

## **Irish Feminist Network: Strategic Plan 2011 – 2013**



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## **Foreword**

The Irish Feminist Network has developed this plan with a view to carrying out its work over the coming years in an effective and maximally productive manner. Although the IFN will be somewhat flexible during the period 2011 – 2013, we will primarily seek to implement the strategic plan, thus remaining true to our identified priorities and issues of concern.

The IFN currently has over 1,600 supporters, and this number is continuously growing. In this current strategic planning period, we will seek to represent our members' interests to the best of our ability, working toward increased gender equality in Ireland.

The coordinators wish to thank the original co-ordinators, the IFN members, the National Women's Council of Ireland, and other individual supporters and organisations, who have ensured that the IFN, a year after its inception, continues to develop and expand. The current strategic plan forms a map of how we see this expansion taking hold over the next couple of years.

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## **IFN Mission, Vision, and Values**

### **Mission**

The Irish Feminist Network is an organisation committed to promoting gender equality in Ireland. We seek to make feminism relevant to a new generation of women, engaging all women in working for change.

### **Vision**

The Irish Feminist Network's vision is of an Ireland, and of a world, which prizes gender equality, and which allows women and men to live free from gendered injustices and oppression.

### **Values**

**Feminist Ethos:** We wish to undertake all our work from an explicitly feminist perspective. While mindful of the complexity and multiplicity of feminisms, we purposefully embrace the term 'feminism' and invite others to follow us in doing so.

**Equality:** We wish to advance equality in all spheres of Irish society. As different types of inequality overlap and reinforce each other, we recognise the importance of working toward the elimination of inequalities that are not just based on gender, but also on class, racial or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, and other markers of difference.

**Inclusiveness:** We wish to protect and promote the interests of all of our members, and we respect the diversity of women and men who join us in opposing gender inequality.

**Solidarity:** We wish to work toward increased gender equality in Ireland by forging alliances with other social justice groups, community groups, NGOs and movements with whom we share similar values and priorities. Such alliance-building will also extend across national boundaries and will encompass the whole island of Ireland.

**Progressiveness:** We wish to form a focal point for feminist women and men who seek the introduction of positive and progressive measures for the achievement of gender equality both in Ireland and abroad.

## **IFN Strategic Context**

The Irish Feminist Network was officially launched on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010, having been conceived by a group of women from the M.Phil. in Gender and Women's Studies at Trinity College Dublin. It was set up as a network for women and men interested in feminism and gender equality in Ireland, to advocate for and bring about change.

In July 2011 new co-ordinators took over the responsibility of running the IFN, and there are now five individuals dedicated to this task. While this somewhat expands the capacity of the IFN to achieve its objectives outlined below, it is important to note the developing state of the IFN at this stage.

The IFN's resources are extremely limited, although there are several measures discussed in what follows to counteract this. It should be pointed out, as well, that the IFN is growing organisationally, against a backdrop of a financial crisis and increased austerity measures purportedly designed to grapple with said crisis. Government and philanthropic funding, for all sectors, is increasingly limited.

As the IFN's co-ordination has recently changed hands, and the present document forms the IFN's first strategic plan, there was little opportunity for consultation on the plan. This circumstance is reflected in the timeframe of the current strategic plan – it is limited to a two year period, during which the co-ordinators will endeavour to undergo a consultation process with its members for the next strategic plan 2013 – 2016.

Despite this lack of broader consultation, the IFN has several strategic cues to take from its near-unique position as a feminist organisation, which is not government-funded or aligned to a political party, and which does not represent any special or specific interest group other than those who wish to work toward increased gender equality.

The IFN also acknowledges the important role the National Women's Council plays with regard to challenging gender inequalities, and recognises the significance of aligning its strategic priorities with existing campaigns and programmes, such as the Turn off the Red Light Campaign and the NWCI's project on women's political representation. The National Women's Strategy, adopted by the government in 2007, is similarly important in this regard. The IFN also notes the potential of capitalising on the current groundswell in feminist grass-roots activism through strategic alliance-forging with other women's groups and relevant organisations.

## **Strategic Priority Areas**

The IFN has identified six strategic priority areas, which it will focus on over the next couple of years. This work will significantly contribute to the realisation of our vision and the fulfilment of our mission, while remaining true to our organisational values. The priority areas are as follows:

Strategic Priority Area 1: Engaging Women and Men in Feminism

Strategic Priority Area 2: Economic Gender Justice

Strategic Priority Area 3: Political Representation

Strategic Priority Area 4: Prostitution and Sex-Trafficking

Strategic Priority Area 5: Reproductive Freedom

Strategic Priority Area 6: IFN Capacity Building

## **Strategic Objectives and Actions**

Each of these strategic priority areas is broken down into specific objectives (O) and attendant actions (A) to be achieved during the course of the strategic planning period, that is, from 2011 – 2013.

### **1. Strategic Priority Area 1: Engaging Women and Men in Feminism**

#### ***O 1: Counter negative stereotypes of feminism and provide alternative visions***

A 1.1: Plan and execute outreach activities and events to invite particularly young people to meet feminists.

A 1.2: Build upon our media resources to also facilitate such meetings online and through social media.

A 1.3: Invite prominent women and men to talk on feminism, gender, and related topics, at IFN-organised and affiliated events.

A 1.4: Collaborate with feminist groups, youth groups, and other relevant organisations in outreach and similar activities to promote feminism.

#### ***O 2: Undercut negative associations with the term ‘feminism’***

A 2.1: Explicitly refer to feminist work and literature as ‘feminist’ in all our media, policies and communications.

A 2.2: Disseminate analyses of the phenomenon of the ‘F-word’ and promote explicitly feminist literature to counter this phenomenon (through our book club, original articles for the media, etc.).

## **2. Strategic Priority Area 2: Economic Gender Justice**

### ***O 1: Expand our research and policy work on economic inequality and gender***

A 1.1: Undertake research and policy work on the economic situation of women and men in Ireland. Where appropriate, draw upon existing work (by academics, NWCI, etc.).

A 1.2: Ensure research and policy work are nuanced (utilising available information on different groups of women in particular) and up-to-date.

A 1.3: Assess new economic measures and developments with regard to their gendered impacts, and the impacts they have on different groups of people in Ireland.

### ***O 2: Engage in advocacy and campaigning work on economic inequality and gender***

A 2.1: Building upon O1, use up-to-date research and policy work as a basis for campaigning and advocacy.

A 2.2: Disseminate information on gendered economic inequality through various media outlets (Facebook, website, newspapers, newsletter, blogs, etc.).

A 2.3: Form alliances with other groups and organisations working on gendered economic inequality and support existing campaigns.

A 2.4: Lobby government for a gender analysis of the forthcoming budget; for clear provision of information on the budget; and for an analysis of how the budget and other economic measures and policies impact upon different groups in Irish society.

A 2.5: Work, together with other organisations and groups, for the protection of social welfare provisions and benefits (which primarily benefit women) through advocacy and campaigning.

### ***O 3: Analyse economic inequality and gender in its intersection with other inequalities and act upon such analyses***

A 3.1: Develop research and policy work on the intersection of economic inequality, gender, and other inequalities, and draw upon existing analyses of same where appropriate.

A 3.2: Form alliances with organisations and groups working on economic inequality and gender as it intersects with other inequalities.

### **3. Strategic Priority Area 3: Political Representation**

#### ***O 1: Raise awareness of the under-representation of women in Irish politics***

A 1.1: Undertake research and policy work on the situation of women in Irish politics. Where appropriate, draw upon existing work.

A 1.2: Disseminate this research and policy work in accessible format through various media outlets to draw attention to women's political under-representation and provide information to the public.

A 1.3: Organise and participate in events on women's political representation and women in Irish politics more generally.

#### ***O 2: Engage in lobbying and campaigning to alter women's under-representation in Irish politics***

A 2.1: Campaign for positive measures, such as quotas, to be introduced as a means of counteracting the under-representation of women in Irish politics.

A 2.2: Lobby for the full realisation of such measures and campaign for quotas to apply to local elections, and to be extended from 30% to 50% female candidacy.

A 2.3: Undertake campaigning and advocacy work on other prohibitive factors for women in politics (such as childcare and political culture).

A 2.3: Form alliances with other groups and organisations campaigning for more equal political representation in Ireland (such as the NWCI, 50:50 group, etc.)

#### ***O 3: Work toward the inclusion of politically marginalised groups who may or may not also be women***

A 3.1: Undertake research, policy work and advocacy on traditionally excluded or marginalised groups and their under-representation in Irish politics. Assess whether this exclusion is exacerbated by gender where relevant.

A 3.2: Form alliances with groups campaigning for inclusion of such traditionally marginalised groups.

#### **4. Strategic Priority Area 4: Prostitution and Sex-Trafficking**

##### ***O 1: Raise awareness of the complex issues involved in prostitution and sex-trafficking***

A 1.1: Undertake research and policy work on prostitution and sex-trafficking in Ireland. Again, where appropriate, draw on existing research and resources (e.g. Ruhama).

A 1.2: Disseminate information on prostitution and sex-trafficking, particularly to younger audiences, through social media and more traditional outlets.

A 1.3: Organise or participate in events on prostitution and sex-trafficking in Ireland, and engage specifically younger people in such events.

##### ***O 2: Campaign for legislative change and pro-active measures to address prostitution and sex-trafficking***

A 2.1: Lobby for the introduction of the Swedish model in Ireland.

A 2.2: Support the Turn off the Red Light Campaign and other relevant parties in doing so.

#### **5. Strategic Priority Area 5: Reproductive Freedom**

##### ***O 1: Raise awareness of the status of women's reproductive rights in Ireland***

A 1.1: Undertake research and policy work on women's reproductive rights in Ireland. Again, where appropriate, draw on existing research and resources.

A 1.2: Disseminate information from this research and policy work in accessible form through various media (website, blogs, Facebook, newspapers, etc.)

A 1.3: Organise or participate in events on women's reproductive rights in Ireland, and engage specifically younger people in such events.

##### ***O 2: Campaign for legislative change and pro-active measures to address women's reproductive rights***

A 2.1: Lobby the government and political parties to legislate for the ABC case.

A 2.2: Campaign for improved sex education in Irish schools.

A 2.3: Campaign for safe and accessible sexual health services.

A 2.4: Support other organisations and campaigns in doing so.

## **6. Strategic Priority Area 6: IFN Capacity Building**

**Enable execution of this strategic plan by building the IFN through:**

### ***O 1: Development and maintenance of our media presence and communications***

A 1.1: Maintain and develop our website, blog, forum, Facebook page, and other media.

A 1.2: Use these to regularly disseminate information, advertise events, and act as a focal point for campaigns and networking for the IFN, relevant organisations and interested individuals.

A 1.3: Additionally, use other media, such as newspapers, magazines, blogs, or radio in advocacy and lobbying work to advance our strategic interests as outlined above.

### ***O 2: Fundraising***

A 2.1: Finalise the incorporation process to allow for applications to funding schemes and government grants.

A 2.2: Pursue philanthropic or corporate funding, such as provided by Diageo or Vodafone.

A 2.3: Continue direct fundraising with supporters through events, and through enabling donations on our website.

A 2.4: Draw on other required resources by seeking corporate sponsorship or support from other organisations.

A 2.5: Pool resources with other interested groups and networks by organising joint events and pursuing joint funding proposals.

### ***O 3: Research and Policy Development***

A 3.1: Undertake research and develop policies in accordance with the strategic priorities outlined in this strategic plan.

A 3.2: Share research and policy work with other relevant groups and networks, and with our members.

### ***O 4: Advocacy, Campaigning and Alliance-Building***

A 4.1: Engage in advocacy and campaigning work in accordance with the strategic priorities outlined in this strategic plan.

A 4.2: Join existing campaigns which seek to advance the priorities of this strategic plan.

A 4.3: Support organisations and groups working on the IFN's identified strategic priorities and, where appropriate, become a member of such organisations (e.g. the NWCI).

### ***O 5: Events, Outreach and Coordination***

A 5.1: Organise events in accordance with the strategic priorities outlined above, and support events (through attendance, speaking engagements, etc.) which are in accordance with these priorities.

A 5.2: Although the IFN is based in Dublin, try to expand the IFN's activities to other parts of Ireland. As part of this, pursue cross-border funding for an all-Ireland feminist event.

A 5.3: Continue holding regular events for our members (such as our book club), and consider expanding this into a discussion group, film club, or similar.

A 5.4: Set up a list of members who are interested in acting as volunteers.

A 5.5: Engage in a consultative process for the next strategic plan, 2013 – 2016, by organising a members-based event on the IFN's development and similar measures.

A 5.6: For the co-ordinators: to continue to hold regular meetings and to further stream-line working processes and practices as the IFN develops.

## **Performance Indicators**

The following shall act as performance indicators for the strategic priority areas detailed above, with the following outputs to be achieved by 2013:

1. Policy and/or research documents (position papers, policy briefs, etc.) produced on:
  - (a) economic inequality and gender in Ireland (as well as how this is impacted by other inequalities)
  - (b) the under-representation of women in Irish politics (as well as other traditionally excluded groups)
  - (c) prostitution and sex-trafficking in Ireland
  - (d) women's reproductive rights in Ireland
2. Being an active member in existing campaigns, or having played a significant role in its own right as a lobbying body for each (a) – (d). Legislative change brought about as a result

of such campaigns with regard to women's reproductive rights, prostitution, and political representation.

3. Production and publication of advocacy materials (such as pamphlets, blog posts, articles, etc.) on (a) – (d) as well as on feminism and gender in Ireland more generally, and on its relevance to young people particularly.

4. Events and outreach activity undertaken (an advocacy workshop, feminism summer school, and others) on (a) – (d) – as well as on feminism and gender in Ireland, involving particularly young people.

5. Alliances built with other networks and groups through participation in events (TORL, Cork Feminista event, etc.), speaking engagements and joint campaigning.

6. Consolidating the structure and resources of the IFN financially (funding obtained), organisationally (incorporation process completed), and in terms of its media and human resources (website, forum, etc. established and used by members as a resource).

7. Consolidating and growing the IFN's membership (increased followers on Facebook, volunteers, book club members and attendance at other events) and increased recognition of the IFN as a representative body for people interested in feminism and gender equality, particularly young people (interest from media, requests to speak, etc.).

## **Appendix: The IFN Coordinators**

**Alison Spillane** works as a political researcher in the Oireachtas. She writes occasionally for the Irish current affairs website Politico.ie and is involved with the CrisisJam project hosted there. As a co-ordinator with the IFN she hopes to develop the campaigning arm of the organisation, particularly around issues such as reproductive rights and political under-representation. She also contributes to policy development and media/communications work.

**Clara Fischer** holds a Ph.D. in feminist theory and political philosophy from Trinity College Dublin. Besides lecturing and researching in academia, she has also worked as a gender specialist in the NGO sector, with a particular focus on gender and development. She is a musician, and loves singing nearly as much as she loves her tabby cat. As a coordinator of the Irish Feminist Network, she is primarily concerned with policy development, research and advocacy work.

**Emma Regan** has always been a feminist but has done very little about it until now. While studying English and Maths at Trinity College Dublin, she enjoyed debating women's issues in her beloved Phil. Then she taught English in Japan for a year. She is excited to work with the IFN to promote debate about feminism on a societal level, particularly in the areas of language, the arts and involving young people.

**Erin Gell** is currently working towards an M.Phil in European Studies at Trinity College Dublin. Originally from the United States, Erin studied journalism at the University of Florida and worked as a writer and reporter in New York City before relocating to Dublin in 2010. She is looking forward to working with the IFN to help change the stigma around feminism and hopes to become involved with women's issues in areas including the media, advertising, the arts, and sport.

**Jessica Connor** has always been involved in activism and feels passionately about feminism and issues of inequality around the world and in Ireland. Jessica became involved in the IFN after becoming overwhelmingly frustrated with the state of affairs in Ireland and decided to challenge the status quo. Jessica's main areas of responsibility with the IFN, though not limited to, are maintenance of the site, our online presence, and involvement with event coordination and activism.