCAS, including Northern Ireland, are afforded the same standards of protection, access to services (particularly related to GBV) and aid. Asylum Aid has developed a Women's Asylum Charter which may be useful on this issue.⁵

Ireland should also support and conduct meaningful consultations with women in FCAS, which could be used in Northern Ireland. Saferworld has been working with GAPS UK, Amnesty International, Womankind and Women for Women International to research and produce a Toolkit for effective consultations with women in FCAS. This will be launched in January 2019, and was initially informed by consultations with women in countries like Somalia, Myanmar and South Sudan for the UK NAP on WPS.⁶

Finally, supporting and resourcing women's organisations in FCAS and Northern Ireland, and organisations working with refugee and migrant women in Ireland, is crucial to include their concerns meaningfully in the design and implementation of the NAP.

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

A strategic objective on addressing and transforming gender norms that fuel inequality, violence and conflict would address all those that are directly or indirectly involved in driving, or are impacted by, these norms. This would include: working with men and boys in transforming negative masculinities; addressing gender norms that drive all forms of discrimination and violence against women in and out of conflict and against sexual and gender minorities (eg human trafficking, FGM, EFM); and addressing masculinities and

⁴ For more on Saferworld's work on SDG16+ and our localisation approach in Somaliland, see:

<https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/1173-building-a-peaceful-just-and-inclusive-somaliland-sdg16-priorities-for-action>

⁵ <https://www.asylumaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Charter.pdf>

⁶ <http://gaps-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/GAPS-Summary-Consultations-report-NAP-April-2017.pdf>

femininities that drive violent conflict. Saferworld research on programmes to address violent masculinities offers an insight into available programme models and advice to integrate such programming into peacebuilding strategies.⁷

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

a) Support and strengthen the WPS agenda in its own right

Although the WPS agenda continues to have champions like the Irish Government, organisations working on this are facing threats and shrinking space. To integrate WPS with, or mainstream it through, other policy agendas should only be done insofar as women's rights and principles of peacebuilding are not undermined.

Initiatives receiving increased attention and resources, such as the Countering Violent Extremism agenda, have become incredibly dangerous for the work of many women's organisations in FCAS. It is crucial to protect WPS as a framework for achieving women's rights and their activism against all forms of violence and conflict as a standalone goal, rather than as a means to achieve national security objectives.

Additionally, it is imperative that WPS objectives are integrated fully into all policies and strategies to ensure that women and girls are not instrumentalised and that the realisation of their human rights does not become secondary or contingent upon other objectives.

GAPS UK developed a policy brief on these tensions which provides specific policy recommendations on the issue.⁸

b) If elected, make WPS and progressive related policy frameworks core to Ireland's UN Security Council (UNSC) term

If Ireland is elected to the UNSC for 2021 and 2022, it will be in an influential position to champion some crucial issues that are currently under threat at a multilateral level. The WPS agenda should be a core issue that other engagements are organised around. Ireland should look to champion the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in connection with its WPS work, by following up the strong recommendations from the 'Missing Peace' study⁹ on the interlinkages between youth, gender and masculinities. Ireland should also follow the example of the Swedish Government, who during their time on the UNSC (2017-2018), led several new initiatives for greater transparency and prioritised creating space for civil society (and women's organisation) briefings to the UNSC.

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. We believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

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⁷ See: <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/publications/862-masculinities-conflict-and-peacebuilding-perspectives-on-men-through-a-gender-lens>; and <https://www.saferworld.org.uk/resources/news-and-analysis/post/654-masculinities-and-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda-strengthening-or-watering-down>

⁸ http://gaps-uk.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/GAPS-report_Prioritise-Peace-Challenging-Approaches-to-P-CVE-from-a-WPS-perspective.pdf p 2

⁹ <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/missing-peace-independent-progress-study-youth-and-peace-and-security>