

Gender & Development Bulletin

Banúlacht
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Women in Ireland in Global Solidarity



TGNP Exchange

Exchange participants with facilitators during a three-day orientation course in preparation for the trip to Tanzania. From left: Sarah Beth Watkins, Aoife Cooke, Maimuna Kanyamala, Sarah Oates, Niamh Farren, Eileen Smith, Nyamwenda Massamba; Jo Lambe, Breda Murphy, Olivier Gupta and Maeve Taylor.

Banúlacht Women's Exchange with Tanzania

Six women who work for community projects in Ireland are travelling to Tanzania in September 2007 to participate in an exchange visit with the Tanzanian Gender Networking Programme (TGNP), an organisation that promotes gender equality, social transformation and women's empowerment.

Over the course of two weeks, the participants will talk to women's organisations in Tanzania and Zanzibar about the issues facing women in Ireland and Tanzania. Such issues include health, domestic violence, interculturalism, women in poverty and community education. The six participants are Aoife Cooke – Tallaght Intercultural Action; Breda Murphy – Waterford Women's Centre; Jo Lambe – Open Door Network (Tralee);

Niamh Farren – the Media Co-op; Sarah Oates – Tuam Community Development Resource Centre; and Sarah-Beth Watkins – Templeshannon CDP. The women will also give presentations at the 2007 Gender Festival in Dar es Salaam.

This exchange aims to raise awareness of gender and development issues and to look at how women in Ireland can work in solidarity with women in the South for women's human rights globally.

The exchange is partly funded by Irish Aid, Concern and Trócaire; each participant is also required to raise matching funds towards costs. In 2008, Banúlacht and TGNP will organise a return visit for women in Tanzania.

Editorial

The implementation of women's civil, political, economic, social and cultural human rights requires action by governments at policy level, by nongovernmental organisations, and by women's organisations at community level.

The Irish government and the European Union (EU) have repeatedly endorsed gender mainstreaming, the strategy of the Beijing Platform for Action for the implementation of women's human rights. Gender mainstreaming involves a twin-track approach: Specific programmes to advance women's empowerment, as well as the inclusion of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes, are required. Recent policy initiatives, such as the government's National Women's Strategy, the White Paper on Irish Aid and the EU's Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Developing Cooperation are very welcome in this regard.

Policy initiatives must be complemented by bottom-up approaches that empower women in marginalised communities and groups. From Tallaght in Dublin to Gaza in Palestine, work at community level has empowered women to recognise their leadership potential, to gain confidence to speak out, to challenge gender stereotypes in their own communities and to take on policy makers.

In the context of development cooperation, the work of the Gender Based Violence Consortium of development agencies and nongovernmental agencies and Trócaire's 2007 campaign on gender equality are welcome signs that NGOs and governments are taking gender equality seriously.

Civil society has a critical role in ensuring that gender equality policies are implemented. The Irish government has committed an extra 69 million under the National Women's Strategy; it has also made commitments to additional funding for gender equality work in its overseas aid programme. It is crucial that additional resources are directed towards women's organisations, in Ireland and the South, that critique and challenge inequality between women and men in the civil, political, economic, social and cultural spheres.

About Banúlacht

Banúlacht is a feminist organisation that is part of a global women's movement and, as such, is committed to political action. Banúlacht believes in justice and equality for all women and men and in relationships of solidarity between women North and South. (We use the terms North and South rather than "First World/Third World" or "Developed World/Developing World," which imply superiority and inferiority.) At the heart of our approach is the belief that change is possible and necessary. The name "Banúlacht" is derived from the Irish word for women, bean, and means "of women" or "related to women."

Banúlacht's development education work explores such issues as poverty, alienation, disadvantage and injustice through a global lens and from a gender perspective. We carry out workshops and short courses with women's organisations in Ireland on themes such as gender and development, women and the economy and women's human rights. We have a particular focus on the framework of international human rights agreements. We aim to highlight the work of women's organisations in the South to challenge gender inequalities locally and globally.

Joining Banúlacht

Banúlacht is a membership organisation. Our members include locally based women's groups, women's networks, development education organisations and national women's organisations, as well as individual feminists, activists and others interested in development issues from a gender perspective.

Organisations that are not women only and individual men can join as associate members. Members receive regular briefings and updates by e-mail on issues relating to gender and development, women's human rights and economic issues. Such information is sourced from women's organisations in the South and global feminist networks. Members can also avail of special rates for Banúlacht conferences.

You can download a membership application form from our website, www.banulacht.ie, where you will also find copies of Banúlacht policy documents, briefings and submissions to government.

Banúlacht is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. It is registered in Dublin, Ireland No. 284753. Directors are the executive members: Eilish Dillon, Margaret Tumelty (chair), Nessa Ni Chasaide, Niamh Farren (company secretary) and Siobhán Madden. At the 2006 AGM, we welcomed Gráinne Begley and Jennifer Flynn as new executive members.

Banúlacht
20 Lower Dominick St
Dublin 1
Ireland

www.banulacht.ie
+353 (0)1 872 3039
banulach@iol.ie

Staff: Eileen Smith (Co-Ordinator), Maeve Taylor (Project Leader).
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Contents

pg 1

Editorial

Banúlacht Women's Exchange with Tanzania

by Sarah-Beth Watkins

pg 2

Contents

Focus on Women's Leadership

pg 3-5

Traveller Women Taking Leadership: A Personal View

by Margaret O'Leary

Developing Leadership among African Women

by Salome Mbugua

Women's Empowerment in Palestine

by Mona al Farra

Top 25 Women's Human Rights Websites

pg 6-7

pg 8-10

Focus on Gender Mainstreaming Strategies

National Women's Strategy

by Joanna McMinn

White Paper on Irish Aid: A Gender Analysis

by Maeve Taylor

The Gender-Based Violence Consortium

by Angela O'Neill de Guilio

pg 11

Global Updates

Short reports on gender and development

Banúlacht Update

pg 12

Focus on Women and Leadership

The Beijing Platform for Action states that governments and NGOs should 'provide leadership and self-esteem training to assist women and girls, particularly those with special needs, women with disabilities and women belonging to racial and ethnic minorities to strengthen their self-esteem and to encourage them to take decision-making positions' (paragraph 195). In this feature, we focus on three case studies of women's leadership programmes. Margaret O'Leary of the Southside Travellers Action Group (STAG) gives a personal account of her experience of developing women's leadership among Travellers. Salome Mbugua of AkiDwA describes her organisation's leadership programme for African women living in Ireland. In the final case study, Dr. Mona El Farra describes empowerment among women in Palestine.

Traveller Women Taking Leadership: A Personal View

My name is Margaret O'Leary. I am a Travelling woman and I have three sons. I run the Travellers women's training programme (where I was once a trainee). I always felt that a Traveller should have this position, so I became a 'shadow' of the coordinator at the time, Mary McCorry, who strongly believed that Travellers should take a more active role within their community.

I am currently doing a two-year course on legal studies which will help me to qualify as either a barrister or a solicitor. This will enable me to do much more for my community. It is also great for my sons to see me achieve this because it will encourage them to finish their schooling.

I give a Traveller voice to issues affecting Travellers: when I go to different meetings, I always raise the issues that affect Travellers. I believe that telling people about the struggles that face Travellers is the way to change people's attitudes in the way that they see Travellers. I have been working locally and nationally for Traveller rights. For example, we are fighting to be recognised as an ethnic group. Having such rights is very important for the future of the next generation.

The issues that affect Travellers are very important to me, and the issue that is most important to me is equality between men and women. Education is vital to any change. I am the coordinator of an accredited training programme for Travelling women. There should be more women on it, but because of childcare issues they are unable to attend. I blame the government for this. There should be adequate childcare for all women.

This programme is not just about receiving FETAC certs, it is a way to get more women to realise their potential and to change the views that are within our community in relation to women. The women started this programme so that they could have a few hours to

themselves, but, within a few months and with the guidance of good tutors, the programme has changed how these women view themselves as individuals, not just as mothers or wives. The women are becoming more vocal about the issues that affect their everyday lives, including domestic violence and childcare, and more are standing up for their rights. This can sometimes be very hard and can make you feel isolated within your community: some men do not want you to mix with the other women because you could maybe change their views on how they are treated. At the same time, the women in the community are sometimes afraid to talk to you because they see you as a bad influence. I believe strongly that women will become more powerful, but in order to do this we have to come together.

All of the women who are working within STAG have registered to vote, which most had never done before. When the women from STAG did this they realised the importance of all Travellers voting, and they then went out to the local Traveller community and helped Travellers who had never voted to register. The women have also made up simplified leaflets to distribute to the community on the importance of having your voice heard.

We have invited some local TDs to STAG's offices to answer questions about what they will do for our community. Last year, the women at STAG would never have done this because they didn't think they had the right or even that they were capable of doing it would be able. This is a great achievement for STAG, as this is what we are about, helping the women to empower themselves.

Margaret O'Leary
Southside Travellers Action Group



Course graduate Kemi Owogboro speaking at an intercultural seminar in Athlone.

Developing Leadership among African Women Living in Ireland

Background

Established in 2001, Akina Dada wa Afrika (AkiDwA) is a voluntary national network of migrant women living in Ireland. The organisation provides support, a platform for migrant women and advocacy on their behalf. AkiDwA has grown from its modest beginnings, becoming strong in advocating for women of all minority ethnic backgrounds and in providing necessary services and supports to women in need. The work of the organisation is currently dictated by its strategic plan 2004-2008, the goals of which are provision of information and nonjudgemental support, networking and forming alliances, education and training, advocacy and influencing policy, and organisational development.

The organisation is also working on several other projects that address such issues as linking local and global women, gender-based violence and Black African women's access to the labour market.

Importance of leadership training

In 2003, with support from Community Technical Aid (CTA), AkiDwA mobilised the first group of 14 women to participate in a leadership training course. To date, 262 African women living in different counties in Ireland have received this training. The training has been quite effective and the organisation has received very good feedback from the participants. Many African women are now involved in their own communities. They participate and speak in meetings, seminars and conferences. In 2003, one woman who had completed the training represented the concerns of African women to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Equality and Justice. There is no doubt that this 11-week training course has helped to rebuild women's confidence and self-esteem.

Continuous representation and participation of African women in Ireland is crucial, and while many migrant women in Ireland today continue to be affected by racism and exclusion, AkiDwA is taking a leading role to ensure African/migrant women have a space and platform where their issues, contributions and creativity can be expressed.

The objectives of the leadership training are to

- facilitate African women with leadership training so that they can gain confidence and interest to help them voice their issues and views through active participation in various forums, committee, groups, and organisations
- improve African women's understanding of decision-making processes and encourage them to take a leading role by engaging with others at community level or at local, regional and national levels
- provide African women with skills, knowledge and information to enable them to become active agents in articulating their needs and those of their community

Training method

The leadership training course is held once a week. In order to accommodate women's childcare needs, sessions begin at 10:00 a.m., when the women have dropped their children to school, and finish at 1:00 p.m. Childcare is a huge barrier to women's participation. Each participant receives a contribution so that she can organise her own childcare. The training group consists of 15 women. Because the participants have different levels of English, a range of methodologies—such as group activities, art, video and music—are used, and the facilitators use participatory approaches that emphasize and encourage individuals' experience, knowledge and skills. Subjects covered range from rights and entitlements, health, and reproduction to domestic violence, conflict management, decision making, the global women's movement, housing and education. Site visits and meetings with people in leadership positions are also organised. Participants are awarded an in-house certificate on completion.

Learning from this project:

- Women are active agents of change and are willing to contribute to society, but recognition of their triple role (i.e. reproductive, productive and community work) is required.
- Childcare is a major barrier to participation. Although the project may contribute towards cost of childcare, finding a trustworthy childcare provider is a problem for some women.
- It is important to accommodate the needs of the women participants while organising training.
- Women's experience counts and should be put at the core of their learning.
- Participant-centred learning is therapeutic, especially for migrant women coming from a background where education is hierarchical and bureaucratic.

Salome Mbugua
National Director, AkiDwA
www.akidwa.ie

Comments from course participants:

I am now involved with my local group helping to organise activities for children. I feel I am totally part of the community where I live.

When I stood up to speak in the seminar, I started shaking but I gained confidence when I saw people nodding their heads. I assumed they agreed with what I had to say. The feedback from my colleagues and other participants was very good.

Women's Empowerment in Palestine

Like the entire Palestinian nation, Palestinian women must deal with the Israeli occupation and its wide range of effects on their daily life. However, Palestinian women must also deal with the constraints of a strong traditional society – a society which puts a tremendous amount of pressure on women.

For a developing country such as Palestine, the process of development will not be effective if it excludes half the population (i.e., women). When social, political and economic factors have contributed to the decline of the development process and when resources are scarce, the most vital resource becomes well-invested human resources.

I believe that women in my country need to be empowered in various ways. What is most important is that women are aware of their social, legal, economic, health and political rights and have the tools to fully exercise those rights. Education about these rights is important, but knowledge and learning are not enough. Practical projects and programmes that help to alleviate poverty for women and strengthen their economic independence are essential. Having economic independence means women can play a much greater and important role both inside the family and in the community as a whole.

Women and gender equality

Gender equality, whereby both men and women have equal rights, is a strategic long-term goal. To achieve this goal, it is important to help and support the more vulnerable party, which is usually the woman. The message that we all live under occupation in my country, both men and women, that all human rights are violated and that it's a battle for everyone must be promoted.

Because of the unique situation in Palestine, women face new pressures. Not only has the whole community suffered because of the occupation, but the number of families headed by women has increased. Even when a woman has a partner, she usually has the largest role inside the family. Women are trying to help their families through the daily hazards of living under occupation and the associated social, psychological, and health problems, but they are also victims of these problems. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that the incidence of post-traumatic stress syndrome in women and children is higher than in men.

Programmes aimed at increasing women's empowerment have been adopted in special women's welfare centres run by the Union of Health Work Committees and the Palestinian Red Crescent Society in Gaza. This drive to empower women has always been a part of the mission statements of both organisations. It is an essential goal in the fight for women's development and gender equality. In these programmes, awareness and enlightenment are the main focus, along with support and practical elements, including social and psychological support, legal aid support, health services and job opportunities. All of these elements are underpinned by gender equality.

I do believe that progress is being made. Despite both the occupation and the traditional social constraints, every day, through my work in different women's programmes, I can clearly see the change. It is not fast, but there is progress. For example, the average age at which girls are marrying has increased slightly; more girls seem to be getting a university education; and marriages between relatives are not as frequent as they used to be. Despite economic hardship and humanitarian crises, these slight changes are a positive outcome and reflection of the ongoing awareness-raising programmes of different NGOs in Palestine.

I am convinced that given the right atmosphere and circumstances, women can play a very positive role in changing my country. Palestinian women can contribute much. However, in order for them to have the opportunity to do so, the enlightenment and education of men, especially young men, is essential. At the same time, one of the golden rules of community activists and workers is to ensure the right of education for girls. And we must continue working with women on an international basis in order to attain women's rights and empowerment. Solidarity is a great weapon in achieving this goal. It is important to work as part of a global movement that is fighting injustice and exploitation instigated by capital, imperial and colonial world powers.

In the end, gender equality is not an intangible concept but a real demand for prosperity and justice for both females and males.

Dr. Mona El Farra

Dr El Farra is a physician by training, a human rights and women's rights activist by practice, in the occupied Gaza Strip. She visited Ireland in March this year to highlight Trócaire's Lenten Campaign on Gender Equality.

Banúlacht's Top 25 Websites

A round-up of websites that focus on gender, women's human rights, development and trade from a feminist perspective.



AmnestyInternational

The site features details of the Global Stop Violence Against Women Campaign and other campaigns, as well as information on such issues as trafficking of women.

www.amnesty.ie (Irish Section); also www.amnesty.org

Association of Women's Rights in Development (AWID)

AWID is an international membership organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women's human rights. AWID's website contains publications for download under the thematic areas: Feminist Movements and Organizations, Women's Rights and Economic Change, Young Women and Leadership and Gender Equality and New Technologies. There are also journals, handbooks and materials on everything from women and HIV/AIDS to globalization and employment.

www.awid.org

Clean Clothes Campaign

The Clean Clothes Campaign is an international campaign focused on improving working conditions and empowering workers in the global garment industry in order to end the exploitation of workers, most of whom are women. The website features information and analysis about the conditions of women workers in the garment industry, as well as campaign resources and briefings. You can also sign up to an urgent action e-mail list. A 2005 report entitled Made by Women: Gender, the Global Garment Industry and the Movement for Women Workers' Rights, published by the Clean Clothes Campaign, is available for download from the website.

www.cleanclothes.org

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

DAWN is a network of women scholars and activists from the economic South who engage in feminist research and analysis of the global environment and who are committed to working for economic justice, gender justice and democracy. DAWN's website includes articles and other resources on the Political Economy of Globalization; Political Restructuring and Social Transformation; Sustainable Livelihoods; and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

www.dawnnet.org

Gender Action

Gender Action is dedicated to promoting gender equality and women's rights in International Financial Institutions (IFIs), such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Themes covered by the website include gender and economic restructuring, women's rights in peace and conflict, and women and the environment. A 2006 publication entitled Gender Guide to World Bank and IMF Policy-Based Lending, by Suzanna Dennis and Elaine Zuckerman, is available to download from the website.

www.genderaction.org

Gender at Work

Gender at Work aims to increase political accountability and to support organizations in challenging social norms and gender inequity in the society in which they work. The website has a range of articles on gender and development for download and a catalogue of books which can be ordered online.

www.genderatwork.org

Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch is dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world. The website features an extensive section on women's human rights (www.hrw.org/women/) with thematic and regional overviews of women's rights.

www.hrw.org

International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN)

IGTN is a network of feminist gender specialists who provide technical information on gender and trade issues from a critical feminist perspective. It is a Southern-led network that builds South/North cooperation for the work of developing more just and democratic policy. The website includes comment and analysis of the current round of World Trade Organisation negotiations, an overview of international trade policy issues from a gender perspective and resources for economic literacy.

www.igtan.org

International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) - Asia Pacific

IWRAP - Asia Pacific is a non-profit international women's organisation that promotes the domestic implementation of international human rights standards by building the capacity of women and human rights advocates to claim and realise women's human rights. The website provides official and practical information on the application of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other international human rights treaties.

www.iwraw-ap.org

Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN)

MSN is a labour and women's rights advocacy organization that promotes solidarity with grassroots groups in Mexico, Central America, and Asia who are working to improve conditions in maquiladora factories and export processing zones. The organisation aims to make retailers accountable for the conditions under which their products are made. As well as resources and thematic features, the site includes details of MSN campaigns focusing on a range of countries, including background information, urgent actions and sample letters.

www.maquilasolidarity.org

Peacewomen Project

A project of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, this website monitors and works towards rapid and full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security.

www.peacewomen.org

Siyanda

Siyanda is an online database of gender and development materials from around the world. Siyanda is hosted by BRIDGE - the gender and development research and information service located at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), Brighton.

www.siyanda.org

Stop Rape Now

This is the website of the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, a new, cross-UN initiative, committed to preventing all forms of gender-based violence in conflict and to supporting survivors.

www.stoprapenow.org

UNIFEM

UNIFEM is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that foster women's empowerment and gender equality throughout the world. The website has information and resources on gender and development, as well as links to thematic web portals (see below).

www.unifem.org

UNIFEM thematic web portals

The four web portals developed by UNIFEM cover specific themes:

- Women, War, and Peace (www.womenwarpeace.org)
- Gender and HIV/AIDS (www.genderandaids.org)
- Gender Responsive Budget Initiatives (www.idrc.ca/gender-budgets)
- Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals (www.mdgender.net).

UN Women Watch

WomenWatch is an official United Nations website and is the central gateway to information and resources on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the UN system. The website provides links to information and analysis on gender issues pertaining to the follow-up of global conferences, as well as links to the texts of the major international treaties on women's human rights and the and officials sites of the UN treaty bodies.

www.un.org/womenwatch/ and
www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/

Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO)

WEDO is an international organization that advocates for women's equality in global policy. It seeks to empower women as decision makers to achieve economic, social and gender justice, a healthy, peaceful planet and human rights for all. Programme areas include economic justice, sustainable development and gender and governance. WEDO's website includes an extensive library on issues ranging from globalisation and trade to natural resources. WEDO's 2007 resource Changing the Climate: Why Women's Perspectives Matter is available for download from the website.

www.wedo.org

Women in Development Europe (WIDE)

WIDE is a European feminist network of women's organisations, development NGOs, gender specialists and women's rights activists. WIDE monitors and influences international economic and development policy and practice from a feminist perspective.

Banúlacht is the Irish platform of WIDE. The website includes briefing papers on a wide range of issues related to trade and development policy, privatisation, alternative economics and economic literacy.

www.wide-network.org

Women's Human Rights Net/Challenging Fundamentalisms

This is a web resource providing comprehensive information and analysis on women's human rights and global issues. The site contains links to the texts and analyses of all the major women's human rights instruments, as well as articles and interviews on women's human rights and on fundamentalisms. Some of the information on the site is sourced from the international press, whereas other information is specially written for WHRnet.

www.whrnet.org

Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ)

WICEJ is an international coalition that works to link gender with macro-economic policy in international intergovernmental policy-making arenas from a human-rights perspective. A 2004 publication Seeking Accountability on Women's Human Rights: Women Debate the Millennium Development Goals is available for download from the website.

www.wicej.org

Women Living Under Muslim Laws

This is an international solidarity network that provides information, support and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam. The site features a 'news and views' section with an extensive range of articles from international media sources on such topics as empowerment, sexual and reproductive rights and violence against women.

www.wluml.org

Women Working Worldwide (WWW)

Women Working Worldwide is a UK-based organisation that works with an international network of women workers. WWW focuses on supporting the rights of women working in supply chains that supply the UK and other European countries with consumer goods. The website gives details of WWW's campaigns, such as the flower campaign, through which shoppers can use consumer power to demand that supermarkets give a better deal to women workers in East Africa.

www.poptel.org.uk/women-www

Banúlacht's website provides links to all of the above websites. The site also includes information and analysis on gender, development, trade and women's human rights, and copies of all our policy submissions, briefing papers and bulletins, as well as information about membership.

www.banulacht.ie

If you know of other feminist websites that could be featured on our website, please let us know



Noirin Clancy, Women's Human Rights Alliance; Bridget Quirke, Pavee Point; CEDAW Committee members: Heisoo Shin, Rep of Korea and Anamah Tan, Singapore; Marie Hainsworth, NWCi at the CEDAW Committee's examination of the Irish government in 2005.

The National Women's Strategy

The National Women's Strategy (NWS), published on the 18th May 2007, has its origins in a women's human rights context. In 1995, at the 4th UN Conference on Women, the Irish government made a commitment to develop a national plan for women when it signed up to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). This UN strategy aimed to remove all obstacles preventing women's active participation in public and private life.

In 2005, at its examination of the Irish government's Combined Reports, the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) recommended that the National Women's Strategy 'take a comprehensive and integrated approach to women's human rights,' recommending 'that the national machinery for gender equality be fully empowered, staffed and funded to effectively pursue coordination and monitoring of the NWS, while promoting gender mainstreaming into all areas and sectors of governance and maintaining at the same time women-targeted projects aiming at gender equality.' Recommendations 29 and 30 of the committee's concluding comments specifically urged measures that prevent violence against women, punish offenders and provide services for victims; suggested that the Irish government adopt without delay its strategic plan; and strongly recommended the implementation of a comprehensive NWS to combat trafficking in women and girls.

The stated vision of the NWS is 'an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life.' The objectives and actions in the NWS fall into three categories:

- equalising socio and economic opportunity for women
- ensuring the well being of women
- engaging as equal and active citizens

The NWS is wide ranging, and the breadth of women's inequalities acknowledged. However, the strategy lacks an analysis of structural causes of women's inequality in Irish society. It continually refers to the 'outstanding gaps' for women and fails to recognise or acknowledge the structures and systems embedded in society that inevitably prevent women from reaching the vision the NWS aspires to.

On the positive side, the strategy includes a wide range of welcome objectives to address women's inequality—for example, the aims of reducing the gender pay gap, decreasing the number of women in poverty, enhancing work-life balance, and addressing the issue of trafficking of women and children.

However, one of the weaknesses of the strategy is the lack of concrete actions and mechanisms to address these objectives. The NWS also does not contain measurable targets or timescales. For example, there are no defined targets for making childcare more affordable for women in Ireland. Nor are there targets for increasing the numbers of women in decision making. This lack of targets will pose a challenge to women's organisations and organisations working for equality for women in using the NWS effectively to further women's equality.

Nevertheless, there is a commitment to positive action measures that will play an important part in ensuring the implementation of the NWS. The Equality for Women Measure is a good example. Projects throughout the country have been making an impact by providing supports aimed at improving the economic, social, cultural and political lives of women. However, a weakness with such measures is their short-term nature. To change persistent inequalities in society, more long-term measures are required. This is acknowledged in the NWS:

'While much has been achieved under the Equality for Women Measure, there is still a need for a further programme of positive action measures at the level of the community, in addition to actions by Government Departments, State Agencies and social partners These positive actions should be distinguished from State support for those organisations that provide support to women in their own right. This support which is indispensable to the sector should be coherent and coordinated to avoid duplication and overlap.'

Funding runs in the first instance to 2013 and it complements the very significantly increased package of 68 million for positive actions under the Equality for Women Measure (up from 3.7 million in 2000 - 2006). This increase from 3.7 million to 1.27 billion is significant.

The National Women's Council of Ireland will undertake a detailed analysis of the National Women's Strategy and will circulate the analysis in the coming months. The NWCi will also aim to produce an information tool to assist women's organisations to maximise the potential of the NWS.

*Dr Joanna McMinn
CEO of the National Women's Council of Ireland*

Gender and the White Paper on Irish Aid

The first White Paper on Irish Aid was launched in September 2006. There is much to be welcomed in it, including the enhanced priority given to gender equality issues. However, Banúlacht has some concerns about the framing of gender throughout the document.

Much feminist critique of development policy has focused on the tendency to view women's empowerment as an element in poverty reduction rather than as a goal in itself. This tendency is evident in the White Paper. Like many development policy documents, the White Paper emphasises gender concerns principally within the context of women's traditional roles in the domestic and reproductive spheres, largely confining women's issues to health and education policy. The absence of any discussion of gender equality in the areas that deal most directly with decision making in foreign policy, macroeconomic policy, and governance is extremely disappointing and raises questions about the depth of the commitment to mainstreaming a gender perspective into all areas of the Irish Aid programme.

Policy implementation

Any policy is only as good as its implementation strategies. Policy and advocacy organisations within civil society have a critical role in holding the state accountable for commitments made under international human rights frameworks. A key role for development cooperation, therefore, is to strengthen the capacity of such organisations and to engage in dialogue with them in order to further develop strategies to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. There is a tendency for many donor organisations to fund service provision rather than more strategic work. If Irish Aid is serious about promoting gender equality, it must direct increased resources to organisations in its priority countries. These resources should challenge gender inequality and promote the participation of women in all areas of political, social and economic life.

Civil society organisations in Ireland have a key role in monitoring the implementation of the White Paper and of the Gender Equality⁷ Policy published in 2004. Both texts outline very comprehensive and substantive commitments to taking action to advance gender equality. The Gender Equality Policy is particularly strong in its recognition of the structural dimensions of inequality and the power relationships that keep women in an unequal position. Irish Aid, however, has yet to produce an Action Plan which would facilitate monitoring of the Gender Equality Policy by nongovernmental organisations.

The 2008 meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will focus on the theme of 'financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women.' This annual two-week meeting is held to coincide with International Women's Day: Banúlacht calls on the Minister for Foreign Affairs to mark International Women's Day 2008 with an announcement of increased financing for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Gender in the White Paper

Areas to be supported within the overarching objective of poverty reduction:

- Promotion of human development
- Human security and justice
- Building and strengthening of democracy
- Promotion of gender equality
- Promotion and protection of human rights

Gender highlights

- Commitment to promoting gender equality throughout the programme
- Key decision 'to increase our support for gender equality measures, with a specific focus on preventing and responding to gender-based violence'
- Strong commitment to gender mainstreaming
- Gender mainstreaming firmly linked to women's empowerment
- Reaffirmation of the framework of international human rights—specifically, CEDAW and the BPfA
- Acknowledgement that addressing gender equality 'is about implementing the fundamental human right to equality'
- Specific actions outlined to improve the position and status of women (e.g., by increasing funding to women's organisations, promoting women's economic empowerment, and improving access to education and reproductive and other health services)
- Strong commitment to work against gender-based violence
- Recognition of the importance of implementation of UN Resolution 1325 'which recognises the need for women to participate on equal terms with men at all levels and in all roles to promote peace and security'
- Specific chapter on Gender and Development
- Gender concerns strongly reflected in the following chapters: Education, HIV/AIDS and Communicable Diseases, Health, and Human Rights and Development

Omissions

There is no specific reference to gender equality in the chapters entitled:

- Preventing and Responding to Humanitarian Disasters
- Building Better Government and Combating Corruption
- Peace, Security and Development
- Trade and Development
- Partnership
- Coherence
- Making Aid Work
- Irish Aid and the Irish Public
- Management of the Programme

'The extreme violence that women suffer during conflict does not arise solely out of the conditions of war; it is directly related to the violence that exists in women's lives during peacetime.'

Women War Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment, UNIFEM 2002

Irish Agencies Collaborate To Address Gender-Based Violence

In 2004, following reports of very high levels of rape in Darfur, the Joint Consortium of Irish Human Rights, Humanitarian and Development Agencies and Irish Aid was formed. The group aims to ensure that gender-based violence (GBV) responses and strategies for prevention have visibility, credibility, high-level leadership and wide support within its member organisations not only in high-profile emergency situations, such as that in Darfur, but also in other conflict, post-conflict and non-conflict environments.

Placing GBV firmly within a human rights framework and highlighting that GBV is a violation of numerous human rights instruments has been central to the work of the group. It has also facilitated a broader debate on gender equality and has given renewed impetus to gender mainstreaming.

An independent study commissioned by the consortium recommended that each agency identify a few key actions on which they could move forward within 6 to 12 months. In this context, the consortium would share information and offer examples of good practice. It would also act as a peer support mechanism. Several key actions were identified for all members:

- establish a policy or integrate GBV response within existing frameworks
- set and enforce standards of behaviour for all staff and partners
- allocate high-level responsibility (a team rather than an individual)
- integrate GBV into appraisals, regional country programme design, implementation and monitoring
- build staff capacity through documenting programme experience, research and training
- link with national and international human rights organisations to develop effective ways of working together
- raise awareness of GBV internally and externally
- draw lessons from HIV and gender mainstreaming approaches.

Moving forward

Over the past two years, significant progress has been made. For example, agencies have placed GBV within human rights, social justice, gender equality and equality frameworks, often with strong links to HIV and AIDS and health.

'The challenge for us all is this: If we know GBV exists, and if we tolerate or ignore it, are we not being complicit, are we not turning a blind eye to human rights violations? I congratulate this initiative's commitment to place GBV at the centre of development and human rights work.'

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former High Commissioner for Human Rights

The focus of the consortium in 2007 is on strengthening approaches to address GBV in both conflict and non-conflict situations and on developing materials, collaborative work, and advocacy. The consortium is undertaking further work to support members in implementing policy, building organizational capacity, developing programme responses, and collaborating with partners.

The consortium also hopes to engage new partners and connect with different groups working on GBV issues, including development networks, organizations involved with domestic violence in Ireland, and academic groups.

Gender Based Violence – A Failure to Protect, A Challenge to Action is available online at www.gbv.ie.

Angela O'Neill De Guilio
Regional Director with responsibility for leading GBV prevention and response strategy at Concern Worldwide (www.concern.net)

UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325, adopted by the UN in 2000, is a watershed political framework that makes a gender perspective relevant to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps and peacekeeping operations and reconstructing war-torn societies.

SCR 1325 calls for the following:

- increased representation of women at all decision-making levels in conflict prevention, management and resolution
- attention to the specific protection needs of women in conflict
- increased support for women peace builders
- no impunity for war crimes against women, including gender-based violence
- gender perspective in UN peacekeeping operations and post-conflict processes

'Resolution 1325 holds out a promise to women across the globe that their rights will be protected and that barriers to their equal participation and full involvement in the maintenance and promotion of sustainable peace will be removed. We must uphold this promise.'

from the UN Secretary-General's 2004 report on women, peace and security

'We are committed to the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security which recognized the need for women to participate on equal terms with men at all levels and in all roles to promote peace and security.'

from White Paper on Irish Aid

Global Updates

Eye on the UN: Priority Themes of the Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women has been responsible for organizing and following up on the world conferences on women in Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985) and Beijing (1995). Over the past decade, the Commission has systematically reviewed progress in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Beijing Platform for Action at its annual sessions and has adopted action-oriented recommendations, in the form of agreed conclusions, to facilitate implementation at all levels. The priority theme on the Commission's agenda for 2008 is 'financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women.'

The theme for the 2007 meeting was the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child. The 2009 priority theme will be the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS.

Finnish Cabinet Has Majority of Women

Finland has become the only country in the world to have a majority female government. Matti Vanhanen, the prime minister, has appointed 12 women to the 20-minister centre-right coalition cabinet, believed to be the highest proportion of women in any government in the world.

However, some senior cabinet posts—including the prime minister and posts in finance, foreign affairs and defence—remain in the hands of men, although women have the interior affairs and justice positions. Finland was the first country to elect women to parliament, with 19 women winning seats in elections 100 years ago. A total of 84 women won seats in Finland's 200-member parliament in general elections in March 2007.

New EU Policy Document on Gender and Development

The European Commission (EC) marked International Women's Day 2007 by issuing a Communication on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Developing Cooperation. Aimed at strengthening the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in EU Development Cooperation, the Communication recognises gender equality as 'a fundamental human right, a question of social justice and also a core value of the EU, including EU development policy.' WIDE, Women in Development Europe, welcomes the efforts of the Commission and Member States to put forward mechanisms to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment in EU Development Cooperation. However, WIDE has concerns that in spite of many positives—such as a list of concrete actions to increase the efficiency of gender mainstreaming and references to women's rights and to the link between HIV, women and sexual violence—the Communication is short on strategies and vague about resources to tackle the feminisation of poverty and to advance the empowerment of women in the political and economic spheres. Source: www.wide-network.org.

ILO Study Warns on the Feminization of Working Poverty

More women than ever before are working, but a persistent gap in status, job security, wages and education between women and men is contributing to the 'feminization of working poverty,' according to a new report by the International Labour Office (ILO).

According to 'Global Employment Trends for Women Brief – 2007,' the number of women participating in labour markets—either in work or looking actively for work—is at its highest point. In 2006, the ILO estimated that 1.2 billion of the 2.9 billion workers in the world were women.

However, the ILO said more women than ever before are unemployed (81.8 millions), stuck in low productivity jobs in agriculture and services or receiving less money for doing the same jobs as men. In addition, the ILO also said the share of working-age women who work or are seeking work had actually stopped growing or declined in some regions, partially due to more young women in education rather than work. Source: www.ilo.org.

Publication of Trócaire Development Review

The annual Trócaire Development Review is a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to policy analysis and research findings on development issues. The journal contains articles on economic, social and political themes related to poverty in the developing world. A particular focus is the impact that aid, trade, financial and other policies adopted by industrialised countries have on developing countries. The 2007 Trócaire Development Review

addresses the question of how to achieve gender equality, asking why, after so much time and effort, gender equality is still so far from being a reality. Each of the articles in this issue presents a different angle on this topic, highlighting the multifaceted and complex nature of gender relations, as well as the impact they have on the struggle to eliminate poverty and inequality. The review is available for download on www.trocaire.org

Banúlacht Updates

International Women's Day Conference

Banúlacht's 2007 International Women's Day Conference, 'Making Change Happen,' was a resounding success. Moving away from the traditional conference venues, we chose the Axis Centre, a community arts centre and theatre, to provide an innovative space, encouraging creative responses to our theme. We were fortunate to have four exceptional and thought-provoking speakers. The conference opened with a presentation by Elva O'Callaghan of the National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks. South African poet and activist Lebo Mashile followed with a reflection on women in post-apartheid South Africa. The afternoon speakers were equally powerful and inspiring: Professor Kathleen Lynch of the Equality Studies Centre at UCD spoke on 'Women's Citizenship' and Salome Mbugua of AKiDWA, the African Women's Network, addressed the theme of linking local and global women. The conference workshops focused on exploring North-South Solidarity through drama, poetry, visual arts and singing. Feedback through drama, poetry and song was lively, inspiring and fun, as well as reflective of the themes. Lebo Mashile closed the conference with a compelling performance of her poem 'Ancient Ones.' We were delighted to collaborate with the Ringsend Action Project, whose special staging of the Vagina Monologues ended an inspiring celebration of International Women's Day.

As one participant commented, 'the conference is a brilliant opportunity for different women in Ireland to meet, to be open to new ideas and perspectives and to be challenged beyond our immediate experiences.' Plans are already afoot to continue this creative theme in our 2008 International Women's Day conference. Watch this space!

Gráinne Begley
Banúlacht executive

Courses Offered by Banúlacht

Looking at the Economy through Women's Eyes
Banúlacht's Economic Literacy Training Programme.

Economics often seems like an elitist subject, and, for many, the language and concepts are off-putting and disempowering. Banúlacht's Economic Literacy training provides a space for women to unpack and demystify the jargon and to recognise how much they already know about the economy. The aim of this training course is to build the capacity and confidence of women and women's organisations in relation to the economy and economic policy making. We don't use textbooks, draw supply and demand curves, or cover pages with complicated mathematical formulae. Rather, we use group work, role-play and creative writing (and some theoretical inputs).

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The views expressed belong to the contributors and do not necessarily represent Banúlacht executive policy.

New Initiatives

Foundation Courses in Gender and Development Beginning in January 2008, and running once a week over 10 weeks, Banúlacht will run a new foundation level course in gender and development. We are currently convening an Advisory Group of representatives of Dublin-based women's community development organisations who will advise on the content and methodology of the course and also identify participants from within their own organisations. If you are interested in finding out more about this initiative, contact us at 01 872 3039.

Feminist Dialogues

As part of our work over the next three years, Banúlacht will organise a series of public events. Taking their name from the feminist spaces created by women's organisations at the World Social Fora, these sessions aim to provide a forum for discussion of topical gender, development and human rights issues from a feminist perspective and to bring together a diverse cross-section of people with an interest in gender and development.

Details of this series will be posted on our website, www.banulacht.ie, and will be sent to our expanding e-mail contact list. If you would like to be added to our notification list, send your contact details to banulach@iol.ie.

Two-, three- or four-day Economic Literacy courses are available, as well as one-day taster sessions.

To find out more or to order a copy of *Looking at the Economy through Women's Eyes: A Facilitator's Guide for Economic Literacy*, contact Banúlacht at 01 872 3039.

Comments from participants

'I got a greater knowledge and understanding of global issues, the economy, care sector and the importance of women's role in society.'

'This course has given me a greater understanding and awareness of worldwide issues that I had before never thought about or thought were way above my head.'

'The course was both interesting and informative. The content was both relevant and extremely interesting and was easy to relate to everyday examples.'

'I am more aware of the interconnectedness of the North and South and of how policies made in the North can impact on the lives of women and others in the South.'

'It's opened my eyes to what an important part women play in the economy.'