

REPORTS

The United Nations ‘Beijing Platform for Action’ (1995–2005): Local–Global Political Spaces, NGO Activism and Governmental Responses in the Republic of Ireland

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Introduction

September 2005 marks the tenth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing 1995) and the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) by 189 governments, including Ireland. From 28 February to 11 March, 2005, Irish governmental and non-governmental organisation (NGO) delegations attended a meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, which aimed to carry out a ‘review and appraisal’ of implementation of the BPFA. At this timely juncture, this report reviews the domestic impact in the Republic of Ireland – with a focus on NGO activism and governmental responses – of the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) and subsequent BPFA implementation monitoring processes. This report starts with a brief overview of the ‘Beijing to Beijing-Plus-Ten’ path in global perspective. It then highlights key developments in NGO and governmental engagement with the BPFA and its review processes in Ireland. In doing so, it considers the overall impact of the BPFA, the relative roles of the state and NGO actors around its implementation at the local/national level and some implications for the women’s movements in Ireland.

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Finally, it notes some specific concerns and challenges that arise in understanding the nature of emerging local/global political spaces.

Global Context: Origins and Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action

The UN Fourth World Conference on Women was an important watershed in transnational feminist advocacy. It was the culmination of the UN Decade on Women (1975–85) and a series of world conferences on women that were held in Mexico City (1975), Copenhagen (1980) and Nairobi (1985). More immediately, it was also part of a fresh series of UN world conferences on social and economic justice themes in the 1990s, reflecting a moment in global politics wherein many envisaged that UN and human rights standards would play a more prominent role in a post-cold war era. In addition to the FWCW, these conferences included the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro 1992), the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna 1993), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo 1994) and the Social Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen 1995). One of the most effective examples of transnational activism that crystallised around the 1990s conferences was the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights. This campaign sought to situate emerging global commitments to women, including the BPFA, within a human rights framework that was informed by feminist principles (Bunch, 1990; Brown Thompson, 2002).

Ostensibly, the BPFA is the vehicle through which the commitments made in Beijing are realised within national and local contexts. It names 12 'Critical Areas of Concern' wherein the FWCW identified continuing obstacles to women's advancement. These are: poverty, education and training, health, violence, armed conflict, decision-making, institutional mechanisms, human rights, media, environment, the girl-child, and the economy. The BPFA also provides hundreds of detailed 'strategic objectives and actions' to be taken up by UN, state and/or NGO actors. Specifically, it calls for governments to develop plans of action 'preferably by the end of 1996'. Perhaps most importantly, the plans of action are expected to have 'time-bound targets and benchmarks for monitoring, and include proposals for allocating or reallocating resources for implementation of the Platform for Action by governments' (BPFA: para. 297).

In June 2000, a comprehensive review of governmental implementation of the BPFA took place in the form of a UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS). However, the UNGASS was the site of an intense conservative backlash against the BPFA, especially in the areas of women's health and reproductive and sexual rights (Sen and Correa, 2000; Neuhold, n.d., CWGL/WEDO, 2000). In light of this backlash, leaders in the global women's movement argued against the UN convening a fifth world conference on women where, they anticipated, the BPFA might be renegotiated and progress on women's human rights reversed (CWGL, 2003). These developments prompted women's movements across all regions to question the usefulness and relevance of their global-level advocacy over the past decade and to

examine the extent to which they have contributed to the promotion of gender justice at the national and local level (ISIS International Manila, 2004).

Turning to the local terrain with this question in mind, we now trace the impact of the FWCW and the BPFA in Ireland. I do not attempt to review national progress in relation to specific 'critical areas of concern' in the BPFA. Rather, I am concerned here with mapping key developments in the engagement of domestic actors – both governmental and non-governmental – with the FWCW and the BPFA. In particular, I chart the evolving political relationship between the feminist NGO sector and the government surrounding BPFA implementation and review processes.

Local Impact: Governmental and Non-governmental Engagement with the FWCW and Beijing Platform for Action in Ireland

The FWCW and the First Governmental Report

At least 15 non-governmental organisations or networks from Ireland sent representatives to the FWCW in Beijing in 1995.² This included a range of smaller groups that attended under the auspices of accredited organisations. Irish NGO participation at the FWCW, therefore, was significant and signalled increased involvement and interest in the international arena by a wider range of groups than had ever before been involved in UN meetings. Some 25 Irish NGOs made submissions to the government, which were included in the appendices of the national report of Ireland (DELR, 1994)³ or in the supplement to the national report of Ireland (DELR, 1995a).⁴ The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) produced an independent report (NWCI, 1995) to the FWCW, which provided a thorough overview of the situation of women in Ireland in relation to the Draft Platform's 12 'critical areas of concern'. As such, the report represented a significant shift in the Council's approach, wherein, for the first time, it situated women's concerns in Ireland within a wider global women's movement.

The FWCW played an important role in bringing international pressure to bear on the government to respond to NGO claims domestically. The Irish government's statement to the FWCW governmental plenary echoed many of the concerns contained in NGO submissions. Importantly, the statement opened with a clear articulation of the centrality of UN standards and of a human rights framework to women's rights in Ireland. It thus provided an important reference point for NGOs seeking to hold the government accountable for the implementation of its Beijing commitments within a women's human rights framework:

The Irish government considers that the Platform for Action ... should be the blueprint for the future and we as participants must be committed to its implementation. Ireland wishes to see a strong, focused Platform, one which is positive and progressive, and builds on previously agreed standards ... The framework must be the human rights of women and the girl-child, from which flow all other rights ... The international community must build on what has

been agreed at previous conferences, in particular at Copenhagen, Cairo and Vienna, to ensure equality and inclusion, with full respect for, and protection of, the human rights of women and the girl-child as we approach a new millennium. (DELR, 1995b: 1)

The then Minister for Equality and Law Reform, Mervyn Taylor, went on to pledge the realisation of several specific NGO objectives, including: a minimum of 40 per cent female membership on state boards, employment equality and family-friendly conditions of employment and access to high quality childcare and legislation to further extend protection for women and children in situations of domestic violence. Further, the Minister's statement included recognition that 'NGOs have a vital role to play in agenda-setting and in charting practical strategies of action', and it committed to ensuring 'appropriate involvement of Irish NGOs in the implementation of the Platform for Action' (DELR, 1995b: 3).

The Department of Equality and Law Reform produced the first report on implementation of the Platform for Action in December 1996 (DELR, 1996). However, despite the governmental commitment to consult with NGOs, the report was created without NGO input. It was loosely organised under the Platform's 12 critical areas of concern, with each section containing descriptions of Government programmes and initiatives that were already underway and which could be interpreted as related to a critical area of concern. There was no attempt to link these descriptions to the explicit agreed 'strategic objectives and actions' stipulated in the BPFA under each critical area of concern. Further, there was no attempt to provide time-bound targets, benchmarks or resource commitments. The first report established a pattern for the government's approach to reporting on compliance with the BPFA – using it as a 'master list' of possible issues and actions, which may or may not be taken as it suited the government of the day. This approach was defended with the claim that 'it is apparent from the report that the objectives and actions agreed at Beijing are being assimilated into all areas of government policy *as appropriate to Irish conditions*' (emphasis added). In the years since, this standpoint has been regularly re-articulated – by governments across the political spectrum – and reflects a resistance to fully incorporating the BPFA as a framework that actively shapes gender equality policy and monitoring. Following the first report in 1996, no further governmental action was taken until the UN requested an update on implementation in preparation for its 'Beijing-Plus-Five Review' in 2000.

Within the NGO sector, however, the Beijing process had sparked a new interest in engaging with UN forums and applying global agreements to the local/national context. This included an all-Ireland conference on Women's Rights as Human Rights: Local and Global Perspectives (March 1997), organised by a broad coalition of women's groups and projects under the auspices of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties.⁵ The conference served as a springboard for other women's human rights NGO activities over the following years, including the Women's Human Rights Campaign 1998,⁶ which lobbied for the creation of a National Plan of Action to implement the BPFA and the inclusion of gender concerns in the remit of the

anticipated new national Human Rights Commission. Campaign participants also made submissions to the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the context of its 1999 review of the government's implementation of the Women's Convention.⁷ Further, Banúlacht and the National Association of Adult Education (AONTAS) undertook extensive consultations with community groups in 1999 to assess the impact of the BPFA at the local level, particularly in the area of education and training (Madden, 2000).

Beijing-Plus-Five

In October 1998, the UN initiated its 'Beijing-Plus-Five' review process with a request to governments to complete a questionnaire detailing the steps they each had taken to implement the BPFA at the national level. Once again, the Irish government completed and submitted its progress report to the UN without prior NGO consultation and input. Then, under pressure from NGOs, a series of government-sponsored regional consultations were convened and funding was provided to send a small delegation of NGOs to the UNGASS. However, mirroring developments at the global level, the pre-UNGASS meetings of NGOs in Ireland were obstructed by a minority of vocal, socially conservative activists who were opposed to the BPFA and the UN Women's Convention and questioned the legitimacy of such UN agreements in the context of Ireland. Individuals from 'Near', which describes itself as a 'national coalition of women's rights, pro-family, and pro-life groups' and 'Women in the Home' were the most prominent in advancing anti-BPFA and anti-Women's Convention positions. This manifestation of the backlash in Ireland prompted the formation of the Pro-Beijing Platform for Action NGO Coalition.⁸

Despite the limitations of the consultation process, the Pro-Beijing Coalition used the meetings to produce *Promises Made, Promises Broken: Alternative Report for Ireland Beijing Plus Five* (Pro Beijing NGO Coalition, 2000). The Coalition's efforts were instrumental in ensuring that Minister John O'Donoghue's official speech to the UNGASS contained the long overdue commitments that '[t]he Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform has started work on the development of a National Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2000–2005' and that '[c]onsultation with NGOs will be an important part of the work of developing the Action Plan' (DJELR, 2000a). However, the mode in which the BPFA might be implemented in Ireland was carefully qualified at the start of the same speech with the now recurring governmental phrase that 'the actions agreed at Beijing are being assimilated into Irish government policy *in a manner appropriate to Irish conditions*' (emphasis added).

Towards a National (Action) Plan for Women

Following the UNGASS, the Pro-Beijing Platform for Action NGO Coalition called for a 'bottom-up' consultation process that would begin with submissions from a wide range of women's groups and individuals in the creation of the Draft National Action Plan. The Coalition further recommended that this would be followed by an

'extended period of consultation ... during which responses are sought ... [including] ... proposals for monitoring ... implementation of the Plan' (Pro-BPFA Coalition correspondence to DJELR, October 2000). The government, however, pursued a different process. Early in 2001, it engaged a consultant to draw up the initial 'Draft National Plan for Women' on the basis of existing government documents and 'actual government commitments' (DJELR Brochure, September 2001). Going somewhat beyond the narrow terms of reference set by the DJELR, the consultant, Pauline Conroy, also produced a supplemental discussion document, *Reflecting at the Crossroads* (Conroy, 2001), which drew on limited consultations with some NGOs and individuals. It provided 'a short overview of the concerns, aspirations and expectations of women in Ireland' under the twelve critical areas of concern in the BPFA. The Government's use of language at this juncture is very significant. It replaced the UN term 'National Action Plan' with 'National Plan', thereby distancing itself from UN requirements while still claiming that the plan had 'its origins in a series of UN conferences ... culminating in the Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration'. The term 'actual government commitments' is also important in that it signalled that there would be *no new commitments* in the National Plan, only a listing of government programmes and initiatives that were already in place and which could be construed as satisfying some elements of the BPFA. This raised questions about what the DJELR intended to do with the feedback that would be generated by its proposed 'comprehensive and wide-ranging' NGO consultation process that was to take place *in response to the Draft National Plan*.

The structure of the pre-consultation 'Draft National Plan for Women' (October 2001) provided answers to these questions that were very unsatisfactory to NGOs. The draft was divided into three parts. Part I consisted of the consultant's compilation of existing commitments organised under selected BPFA 'critical areas of concern'. Part II contained 'Statistics in Relation to Women in Ireland', as well as a section on gender-sensitive indicators that were to be further developed in the context of the ensuing consultation process. The latter section was based on the report 'The Development of Mechanisms to Monitor Progress in Achieving Gender Equality in Ireland' (Galligan, 2000). As such, it was a useful point of departure in the exploration of the kinds of indicators that might be used for measuring progress in implementing the National Plan. However, it was extremely unrealistic for the government to claim that indicators would be further developed in the context of the broad-based, unstructured consultation process that was to follow (Draft National Plan, 2001: 4). Up to the present time, the government has yet to develop a workable framework of indicators to facilitate monitoring and measurement of progress in achieving gender equality.

Part III, which was in fact a blank page, was the most controversial and dubious section of the 'Draft National Plan for Women'. According to the government, this part of the National Plan was to be filled with 'a vision of the aspirations of women in relation to the Twelve Critical Areas of concern in the Beijing Platform for Action ... [which would be] ... articulated through the consultation process on the Plan' (DJELR Consultation Brochure, 2001). Women's organisations, especially those that had been closely involved in the FWCW process from 1995 up to this point, were

extremely frustrated by these developments. After all, the government was supposed to have created a National Action Plan to implement the BPFA back in 1996. Now it was presiding over a 'consultation process', ostensibly to create a 'National Plan', wherein NGOs' inputs on implementing the BPFA strategic objectives would be relegated to the status of 'aspirations'. Unsurprisingly, many pro-BPFA activists viewed the whole process as a cynical and wasteful exercise designed to create the appearance of consultation with NGOs and the impression of forward movement on the BPFA in order to comply with UN requirements in a minimal fashion.⁹

Following the production of the Draft National Plan, the actual consultation process commenced in October 2001 and small grants were provided to 228 groups around the country to facilitate the production of NGO submissions.¹⁰ Despite considerable NGO involvement, the resulting national plan (DJELR, 2002) was an unaltered reproduction of Part I of the Draft National Plan published a year earlier. The consultation process with NGOs, therefore, had had no impact on the official governmental report on BPFA implementation submitted to the UN. It reported progress on less than five per cent of the strategic objectives in the BPFA (that is, progress on 26 out of more than 500 objectives). There was no effort to delineate indicators, benchmarks or budgetary provisions. The NGO inputs that resulted from the consultation process were compiled into a separate document (DJELR, 2003), with the government making no commitments to take further action in relation to its contents. Undoubtedly, the consultation process provided a valuable opportunity for many NGOs at different levels to articulate their views on the range of issues and concerns affecting women in contemporary Ireland. However, the definition and structure of the process ensured that it could not have culminated in the kind of National Action Plan that governments had agreed to develop in signing up to the BPFA in 1995: a plan that systematically addresses the specific strategic objectives and actions set out in the BPFA and that is underpinned by an effective monitoring system and adequate resources.

Beijing-Plus-Ten

Early in 2004, following a similar process used in the Beijing-Plus-Five review, the government was required by the UN to submit a Beijing-Plus-Ten progress report. This report took the form of a questionnaire from the UN that asked governments to identify 'major achievements, gaps and challenges, as well as priority areas for further action to ensure full implementation' of the BPFA in their countries. In keeping with the established pattern, the Irish government did not involve NGOs in the governmental process to complete the questionnaire. The resulting progress report draws on and updates elements of the national plan on women (DJELR, 2002) and refers to the government's most recent report to CEDAW (DJELR, 2003) as a source of further information. It draws back from the commitment of 'full implementation' of the BPFA by arguing that the Platform does not allow 'for a sufficient prioritisation of issues which are of central importance to Irish women', such as family-friendly workplace policies. Unexpectedly,

the government also mooted plans for the development of a new National Women's Strategy. In response to this new departure, women's NGOs expressed concerns that this strategy must be rooted in an 'equality and human rights framework incorporating commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and other international treaties' and that its action plan should include 'timeframes, targets and indicators, and budget lines'.¹¹

Significantly, the government's report claims that, in large part as a way of meeting BPFA requirements, national policy discourse in Ireland had shifted from a 'women's rights' to a 'gender equality' paradigm, with 'gender mainstreaming' now being the primary focus. It notes that while gender mainstreaming has been 'embraced' in Irish policy implementation, it presents particular challenges from the government's perspective. This includes the enormity of the task of developing and implementing a system of gender mainstreaming indicators, which, it warns, could become an 'end in itself' and displace other actions on gender equality. In addition, the government report acknowledges practical difficulties in 'maintaining a women-only focus' within a gender mainstreaming framework. Further, the government seeks UN guidance on how it might more 'closely align reporting systems under CEDAW and the Platform for Action' and whether it is required to use a 'gender mainstreaming' or a 'women's rights' framework.

In highlighting the apparent conflict between a 'women's rights' and a 'gender equality' approach to policy implementation, the government's report fuels concerns increasingly being articulated by advocates in the global women's movement that the shift to 'gender mainstreaming and gender sensitivity [approaches] has depoliticized the struggle for women's rights' (Griffen, 2004: 159). Sri Lankan human rights activist Sunila Abeysekera, for example, notes that while gender mainstreaming "'appears to be more "inclusive" [in that] it allows for both men and women, in fact, it ... is a way of dislocating women from the centre of the discussion' (Abeysekera & Karl, 2004: 80). Overall, efforts to implement gender mainstreaming have been very uneven. For example, 'in Canada and the Netherlands, the integration of gender equality in general policies proved to be much more troublesome than was expected [not least] because of a lack of political will, and a bureaucratic wall of indifference, if not hostility' (Verloo, 2001: 5). There is a growing awareness, therefore, that if gender mainstreaming is to deliver on its radical promise in local/national contexts, proponents must take measures to avert the 'danger of the disappearance of gender equality policies ... and the danger of being swept away by the mainstream instead of changing it' (Verloo, 2001: 8).

The Beijing-Plus-Ten review also reactivated NGO engagement with the BPFA in Ireland. The Women's Human Rights Alliance (WHRA)¹² completed a 'shadow questionnaire' as part of a global NGO initiative organised by the New York-based NGO Committee on the Status of Women, and Women's Aid prepared a separate Beijing-Plus-Ten submission on the issue of violence against women (Women's Aid, 2005). In addition, the WHRA served as a national focal point in a Global Week of Action for Women's Rights (1–8 March 2005), calling for a reaffirmation of the BPFA in the context of the Beijing-Plus-Ten review.¹³ These activities built on other

ongoing projects coordinated by the WHRA, including extensive training and capacity-building workshops with local and community groups around using the UN Women's Convention in local/national contexts and the production of an NGO shadow report to CEDAW (WHRA, 2004).

The primary objective of both NGO and governmental supporters of the BPFA at the Beijing-Plus-Ten CSW meeting was to secure the unanimous adoption by governments of a two-page draft declaration that unconditionally reaffirmed the BPFA and the Outcome Document of the Beijing-Plus-Five Review. The first week of the meeting was dominated by efforts to defeat a United States of America amendment to the draft declaration, stating that the BPFA does not create any 'new human rights', particularly a right to abortion. Facing sustained opposition from the majority of governments present (including Ireland via the EU), the US withdrew its amendment and the draft declaration was adopted unchanged on 4 March 2005.

As in the past, in the context of the global UN arena, the Irish government presented itself as a firm supporter of the BPFA. The national statement by Minister of State Frank Fahey expressed the hope that this 'review of the Beijing Platform for Action would copperfasten the progress we have made in the last ten years and propel us forward into a new era of true equality for the women of the world' (DJELR, 2005: 1). Given the hostility of the US delegation to reproductive and sexual rights, it is also noteworthy that Minister Fahey's statement asserted that, in the context of its development aid programme, 'in the fight against HIV/AIDS Ireland adopts a multifaceted approach which includes funding for sexual and reproductive health, information and services' (p. 3).

At the same time, however, a ten-year trend of marginalising the BPFA in the formation of domestic policy responses to gender inequality was continued. The government statement outlines its three-pronged approach to gender issues in Ireland as consisting of 'equality legislation, gender mainstreaming and positive actions'. Significantly, the statement makes no mention of women's rights or human rights or the involvement of NGOs and there is no renewed commitment to implement the BPFA in Ireland. On the contrary, Minister Fahey declared that the way forward will be shaped by the forthcoming National Women's Strategy which 'will be inspired by the spirit of Beijing' and 'will become the touchstone for progress on equality for women in Ireland [in the way] that the Platform for Action has become for women of world' (p. 3). In this subtle use of language, the Irish government creates a dichotomy between 'women in Ireland' and the 'women of world', where, it seems, the BPFA applies to the latter only.

Conclusions

Over the past decade, the BPFA has played a significant, if often contentious, role in the Republic of Ireland. This includes influencing governmental discourse around gender equality, framing an emerging strand of globally-oriented, feminist activism, and shaping new local-global political spaces in which governmental and non-governmental actors engage around what it means to implement global agreements

in local/national contexts. The complicated trail of actions and measures taken by the government and local NGOs in relation to the implementation of the provisions of the BPFA in Ireland reveal a very mixed experience. From an NGO perspective, there has been little success in securing consultative processes through which NGOs can influence the implementation and monitoring of the BPFA. Further, there is still no governmental 'action plan' that uses the BPFA as a source of strategic objectives with a view to its 'full implementation'. Initially, the FWCW had prompted the government to endorse the relatively binding language and framework of 'women's rights as human rights', which had emerged in the preceding UN world conferences. From there on, however, Irish governmental practice and discourse repeatedly pulled back from a concept of the BPFA as an active framework that should shape women's advancement domestically in a systematic way. Instead, successive reports on implementation of the BPFA have treated the vast majority of its 'strategic objectives and actions' as optional. Most recently, this trend was confirmed in the national statement to the Beijing-Plus-Ten Review at the 49th session of the UN CSW in which the government made its most vague commitment yet – that the new National Women's Strategy would be guided by the 'spirit of Beijing'.

At the same time, in global UN forums over the past decade, the Irish government has presented itself as a firm supporter of the BPFA. It has ostensibly opposed the conservative backlash against the global women's rights agenda, spearheaded most notably by the United States of America in recent years. This raises interesting questions about the dual role of states as 'global' as distinct from 'local' actors. For example, in the context of scholarship around globalisation and a putative decline in the autonomy of the nation-state, it suggests that states, while appearing to forfeit a degree of 'sovereignty' in signing up to certain global agreements, in fact retain a strong veto at the level of national interpretation and implementation. This is, perhaps, more the case in relation to declarations and platforms for action than it is for quasi-legal agreements, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It remains to be seen, however, whether the relatively recent shift in NGO focus to seeking full implementation of CEDAW will prove to be more effective in shaping governmental responses at the local/national level than has engagement with the BPFA.

An additional area of concern is the degree to which the government's embrace of a 'gender mainstreaming' approach as the chief feature of its implementation of the BPFA is, in fact, reflective of a wider pattern of de-radicalisation of women's (human) rights agendas. This development requires further exploration and suggests that, perhaps, recent scholarship has overstated the degree to which the application of the BPFA and gender mainstreaming in Ireland is 'evidence of feminist ideas, concepts and values penetrating mainstream policy making' (Carney, 2002: 28).

Finally, notwithstanding the many obstacles encountered by NGOs in seeking implementation of the BPFA in Ireland, it is clear that the very existence of the BPFA and the recurring opportunities that monitoring its implementation present have yielded positive gains for feminist projects locally. This includes opportunities

to extend women's organisational and networking infrastructures, strengthen collaboration among groups locally and globally and build interconnections between global women's movements and local feminist activism in Ireland. I would argue that this represents a significant development within the women's movement in Ireland, which as yet has not been addressed in the relatively small literature on the subject (Connolly, 2003; Mahon, 1995). Linda Connolly's discussion of the women's movement in the 1990s, for example, highlights its 'professionalisation', the rise of women's studies initiatives, and the role of women's community groups (Connolly, 2003: 187–210). However, she does not mention the FWCW even though dozens of women's groups were extensively mobilised around the event and its related review processes during the 1990s and in recent years. The outwardly focused feminist activism reflected in NGO advocacy around the BPPA (and CEDAW), and the fact that such global agreements are unlikely to recede in importance in governmental policy discourses, suggest the emergence of new local–global political spaces that warrant further attention.

Notes

1. This report was prepared while I was a postdoctoral fellow in Women's Studies and Politics at the University of Limerick. It informs a wider research project exploring the role of critical human rights discourses in shaping emerging global feminism(s).
2. Women's organisations or networks that sent representatives to Beijing included: Banúlacht, Cork Federation of Women's Organisations, Cork Women's Action Group, KLEAR (Kilbarack Adult Education Centre), European Network of Women Ireland, Irish Country Women's Association, National Traveller Women's Forum, National Women's Council of Ireland, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, Rape Crisis Center, Women's Aid, Women's Education Research and Resource Centre, Women's Forum in Northern Ireland, and Women in Media and Entertainment. In addition, the Irish Association of NGO Development Organisations and the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace were represented.
3. Submissions were made by the National Association of Adult Education (AONTAS), Irish Country Women's Association, Banúlacht, National Women's Council of Ireland (then CSW), Gay and Lesbian Equality Network, Irish Women's Environmental Network and Earthwatch, National Rehabilitation Board, National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) and Women's Aid.
4. Submission to the supplemental report were made by for the Protection of the Rights of Separated Spouses, Amnesty International, Forum of People with Disabilities, Baby Milk Action, Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (INOUE), KLEAR (Kilbarack Adult Education Centre), Labour Women's National Council, National Youth Council of Ireland, Association Dochas, Inishowen Women's Network, Irish Farmers Association, Sinn Fein's Women's Department, UNIFEM, Women in the Home and Women in Solidarity.
5. The Organising Committee included: Amnesty International, Banúlacht, Centre for Research and Documentation (Belfast), National Traveller Women's Forum, Forum of People with Disabilities – Women's Subgroup, ICCL Women's Committee, Irish Refugee Council, Irish Commission for Prisoners Overseas, Committee for the Administration of Justice (NI), Lesbian Education and Awareness, Oxfam (Ireland), National Women's Council of Ireland, NODE (Network Outreach and Development Education), Community Workers Cooperative, WERRC.
6. Campaign participants included: Amnesty International (Irish Section), Banúlacht, Community Workers Cooperative Women's Sub-Group, Dublin Aids Alliance, Forum of People with Disabilities Women's Sub-Group, Irish Council for Civil Liberties, Irish Commission for

Prisoners Overseas, Irish Penal Reform Trust, Irish Refugee Council, Lesbian Education and Awareness-NOW, Merchants Quay Project, National Traveller Women's Forum, National Women's Council of Ireland, Pavee Point, Ruhama Women's Project, St Michael's Family Resource Centre, UNIFEM (Ireland), UNICEF (Ireland), Women's Aid, WERRC, Women and Prostitution Project.

7. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN in 1979 and ratified by the Irish state in December 1985. It contains articles covering women's social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights on an equal basis with men. The committee overseeing implementation of CEDAW has also defined implementation of the BPFA as an integral part of implementing the Women's Convention.
8. Members of the Coalition at the time included: Amnesty International (Irish Section), Banúlacht, National Traveller Women's Forum, National Women's Council of Ireland, National Youth Council of Ireland, Women's Aid, Women's Education, Research and Resource Centre, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.
9. Interview with Ursula Barry, Women's Education Research and Resource Centre, November 2004.
10. Grants ranged from 200 to 2000 euro per organisation. It is noteworthy that almost one-fifth of the grants went to individual branches of one organisation (the Irish Country Women's Association), while another fifth went to women's local/community groups and projects. About five per cent of the grants went to nationally-oriented networks and organisations that normally engage in policy development and lobbying activities, including the National Women's Council of Ireland and the Pro-Beijing Coalition. Grants to other community groups, trades unions, political parties, local/regional development partnerships, quasi-state agencies, religious groups, and educational institutions made up the remainder.
11. 'CEDAW Pre-session Meeting January 2005: Questions to assist the CEDAW Committee in preparing for their interview with the Irish Government' (Women's Human Rights Alliance, January 2005).
12. The WHRA (formerly the Women's Human Rights Project) was established with the help of National Development funding in 2001. It is an initiative of the Pro-Beijing Platform for Action NGO Coalition. The Advisory Board of the WHRA is currently made up of members from the women's refugee network, Akina Dada wa Africa, Banúlacht, Irish Council for Civil Liberties, National Women's Council of Ireland, South Side Travellers Action Group, Women's Aid, Women's Education Research and Resource Centre, and a number of individuals.
13. The Global Week of Action for Women's Rights (1–8 March 2005) is coordinated at the global level by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), Development Alternatives With Women for a New Era (DAWN) and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and co-sponsored by women's and social justice groups across the world.

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