



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Fourth Annual Report on
Ireland's third National Action Plan for
the implementation of UNSCR 1325
and related resolutions on
**Women, Peace and Security
(2019-2024)**

December 2024

Cover images:

Women gather at an event in Malawi © DFA

A woman smiles at a meeting between the Tánaiste
and entrepreneurs in Jordan in 2023 © DFA

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Foreword

by Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs
and Minister for Defence,
Micheál Martin T.D.



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I warmly welcome the publication of the 2023 Annual Report under Ireland's third National Action Plan (NAP) on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and related resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS). As we near the end of Ireland's third NAP and look ahead to developing our fourth, it is important to reflect on the progress achieved, as well as the challenges still to be overcome.

Women made their mark throughout 2023 to contribute to building peace in their communities and societies, whether it was fighting for fundamental rights in Afghanistan or rebuilding communities in Ukraine. However, despite this, 2023 was a year of challenges for the WPS agenda. The UN Secretary General's report on WPS described trends of stagnation, or in some cases regression in women's rights across the globe. Unfortunately, we saw record levels of violence and conflict, with the number of women killed in armed conflict doubling when compared to 2022. From Gaza to Sudan, and countless more areas, the numbers killed and injured are hard to comprehend, but it is a fact that women, children and marginalised groups bear the brunt of violent conflict.

The evidence tells us that peace processes are more sustainable when women are meaningfully included in all spheres of decision-making, but this commitment is too often ignored despite the international commitment to the WPS Agenda. As the clock rolls back on women's rights in many parts of the world, Ireland remains steadfast in our commitment to promoting gender equality across all of our humanitarian, development and peacebuilding work, and in our wider foreign policy. To achieve this, tackling gender inequality and empowering women and girls are priority areas.

The progress outlined in this report is testament to the wider cross-departmental commitment to advancing gender equality, and ensuring that women – in all their diversity – play a central role in efforts to build and sustain peace, both at home and abroad. Looking ahead to the 25th anniversary of the WPS agenda, we will continue to provide strong leadership on this issue, inspired by the women working tirelessly every day to build peace in difficult circumstances. We will support women working at all levels of government, in civil society and the private sector to make this vision a reality. Their leadership and determination will be our lodestar in meeting our commitments to the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

Tánaiste, Minister for Foreign Affairs
and Minister for Defence
Micheál Martin T.D.

Foreword

by Minister of State for International
Development and Diaspora,
Seán Fleming T.D.



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I am pleased to welcome the publication of the latest Annual Report on Ireland's third National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).

The NAP is a central component of Ireland's approach to the promotion and implementation of the WPS Agenda, as outlined in UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and nine subsequent resolutions, which recognise the differential impact of conflict on women and girls, in all their diversity, and the role that women can - and already do - play in promoting peace. This report is a key monitoring element of Ireland's NAP, and outlines efforts to advance the WPS Agenda in 2023.

Following Ireland's successful tenure on the UN Security Council, we continued our strong advocacy on the WPS agenda at the UN, while also turning our attention towards delivering practical action on the ground. We have continued to use our voice at the EU and other multilateral fora to push for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all areas of decision-making related to building and sustaining peace.

Worryingly, the world is not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of gender equality by 2030, and the challenges we face are worsened by recurring crises worldwide. Nothing less than transformative change is required to help us achieve true gender equality and advance the WPS Agenda. The NAP is an important guide in our efforts to reach the goals of the WPS Agenda. We continue to strive for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes both internationally and domestically.

This Annual Report showcases the wide breadth of work which has been done in Ireland and abroad in 2023. It highlights the importance of the four WPS pillars of Prevention, Participation, Protection, and Promotion and also helps us to identify areas in which we can take stronger action going forward. We remain steadfast in our commitment to the vision of the WPS Agenda, and are proud to champion its principles of peace and equality.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Seán Fleming". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Minister of State for International
Development and Diaspora
Seán Fleming T.D.

Chairperson's Foreword

by Independent Chair
of the Oversight Group



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I am pleased to mark the publication of the fourth annual report on Ireland's National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security (WPS). This report outlines the considerable progress we have made so far to implement the WPS agenda on the domestic and international level and is a testament to government and civil society commitment to realising the agenda's goals.

As we reflect on progress made throughout 2023 in implementing the WPS agenda in Ireland and further afield, it is clear that we stand at a critical juncture. The pursuit of gender equality and the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in building peaceful societies is not only desirable but necessary for sustainable peace and development globally.

This report highlights the strides Ireland has made in integrating women's voices and perspectives into peacebuilding processes. The cross-departmental commitment to implementing the goals outlined in Ireland's third National Action Plan on WPS is to be commended. Civil society continues to play an indispensable role in addressing the unique challenges faced by women in conflict settings, while advocating for women as agents for change.

Yet, it is difficult to remain positive at a time of immense suffering, with record levels of armed conflict causing the deaths of appallingly high numbers of women and children, and escalating global pushback on gender equality and women's rights. The commitment of women peacebuilders demands that we remain positive and maintain our focus on the goals of the WPS agenda.

Government and civil society representatives demonstrated sustained commitment to the WPS agenda through participation in the Oversight Group. Through regular meetings, the Group discussed key areas related to the implementation of Ireland's NAP. As well as highlighting our accomplishments, this report also outlines where more work is needed.

Let us use this moment to renew our commitment and action to drive forward implementation of the agenda. We can only achieve a peaceful world when the voices and perspectives of women are truly integrated into decision-making.

Mrs Nora Owen
Independent Chair,
Oversight Group for the National Action Plan

Select Glossary

AGS	An Garda Síochána	IRC	International Rescue Committee
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy (EU)	IRPP	Irish Refugee Protection Programme
CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence	LECP	Local Economic and Community Plan
DAC	Development Assistance Committee	NAP	National Action Plan
DCEDIY	The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	NRM	National Referral Mechanism
DECC	Department of Environment, Climate and Communications	ODA	Official Development Assistance
DF	Defence Forces	OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs	PSEAH	Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
DOD	Department of Defence	SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
DOJ	Department of Justice	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
DRCD	Department of Rural and Community Development	SICAP	Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme
DSGBV	Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence	SOGI	Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
GBV	Gender-Based Violence	UPR	Universal Periodic Review
HSE	Health Service Executive	UNSC	United Nations Security Council
ICGBV	Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence	UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
IFIs	International Financial Institutions	WHRD	Women Human Rights Defenders
IOM	International Organisation for Migration	WPHF	Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund
IPU	Inter Parliamentary Union	WPS	Women, Peace and Security
		YPS	Youth, Peace and Security

I. Executive Summary

Ireland remained focused on delivering the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS) in 2023, both at home and abroad. The National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS continued to guide Ireland's engagement via domestic and foreign policy, with departments across government delivering on their respective NAP commitments.

The global peace and security context saw multiple and intersecting challenges in 2023, from armed conflict to climate-related disasters. Ireland maintained a strong focus on integrating the WPS Agenda to its response. On the international stage, Ireland continued to advocate for WPS at the UN, sharing lessons with incoming Security Council members on WPS engagement and participating in Open Debates at Ministerial-level. Hosting a WPS Symposium event, as well as an event with women from Afghanistan, during UNGA High-level Week in September, were notable highlights.

Ireland continued to prioritise WPS in its overseas development programme in 2023, ranking second among OECD member countries in terms of the shares of Official Development Assistance (ODA) for gender equality¹. Funding supported numerous women's grassroots organisations, with a continued focus on WPS activities in Africa. Capacity-building for local women peacebuilders, engaging men on the topic of GBV and other WPS-related issues, and improving access to sexual and reproductive health services (SRHS) were some key areas covered. Ireland also provided a total of €410,000 to the UN Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), which provides financial support to women led civil society organisations involved in peacebuilding and conflict resolution

Domestically, the Government made strides in implementing the WPS Agenda in Ireland. The Oireachtas passed legislation on the establishment of a Domestic and Sexual Gender Based Violence (DSGBV) agency, and the Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking (2023 – 2027) was published in November. Efforts were made to integrate gender-sensitivity to protection and integration services available to refugees arriving in Ireland from conflict-affected contexts. Crucial efforts to deliver medical, psychological, and educational services around FGM continued to meet high demand. The Defence Forces set out a plan to address gender-related challenges with a focus on the recruitment, retention and advancement of women in the Defence Forces.

The Oversight Group met regularly to monitor the NAP's implementation, ensuring that Ireland was active and accountable in this pursuit. In early 2023, a Midterm Review of the NAP was presented to the Oversight Group, identifying challenges in relation to reporting. A decision was taken by the Group to update the NAP's monitoring and evaluation framework, in order to capturing progress and obstacles more efficiently.

Ireland remains committed to the WPS Agenda. Interdepartmental and agency cooperation will ensure that we deliver on this important foreign and domestic policy priority in 2024, the third NAP's final year of implementation.

¹ According to latest validated data by the OECD at the time of publishing. See [here](#).

2. Background

2.1 Development of the National Action Plan

Ireland's third National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2024) was launched by the then-Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Simon Coveney T.D. in June 2019. This document builds on the previous NAPs launched in 2011 and 2015. It commits to deliver on a holistic and comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, the adoption of the EU Strategic Approach to WPS² and the conclusions of the 2015 UN Study on the implementation of the WPS Agenda.³ It seeks to renew Ireland's commitment to implementing the WPS agenda domestically and internationally across all of Government, and ensuring the engagement of civil society throughout.

The development of the third NAP was led by a dedicated Working Group that included statutory agencies, civil society and academic experts. As with previous iterations, the NAP is based on four thematic pillars:

- » Prevention
- » Participation
- » Protection
- » Promotion



Nora Owen speaks at a Public Consultation Workshop on the Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security in Iveagh House. © DFA

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/37412/st15086-en18.pdf>

³ [https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.peacewomen.org/sites/default/files/UNW-GLOBAL-STUDY-1325-2015%20(1).pdf)

3. Oversight Group for Ireland's third National Action Plan on WPS

3.1 Background of the Oversight Group

The Minister for Foreign Affairs appointed an Oversight Group to oversee the implementation of actions across the four pillars within the NAP. The Group is independently chaired and is composed of 50% representation from civil society, academia and independent experts, and 50% representation from government departments and state agencies with shared responsibility for implementing the NAP.

3.2 Oversight Group Membership

The representatives from civil society, academia, and independent members in 2023 were the following:

Nora Owen – Independent Chair

Nora Owen is a former T.D. and served as Minister for Justice from 1994-1997. Mrs Owen chaired the Oversight Group for Ireland's second National Action Plan on WPS.

Oliver Barbour – Independent Expert (former Defence Forces)

Oliver Barbour was the Defence Forces representative for the first NAP on UNSCR 1325. He travelled to Timor Leste and Liberia as part of the consultation group in developing the first NAP on UNSCR 1325 and was involved in the public consultations process in Ireland. He has presented in Ireland's UN Training School and other UN Schools in the area of Gender Equality, GBV and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and has served on several UN Missions including Kosovo, Bosnia, Lebanon, Western Sahara, East Timor, Liberia, Chad, Ethiopia and Sudan.

Noeline Blackwell – formerly Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

Noeline Blackwell is a human rights lawyer with recognised expertise and commitment to women's rights, migrant rights and refugee rights. She was CEO of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre until 2023, and was previously Director of FLAC (Free Legal Advice Centre). While Vice-President of the International Federation for Human Rights, Noeline had special responsibility for women's human rights and the rights of human rights defenders. She acted as liaison for women human rights defenders as a board member at Front Line Defenders.

Maria Butler – Nobel Women’s Initiative

Maria Butler is Executive Director of the Nobel Women’s Initiative. Maria previously held the positions of Director of Global Programmes at Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), and the Director responsible for WILPF’s Women, Peace and Security program. She co-authored the article ‘WPS and Arms Trade Treaty’ in the Oxford Handbook of Women, Peace and Security.

Egide Dhala – International Organisation for Migration

Egide Dhala works for International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Ireland as Mental Health, Psychosocial Support Project Manager and has over 20 years of experience working with migrants in Ireland. While working with Spirasi, he set up an education programme in support of vulnerable women, and worked with AkiDwA in engaging men to address violence against women. He is the co-founder of Wezeshu, which supports African women who are affected or likely to be affected by conflict and violence.

Nura Hagi – Mind the GAP

Nura Hagi is a human rights defender from Somalia. She is a member of the Board of Directors for the Sexual Violence Centre in Cork and is the CEO of Karti, an organisation that supports women from conflict zones living in Ireland. She also works for Mind the GAP a development education arts project and an advisor at the Women’s section in the Islamic Information Centre.

Emma Johnston – Pieta

Emma Johnston is an Education and Training officer with Pieta, working on the area of self-harm and suicide. Previously, she worked as a Young Women’s Development Worker for Youth Action Northern Ireland. In 2013, Emma was selected as the representative for Northern Ireland on the UK Joint Committee on Women, and in 2009, she was elected as a committee member of NIWEP (Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform) to represent the voice of young women.

Dr Walter Kilroy – Dublin City University (DCU)

Walt Kilroy is an Assistant Professor at DCU’s School of Law and Government, teaching on issues of development, conflict, security, peacekeeping, protection of civilians, and post-war recovery. He is also Associate Director of the university’s Institute for International Conflict Resolution and Reconstruction. Dr Kilroy served on the Oversight Group for the second National Action Plan from March 2018 until its term concluded in 2019.

Abby Ryan – Immigrant Council of Ireland

Abby Ryan is an Advocacy and Policy Manager at the Immigrant Council of Ireland. Before this, she was a Coordinator at the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence (ICGBV). Abby’s previous experience includes her role as a Junior Professional Intern for Gender Equality and Human Rights in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and as an Asylum Seeker Support Worker for the UK Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group.

Nominees from Government/Statutory Representatives on the Oversight Group

- » Fionnuala Gilsonen, Peace and Stability Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs
- » Cyril Brennan, Conflict Resolution Unit, Department of Foreign Affairs
- » Tom Crowley, Development and Cooperation and Africa Division, Department of Foreign Affairs
- » Noreen Woulfe, Department of Defence
- » Lt. [NS] Caroline Scanlon, Defence Forces
- » Chief Superintendent Louise Synnott, An Garda Síochána
- » Aoife Davey, National Social Inclusion Office, Health Service Executive
- » Ruth Armstrong, National Social Inclusion Office, Health Service Executive
- » Ruth Gallagher, Department of Justice
- » Deirdre Ní Néill, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)
- » Claire Guilfoyle, Irish Refugee Protection Programme, DCEDIY

Secretariat to the Oversight Group

- » Sophie Mc Guirk, Peace and Stability Unit, 2023-2024
- » Emma McCarthy, Peace and Stability Unit, 2023-2024
- » Jane McCulloch, Peace and Stability Unit, 2023
- » James Hagan, Conflict Resolution Unit, 2022-2023



Oversight Group of the third National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security. © DFA

3.3 Oversight Group Activity in 2023

The Oversight Group met in hybrid format throughout 2023 to discuss developments in relation to the implementation of the third NAP, including its Midterm Review. The Group also heard from experts and professionals on issues such as women's leadership in conflict, survivor-centred accountability processes, and localising the WPS Agenda.

The Oversight Group held its first meeting of 2023 in April, where Cyril Brennan, Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit (CRU) in DFA, briefed the Group on the development of a new Peace and Stability Unit. Incorporating the work of CRU, WPS would fall within the new unit's remit of work.

Independent consultant Bronagh Hinds presented her findings from the Midterm Review of the third NAP, highlighting ways in which the Monitoring Framework could be streamlined to enhance coherence and opportunities for intergovernmental and EU coordination. A decision was made to review and reduce the number of indicators where appropriate, to enable more efficient reporting on the NAP's implementation.

With the new Peace and Stability Unit (PSU) in place, Fionnuala Gilsean, PSU Director, addressed the Oversight Group at the September meeting. The unit is the first to work across both the Political Division and the Development Cooperation and Africa Division (DCAD) in the DFA. The unit committed to continue multilateral engagement on WPS, whilst also supporting grassroots work.

Nicola Brennan, Ambassador of Ireland to Ethiopia, also participated in the meeting, speaking on the topic of supporting women's leadership and participation in crisis contexts. Ireland's Embassy in Addis Ababa placed women and girls at the centre of its work both during the recent conflict in Ethiopia and beyond, from engaging female ex-combatants, to supporting civil society and promoting women's issues in relation to transitional justice.

The Oversight Group meeting in December heard from the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence (ICGBV). Áine Hanrahan and Róisín Gallagher presented to the Group on a newly published paper entitled 'Women's Voices: Local Women's Voices on Women, Peace and Security' which captures learning from a series of 'listening sessions' with global women's human rights activists working to end GBV. The Oversight Group Secretariat also presented the 2022 Annual Report on the NAP, featuring a case study on Ireland's term on the UN Security Council 2021-2022.

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

4.1 Note on Funding

In relation to the funding figures provided by DFA, validation of data on Ireland's ODA programme is done in arrears. Prior to publication of the final ODA figures, draft statistical returns are shared with the relevant OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) experts for assurance that Ireland's reported spending meets the DAC's criteria to be counted as ODA and that application of codes and markers is consistent across donors. This assurance is important to maintaining Ireland's reputation as a quality donor. Validated figures for 2023 were not available at the time of publication of this Annual Report, and will be available in 2025.

Therefore, figures from 2022 have been included in this Annual Report. Figures from 2019 - 2021 have also been included, to provide a baseline to facilitate assessment of funding commitments.

Although overall expenditure on gender equality increased in 2022, the funding figures enclosed in this report are specific to expenditure on gender equality in fragile contexts only. Funding amounts were calculated for states listed in the OECD DAC code book of fragile contexts in 2022. For consistency, the same states are considered across the period 2019-2022. Variation in funding for gender equality, both significant and principal, is conditional on context-specific factors.



In partnership with UNDP Zambia, Ireland's Embassy in Lusaka advocates for and directly supports the involvement of boys and men in tackling gender-based violence (GBV), including their important role in changing attitudes and practices related to GBV. © DFA

4.2 Pillar I: Prevention

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA)

1. Develop understanding of gender equality, GBV and gender-sensitive conflict analysis in disarmament and arms control, through the provision of support to, and participation in, relevant funding streams, research, trainings, capacity building, meetings and events.
2. Advocate for the inclusion of gender perspectives and women's effective participation in the prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation, with particular focus on the role of women as agents of change in society.

DFA ensured the prioritisation of gender issues in all national statements, interventions, bilateral and multilateral settings. DFA provided €100,000 in earmarked funding to the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) for its Gender and Disarmament programme.

Ireland co-sponsored a number of gender statements including at the Chemical Weapons Convention Conference of the States Parties and at the UN First Committee in New York.

DFA participated in a number of gender related side events throughout different multilateral fora in 2023, including a UNIDIR event at the Second Meeting of States Parties of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in November 2023 in New York.

Ireland did not directly fund any initiatives related to counter-terrorism or the prevention of violent extremism in 2023, but continued to advocate for a gender-responsive approach to countering and preventing violent extremism and radicalisation. At the UN and the EU, Ireland promoted the position that the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the creation and development of policy is critical to building resilience and to countering terrorism. Ireland will continue to champion work on this topic in all relevant multilateral fora.



DFA participated in a UNIDIR event on gender at the Second Meeting of States Parties of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in November 2023. © DFA

3. Encourage greater consideration of gender in the fields of cybersecurity and disinformation (hybrid threats) by continuing to amplify the voices and perspectives of women in Ireland's interventions and engagements on these issues.

Ireland continued to advocate for greater consideration of gender in the fields of cyber, hybrid and foreign information manipulation and interference, and to ensure that the voices and perspectives of women are reflected in Ireland's interventions in international fora and in our policies. Ireland emphasised the importance of gender perspectives in our national statement at the UN Open-ended Working Group on Security of and in the use of Information and Communications Technologies, and successfully advocated for the stronger language in the Annual Progress Report on the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in the field of Cyber Security.

In 2023, Ireland supported a multi-stakeholder, majority women discussion which explored issues relating to the resilience of subsea critical telecommunications infrastructure.

Ireland consistently underscored the importance of narrowing the "gender digital divide", and voiced support for programmes of gender-responsive capacity building to ensure that all people enjoy the benefits of digital technologies.

4. Support projects aimed at women who have been affected by conflict on the island of Ireland, or that work on WPS, gender equality and issues relating to GBV.

Through the Reconciliation Fund operated by DFA, over €583,274 in funding was allocated across 11 projects actively supporting and prioritising women's issues in 2023

5. Support women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and civil society space through Ireland's foreign policy.

In 2023, Ireland continued to prioritise WHRDs and civil society space in multilateral engagement. At the 53rd Session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC), the Ireland-led resolution on Civil Society Space was adopted by consensus, with 67 co-sponsoring states. At HRC52, Ireland co-sponsored the resolution renewing the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, which was adopted by consensus. Ireland also delivered a national statement during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, which celebrated 25 years of the mandate.

During the three sessions of the Human Rights Council in 2023 (HRC52-54), Ireland raised the issues of civil society space 26 times and human rights defenders 22 times in national interventions. In Ireland's UPR recommendations for 2023, civil society space was raised seven times and human rights defenders were raised 11 times.

6. Support sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) issues in multilateral fora, the EU, and through other relevant coalitions and organisations.

Ireland continued to prioritise support for SOGI issues at multilateral fora and through our membership of the EU and relevant coalitions and organisations. During high-level week at the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA), Taoiseach Leo Varadkar delivered an address during the side event hosted by the UN LGBTI Core Group, of which Ireland is a member. Ireland joined LGBTI Core Group statement presented at the Interactive Dialogue with the Independent Expert on SOGI during Third Committee. A statement was delivered in Ireland's national capacity during this dialogue, welcoming the Independent Expert's report on the links between colonialism and discrimination based on SOGI.

Ireland remained an active member of the Equal Rights Coalition, an intergovernmental body which works with civil society and international organisations to create policies and actions that promote and protect the human rights and lives of LGBTIQ+ persons globally. In 2023 Ireland co-signed ERC statements on the Russian Supreme Court judgment infringing LGBTIQ+ people's basic human rights and a statement on the SDG Summit.

During the three sessions of the Human Rights Council in 2023 (HRC52 – HRC54), Ireland referred to SOGI and LGBTIQ+ rights 20 times during our national statements. In Ireland's UPR recommendations in 2023, SOGI and LGBTIQ+ rights were referred to 22 times.

7. Strengthen capacity and training around gender equality, GBV and gender-sensitive conflict analysis to ensure a gender sensitive approach to conflict across the Department's work.

In 2023, with the establishment of DFA's new Peace and Stability Unit (PSU), efforts were focused on consolidating the unit's knowledge and expertise

on gender sensitivity and conflict sensitivity more broadly. As part of this, the unit undertook a thorough appraisal process of all existing and new peacebuilding partners, to assess their practice in conflict and gender sensitivity analysis. One organisation was identified to provide training in this area to Ireland's Mission network.

In June 2023, Ghita El Khyari, Director of the UN WPHF, visited DFA HQ in Dublin to present the work of the WPHF and importance of the WPS Agenda more broadly, as part of the Department's Global Island Policy Series Seminar Series to promote internal learning.

In December 2023, DFA staff attended a two-day training on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) facilitated by PSU and delivered by Professor Aisling Swaine, a UCD-based Irish academic specialised in gender, peace and security. The first part of this training delivered a foundational understanding of the CRSV agenda, including how it came to fruition and an overview of key policy frameworks and definitions. The second part focused on deepening staff's understanding of CRSV through analysing global policy approaches and language.



Ghita El Khyari, Director of the UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) visited DFA HQ in Dublin to speak about the importance of investing in women for lasting peace. Ireland partners with the WPHF to support local civil society organisations working on women, peace, security and humanitarian action. © DFA

8. Progress the implementation of A Better World commitments on gender equality, and other areas of Ireland's international development work which facilitates women's participation in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

DFA provided support to the Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) for their work in supporting parliaments in advancing gender equality, increasing women's political participation and leadership and transforming into gender-sensitive institutions.

In 2023, the IPU supported five countries at the national level, namely the Central African Republic, Djibouti, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Tanzania. Elections held in 2023 in countries supported by the IPU resulted in a maintained number of women elected to the National Assembly of Djibouti and a record number of women MPs elected in Sierra Leone.

Publications were produced and used to promote gender equality at national levels and gender mainstreaming capacities were supported in three parliaments by IPU.

9. Update on work on gender equality and women's involvement in climate action, including with Small Island Developing States.

In 2023, DFA provided the International Institute for Sustainable Development with core funding of €2 million. Of this, €225,000 was dedicated support to their research exploring how concepts of and approaches to intersectionality can be applied to climate change adaptation planning and policymaking, to progress gender-transformative climate adaptation in developing countries including fragile and conflict-affected states.

DFA also supported the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO) with funding of €390,000. WEDO works to connect and coordinate women's rights advocates and gender experts from across the world, including through their support of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Feminist Taskforce which campaigned at COP28 for strengthened recognition of the links between conflict, violence, and climate justice.

In 2023, DFA supported Climate-KIC with €1.5 million, with part of this funding addressing gender challenges in the world of climate entrepreneurship. Climate-KIC developed a Handbook offering guidance on building diverse teams, promoting programmes to the right entrepreneurs, supporting climate entrepreneurs in a gender-smart way, and selecting climate innovations in an inclusive manner. DFA also supported the establishment of a flexible grant facility, making funding available for entrepreneurship support organisations to e.g. recruit all-female cohorts of climate entrepreneurs, develop gender policies for their organisations, provide workshops on financial literacy and provide training on gender bias.

Throughout 2023, DFA supported NGO International Alert to strengthen communities' voices and their capacity to reduce violence, in particular by working with disadvantaged women and young people. The project supported inclusive peace processes and wider peacebuilding initiatives and champions gender and conflict sensitivity in ways that contribute to inclusive and sustainable peace, working with marginalised sections of society, including women and youth, by bolstering their peacebuilding and mediation skills, in close alignment with the WPS Agenda.

10. Implement safeguarding in grant management processes, as recommended by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Peer Review.

DFA has a Safeguarding Policy, which also applies to grant partners. The policy commits the Department to ensuring the protection of children and vulnerable adults, and promoting good safeguarding practice and expects its partners, including its grant partners, to adhere to best practice without exception.

DFA's Development Cooperation and Africa Division (DCAD) worked on an update to the Standard Approach to Grant Management, to include detailed guidance for grant managers on how to respond appropriately to safeguarding issues arising. DCAD also uses donor-harmonised language on safeguarding in UN agency and IFI contracts.

These guidelines are informed by BSU's engagement with the Donor Safeguarding Investigations Group, the Technical Working Group following the London Summit on Safeguarding, the OECD DAC Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (PSEAH) Reference Group, and in consultation with Dóchas's Safeguarding Working Group. DCAD also

participated in the development of a donor Common Approach to Protection from SEAH, which aims to drive alignment of effort; improved accountability; prevention of SEAH cases; and improved response and support to victim-survivors.

11. Allocate gender principal and/or significant funding in fragile states.

	2019	2020	2021	2022
Gender Principal	42,993,305	37,816,335	37,849,135	49,836,946
Gender Significant	173,768,879	173,404,024	173,291,172	169,052,438
Grand Total	216,762,185	211,220,359	211,140,307	218,889,384

12. Allocate funding in fragile states that is gender principal and significant, and also climate principal and significant.

	Environment Significant	Environment Principal	Total	
2019	Gender Principal	10,288,122	70,000	10,358,122
	Gender Significant	61,376,159	6,136,550	67,512,709
	Total	71,664,281	6,206,550	77,870,831
2020	Gender Principal	4,889,481	177,480	5,066,962
	Gender Significant	30,255,587	15,478,758	45,734,345
	Total	35,145,068	15,656,239	50,801,307
2021	Gender Principal	8,125,101	605,195	8,730,296
	Gender Significant	42,399,784	8,118,433	50,518,218
	Total	50,524,885	8,723,628	59,248,514
2022	Gender Principal	14,700,954	549,327	15,250,281
	Gender Significant	43,617,081	9,961,568	53,578,648
	Total	58,318,034	10,510,895	68,828,929

13. Allocate funding in fragile states that is gender principal and significant, and also nutrition principal and significant.

	Nutrition Significant	Nutrition Principal	Total	
2019	Gender Principal	15,516,871	2,394,510	17,911,381
	Gender Significant	75,667,396	17,216,030	92,883,426
	Total	91,184,267	19,610,540	110,794,808
2020	Gender Principal	6,045,549	1,741,243	7,786,792
	Gender Significant	81,045,180	20,855,937	101,901,117
	Total	87,090,729	22,597,180	109,687,909
2021	Gender Principal	10,903,457	2,648,665	13,552,122
	Gender Significant	83,538,848	22,277,100	105,815,948
	Total	94,442,305	24,925,765	119,368,070
2022	Gender Principal	14,771,637	4,909,787	19,681,424
	Gender Significant	68,908,338	25,727,842	94,636,180
	Total	83,679,974	30,637,630	114,317,604

14. Allocate funding in fragile states committed to education programmes that is gender principal and significant.

	Education 2019	Education 2020	Education 2021	Education 2022
Gender Principal	2,811,451	5,108,078	2,644,705	2,138,514
Gender Significant	12,141,445	12,586,743	11,510,888	15,491,005
Total	14,952,897	17,694,821	14,155,593	17,629,519

4.3 Pillar II: Participation

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, EQUALITY, DISABILITY, INTEGRATION AND YOUTH (DCEDIY)

1. Develop opportunities for migrant women, including those from conflict-affected areas, to explore creative outlets, acquire proficiency in English language, and build capacity in regard to employment.

Migrant Integration Strategy and Funds Admin Unit

Several funding streams provided by DCEDIY seek to improve the participation of migrant women living in Ireland.

The National Integration Fund covers the themes of enhancing employment opportunities for migrants, with a focus on language acquisition; promoting representation of migrants in politics; and encouraging migrant participation in sport, volunteering and cultural activities. Results of a call for proposals funded under the 2023 programme were announced in April 2024. A total of €2.9 million was awarded to 18 projects over a three-year period.

The Communities Integration Fund (CIF) provides practical support through grant funding local community based organisations to facilitate social inclusion among the migrant population. CIF 2023 awarded 111 organisations once off grant payments, with a total value of €509,415.

DCEDIY launched the Ireland Against Racism Fund in 2023 with the overall objective of providing funding for projects that aim to combat racism and foster racial equality and community cohesion. In 2023 a combined total of 24 national and regional projects were successful.

The International Protection Integration Fund has a goal to support communities across Ireland so they can play a greater role in promoting the integration of International Protection applicants. In 2023, 70 projects received €1,200,776 in funding.

There are two funding options available to organisations relating to Migration and EU Funds;

- » The Integration and Employment of Migrants funding stream is part of a multi-annual EU fund under the European Social Fund Plus Employment, Inclusion, Skills and Training 2021-2027 Programme. In Ireland, seven projects have been approved total funding of €2.7 million for a three-year period to support legally resident migrants who are experiencing barriers to participation and employment because of language difficulties, lack of training or social exclusion.
- » The Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund is a multi-annual EU co-funded programme; Ireland has an allocation is approximately €60 million to finance a wide range of asylum, migration and integration projects from now until 2027.

Irish Refugee Protection Programme

English language training for adult beneficiaries of the Irish Refugee Protection Programme (IRPP) was delivered by the ETBs in each of the three Reception and Orientation Centres. All children are allocated places in local schools, pending eventual resettlement in local authority provided housing in due course. Ongoing English language supports are provided for under these local authority resettlement programmes.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE (DOD), AND THE DEFENCE FORCES (DF)

2. Continue to undertake measures to improve the recruitment, retention and advancement of women within the Defence Forces

In 2023, following the publication of the Independent Review Group's report, the Strategic Framework and Detailed Implementation Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces were published. These set out the mandate to address the challenges facing the Defence Forces. Key to these plans is the recruitment, retention and advancement of women in the Defence Forces. As of January 2023, the most senior on-island serving female officer participates at General Staff meetings, and as a retention initiative the Defence Forces has extended free healthcare to all ranks and the introduction of gender-sensitive clothing.

The DF established the Joint Recruitment Office to tackle the issue of recruitment in the DF. Initiatives to increase recruitment of women include engagement with girls' schools, the appointment of a female member of staff to engage with female candidates, a survey of women in the target audience to improve the perception of the viability of a career in the DF, the attendance of female personnel at careers events, and the development of female targeted advertising.

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA)

3. Implement the Disarmament IGC Panel Parity Pledge to no longer support or participate in panel discussions or side events with single-sex panels. Raise awareness around the IGC 2023 Commitments Guide. Continue to promote a gender perspective in national statements to UN Disarmament fora.

The baseline commitment of the IGC is the Panel Parity Pledge. This calls upon individual Gender Champions to challenge the absence of female speakers on topics addressing gender equality, by discussing panel composition with event organisers, recommending female (or when appropriate, male)

speakers on the topic, and fostering a positive mindset for the inclusion of women in all discussions effecting our society. Through the Panel Parity Pledge, Champions commit to no longer taking part in any single-sex panels. This pledge has normalised the notion that single-sex panels are no longer acceptable in hubs where IGC operates. Champions have taken the lead in raising awareness of the need to ensure gender parity.

In accordance with the Panel Parity Pledge, the DFA ensured that its officials did not participate in any all-male disarmament panels in 2023.

DFA continued to promote a gender perspective in national statements at all relevant UN Disarmament fora.

4. Promote gender equality and support. Advocate for the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all civilian CSDP planning and actions, focusing also on the equal and meaningful participation of women in all functions, including in leadership positions. Strive to achieve a gender balance of 40% minimum female/male representation in DFA deployments to civilian CSDP Missions.

In 2023, Ireland consistently emphasised gender equality and the need for all CSDP missions to have gender action plans during discussions on the mandates of missions in Brussels, working with like-minded EU Member States who also place a strong emphasis on this issue.

Just over 20% female representation in DFA deployments to civilian CSDP missions was reached by the end of 2023. Female deployees have been encouraged to and been successful in occupying leadership positions in different missions, including the Deputy Head of Mission of European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine, the Head of Operations of EUAM Ukraine, and the Head of Human Resources of European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia. Ensuring the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective and the representation of women in deployments are priorities for Ireland as an updated National Implementation Plan for the Civilian CSDP Compact is developed.

5. Support international, regional and national, mediation organisations to deliver the WPS agenda, particularly the meaningful inclusion of women mediators in peace-making efforts.

In 2023, Ireland maintained long-standing relationships with several organisations who support women's meaningful participation in dialogue and mediation at different levels, from local conflict resolution to regional processes.

The CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Foundation (CMI), a peacebuilding partner of PSU, supported women's political engagement in peace and security processes in Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Palestine and Afghanistan. CMI also contributed to policy dialogues, with multilateral actors such as the EU, to promote an understanding of the diverse roles of women in peace processes and practical guidance on the implementation the WPS Agenda.

Ireland also provided core support to the Dialogue Advisory Group, an INGO that integrates gender equality and women's participation to its mediation efforts, as well as negotiating agreements through a gender-sensitive approach, from humanitarian access to disarmament.

Ireland provided the UN WPHF with €300,000 in core support in 2023. Run by UN Women, the WPHF aims to enhance women's participation in peace processes by directly financing women's or women-led civil society organisations in conflict or crisis-affected settings. It also has a Rapid Response Window which provides fast and short-term funding to women peacebuilders involved in international, national, or regional peace processes or the implementation of peace agreements. In 2023, the WPHF supported 649 civil society organisations globally. In addition, Ireland provided €110,000 dedicated to the Libya Floods Appeal of the WPHF.

Numerous activities also took place through Ireland's Mission network, with further detail outlined below.

6. Support organisations giving a greater voice to young people, recognising the intersections between the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) and Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agendas, and the need for intergenerational dialogue

Ireland supported an intergenerational dialogue on peacebuilding between South African and Irish youth, hosted by ACCORD in partnership with the Ireland's Embassy in South Africa. The created a space for South African and Irish peacebuilders to meet, share experiences, and draw inspiration from one another.

Ireland took part in several events which highlighted the intersection between the WPS and YPS Agendas. In February, at the Education Cannot Wait pledging conference in Geneva, DFA's Policy Unit Director participated in an event dedicated to gender-transformative education in emergency settings and spoke of the role of Plan/Purposeful's girls fund in generating evidence on youth leadership, including young women, as a key driver of innovation.

Ireland continued to support the UN Secretary General's Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and was once again one of the top donors to the Fund in 2023. The Fund prioritises the mainstreaming of women's and youth inclusion throughout its programmatic work through its special Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives. This includes the promotion of women's leadership and participation in conflict prevention and peacebuilding. In 2023, 47.3% of the Fund's approved budgets went towards gender equality and women's empowerment in peacebuilding, exceeding the Fund's target of 30% for the seventh year in a row. This included projects dedicated to promoting women's engagement in climate change mitigation and adaptation and in natural resources management. In the same year, the PBF allocated approximately \$30.5 million towards youth empowerment, with projects focused on fostering youth-inclusive political processes and promoting the political participation of diverse young people. It also focused on safeguarding and expanding civic space for youth participation including through local-level infrastructures for peace.



In June 2023, Ireland welcomed the UN Peacebuilding Fund and donors for the Fund's annual Strategic Dialogue. The Fund prioritises the mainstreaming of women's and youth inclusion throughout its programmatic work and special Gender and Youth Promotion Initiatives. ©DFA

DFA continued to support international NGO Interpeace's YPS programme focused on the amplification of youth voices and diversification of youth perspectives in multilateral fora. Across their events, initiatives and publications, Interpeace sought to profile and amplify the perspectives of young women, and to highlight the nexus of YPS and WPS policy and practice. Amongst its 2023 activities, Interpeace published a new resource on the conceptual and practical links between the WPS and YPS agendas, organised for the first cohort of young peacebuilders to participate in a training programme, and engaged four young women peacebuilders and researchers from across the globe to draft upcoming policy briefs.

7. Allocate funding to women's rights organisations and movements in fragile states

2019	2020	2021	2022
4,806,244	6,223,561	8,903,400	11,385,828

DEPARTMENT OF RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DRCD)

8. Develop values and principles and guidelines, protocols and benchmarks for good practice consultation, engagement and participation in decision-making processes.

Across 2023, DRCD continued to work closely with the community and voluntary sectors in accordance with the five-year strategy on 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities 2019-2024', available [here](#).

One objective of this strategy involves developing and strengthening processes to secure meaningful consultation and participation of non-engaging and marginalised communities. This was achieved through the Dormant Accounts funded measure on the engagement and participation of marginalised groups.

A key achievement of strategy implementation was agreement on a clearly defined set of shared values and principles which guided the Strategy's development and continues to form the basis for collaboration and partnerships.

The ‘Values and Principles for Collaboration and Partnership Working with the Community and Voluntary Sector’ were formally adopted by Government in May 2022 and published on 19 October 2022, available [here](#). This document was issued to all Government departments and agencies, as well as to local authorities, with the intended aim of using it as a basis for interaction with the community and voluntary sectors.

In 2023, the Minister issued a request to all Government departments for an update on the application of these values and principles. DRCD will review these returns in 2024 in order to assess the compliance and benefit to application.

9. Develop guidelines and protocol for securing diverse representation and equality (including gendered balanced representation).

To identify best practice, robust engagement strategies and flexible, adaptable toolkits to support consultation, and engagement and participation in decision-making processes, a Dormant Accounts funded Inclusive Community Engagement Project was initiated in 2021.

Implemented in 2022 and 2023, with the intention to continue into 2024, the initiative seeks to facilitate inclusive engagement and planning processes by bolstering the capacity of Local Community Development Committees (LCDCs) to involve marginalised groups in Local Economic and Community Planning (LECP) activities, encompassing planning, execution, and evaluation phases.

To fulfil these objectives, the project provided tailored support to LCDCs, including bespoke training sessions, which included workshops on intercultural awareness, public sector duty and inclusive community engagement in planning and decision-making. The workshops were intended for the Chief Officer and members of the LCDCs, as well as local authority staff, public participation networks, education and training boards, and others involved in local consultation processes.

A ‘Guide for Inclusive Community Engagement in Local Planning and Decision Making’ was also developed and launched by Minister of State with responsibility for Community Development, Charities and Integration, Joe O’Brien TD, in February 2023. An updated, second edition was published in October 2023 using learnings

from three pilot programmes and feedback gained from the process, available [here](#).

10. Develop participatory structures and processes by Government departments and state agencies.

Action 3.4 of the strategy on ‘Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities 2019-2024’ available [here](#), places a long-term focus on developing participatory mechanisms and processes in line with commitments in ‘Our Public Service 2020’ to improve engagement on the design and delivery of services.

In addition to the work led by DRCD in respect of the guidelines for inclusive engagement in local planning and decisions-making, the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform and the Department of the Taoiseach are revising the Public Consultation Guidelines for public bodies. DRCD fed into the review of the existing guidelines.

11. Number of female asylum seekers and refugees receiving interventions under the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP).

SICAP is Ireland’s primary intervention for promoting social inclusion. It aims to reduce poverty and promote social inclusion and equality by supporting communities and individuals through community development approaches, engagement and collaboration. ‘New Communities’ is a target group under SICAP and includes the sub-categories of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.

In 2023, SICAP supported 1,074 female asylum seekers, representing 35% of the total number of asylum seekers supported and a 48% increase on female asylum seekers supported compared to 2022. Likewise, 4,492 female refugees received SICAP support in 2023, representing 60% of the overall number of refugees supported and marking a 25% increase on numbers supported in 2022. The forms of support available included English language classes, health and wellbeing programmes, employment supports and intercultural events.

4.4 Pillar III: Protection

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, EQUALITY, DISABILITY, INTEGRATION AND YOUTH (DCEDIY)

1. Communicate Ireland's societal norms with regard to gender equality in cultural orientation to IRPP beneficiaries.

Information on societal norms (gender equality and rights of women included) and other issues pertinent to life in Ireland is presented to proposed beneficiaries for the IRPP during selection missions. Pre-Departure Orientation sessions are conducted with those selected for resettlement prior to their arrival in Ireland. This training is delivered by the IOM and there is a defined curriculum for this training.

2. Develop the Community Sponsorship programme to further facilitate strong integration of women into the community and to grow local relationships.

Arrivals under the Community Sponsorship Ireland Programme continue, with over 230 persons placed with Community Sponsorship Groups around Ireland. The programme was reviewed in the second half of 2023, with a final report having been received in November. The outcomes/recommendations in this report are currently under consideration, with a view to the programme being expanded in the second half of 2024 and beyond

3. Monitor and evaluate resettlement processes and provide gender sensitive interpretation where applicable, to ensure better integration in Ireland of women affected by conflict.

Gender sensitivity is an ongoing requirement that is considered by IRPP staff when interpretation services are being booked. All IRPP staff are informed of the importance of this matter.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE (DOJ)

4. Update on the implementation of the third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking in Ireland, and the revised National Referral Mechanism Framework.

New National Referral Mechanism Framework on Human Trafficking

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is the framework through which the State fulfils its obligations to protect and promote the human rights of trafficking victims, working in partnership with civil society.

On 11 May 2021, the Irish Government approved the creation of a revised NRM to make it easier for victims of trafficking to come forward, be identified and access support. The revised NRM will include the range of government departments and agencies that meet potential victims. In addition, an important feature of the new model is that NGOs designated as 'trusted partners' will become authorised referral partners. They will provide an alternative and trusted pathway to recognition by the NRM, the advantages being that victims will find it easier to approach an NGO or other agency to seek protection.

The priority in the new NRM is to ensure that as many victims as possible come forward to seek protection. In the longer-term, this should help ensure that victims are more willing to assist the relevant State bodies gather more information and evidence in order to bring to justice the traffickers who prey on vulnerable people with no regard for their lives and safety.

National Action Plan on Human Trafficking

The Third National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking (2023 – 2027) was published on 6 November 2023. This built upon work carried out to date and drew on increased knowledge and understanding of the complexities involved in this field. The central goals of the Plan are to work towards the abolishment of human trafficking and its demand, to identify and support victims of trafficking, to enforce the rights of victims and bring the perpetrator

to justice and to have whole of government co-ordination in supporting victims and decreasing incidents of trafficking.

Key aspects of the plan include: the development of a training framework for those who come into contact with potential victims of trafficking; awareness-raising and information dissemination; and actions which seek to improve supports for victims. The new training framework will build on the training provided to border management and airport personnel, health care professionals and social workers which has enabled potential victims of trafficking to be investigated by law enforcement. The Plan will work in tandem with the revised NRM and the accompanying operational guidelines to improve the overall response to human trafficking and support victims of this crime.

5. Advance the implementation of the third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (DSGBV), including the establishment of a statutory DSGBV agency.

The Programme for Government recognised an epidemic of DSGBV in Ireland, which is consistent with global trends. The Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (TNS), launched in June 2022, set out the framework to achieve zero tolerance in Irish society for any form of DSGBV.

The TNS set out the roadmap for establishment of a new statutory DSGBV agency by 2024, to ensure this priority area continues to receive the expertise and focus needed to drive it forward.

Flowing from this strategy, and building on the work carried out throughout 2022, in 2023 work continued to transfer the relevant functions of the Child and Family Agency/Tusla and the Department of Justice into a new specialist Agency, the design and structure of which was developed in collaboration with the NGO and DSGBV services sectors.

Parallel to this, legislation establishing the Agency made its way through the Oireachtas over the course of 2023, and was passed by the Oireachtas in November 2023.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE (DOD), AND THE DEFENCE FORCES (DF)

Defence Forces

6. Continue the implementation of effective training policies on the prevention of SEA, human rights, gender equality, code of conduct and international humanitarian law for all relevant Irish staff deployed overseas (including on CSDP and UN Peacekeeping Missions, including through supporting the United National Training School Ireland as a centre of excellence, as well as training of civilian deployees.

All DF personnel deploying overseas receive WPS and SEA training as part of their pre-deployment training. Applying a gender perspective and prevention of SEA are a key focus of all Defence Forces personnel operating both on island and internationally. Gender Focal Point training was conducted by DF Gender Advisors, with a total of 44 Focal Points qualified in 2023.



Irish peacekeepers working as part of the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Cyprus. © DFA

In 2023, there was a return to in person training with DF personnel attending both the ‘Women’s Military Peace Operations Course’ in Berlin and ‘A Comprehensive Approach to Gender in Military Operations’ with the European Security and Defence College. The Nordic Centre for Gender in Military Operations’ Gender Advisor course was attended online by Defence Forces members.

7. Increase and improve training for DF personnel who may be investigating cases of sexual assault, to ensure the victim receives the required support whilst an unbiased investigation is carried out.

The DF continues to develop and enhance investigative skillsets concerning matters related to sexual offences. Currently, the Military Police Corps (MP Corps) conducts a range of courses that provide both theoretical and practical education concerning the investigation techniques for sexual offences. The MP Corps has embedded within each formation Military Police qualified personnel, who are trained and educated in the processing and investigating of crimes including those of a sexual nature. DF takes all forms of crimes seriously and refers all reported crimes of a sexual nature to An Garda Síochána for investigation.

The Defence Forces’ Victims Information Booklet was distributed in 2023, which aims to ensure that the victim of a crime has access to information pertaining to the investigative process that will unfold into the future. Additionally, the MP Corps assigns a Victim Liaison Officer as a point of contact for any individual that is victim to any crime.

The DF has organised a number of iterations of the Investigation of Gender Sexual Based Violence (GSBV) Courses, in collaboration with the International Institute of Criminal Investigation (IICI), in order to further enhance the investigative skillsets of the MP investigators within the spectrum of GSBV both on Island and in overseas settings.

HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE (HSE)

8. Roll out a training programme for HSE staff in supporting appropriate, effective responses to women from areas of conflict who have experienced DSGBV.

Under the Third National DSGBV Strategy, the HSE National Social Inclusion Office (NSIO) has developed a National DSGBV Training Strategy to ensure HSE staff and staff from funded services have a deep understanding of DSGBV and are equipped to support victims of DSGBV.

As mentioned, four DSGBV e-learning modules will be developed, namely Awareness, Recognise, Respond and Refer and will be available to all HSE staff and staff from funded services on HSELand – HSE’s e-learning platform. Module 1, Awareness, was launched on 11 December 2023 and achieved 124 completions that month. All modules will be available by early 2024.

Training formats and content are informed by an external evaluation of previous DSGBV trainings (by Dr Sarah Morton). RECOGNISE, RESPOND, REFER, a review of the approaches used by frontline HSE staff, to ask about DSGBV, was carried out by Eithne Tiernan. A DSGBV training and resource needs analysis was carried out by the HSE NSIO and completed by 576 staff from HSE and funded services.

The HSE NSIO also established a DSGBV Training Working Group to oversee the development of training content. This group includes members from different sections within the HSE who have an expertise on the topic of DSGBV – Sexual Assault Treatment Units, Emergency Medicine Programme, Sexual Health Crisis Pregnancy Programme, National Women and Infants Health Programme and the Office of the Nursing and Midwifery Services Director in addition to the NSIO. Expertise from specialist services has also been sought for specific topics, including Section 39 services and other HSE colleagues.

The NSIO has also collaborated with experts to develop additional DSGBV training resources- e.g. working sensitively with migrants who have experienced trauma including sexual violence Session coordinated by NSIO and facilitated by Dr Sarah Heke, available [here](#).

9. Continue to support the range of NGOs providing health-related services to women refugees, those seeking international protection and other migrant women who have experienced violence/conflict including mental health programmes, a Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) Clinic, sexual and reproductive health outreach in Direct Provision.

In line with the HSE Second National Intercultural Health Strategy and the Third Strategy on DSGBV, the HSE NSIO provide funding to the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) FGM Treatment Service and to AkiDwA annually, including in 2023.

The HSE Women's Health Service /Anti Human-Trafficking team are trained in prevalence and impact of FGM. FGM is included in the assessment of trafficked victims. A specialist psychologist is available to both services. Referrals for medical treatment are made to Irish Family Planning Association FGM treatment service. The WHS operates sexual health clinics and outreach support.

IFPA provides free specialised medical care and counselling to women who have experienced FGM. The service model involves four key components: clinical service provision, including referral pathways to secondary care; training and capacity-building with service providers; sexual and reproduction health outreach with affected communities; and building and maintain relationships with key stakeholders.

In 2023, the HSE NSIO undertook a review of the resources on FGM and service support included in the NSIO website and updated accordingly. The office has also reviewed FGM related content on Mychild.ie.

The HSE NSIO has commenced work on the development of the HSE National DSGBV Training Strategy and Resource Development. FGM is included in the development of this national training strategy and resource development and content from AkiDwA's Handbook – Female Genital Mutilation Information for Healthcare Professionals Working in Ireland – and recommendations from IFPA have been included.



In July 2023, Ireland participated in the UN Security Council Open Debate on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence. © DFA

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA)

10. Advocate for greater reference to conflict-related SGBV as a criterion for UN sanctions. Advocate against impunity for perpetrators of conflict-related SGBV.

Ireland continued to advocate for greater inclusion of conflict-related SGBV at the UN throughout 2023. At the UN Open Debate in July on 'Promoting Implementation of Security Council Resolutions on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence', Ireland stated that SGBV continued to be brandished across the world as a weapon of war. Ireland welcomed the launch of the guidebook on State obligations on CRSV, emphasising the importance of survivors' access to justice and accountability for perpetrators. Regarding sanctions, Ireland called for a pre-requisite across all sanctions regimes, and for continued designation of individuals responsible for acts of SGBV, as had happened recently in Haiti and Yemen.

During a UN Security Council meeting on Sudan in March, Ireland strongly condemned the use of sexual violence as a tool to intimidate and punish women and men in exercising their civil and political rights. Ireland continued its work with partner organisations, such as the WPHF, to support work in Sudan and other contexts to respond to the needs of women affected by conflict, including victims and survivors of CRSV.

11. Allocate funding to end violence against women and girls in fragile states.

2019	2020	2021	2022
11,070,600	9,519,934	12,189,482	9,383,223

12. DFA, through its Humanitarian Unit, allocates funding for gender and protection/specialised programmes.

DFA continued to increase the multi-year support to the International Rescue Committee (IRC) under the Strategic Partnership programme which ensures that gender equality and protection of women and girls is prioritised and given increased prominence across global humanitarian frameworks and policies. The Strategic Partnership programme provided specialised initiatives to prevent and mitigate against gender based violence and comprehensive services for survivors of GBV in acute and protracted crises settings in Burundi, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Somalia and Kenya.

In 2023, Ireland's support increased to €2 million, a €200,000 increase from 2022 and €500,000 more than Ireland's stated commitment under the MOU with the IRC. The budget envelope is set to increase again in 2024 to €3 million for the third and final year of the programme, increasing the overall commitment from €5.4 million to €6.8 million from 2022 - 2024.

DFA also provided €1.5 million to the UNFPA for their programmes in Ukraine in 2023, including for SRHS and supports for protection against and the mitigation of SGBV.

13. Continue Ireland's work to support the implementation of specialised protection and GBV services in humanitarian contexts, including through protection and gender expertise in humanitarian contexts.

Ireland established a three-year strategic partnership (2022-2024) with the IRC, providing €6.8 million in flexible funding for GBV in Emergencies response. The programme includes multi-level advocacy on GBV, emergency response, and recovery and preparedness efforts to support women and girls in crisis-affected areas across Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and South Sudan.

In 2023, Ireland's support to IRC through the Emergency Response Fund (ERFS) allowed for rapid set-up of services in response to a devastating fire that broke out in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. IRC swiftly responded to the emergency needs of fire-affected individuals, focusing on the safety and protection of women and girls by delivering life-saving integrated GBV case management services and community outreach activities. IRC provided health services, psychosocial support, GBV case management, and distributed essential items, alongside awareness messages related to GBV risk mitigation, fire prevention, and burn wound management.

The ERFS also significantly contributed to supporting IRC's women's protection and empowerment emergency response in South Sudan, which was specifically aimed at addressing the challenges posed by the arrival of refugees from Sudan, a consequence of the escalation of ongoing conflict. The IRC implemented a comprehensive project to enhance access to confidential services, distribute dignity kits, and raise awareness about women's rights at the transit centre in Renk. Additionally, the IRC improved the referral system and coordination for GBV services through training sessions for staff and protection actors, to empower women and mitigate risks related to GBV and sexual exploitation.

The ICGBV is a unique alliance of international human rights, humanitarian and development organisations including INGOs, the DF and Irish Aid to increase knowledge and understanding of GBV and to ensure high quality programming and policy responses in both humanitarian and development settings.

During Ireland's term on the on the Security Council, ICGBV hosted consultations with civil society and DFA staff ahead of each meeting of the Informal Expert Group on WPS. The reports from these discussions were shared with DFA teams in Dublin and in New York. In October 2023, ICGBV published a position paper Women's Voices on Women Peace and Security based on these consultations.

In March 2023, ICGBV and Ireland co-hosted a successful side-event at the 67th Commission on Status of Women (CSW) on Technology Facilitated Gender-based Violence Opportunities and Threats based on a policy paper they prepared on the issue. Also in 2023, a three-day training on GBV Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) was organised for member participants to improve skills in applying MEAL frameworks to GBV programming and prioritised a survivor-centred approach.



"Tech-facilitated gender-based violence should not be seen as different or separate from other forms. The root causes are the same." stated ICGBV's Jennifer McCarthy Flynn during an event co-hosted by Ireland during CSW67. © DFA

4.5 Pillar IV: Promotion

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, EQUALITY, DISABILITY, INTEGRATION AND YOUTH (DCEDIY)

1. Communicate and promote Ireland's commitment to the WPS Agenda among domestic stakeholders, through training of staff and provision of relevant information to IRPP beneficiaries and international protection applicants

Irish Refugee Protection Programme

The wellbeing of women and children is a particular focus of IRPP from the time of selection mission, up to the time that families are ultimately resettled in local authority housing. IRPP staff continue to be informed of the importance of the WPS agenda when it comes to IRPP beneficiaries. IRPP staff ensure on selection mission that women in particular are given an opportunity during the interview to speak to IRPP staff alone to ensure that their voice and concerns are heard free from judgement or otherwise from male members of the family. Resources are being developed for cultural orientation for children. The range of mainstream services available to support women on arrival to Ireland is highlighted both in pre-departure and post arrival materials.

Equality and Gender Equality Unit

At the end of October 2023, the UN CEDAW Committee provided Ireland with a list of issues prior to reporting to be addressed in the State's 8th periodic report under the Convention, with a response to be submitted by November 2023.

While the WPS Agenda was not specifically referenced, the issues raised included matters such as GBV, human trafficking and climate change and disaster risk reduction. DCEDIY began preparations on the report.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE (DOD), AND THE DEFENCE FORCES (DF)

2. Continue to act and engage on WPS, through the Department of Defence, on an international level. This includes through participation in the Partnership for Peace (including the implementation of NATO/EAPC WPS Policy and Action Plan), and through Ireland's gender-related training pledges to the UN's Peacekeeping Readiness Capability System.

Ireland, through DFA and DOD, continued to consistently advocate the promotion of the WPS Agenda in the course of its ongoing participation in key Working Groups on International Security and Defence in 2023. In 2023, Ireland agreed an Individually Tailored Partnership Programme with NATO, a framework bilateral agreement for the next five years between Ireland and NATO. One of the 22 partnership goals focuses on WPS, for which DFA is responsible. The WPS Goal involves joint collaboration between Ireland and NATO to actively promote the WPS agenda. In 2023, Ireland fed into the development of the NATO WPS Policy.

3. Implement the Defence Forces (DF) specific Action Plan feeding into the NAP on WPS on a strategic level, which includes consideration of the effects and drivers of violent masculinity.

To address the issue of toxic masculinity, the DF introduced two education programmes that tackled a variety of cultural and harmful behaviours. Gender Diversity and Unconscious Bias training was delivered by the Irish Centre for Diversity, and the Sexual Ethics and Responsible Relationships (SERR) workshop was developed by the DF and delivered by Professor Louise Crowley (Bystander intervention Programme) alongside DF Military Champions. A total of 4,346 DF personnel received the Gender Diversity and Unconscious Bias training and 2,953 personnel received the SERR workshop. These training programmes supported the work Organisational Cultural Standing Committee in delivering on the process of cultural change in the DF.

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (DFA)

4. Update on the number of recommendations dealing with GBV and SEA and the implementation of the WPS Agenda in UPR processes.

Ireland made 20 recommendations related to combatting gender-based violence during the 2023 UPR sessions. Recommendations related to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse was made three times, and the implementation of the WPS Agenda was raised once.

5. Promote women's experience and expertise in peace-building in Northern Ireland/Ireland, and promote WPS principles in engagements, including through events, conferences, research commissioned, public statements, and meetings with stakeholders including civil society organisations.

DFA continued to engage with civil society organisations to promote women's experiences and expertise in peace-building in Northern Ireland. In 2023, this included inviting a number of high-profile women peace-builders to address several events marking the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, both in Ireland and across the mission network. DFA also met regularly with civil society organisations, including a number of women's groups funded by the Reconciliation Fund.

6. Update on the establishment and operation of a Northern Ireland consultative group.

The Belfast Secretariat had regular engagement with key stakeholders involved in the WPS agenda in Northern Ireland, much of which is ongoing. Two meetings were held with the WPS consultative group in 2023, with ambition for more targeted engagement in 2024.

7. Advocate for the WPS Agenda internationally, and promote lesson-sharing on the development of National Action Plans and the Northern Ireland peace process.

Advocacy for WPS internationally

Following Ireland's departure from the UN Security Council, advocacy continued on the international stage, including at the UN. The 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) took place from 6-17 March, where Ireland was represented by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman. In partnership with ICGBV, Ireland co-hosted an event on technology-facilitated gender-based violence, where ICGBV presented their new policy paper, which examines the exacerbation of violence against women facilitated by the use of technology, as well as opportunities to use technology as a tool for violence prevention and mitigation.

The Minister met with representatives of the Women's Forum on Afghanistan to discuss the silencing of women and girls' voices by the Taliban and to learn more about their experiences. Minister O'Gorman also participated in an UNSC Open Debate on WPS in March, where Ireland's statement spotlighted positive progress in contexts such as Liberia and Colombia, where women were playing an important role in shaping a more peaceful future. Equally, Ireland expressed concern over the continued erasure of women from public life in Afghanistan, and the horrific impact of war on women and girls in Ukraine. Ireland anticipated that the 25th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 offered an opportunity to reflect on progress and redouble action to make the WPS agenda a reality.



Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman participated in the UN Security Council Open Debate on WPS in March 2023. © DFA

Also in New York during March, Ireland was represented at a Board Meeting of the WPS-Humanitarian Action Compact, led by UN Women, by DFA's Human Rights Unit Director, Jackie O'Halloran, who emphasised the potential for gender equality to drive sustainable peace, and that women and girls continue to be amongst those most affected by poverty, climate change and conflict.

Represented by the newly-formed PSU, Ireland attended the 5th Capital-level meeting of the WPS Focal Points Network, co-chaired by Romania and USA, in Washington, D.C. from 5-9 June, at which lessons-learned and best practices for WPS NAPs was a key focus of discussions amongst the over 100 MS in attendance.

During UNGA High-level Week in September, Ireland co-hosted, with the International Peace Institute and the Sasakawa Peace Foundation, the 6th annual Women, Peace, and Leadership Symposium. The Tánaiste participated in the opening of the event, which served to promote the discussion of WPS beyond the UN WPS week in October, integrating key issues to broader high-level discussions amongst the international community. Also during High-level Week, Ireland co-hosted a side event on the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan, drawing attention to the severity of the situation and ensuring a platform for the voices of Afghan women.

Ireland's Embassy in Helsinki hosted an event with CMI to celebrate the many roles women play in peacemaking. The first event was a roundtable



In September 2023 the Tánaiste opened an event at UNGA High-level week on "Global Solidarity with Afghan Women and Girls", co-hosted with Indonesia, Canada and the Women's Forum on Afghanistan. © DFA

facilitated by CMI, where participants considered the attributes needed to be a peacemaker today and the discussions reflected on policy and operational environment; the broad nature of teams engaged in peacemaking; the mental health impacts of being engaged in a peace process; the psychology of conflict-induced trauma; and the process of decolonisation in global peacemaking.

Lesson-sharing on the Northern Ireland Peace Process

On St Brigid's Day, 6 February 2023, Embassy London organised a panel discussion on Women and Peace as part of a series of panel discussions. This panel examined the role of women in securing peace in Northern Ireland and featured Anne Carr, Eileen Weir and Susan McCrory. Ahead of the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, the Peace Heroines exhibition by visual artist FRIZ was launched at Embassy London on St. Brigid's Day, featuring portraits of women peace activists who played a central role in achieving peace in Northern Ireland.

As part of the above mentioned event hosted by Embassy Helsinki with CMI, a 'Women and Trust-Building' event was held at the Ambassador's residence. The seminar was co-facilitated by guest speakers Shona Bell of Corrymeela and Johanna Putanen of CMI, discussing the work of Corrymeela in Northern Ireland. Questions prompted discussion on women's leadership in peace processes, the tools of peacemaking and gendered dimensions with regards to trust-building.



On St Brigid's Day 2023, Ireland's Embassy in London organised a panel discussion on the role of women in securing peace in Northern Ireland, with Anne Carr, Eileen Weir and Susan McCrory. © DFA

8. Promote the WPS Agenda in both Irish media and online, and through outreach events in Ireland.

The Department's outreach on the WPS agenda in Ireland included consistent posting on social media and updates via a newsletter. On X (formerly Twitter), WPS featured prominently amongst posts to the Department's @DFAPeaceSupport account, and a final edition of a dedicated WPS newsletter, circulated to Department staff members, was issued in March.

9. Advocate for the integration of a gender perspective in policies, resolutions, decisions and instruments in multilateral development contexts and International Financial Institutions (IFIs).

EU Engagement

Ireland places a strong focus on WPS in our engagement on the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI – GE). One of the cross-cutting priorities of the instrument is a target of at least 85% of actions having gender equality as a principle or significant objective which Ireland continued to support in 2022. Similarly, Ireland continued to support the Team Europe Initiatives and the EU's Gender Action Plan III (GAP III), which both work to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

Ireland also integrated gender perspectives in EU development finance through the EU Financial Architecture for Development formats including the European Investment Bank Global Advisory Group, the European Fund for Sustainable Development + and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

UN and IFIs Engagement

Ireland continued to advocate for the integration of a gender perspective in relevant international fora, such as the Executive Boards of New York-based UN agencies (UNFPA/UNDP/UNOPS, UNICEF, and UN Women) and at the Programme Coordinating Board of UNAIDS, Peacebuilding Fund discussions in the General Assembly, Peace Building Commission, World Bank, IMF, and Regional Development Banks. Ireland

continued support to UN Agencies, who support countries affected by conflict, violence and fragility. Many UN Agencies work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus, and are well positioned to support the Women, Peace and Security agenda and an emphasis on a broader understanding of peacebuilding - from prevention and post-conflict peacebuilding, to longer term recovery and reconciliation. For instance, addressing the root causes of conflict and violence is at the heart of UN Population Fund's (UNFPA) mandate. UNFPA invests in the area of gender equality and prevention of violence against women, in line with its mandate. UNFPA also invests efforts into promoting the agenda of Women, Peace and Security, and within it aspects related to provision of support to survivors of CRSV. In 2023, Ireland provided €4.5 million in core support to UNFPA. Ireland also reaffirmed its commitment to preventing, and responding to GBV, maintaining its increased support to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (€500,000 in 2023). UN Women plays a leading role in implementing the WPS agenda through research initiatives, data collection, learning exchanges, and documentation of good practices to inform policy and programming. In 2023, Ireland provided €5.52 million to UN Women. Other key UN partners include UN Women's Making Every Woman and Girl Count Programme and Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF).

In 2023, Ireland continued to contribute to thematic trust funds in Multilateral Development Banks, to ensure support to gender mainstreaming and advancing gender equality, such as through the Umbrella Facility for Gender Equality, an instrument of the World Bank Group that aims to close gender gaps through research. Ireland continued its Gender partnership with the International Finance Corporation, the private sector arm of the World Bank, to support the advancement of women's economic empowerment and inclusion.

10. Promote the WPS Agenda in development and emergency settings, including through building capacity of local actors to provide women-led response to emergencies, support to civil society organisation to combat human trafficking, and support for SRHR in emergency settings.

Ireland continued to be a member of the Standby Partnership, which has a Rapid Response Roster including gender and protection specialists who are deployed to UN Agencies to support the UN system in emergencies response. Twenty of the 55 new Rapid Response Roster members recruited by Ireland in 2023 are experts in gender and protection related areas. 12 of these are GBV experts, along with experts in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and child protection. These are now available to be nominated to fill short-term roles in UNICEF, WFP, UN OCHA, IOM and UNHCR. In addition, all new roster members received training on gender and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse during their induction in Ireland in November 2023. Ireland also provided support to Justice Rapid Response (JRR) for their SGBV roster. JRR deploys a roster of specialised experts who partner with international, national and civil society organisations and institutions to strengthen accountability for international crimes and serious human rights violations.

2023 was the second year of implementation of the Strategic Partnership between Ireland and the IRC, a three-year multi-annual agreement to address GBV in emergencies. This programme places a specific focus on the enhancement of knowledge and expertise of local grassroots organisations and women volunteers by providing training on key technical topics and methodologies, including case management, survivor-centred approaches and psychosocial supports and activities to support women and girls affected by sexual violence and GBV. Training sessions were delivered to 62 local women's organisations' staff and volunteers by IRC's specialist team of Women Protection and Empowerment Advisors who are key to ensuring the quality and accessibility of services in refugee and displaced people's camps.

11. Promote understanding of effects and drivers of harmful social norms, including masculinities and discriminatory gender norms, through commissioning research and conducting trainings and capacity building that includes gender equality, gender sensitive conflict analysis and a GBV response.

Ireland supported ALIGN, the Overseas Development Institute's (ODI) influential programme of work on gender equality and gender norms. ALIGN is a digital platform and programme of work that fosters a global community of researchers, practitioners and thought leaders, all committed to gender justice and equality. ALIGN provides new research, insights from practice, and grants for initiatives that increase our understanding of – and work to change – discriminatory gender norms.

With Ireland's support, the ODI hosted a series of virtual seminars in 2023 for staff on gender transformative approaches in policy and programming, exploring key concepts relating to gender equality and harmful gender norms. The series aimed to strengthen internal knowledge and capacity to develop gender-transformative approaches in existing and future programmes.

Through DFA's funding for NGOs, many organisations carry out training to address harmful social norm, an example of this work is where Concern Worldwide engage Syrian refugee and host communities in North Lebanon in gender-focused trainings, particularly aimed at male community members with a view to changing attitudes and behaviours towards GBV. Further trainings and capacity buildings on healthcare, and psychosocial wellbeing (with a gender lens) were completed in Iraq and Syria. Oxfam improved knowledge of gender rights and successfully reduced the prevalence of violence against women in pastoralist communities in Tanzania.

DEPARTMENT OF RURAL AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DRCD)

- 12. Develop a programme to raise awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for local decision-making structures, local authorities, government departments and agencies, community and voluntary organisations, and local development bodies.

Building upon a training event that took place in 2019 and guidelines on 'Local Economic and Community Plans' published in 2021, DRCD delivered training on the SDGs to Local Community Development Committee members and local authority support staff in early 2022 to support the development of new 'Local Economic and Community Plans'. DRCD, in collaboration with the Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development, engaged Pobal to undertake a needs analysis of the community and voluntary sector and their supporting structures, including specific reference to training around the SDGs.

Progress around these actions was overseen by the Training Needs Subgroup of the Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development. It was agreed that a three-step modular approach would be undertaken, consisting of assessments of the training needs of LCDCs, voluntary boards of mid-sized non-profits, and smaller community and voluntary groups. These three reports are expected to be published in 2024 and an implementation plan based on the findings and recommendations will be developed in consultation with sectoral representatives thereafter.

- 13. Develop a toolkit for the design and proofing of programmes and plans towards the SDGs.

The fulfilment of this objective in collaboration with other stakeholders is set out in Action 8.2 of the government strategy 'Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities'. Although progress has been delayed, DRCD remain committed to engaging with colleagues at the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC) and the Community and Voluntary Sector, to further this objective in 2024.



A display of the UN Sustainable Development Goals at the UNGA 2023 in New York. © DFA

14. Support the capacity of local government and community and voluntary sectors in relation to the SDGs.

The actions under Objective 8 of the ‘Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities’ strategy seek to support the capacity of local government and community and voluntary sectors in relation to SDGs, and DRCD continued to work closely with the community and voluntary sectors in 2023.

As highlighted above, DRCD delivered training on the SDGs to Local Community Development Committee members and local authority support staff. In collaboration with the Cross-Sectoral Group on Local and Community Development, DRCD engaged Pobal to undertake a training needs analysis of LCDC’s and the community and voluntary sector and their supporting structures, with specific reference to training needs under the sustainable development goals. The reports on this analysis will be published in 2024.

Conclusion

In 2023, Ireland continued to build its reputation as a leading advocate for the WPS Agenda. Throughout the year, Ireland's strong engagement at bilateral and multilateral levels, working closely with likeminded states, regional and international organisations, and expanding our civil society networks was part of a concerted effort to protect and expand the implementation of the WPS agenda.

The updates and progress on Ireland's Third National Action Plan, as set out in this report, demonstrate continued dedication across the Irish Government the promise of the WPS Agenda, both in Ireland and abroad. However, 2023 was an incredibly challenging year for women and girls around the world. Conflict-related sexual violence and other forms of SGBV are perpetrated with impunity, and women remained almost entirely absent from formal peace processes.

Ireland continued to promote the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all forms of peacebuilding on the international stage, including at the UN, EU and other multilateral fora. Our engagement has highlighted the dire situation for women and girls in conflict, faced with a global pushback on women's rights. Our continued support to organisations like the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund ensured direct support to women's grassroots organisations dedicated to empowering women and girls in conflict and humanitarian settings.

The year also saw sustained focus on implementing the Agenda's goals at home. The publication of the Strategic Framework and Detailed Implementation Plan for the Report of the Commission on the Defence Forces represents an important effort to address the challenges facing the Defence Forces, including recruitment and retention of female staff. Throughout the year, there was strong commitment from across Government and civil society to advancing the WPS agenda in Ireland.

Ireland will continue our efforts to address the impact of conflict on women and girls and support their role in achieving the goals of the WPS agenda. This is a fundamental part of our commitment to work for a secure inclusive and sustainable peace globally.



A woman smiles at an event in Malawi, where promoting gender equality is a core part of Ireland's work. © DFA



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