

**Final Report:**

***Learning from Practice: the experiences of GBV  
Programming  
by Irish Joint Consortium Members'  
in Sierra Leone***

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February, 2012**

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## **Acknowledgements**

Appreciation is extended to all of those in Sierra Leone who gave their time to participate in this research. A note of thanks is especially extended to those who assisted with the logistics of the consultant's visit to Sierra Leone, particularly: Sinéad Walsh, Irish Aid; Maurice Geary, Concern Worldwide and Florie de Jager and Nafisatu Jalloh of Trócaire.

## Acronyms

AJLC	Access to Justice and Law Centre
BPFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CDHR	Centre for Democracy and Human Rights
DCYP	Disadvantaged Child and Youth Project
DMI	Daughters of Immaculate Mary
NACGBV	National Committee on GBV
NACSA	National Committee for Social Action
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NWM	National Women's Machinery
OECD/DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development/Development Assistance Committee
SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centres
ToR	Terms of Reference
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commissions

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011, the Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence (the Consortium) initiated a renewed focus on advancing its understanding of addressing GBV in conflict-affected/fragile states. A research study was designed with the overall objective of identifying promising practice and lessons learned on addressing GBV in post-conflict settings. On the basis of a mapping exercise conducted to identify country-level presence by member agencies in conflict-affect contexts, Sierra Leone was chosen as the site for the research project. Four research questions framed the research approach and examined:

- the different approaches and strategies used to address GBV by Consortium members in Sierra Leone, and whether these correspond with the OECD/DAC Principles on Fragile States;
- the challenges and lessons learned;
- whether the learning by the Consortium as a whole has influenced members actions in Sierra Leone, and
- whether there are coordinated actions taking place between organisations on the basis of the membership of the Consortium.

The research was framed by the OECD/DAC Principles which recognize that fragile or post-conflict states require differentiated approaches to development than those employed in more stable or developing countries. A CEDAW concept note on its applicability to post-conflict contexts, and the package of ‘women, peace and security’ resolutions were also identified as key policy frameworks relevant to examining post-conflict programming on GBV.

Primary research was conducted in Sierra Leone in October 2011. Qualitative interviews were held with 21 organisations and focused on eliciting data related to the research questions. The research found the following in relation to the research questions:

### **(a) Different Approaches and Strategies by Consortium members to GBV in Sierra Leone, challenges and lessons learned and relation to the OECD/DAC Principles:**

The research found that there were four distinct approaches and strategies applicable to the work of agencies in Sierra Leone and a range of challenges and lessons learned related to each:

#### **Addressing the Relevance of the Post-Conflict Context**

The findings raise questions about whether members of the Consortium approach their work in post-conflict states differently than in typical development contexts. Some agencies do take cognizance of the post-conflict nature of the Sierra Leone context and noted particular challenges in addressing GBV as result of the impact of the conflict on infrastructure, systems and capacity. The research found that in the post-conflict ‘moment’ there exists opportunity to lobby for and secure national commitments to gender equality that can be used to frame, legitimize and support programmatic approaches taken by agencies; that agencies would benefit from reflecting more on institutional approaches to post-conflict transition and that overall there is need for enhanced

understanding of the ways that women experience violence in the post-conflict context and that this should be used to assess vulnerabilities and inform programming.

### **Direct Programming on GBV**

The research found that agencies directly address prevention and response to GBV through awareness-raising and behaviour change programmes, creating access to and strengthening justice responses, promoting women's economic empowerment and providing essential response services. The recalibration of society after a conflict requires consideration in the introduction of new concepts such as 'rights' and 'GBV' which many communities have only heard about since the end of the conflict. Essential are approaches that inculcate reflection on attitudes and practices to GBV among staff and staff of partners and the securing of policy and legal frameworks upon which strategies may be based and which lend these legitimacy. Strategies such as economic empowerment to foster women's ability to cope with the impacts of violence are needed to compliment service responses. 'Do no harm' approaches require stronger attention in the research approaches and support to partners that agencies are currently adopting.

### **Mainstreaming Approaches to GBV**

Addressing GBV and associated risk factors has evolved within some of the sectoral programmes such as education and through issues such as providing assistance to street children. It has been important to ensure that GBV is not seen as an 'add-on' but effectively mainstreamed. Multi-level approaches that tackle both demand and supply ends of programming responses to GBV are particularly comprehensive ways of addressing GBV in a context with severe capacity deficit such as Sierra Leone.

### **Funding and Collaborative Approaches**

Several Consortium members work through partners. Approaches that incorporate technical support work best and maximize the potential of these partnerships. The research found that funding agencies should consider whether it is necessary to devise distinct institutional approaches to working in fragile states/post-conflict contexts, including consideration of coherence with wider development programming. There is potential for a donor such as Irish Aid to fill a much-needed gap on leadership on gender equality and GBV among donors in Sierra Leone and to engage on policy dialogue on GBV with the Sierra Leone Government.

### **Relation to the OECD/DAC Principles**

The research found that the OECD/DAC Principles were not commonly known among Consortium members in Sierra Leone. Their work corresponds in varying degrees to the OECD/DAC Principles depending on how broad an interpretation is taken to the meaning of each principle. The Principle that Consortium members' work most aligns with is the final principle 'Promote non-discrimination'. This Principle specifically relates to women's exclusion and represents the closest 'fit' between the Principles and the aims of the approaches taken by Consortium members.

## **(b) Influence of the Consortium on Programming and Inter-Agency Relationships in Sierra Leone**

Research findings indicate that there was varying and for the most part, little knowledge on the existence of the Consortium and the resources it has produced among member agencies operating in Sierra Leone. Many agencies are working together in national forums on GBV and on other sector issues. Collaboration between agencies largely takes place in these forums and there has been no collaborations based on membership of the Consortium. The research project brought agencies together for the first time and there are opportunities that may arise as a result of the momentum created by this research. This research found that, at this stage of its development, it is important for the Consortium to consider what it actually means by measuring or understanding its 'influence' and what it would want its influence to be or to look like from HQ to country levels. The recommendations below could be used to inform discussions in the Consortium's strategic planning process in early 2012 and taken into account in planning for future Consortium and country-level initiatives:

### **Recommendations**

The research identified a number of opportunities relating to the research findings and recommendations relating to these are:

**Recommendation 1:** Future research projects that are initiated by the Consortium should be developed concurrently at HQ and country levels with a lead agency or committee nominated to oversee the process at country-level.

**Recommendation 2:** Undertake an exercise to explore the ways in which similar collective inter-organisational mechanisms such as the Consortium generate and measure their influence both within members agencies and externally.

**Recommendation 3:** Assess how individual Consortium members are utilizing their membership of the Consortium to influence programming at country levels. A shared 'accountability' exercise could be jointly undertaken between members or an internal reflection exercise at individual levels may be preferable.

**Recommendation 4:** Do more to learn from the programmes that Consortium members and their partners are implementing in contexts such as Sierra Leone and others. It is recommended that field-based practices are drawn into thematic learning seminars. On the basis of this research thematic areas that arise are: (i) Addressing GBV post-conflict; (ii) Partnership approaches to addressing GBV; (iii) Assessing post-conflict transition and GBV; (iv) Learning from awareness-raising and behavior change approaches.

**Recommendation 5:** Member agencies should reflect further on whether there is an institutional understanding of the specific factors relevant to operating in a 'fragile' or 'post-conflict' environment.

**Recommendation 6:** Take advantage of the momentum created by this research project to enhance coordination and collaboration between agencies in Sierra Leone. Use the documentation of

programme approaches in this report as a basis for exploring common interests. Agencies could come together around specific events such as the 16 Days Campaign or for International Women's Day.

**Recommendation 7:** Exploit and make use of the membership of the Consortium to tackle some of the key challenges to GBV programming in Sierra Leone. It is recommended that Consortium members pool resources and mandates to undertake national level advocacy so that grass-roots work and experiences inform the sculpting of a number of key messages which Irish Aid can use within their policy dialogue with donors and Government.

**Recommendation 8:** There is potential for Consortium members in Sierra Leone to make more use of each others' expertise. This can be done through for example inviting members onto 'Reference Groups' to provide technical inputs to future research projects; or inviting members to participate in programme review meetings and gaining their inputs on programme evaluations and development.

**Recommendation 9:** It is strongly recommended that member agencies become more familiar with, make use of and support national policy development on GBV and its implementation. Overall it would create potential for programmes to have greater collaborative and coordinated impact.

**Recommendation 10:** An additional recommendation in this respect is for non-governmental members of the Consortium to hold Irish Aid to account on its commitments under the Irish National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. Irish Aid should be implementing its commitments on UNSCR 1325 where they are applicable, including in post-conflict states such as Sierra Leone. Additionally, Sierra Leone has a NAP on UNSCR 1325. There are opportunities to utilise both NAPs to inform Consortium members' approaches and policy dialogue.



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This report outlines the findings of research conducted in September and October 2011 which examined the approaches taken by members of the Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence (hereafter referred to as 'the Consortium') to addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV) in Sierra Leone.

The aim of the research was to specifically elicit the learning that may be derived from addressing GBV in a 'post-conflict' or a 'fragile' state. The Terms of Reference for the research project are attached in Annex 1. A Consortium 'Learning Brief' titled 'Addressing GBV in Post-Conflict and Fragile States: A Case Study of Sierra Leone' has been published on the basis of this research also and is attached in Annex 2.

This report is structured to elucidate the key findings of the research. The background and methodology of the overall research process is first outlined. Broader contextual background on the conceptual framework to the research and to the Sierra Leone context is then presented. The research findings are discussed under three areas that correspond to the research questions that framed the research project: approaches and strategies to address GBV; relationship between these and the OECD/DAC Principles on fragile states; and the influence of the Consortium on programming approaches in Sierra Leone. A set of recommendations derived from the research findings concludes the report.

## **2. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY**

In 2011, the Consortium initiated a renewed focus on advancing its understanding of addressing GBV in conflict-affected/fragile states. The 'Learning and Practice' group oversaw the design of a research project to examine approaches to addressing GBV in conflict-affected situations. On the basis of a mapping exercise conducted among member agencies, Sierra Leone was chosen as the site for this research due to the presence of nine members of the Consortium in-country (Amnesty International, Action Aid, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Goal, Irish Aid, Plan, Trócaire, World Vision). A consultant was contracted to undertake the research.

The overall objective of the study was to undertake a review of current GBV programming by Consortium members (and other key development actors) in Sierra Leone to identify promising practice for post-conflict contexts, lessons learned and develop recommendations. Four research questions were set out in the ToR to frame the overall research approach and methodology:

1. What are the different approaches and strategies of JC members and other key development actors in their GBV programming, and to what extent are these approaches in line with DAC principles in fragile states?
2. What are the key challenges and lessons learned for GBV programming in fragile states?
3. Has the learning of the Joint Consortium in Dublin influenced Consortium member's programming in Sierra Leone?
4. Are there existing and potential collaborations of Consortium members in Sierra Leone?
5. Recommendations on scale up of promising practice.

A three-part qualitative research methodology was employed to address the research questions and guide the research process and consisted of:

*a. Secondary data collection and literature review:*

A range of secondary data, including project documents of Consortium members operating in Sierra Leone, and wider research on the Sierra Leone context, were collated into a literature review. The review was used to identify Consortium members' programmes for inclusion in the research; the key informants to be approached for participation in the research and the design of an 'interview guide' for use with identified informants. These were outlined in an initial 'Inception Report' which was used as a basis for planning the field-based research.<sup>1</sup> A list of the secondary resources used in this report is available in Annex 3.

*b. Primary data collection in Sierra Leone:*

The primary research was undertaken over a ten-day period from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> of October, 2011. The logistics of the visit to Sierra Leone by the Consultant was jointly coordinated and supported by Irish Aid, Concern Worldwide and Trócaire. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were undertaken with 21 organisations (a list of informants is available in Annex 4). Research was conducted at national level in Freetown, as well as in Tonkilili and Bombali districts where Amnesty International, Concern and Trócaire and their partners have programmes.

*c. Analysis and write-up:*

The analysis and write-up in this report are structured to directly respond to the research questions identified in the ToR (as above). The documentation in this report combines both secondary literature and primary data. Respondent identities are not provided where quotes are used to protect identities where critical views were expressed.

A note on terminology is required. The ToR for the research refers to Sierra Leone as a "post-conflict country and fragile state".<sup>2</sup> In order to enable the research project to capture, utilize and situate itself within international frameworks that relate to situations of fragility but may not themselves use such terminology, a wider set of terms is considered to be relevant to this research. A range of terminology is thereby used including: post-conflict context, conflict-affected context, transition context and the aftermath of conflict. Additional terminology to note is the use of the term 'victim/survivor' to refer to women and girls who may report experiences of violence and the use of the term GBV as referring to violence against women and girls in line with the Consortium's own publications that reference the term in this way.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Inception Report '*Learning from Practice; the experiences of GBV Programming by Irish Joint Consortium Members*' in Sierra Leone; finalized 26<sup>th</sup> September, 2011

<sup>2</sup> Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence, Terms of Reference: '*Learning from Practice; the experiences of GBV Programming by Irish Joint Consortium Members*' in Sierra Leone, Pg. 2

<sup>3</sup> The policy publications of the Consortium set out GBV as a phenomenon that primarily affects women and girls. Mary Jennings and Shirley McLean for: Consortium of Irish Human Rights, Humanitarian and Development Agencies & Development Cooperation Ireland (July 2005) Gender Based Violence Study;

### 3. POLICY AND CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT TO THE RESEARCH

The ToR for the research identified the OECD/DAC 'Principles on Fragile States and Situations' (hereafter referred to as 'the Principles') as the primary conceptual framework for the research.<sup>4</sup> The Principles recognise that "[s]tates are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations".<sup>5</sup> Fragility is further explained by the OECD/DAC as a status which has "multiple underlying causes" that result in state vulnerability to "internal conflict [and an] inability to cope with humanitarian disaster and a high risk of state collapse".<sup>6</sup>

The Principles recognise that many fragile states are those emerging from periods of armed conflict. Sierra Leone, the focus of this research, is considered to be a fragile or a post-conflict state.<sup>7</sup> The latter term will be used throughout the report in order to accurately reflect Sierra Leone's emergence from over a decade of armed conflict. The 2011 Monitoring Survey of the implementation of the Principles found that some progress on implementing the Principles had been made in Sierra Leone.<sup>8</sup> However, gaps between policy development and implementation of the Principles remain significant. According to the OECD/DAC Monitoring Report development partners in Sierra Leone have made some progress in addressing key issues such as youth unemployment, which is considered a potential trigger of conflict; have supported governmental frameworks of development and made efforts to coordinate

development initiatives. There remain gaps however such as the need for partners to come together more to undertake, or to share the outcomes of, analytical assessments.<sup>9</sup> Many fragile

#### OECD/DAC Principles on Fragile States and Situations (2007)

1. Take context as the starting point.
2. Do no harm.
3. Focus on state-building as the central objective.
4. Prioritise prevention.
5. Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives.
6. Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies.
7. Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts.
8. Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors.
9. Act fast ... but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance.
10. Avoid pockets of exclusion.

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Mary Jennings for: Joint Consortium of Human Rights Humanitarian and Development Agencies and Development Cooperation Ireland (2005) Gender Based Violence: A Failure to Protect, a Challenge to Action It is noted here that specific forms of GBV may affect boys and men also.

<sup>4</sup> OECD (2007) Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations. Copy available in Annex 5

<sup>5</sup> Principles

<sup>6</sup> OECD/DAC (2008) Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: From Fragility to Resilience; OECD. Pg. 16

<sup>7</sup> In its Monitoring Survey on the implementation of the Principles, the OECD identified 13 states that it considered relevant to application of the Principles. This includes Sierra Leone: [http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3746,en\\_2649\\_33693550\\_48696949\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3746,en_2649_33693550_48696949_1_1_1_1,00.html); Accessed 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2011

<sup>8</sup> OECD (2011) International Engagement in Fragile States: Can't we do better? (preliminary version); OECD, Pg. 11 - 13

<sup>9</sup> OECD (2011) International Engagement in Fragile States: Can't we do better? (preliminary version); OECD, Pg. 29, 31, 37, 38

states, including Sierra Leone, are considered to be particularly “falling behind” in respect of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and continue to be a priority for specific support and engagement by international development actors.<sup>10</sup>

The Principles set out a paradigm which recognizes that fragile or post-conflict states require differentiated approaches to development than those employed in more stable or developing countries. Similarly, this research examines whether specific or differentiated approaches to addressing GBV may be required in fragile or post

abductions, recruitment of children as fighters, wanton killing, amputations and destruction of homes and livelihoods.<sup>13</sup> The conflict eroded social, economic and political structures and services and resulted in the break-down of the rule of law and democratic governance.<sup>14</sup>

Women and girls were specific targets of gendered violence during the conflict including forms of rape, sexual slavery, torture, abduction, sterilisation, forced pregnancies, enforced cannibalism, trafficking, and sexual exploitation and abuse in sites of population displacement.<sup>15</sup> It is estimated that up to 250,000 women and girls experienced these forms of abuse.<sup>16</sup> Men were disproportionately affected by enforced recruitment to the fighting factions and associated violence.<sup>17</sup>

Since the achievement of a peace agreement and cessation of the conflict in 2002,<sup>18</sup> efforts at post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone have concentrated on, and to varying degrees been successful in, securing democratic reforms and the provision of basic services to the population. Transitional Justice processes have included a Truth Commission which produced a range of recommendations, including on GBV, discussed further below. Under the TRC, a recommendation was made that the Government should issue an apology to women for the sexual violence that they were subjected to and the impunity for such violence that existed before and during the conflict. The issuing of this apology in 2010 by the President was described as a “momentous occasion” for women by a respondent to this research in Sierra Leone. A reparations programme was also established which has attempted to address the specific needs of survivors of sexual violence during the conflict.<sup>19</sup> Under the auspices of the United Nations, an international criminal tribunal has secured prosecutions for international crimes and produced significant judgements and jurisprudence on cases of GBV, most notably the 2008 judgement that defined ‘forced marriage’

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<sup>13</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone (2004) *Witness to Truth: Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Vol. 2; Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone

<sup>14</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (14 December 2006) Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties, Sierra Leone; CEDAW/C/SLE/5; CEDAW, Pg. 9-10

<sup>15</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone (2004) *Witness to Truth: Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Vol. 2; Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone. Pg. 14-15, 100

<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Watch (2003), ‘We will kill you if you cry’: Sexual Violence in the Sierra Leone Conflict, Human Rights, Watch New York

<sup>17</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone (2004) *Witness to Truth: Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Vol. 2; Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone; And: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (14 December 2006) Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties, Sierra Leone; CEDAW/C/SLE/5; CEDAW, Pg. 17-18

<sup>18</sup> The Lomé Agreement was reached between the Government and fighting factions in July 1999: Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone (2004) *Witness to Truth: Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Vol. 2; Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone

<sup>19</sup> Amnesty International (2007) *Sierra Leone: Getting Reparations Right for Survivors of Sexual Violence*; Amnesty International

under international criminal law.<sup>20</sup> A Human Rights Commission was established in 2006 under the recommendations of the Truth Commission report, which also provides oversight on the implementation of the TRC recommendations.<sup>21</sup> Under reforms to the police services, Family Support Units (FSU) were established in 2003 to specifically deal with reporting of GBV.<sup>22</sup>

Despite significant mineral resources and inputs from international aid, Sierra Leone currently ranks 158 out of 169 countries on the 2010 UNDP Human Development Index, with life expectancy at 48 for men, 50 for women,<sup>23</sup> and maternal mortality rates of 2000 per 100,000 – one of the worst in the world.<sup>24</sup> Socio-cultural norms are informed by a mainstream patriarchal social system in which women are defined socially, politically and economically relative to their association with men. This in turn upholds the structural exclusion of women from formal and informal decision-making fora.<sup>25</sup> Prevalent forms of GBV in post-conflict Sierra Leone include domestic violence, sexual assault, including rape of adults and minors and rape in marriage, and school-related sexual abuse.<sup>26</sup> The International Rescue Committee (IRC) have found that 99% of clients attending their sexual assault referral centres (Rainbo Centres) since 2003 are girls and women between the ages of 6 and 20; 62% of clients showed signs of sexually transmitted infections following incidents of assault; in 90% of reported cases the perpetrator was known to the victim/survivor.<sup>27</sup> Harmful practices are prevalent such as FGM/C which is estimated to have a 90% prevalence rate in Sierra Leone.<sup>28</sup> Early and forced marriage, and subsequent withdrawal from school, compounds the low literacy levels of women (which is estimated to be at 29%) who are largely employed in the

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<sup>20</sup> See for example the decision on ‘forced marriage’ as a crime against humanity: (2008). Prosecutor v. Brima, Kamara & Kanu, Case No. SCSL-2004-16-A. Case No. SCSL-2004-16-A, SCSL.

<sup>21</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (14 December 2006) Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties, Sierra Leone; CEDAW/C/SLE/5; CEDAW, Pg. 19, And interview with Human Rights Commission

<sup>22</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (14 December 2006) Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Combined initial, second, third, fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties, Sierra Leone; CEDAW/C/SLE/5; CEDAW, Pg. 35

<sup>23</sup> World Health Organisation (2011) Countries; UNWHO: <http://www.who.int/countries/sle/en/>; Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> October, 2011

<sup>24</sup> UNPD (2010) Human Development Index and its Components, United Nations Development Programme. [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR\\_2010\\_EN\\_Table1\\_reprint.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2010_EN_Table1_reprint.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> Senorina Wendohand Foma A. M. Ceesay (2008) Local Perspectives of Gender: Liberia & Sierra Leone, Christian Aid, Cafod

<sup>26</sup> Concern Worldwide (2010) Risk and Vulnerability Report for Gender, Equality and HIV and AIDS; Concern Worldwide

<sup>27</sup> The International Rescue Committee (2010) Mek Wi Tok Bot GBV – Let’s Talk GBV: Freetown and Eastern Region - Proposal to Irish Aid, The IRC

<sup>28</sup> World Vision (2009) Female Genital Mutilation/Female Genital Cutting: A Case Study in the Yangatoko Community Imperi Chiefdom, Bonthe District, Southern Sierra Leone, World Vision.

Note: While the statistic referenced here is drawn from the cited World Vision report and is accurate based on the primary and secondary data used for that report, it is important to note that World Vision acknowledges the limitations of compiling and using a statistics such as this. World Vision acknowledges that given the secretive nature of FGM and its associated ceremonial activities, it can be difficult to ascertain exact figures and these figures may be questioned and certainly subject to review as a result.

informal sector.<sup>29</sup> Noteworthy is that alongside ongoing endemic forms of GBV, women and girls continue to deal with the consequences of the violent sexual and other forms of assault experienced during the conflict.<sup>30</sup> This includes enduring psychological and physical trauma, health impacts such as fistula, economic vulnerability and ostracism from family and community as a result of being raped or being associated, whether forced or otherwise, with armed factions.<sup>31</sup> HIV is at an estimated 1.6% prevalence rate<sup>32</sup> and the incident of teenage pregnancy is also considered to be very high.<sup>33</sup> The existence of plural legal systems – Muslim law, customary law and formal law processes that are all inherently discriminatory against women are particular challenges to addressing both prevention and response to GBV.<sup>34</sup>

#### 4.2 National Responses to GBV

A number of legislative and policy frameworks have been developed since the end of the conflict which establish a supportive and conducive environment for both addressing GBV and in which responses to GBV may be situated.

In terms of international legal frameworks, Sierra Leone has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),<sup>35</sup> the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),<sup>36</sup> the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR),<sup>37</sup> and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)<sup>38</sup> which sets out concrete international human rights obligations relating to issues of gender equality and GBV.

There have been significant national level developments also. A 'National Policy on the Advancement of Women' was developed in 2002 which "discourages traditional practices and concepts which are harmful to the health and wellbeing of women and girls".<sup>39</sup> The Sierra Leone poverty reduction strategy, "Agenda for Change", highlights that in areas of social, political and economic development, such as formal employment, education levels and literacy, women are

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<sup>29</sup> SLANGO (2007) Shadow Report of Sierra Leone's Initial, Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Submitted for 38th CEDAW Session May 2007, Pg. 2

<sup>30</sup> UNFPA (no date) Gender Based Violence in Sierra Leone: A Case Study, UNFPA

<sup>31</sup> Amnesty International (2007) Sierra Leone: Getting Reparations Right for Survivors of Sexual Violence; Amnesty International;

<sup>32</sup> Take from: UNICEF: [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sierraleone\\_statistics.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/sierraleone_statistics.html)  
Avert: <http://www.avert.org/africa-hiv-aids-statistics.htm>

<sup>33</sup> Emily Coinco for UNICEF (2010) A Glimpse into the World of Teenage Pregnancy in Sierra Leone, UNICEF

<sup>34</sup> Access to Justice Law Centre (no date) Legal Research on the Three Gender Acts, 2007, 2009 and the Child Rights Act 2007 of Sierra Leone in Compliance with International Human Rights Obligations to Provide Access to Justice and Protection for Women, Access to Justice Law Centre

Dr. Richard Fanthorpe (2007) Sierra Leone: The Influence of Secret Societies with Special Reference to Female Genital Mutilation, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

<sup>35</sup> On 11<sup>th</sup> November, 1998

<sup>36</sup> 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1990

<sup>37</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1996

<sup>38</sup> On 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1996

<sup>39</sup> World Vision (2009) Female Genital Mutilation/Female Genital Cutting: A Case Study in the Yangatoke Community Imperi Chiefdom, Bonthe District, Southern Sierra Leone, World Vision, Pg. 16

significantly more disadvantaged than men.<sup>40</sup> It recognizes ‘violence against women’ specifically to be a significant issue which requires specific responses.<sup>41</sup> The Sierra Leone Government also developed a National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820.<sup>42</sup> GBV comes under two of the NAPs five pillars with the aim of reducing current rates of violence against women and children and ensuring the provision of rehabilitation services to victims/survivors of GBV during the conflict. There is also an ongoing lobby to have a 30% quota for women’s participation in the upcoming elections in 2012. A ‘Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs’ aims to protect and promote the rights of women and children and houses a specific ‘Gender Policy and Advocacy’ section which oversees gender-related national policy. The Ministry heads-up the ‘National Committee on Gender-Based Violence’ (NACGBV) which brings together government ministries, agencies of the UN and local and international NGOs working on GBV.

The Sierra Leone Government adopted three ‘Gender Acts’ in 2007 which provide a legislative framework to address gender inequality, discrimination against women and GBV. These are the ‘Domestic Violence Act’ which situates domestic violence as a criminal act in and of itself and uses a broad definition of domestic abuse which includes physical and sexual abuses, economic abuses, verbal, emotional and psychological abuse; the ‘Devolution of Estates Act’ addresses issues of inheritance, bringing rights to women/widows, abolishing former customary practices where women would have to marry a deceased husbands brother and instead women and men may inherit properties equally; and the ‘Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act’ raises the legal age of marriage and requires customary marriages to be formally registered so that marital status is equally conferred on all marriages. A Child Rights Act was also passed in 2007 which affords protection to children from violence and abuse. At the time of this research, a Sexual Offences Act was pending debate at government which, when promulgated, will provide specific legal codification and response to sexual assault.

While the creation of statutory frameworks promoting gender equality are significant and indicate progress towards formal equality standards in Sierra Leone’s transition phase, what is important is their implementation and the attainment of substantive equality for women and girls. The formal legal system is considered to be slow in processing justice for victims of GBV and many obstacles prevent women from accessing appropriate legal responses to their experiences of violence.<sup>43</sup> The research found that significant obstacles exist such as lack of trained personnel at police stations and where training has taken place staff are frequently rotated or leave these positions; lack of physical resources such as vehicles to transport those accused; sporadic availability of FSUs at local

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<sup>40</sup> The Republic of Sierra Leone (2008) Agenda for Change, Second Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2012), Government of Sierra Leone, Pg. 36

<sup>41</sup> The Republic of Sierra Leone (2008) Agenda for Change, Second Poverty Reduction Strategy (2008-2012), Government of Sierra Leone, Pg. 95

<sup>42</sup> Government of Sierra Leone (2008) The Sierra Leone National Action Plan for Full Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820, Government of Sierra Leone

<sup>43</sup> International Alert (2007) Addressing Gender Based Violence in Sierra Leone: Mapping Challenges, Responses and Future Entry Points, International Alert, Pg. 16

The International Rescue Committee (2010) Navigating Justice: An exploratory study of obstacles facing survivors of sexual violence in Sierra Leone



levels which requires victims/survivors to travel significant distances for assistance; slow progress at prosecutorial levels and a pervading perception that forensic evidence is required to process cases, a facility that is simply not available in Sierra Leone.

## **5. RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The findings related to the specific research questions of the ToR are discussed below, presented in the following way to maximise elucidation of the findings:

- 5.1 Discussion of the approaches and strategies used by agencies, which includes analysis of the related challenges and lessons learned;
- 5.2 Discussion of the ways in which the various approaches respond to the OECD/DAC Principles;
- 5.3 Discussion of the influence of the Consortium on programming and agency relationships in Sierra Leone;

### **5.1 Approaches and Strategies to Address GBV in Sierra Leone**

Four distinct approaches and strategies are applicable to the work of Consortium members working in Sierra Leone. Although the ToR requires a descriptive account of the modes of delivery of programmes, it became apparent during the research that the ways in which agencies engage with the post-conflict context itself also required investigation. The analysis of findings below is therefore structured to capture both the broader engagement by agencies with the context itself, as well as the programming approaches that have been taken to address GBV. The analysis is structured under the following four sections:

- 5.1.1 Addressing the Relevance of the Post-Conflict Context;
- 5.1.2 Direct Programming on GBV;
- 5.1.3 Mainstreaming Approaches to GBV; and
- 5.1.4 Funding and Collaborative Approaches

The ToR posed a distinct question on the ‘challenges’ and ‘lessons learned’ within programming approaches. Rather than segregate these out, they are incorporated into the discussion where they are specifically relevant to each approach discussed.

#### **5.1.1 APPROACH 1: Addressing the Relevance and Specifics of the Post-Conflict Context**

A preliminary challenge faced by this research was ensuring that it responded to the primary purpose of the ToR – to document what it means to undertake GBV programming *specific to fragile/post-conflict states* – and not simply document GBV programming more generally. An initial task was ascertaining whether agencies in Sierra Leone approached their programming in a manner specific to factors present in a post-conflict context.

Many organisations consulted for this research began operating in Sierra Leone during or towards the end of the conflict (almost a decade ago). As such the conflict itself prompted their engagement in Sierra Leone. Many of the organisations have since moved from initial humanitarian responses to broader development programming. Many noted that the prevalence of political and public forms of GBV during the conflict made the issue visible, prompted agency responses to the issue

during and immediately after the conflict, and has meant that it has remained an issue of concern in the post-conflict context.

The term 'fragile state' was unfamiliar to, and is not used by, the agencies consulted for this research. The OECD/DAC Principles were not familiar to the non-governmental members of the Consortium. The term 'post-conflict' was more familiar, however some within and outside of Government felt that the post-conflict label may be increasingly less relevant given the time-lapse since the end of the conflict. Initiatives related to the conflict are still being established however, such as the Government's War Victims Trust Fund (established in the last two years). There are clearly contradictory views about whether the conflict still has a bearing on the Sierra Leone context. The research in Sierra Leone demonstrated that there remain questions as to when a post-conflict status ends and 'development' begins and how agencies interpret these phases through their work.

As a result, there are mixed approaches taken by Consortium members to the context that they are operating in. References to the conflict, its impact and the specifics of operating in a post-conflict context vary within the programme proposals, strategies and planning documents reviewed for this research. There is a predominant and appropriate focus on responding to development needs specific to the context itself – addressing poverty, the dearth in functioning services such as justice and education and enhancing women's overall status. These approaches are rooted in wider development approaches, which in some cases, appear to address the post-conflict nature of the context by default rather than by design.

Some agencies, such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC, funded by Irish Aid), take specific cognizance of the historical conflict into their approaches and continue to highlight the relevance of the impact of the conflict on women in their programme design documents.<sup>44</sup> It was however deduced during the field research, that the Irish Aid proposal format which IRC is required to use, is an emergency response format. This in itself demands reflection on the conflict status and may influence specific references to the conflict status in ways that many other agency documents do not. For agencies such as IRC who began operating during the conflict period, approaches to GBV have changed over the course of the humanitarian to development continuum. IRC noted that their initial response to GBV was very much service oriented, addressing violence in and of itself and specifically addressing women's practical needs. Approaches to GBV later evolved into a wider approach that addressed women's empowerment and gender equality through initiatives such as behaviour change programmes and economic empowerment activities. While the exigencies of a conflict require specific and tailored essential response services, it is also relevant to question how and whether approaches to GBV may be situated within wider equality frameworks from the outset. This is particularly true for situations where acute emergency begins to phase out to more a transitional context and where sustainable national responses to GBV are required.

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<sup>44</sup> The International Rescue Committee (2010) Mek Wi Tok Bot GBV – Let's Talk GBV: Freetown and Eastern Region - Proposal to Irish Aid, The IRC

Christian Aid specifically notes the relevance of the conflict to the approaches that they take. The prevention of future conflict is noted to be a key focus of the country strategy and a rationale for engagement with particular partners on issues such as governance, HIV and youth.<sup>45</sup> Wider development approaches are understood to contribute to addressing some of the causes of the conflict and preventing further conflict. RADA, a partner of Christian Aid, noted that GBV is an issue “beyond the emergency”. They recognise in their work that GBV may occur within and outside of a conflict and requires a response beyond the emergency phase. Their programming began in response to the issues of GBV visible during and in the immediate aftermath of the war and evolved responses that address the endemic nature of GBV, within or outside of conflict (see more below).

Agencies such as Trócaire began operating in Sierra Leone at a later stage (2005). They developed a ‘Demanding Justice for Women’ programme which contributes to the reduction of women's vulnerability through increased access to justice and women's economic empowerment. Initiating this kind of approach presents challenges in a context in which many local NGOs are young, with only some having operational experience during the humanitarian emergency. For those with this background (three out of six of Trócaire's partners operated during the humanitarian period), and for those young and evolving organisations, movement to development-type approaches is, for some, still occurring and requires on-going facilitation. It was observed by Trócaire that there are difficulties with encouraging some of their partners to move from ‘activities-based’ approaches typical of humanitarian response, to longer-term development and results based programming.

There are evidently efforts made by agencies to take account of the conflict and post-conflict status of Sierra Leone. However, many of the approaches taken, that will be discussed below, tailor to development-type programmes. On the one hand, these are appropriate and responsive to the context and the needs therein. On the other hand, many broader contextual factors were identified during the research that are significant to the ‘transitional’ status of Sierra Leone itself but are less evident in the approaches taken by the agencies. These factors are relevant to the purview of this research and are important to consider in GBV programming in a post-conflict contexts. They are outlined here in this respect:

### **Recovery and Institutional Reform Processes**

In the words of one respondent, Sierra Leone “had no law and order in 2002, it was a failed state”. As such, similar to other conflict-affected countries globally, in the aftermath of the conflict national structures required significant reform to address some of the key causes of the conflict and to establish democratic systems and structures to ensure the functioning of services. Many of the challenges which agencies face in implementing effective programmes may be attributed to Sierra Leone's post-conflict status. Deficiencies in the quality of services such as the judiciary, policing and health and education systems (noted above) may be directly and indirectly a result of the conflict. Infrastructure and systems were completely destroyed during the conflict and many of the services had to be re-established after the conflict. This is combined with the ‘typical’ challenges to the effective functioning of such systems faced by any poorly resourced or developing country.

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<sup>45</sup> Christian Aid (2006) Sierra Leone Country Strategy and Policy Paper 2006-2011; Christian Aid

Many respondents noted that within the process of reform, the issue of GBV competed with 'hardware' issues and those considered to be higher priority, including: rebuilding infrastructure such as roads, providing public and commercial transport, and creating services such as hospitals and schools. It was felt by many respondents that there is a perception at national level that addressing GBV is not needed for state building. This is evident in what was perceived to be a lack of political will to address issues of GBV and gender inequality at state level. Irish Aid noted that in a two-hour address by Sierra Leone's president (during the period of the research), a range of national development priorities and progress towards the same were outlined without a single reference to gender equality or GBV. International instruments such as the women, peace and security resolutions have underscored the fundamental importance of addressing gender equality and GBV as part of political reform and state building during and after conflict. Addressing the broader inequalities that inform violence must be prioritised within the new structures and services that may be created at national levels as part of democratic reforms and those that deal with the fall-out of the conflict.

Research elsewhere has found that "countries coming out of conflict have been more attentive to GBV than non-post-conflict countries."<sup>46</sup> It is widely documented that the "changing opportunity structures" that present post-conflict<sup>47</sup> are key and must be taken advantage of if real gains are to be made for women. There is a need to ensure that issues such as GBV get placed on the national agenda and that enough support and pressure is maintained to keep them there. One respondent felt that, aside from the small gains that had been made through securing new legislature, there had been many missed opportunities after the conflict in terms of securing advancement of women's rights. It was felt that women's groups and civil society did not take enough advantage of the opportunities that the changes in social and political structures presented and that more could have been achieved. It was noted that as time goes on and the broader structures stabilise, the space that was available to influence the restructuring that was taking place has begun to close down.

As noted above, Sierra Leone has put in place several structures and policy and legislative frameworks to address and regulate GBV since the end of the conflict. The establishment of a national women's machinery is a key aspect of this process. Sierra Leone's national women's machinery (NWM) was initially established in 1996 after elections and later subsumed into a 'Ministry of Social Affairs, Gender and Children'. Consistent in all consultations was a concern expressed for the status, condition and efficacy of the NWM. Currently the Ministry receives 1.1% of the overall national budget (which includes social welfare and children), there is a frequent rotation of Ministers who change the priority and programming focus each time, and there is little by way of capacity development taking place. The absence of strong commitment or structures to address gender inequalities and GBV at a national level raises questions about the kinds of approaches to GBV that may be necessary during post-conflict transition.

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<sup>46</sup> Tripp, Aili Mari (2010) Legislating Gender-Based Violence in Post-Conflict Africa, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 5, no. 3 At 13

<sup>47</sup> Tripp, "Legislating Gender-Based Violence in Post-Conflict Africa." At 13

Members of the Consortium engage with the Ministry through the NACGBV, a forum that brings together national and international actors working on GBV. It was described by many as “potentially useful” and at the moment functions well to bring agencies together in one space, enables the sharing of information and helps to address issues of duplication and coordination. However, it could do more, as could the Ministry. To date, the IRC has worked with the Ministry to improve the efficacy of the NACGBV and of the FSU who co-Chair the NACGBV through support for the development of protocols to improve police responses to GBV.<sup>48</sup> Both the IRC and Trócaire have provided the Ministry with basic supplies such as computers and stationery – demonstrative of the very basic needs which the Ministry continues to require over 15 years after it was established. IRC also engage with and support the Ministry to run the NACGBV and have assisted the Family Support Unit (FSU) who co-chair the meeting to develop protocols. UN Women is also providing some technical and financial support to the Ministry.

National Women’s Machineries such as these were set out under the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) in 1995 as key mechanisms to advance the interests of women at national levels.<sup>49</sup> The BPFA envisioned that these entities would serve to advance policy implementation on gender equality at the highest government levels and called for them to be strengthened. A NWM provides an architecture in which micro and meso-level approaches to GBV may be positioned and as such is important to the work of Consortium members. The advancement of gender policy by the NWM lends legitimacy to GBV programming and in promoting and securing equality for women.

The Ministry noted that there was an expectation in Government that international organisations would fund issues such as gender equality and GBV and therefore funds from national budget were not necessary or forthcoming. While not clear whether this is the case, this research questions whether such perceptions have resulted in lower budgetary allocations to Ministries such as this. It also questions what the role of international agencies is in taking more strategic approaches to ensuring that national governments fulfil their own national and international commitments to promoting gender equality and addressing GBV.

While provision of basic materials by IRC and Trócaire is needed by the Ministry, it is also evident that the Ministry and the NACGBV require longer-term significant financial and technical institutional capacity development support. The Ministry also requires more political recognition and leverage in the eyes of Government. Strategic engagement with the Ministry by international agencies would enable it to develop the technical capacity required to provide stronger leadership at national levels. For example, Irish Aid has supported the capacity development of the NWM in Timor-Leste by funding technical advisers in the NWM itself as well as across many additional government ministries to support implementation of the NWM’s mainstreaming strategy. Irish Aid has also engaged in policy dialogue at national levels in support of enhancing the status and reach of the NWM which assists with securing its legitimacy within government. This is a particularly

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<sup>48</sup> Sierra Leone Police (2011) A Framework for Monitoring Compliance with SOPs: Standard Operating Procedures for the Investigation of Sexual and Domestic Violence Offences; SLP SOPs Project Team

<sup>49</sup> United Nations (1995) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action: Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women; UN Fourth World Conference on Women

important strategy by an international donor where there is little political will in favour of gender issues at national levels.

It is acknowledged that different agencies fulfil different roles and mandates at different levels and not all are expected to fulfil such a strategic role at national levels. However, there is need for strengthened coordination between agencies and donors so that the gap in provision of funding, and technical and political support to the NWM is addressed by those with the mandate to do so. The NACGBV is a space where such issues could be addressed and joint approaches taken to advocate for engagement by actors. There is opportunity for example to lobby government to demonstrate its commitment to gender equality by providing greater budgetary allocations and to providing resources to the Ministry in terms of staffing. There is also opportunity for an agency such as an international donor or a UN agency to undertake a programme of strategic capacity development support to the Ministry in line with its identified priorities, capacities and needs.

The review of the programme documents of Consortium members for this research also revealed that none of the programmes mention or are aligned with the national policy frameworks or action plans on gender equality and/or GBV cited in the previous section of this report. Only those organisations specifically implementing access to justice programmes have aligned their work directly to the 'gender laws' which they are trying to promote. Again, there is room for more strategic engagement by these programmes with these frameworks so that programmes correspond to national priorities and support policy implementation. Taking a more aligned approach would also again lend legitimacy to these frameworks and the NWM who oversees their implementation.

There was also little evidence of direct engagement by Consortium members with local women's networks outside of coordination activities through and with those who participate in the NACGBV. Trócaire and their partners do engage women's networks/groups present at district and chieftdom level and experience difficulties in engaging with women's networks at national level. This is in part due to the geographical location of partners but also because of the fragmentation of women's movements/networks at national levels. UN agencies such as UN Women noted a close collaboration with the 'Women's Forum' however and support these women's networks own priorities. For example, in the week before this research took place a UN 'open-day' was held where Sierra Leonian women presented their priorities for attention by the UN. Of the five priorities identified, two refer directly to on-going conflict-related issues ('Reparations for war victims' and issues of 'women, peace and security').<sup>50</sup> As far as was evident, Consortium members were not aware that such priorities had been developed by women's organisations nor was there much alignment in approaches to GBV with those priority issues identified by women's networks. It is acknowledged that each agency works to the issues it confronts in its area of operation. For example, Concern Worldwide and Trócaire, through partners, have developed baseline data in the regions that they work in that informs their programming there. The lack of engagement with wider women's rights initiatives must be noted however. This research questions whether it is indicative of the evolution of overall approaches to GBV from humanitarian type programming (i.e

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<sup>50</sup> UN Women (2011) UN Open Day 2011, as it happened; UN Women (copy on file)

GBV in and of itself) or reflective of lack of cognisance with wider gender equality policies and frameworks (both at national and institutional levels) that position GBV as derived from unequal power differentials between men and women that inform violence.

As noted before, the transition context presents the opportunity to secure particular issues on the national agenda. That space was also considered to be closing down somewhat in Sierra Leone. Programmes at community-levels are important and imperative in addressing GBV. It is also imperative however that approaches to post-conflict transition and development secure gender equality as a national priority so that those community-based initiatives operate in a national context conducive to supporting and absorbing their longer-term potential and impact. The research findings question the role which Consortium members can play in contributing to the creation of a solid architecture post-conflict in which GBV may be addressed longer term, and at the least, coordinate approaches so that macro to micro level strategies are collaborative in intent.

### **The Relevance of Transitional Justice Processes and Outcomes**

Mechanisms that seek the truth about the past and to mitigate against recurrence of such abuses, such as Truth and Reconciliation Commissions (TRC), now operate in many post-conflict contexts globally. If gender sensitive approaches are taken, they provide an opportunity for women's experiences of conflict to be documented and acknowledged and for these to be included in, and inform the development of, recovery and longer-term development. As noted by one respondent the TRC in Sierra Leone "highlighted the culture of silence on violence against women that was there before the war. It highlighted the need for services" and to address the issue more broadly in the post-conflict transition.

The report of the TRC in Sierra Leone not only assesses the past abuses of the conflict but also finds that the marginalisation of women prior to the conflict was a contributory factor in the eruption of conflict. It cites discrimination against women and GBV as factors that need to be addressed post-conflict and are relevant to the prevention of further conflict. The report documents specific at-risk groups and notes that "[w]ar widows, aged women, girl mothers, victims of displacement and female ex-combatants are among the most vulnerable groups in Sierra Leone today."<sup>51</sup> Among its recommendations, the report of the Truth Commission calls for:

- Support to victims/survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and the eradication of stigma by communities towards these women;
- The necessity of awareness raising and training for key actors in the legal system including the judiciary and police to instil skills to respond appropriately to gendered violence;
- The abolition of customary law and practices which infringe on the rights of women and girls, including using systems of compensation such as payment or forced marriage as a means to deal with incidents of rape; and the need for systems of customary law to be made to concur with international rights standards;
- Support for women to promote economic independence and in particular micro-credit schemes that "should target women ex-combatants, internally displaced women, female

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<sup>51</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone (2004) *Witness to Truth: Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, Vol. 2; Truth and Reconciliation Commission Sierra Leone

heads of households and war widows”;

- Guarantees of completion of secondary education for girls, the cessation of the expulsion of girls from school when pregnant and the provision of literacy skills training for adult women.

Given this research project’s focus on Sierra Leone because of its post-conflict status, these recommendations, which result directly from the experience of the conflict, are relevant to consider. The report itself was cited by some actors in Sierra Leone, particularly those in Government, as having had some impact and was viewed by many as an important and strategic document in terms of on-going national development. The TRC report is also considered to retain relevance in terms of the need to ensure implementation of outstanding recommendations. One respondent noted that the factors which the TRC identified as causing the conflict remain present in Sierra Leone. This evidently includes discrimination and violence against women.

It is important to note that the TRC report and recommendations are not included or referenced in any of the Consortium members programme documents reviewed for this research. It was cited in an interview as a key source for the AJLC programme, a partner of Trócaire discussed further below. Trócaire also noted that it was used to inform programme development even though it wasn’t explicitly cited in design documents. Many of the agencies programmes already correspond with some of the TRC recommendations – such as the Concern Worldwide programme to ensure girls education and the work of partners of Trócaire and of the IRC in training staff of the legal system. While the necessity to pay cursory attention to such a report in programme development may be questioned, there is need to acknowledge the valuable evidence base and learning which the TRC process provides. In particular, the extensive research by the TRC provides an evidence base on which GBV before, during and after the conflict may be understood. Its recommendations provide pointers towards what may be required to address GBV at national and local levels specific to the aftermath of this particular conflict. Further still, even if agencies do not wish to align their work with such processes, the report itself could be used strategically by agencies as a ‘hook’ for lobbying government for more attention to GBV (as suggested above) and as a standard against which government responses may be held.

### **Understanding the Impact of the Conflict on Violence in the Post-Conflict Context**

In line with the TRC report, it was noted by respondents that attention to GBV after the war is not only necessary in terms of protecting women’s rights, but also because “if we don’t address this, we will have no development”. The need to learn about endemic violence is discussed further below, however it is appropriate to consider here whether the legacy of the conflict is a relevant consideration for post-conflict GBV programming.

While attention is largely given to the prevalence of GBV, particularly sexual violence, targeted at women *during* conflict, there is increasing policy and programming recognition of the need to address GBV in the *aftermath* of conflict and during post-conflict *transition*. There is debate over whether conflict-time violence influences or exacerbates GBV after conflict or whether the existence of new and improving service provision enables increased reporting and help-seeking



behaviours by women and girls.<sup>52</sup> A staff member of the UN noted that “reporting gives the impression” that violence is increasing.

It is widely acknowledged that the post-conflict context presents particular challenges for women and girls – including issues of return and economic viability, socio-cultural and familial tensions as gender roles are re-asserted, and challenges to ensuring women’s full participation in the transitional reforms and reconstruction that is taking place. In Sierra Leone, some respondents noted that the conflict continues to have an impact on the ways that women experience violence. For some, the levels of violence seen during the conflict are understood to have contributed to a high tolerance of GBV after the conflict. There are also new issues facing some women after conflict – such as women and girls who are now heading up households and running large homes alone because husbands or family members have been killed. These women and girls are vulnerable not only to entrenched and chronic poverty, but are also vulnerable to violence and exploitation because of their lone status. One respondent noted that in relation to the combatants of the conflict “we have men who have been using women at will, they are still among us”. Whether currently perpetrating violence or not, the omnipresent threat of violence because of the presence of former perpetrators of conflict-related violence within communities is felt by women.

Additionally, there are indicators that political violence will inevitably result in the sexual violation of women once again. During the research, two political rallies that had taken place in 2009 and 2010 were frequently cited by respondents.<sup>53</sup> At both events, stone-throwing and other aggression had escalated into physical violence and on both occasions there were allegations that women were raped.<sup>54</sup> One respondent noted that “as usual women were attacked”. These ‘flashpoints’ of political violence pose continuing threats and are an indication that renewed political violence is a pervasive threat to women’s safety in particular. A number of agencies provide response services to victims/survivors of GBV, and did so in the incidents cited above. However they were also subject to considerable political and social pressure at national levels for attempting to deliver those services. Some strategic contingency planning may be needed in preparation for the 2012 elections to both advocate for women’s protection and safety and to ensure that organisations are enabled to provide their services in appropriate and confidential ways if political violence were to erupt. It is not clear whether Consortium members are drawing this kind of early warning analysis into their work on GBV (where appropriate to programmes disseminating messaging on GBV and those providing services at community levels).

Many women are also still living with the impact of the violence they experienced during the conflict. IRC sexual assault referral centres address the needs of victims/survivors of sexual violence and associated health and psycho-social impacts resulting from the war. They still receive women reporting health consequences of violence experienced during the conflict. The Sierra

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<sup>52</sup> Cohen, Dara K (2011) Rape Reporting During War: Why the Numbers Don't Mean What You Think They Do, Foreign Affairs, Aug 1<sup>st</sup> 2011

<sup>53</sup> The exact dates and location of incidents are not available. Note that clarifications were sought on these dates and none were received in response. These dates may be erroneous and should not be quoted.

<sup>54</sup> An investigation into these incidents has been undertaken and the Sheare-Moses report of this investigation is pending release.

Leone National Committee for Social Action (NACSA) has established a sexual violence reparations programme which, as recently as 2010, has provided fistula surgeries and gynaecological services to 235 women living with the impacts of conflict-time sexual assault. Even more women are still waiting to access these services, which requires funding if those women's needs are to be addressed. Similarly there are issues of stigma facing women who experienced abuse during the conflict and many are isolated from families and communities. Aside from the IRC programme, there was little mention of these specific categories of women or their needs in the programmes of the Consortium members. An exception in terms of overall approach, is the Action Aid programme which, in the early stages after the conflict, employed a research approach that elicited information and understanding of violence before, during and after conflict (See Box 1).

Again, it is relevant to consider the differing mandates of agencies and the kinds of programmes they may employ because of their own target areas and technical expertise. It is not clear however whether agencies are looking for such issues when they develop programmes in a post-conflict environment such as Sierra Leone.

#### **Box 1: Understanding GBV Before, During and After Conflict**

Action Aid initiated a project to raise awareness on GBV, change behaviours and improve service responses to the issue. As part of development of the project, Action Aid staff undertook a 'Participatory Vulnerability Analysis' (PVA) with target communities. The PVA was structured to elicit the views of community members on trends in GBV before, during and after the Sierra Leone conflict. In this way, the community themselves, as well as Action Aid staff, could understand both an historical timeline of the way that violence occurred and the nature of violence in the post-conflict context. The process was used to enable communities to identify particular needs and vulnerabilities in relation to violence. Action Aid used this data to "train women to know what violence is" and as a result addressed the community's lack of confidence in police services by engaging with the police to improve its responses.

#### **Key Challenges and Lessons Learned**

Developing appropriate responses to GBV within a context emerging from a protracted conflict is challenging and there are a number of lessons to be taken from these experiences:

##### *Recognise Post-conflict as a 'Moment' of Opportunity*

The post-conflict 'moment' presents a significant opportunity for the issues of gender equality, women's empowerment and GBV to become positioned on the national agenda. It is at this juncture that national level democratic reforms, the creation of new institutions, and the potential for a radical break from past and problematic practices can be made, which all require appropriate and sustainable support. This moment of opportunity is of particular relevance to bringing about changes to gender relations and addressing inequalities that existed before and during a conflict and which may continue, or indeed become entrenched, if they are not addressed in the reconstruction efforts after conflict. It is important that newly established structures do not constrain women's advancement but instead act to overcome women's exclusion and put in place

structures to address issues such as GBV. Violence remains prevalent in women's lives after conflict, but because it takes place in private spheres may receive less attention than that violence that may have taken place as part of the 'political' violence associated with the conflict. A post-conflict transition, and the attainment of peace, from a gender perspective should then involve processes and development programming that addresses structural exclusions and the causal factors and impact of pervasive violence in women's lives.<sup>55</sup> It is acknowledged that the differing mandates of Consortium members may mean that not all agencies would work at macro levels. However, there is an evident opportunity in the post-conflict transition to develop and operate programmes in ways that take advantage of and contribute to securing post-conflict gains for women in the transitional moment.

#### *Learning to Incorporate the 'Transition' into Programming Approaches*

The findings raise questions about whether all members of the Consortium approach their work in post-conflict states differently than in typical development contexts. It is not clear whether for some agencies, the humanitarian to development continuum encompasses acknowledgement of a 'post-conflict transition' that takes place in contexts such as Sierra Leone. This research questions whether agencies should take a more strategic approach to transitioning their own humanitarian responses in line with the larger transition that a country may be experiencing. The lesson here is less about changing current approaches or making development approaches 'different' in some way. Rather, it is about consciously assessing the landscape of change which a context emerging from conflict is experiencing, identifying key opportunities and ensuring that responses GBV are responsive to this landscape. Some agencies tend to register the political context or the instability of a context such as Sierra Leone as simply a 'risk' factor for the overall project. The post-conflict status requires a more in-depth assessment in both mapping out the particular issues that face women after conflict and the key ways which individual agencies may (or may not) contribute at macro, meso and micro levels according to their mandate and range of expertise.

#### *Understanding Violence*

The post-conflict landscape poses many challenges for women – in re-establishing lives and livelihoods and dealing with myriad forms of violence. There is a need to fully understand the nature of violence in a context that is both new to many agencies and socio-politically complex. As society reconfigures itself after a conflict, so too do forms and acts of violence in women's homes and communities. The Action Aid approach to learning about the nature of GBV before, during and after conflict is a useful model in disaggregating out violence and what may be needed in response. Existing data on violence such as those found in the report of the TRC could be made more use of as tools to inform programming responses. Any newly initiated research on these issues could also be done in collaborative ways that maximize the utility of research and, by sharing expertise, will ensure that appropriate research techniques are used.

### **5.1.2 APPROACH 2: Direct Programming – Prevention and Response**

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<sup>55</sup> Byrne, Bridget (1996) Gender, Conflict and Development; Volume I: Overview, Report No. 34, BRIDGE

A number of the agencies consulted for the research are engaged in direct programming on GBV. Programmes address the prevention of GBV through behaviour-changing and awareness-raising programmes, create access to and strengthen justice responses for women and promote women's economic empowerment. Programmes also provide essential services to victims/survivors of sexual violence. These differing approaches are discussed below.

### **Awareness-Raising and Behaviour Change Approaches**

Respondents generally noted that “before the war people did not know their rights” and affiliated this with a lack of social and political acknowledgement of GBV as an infringement of women's rights. Agencies that began operating in Sierra Leone during the conflict, such as IRC, initially began awareness-raising initiatives to promote understanding of the need to prevent and respond to GBV. These kinds of awareness-raising and community mobilisation approaches have continued into, and have seemingly expanded, in the post-conflict context as many of the Consortium members and their partners now operate such programmes.

The key in much of this work has been transforming normative understanding of violence in the home and community from something that is ‘acceptable’ or tolerated, to an issue which may be considered an abuse of rights and a ‘crime’. An important element of this overall process has been the use of rights-based language by these programmes. Many rely on both the international rights frameworks and language, as well as the national legislative frameworks which Sierra Leone has put in place, as a basis for this work.

Respondents generally noted that before the war women were more accepting of the normalcy of violence in their lives and their secondary status in society. With the increased awareness of rights, women are now demanding these rights. As noted by one respondent “we now have the NGO language” which has meant that the endemic GBV prevalent before and during the conflict is now re-framed as a crime and a rights issue. Approaches by RADA also highlight that conflict-time political violence should not be seen as completely distinct from the ways that women experience violence in their homes and communities before, during and after conflict (see Box 2).

It was felt by the majority of respondents that the ways in which violence is being newly understood has resulted in more reporting of violence: “this violence has always been there but now people are aware and they are talking about it”. Trócaire considers its partners' awareness-raising programmes to have been successful in prompting increased reporting. Women are approaching their partners' legal services who in turn are linking with law enforcement officials to encourage productive responses. The awareness-raising is understood to have triggered a sequence of events from generating new understanding of violence, to reporting, to approaching services. Awareness-raising and behaviour change approaches are viewed by agencies as activities which have created better local level responses to GBV and overall assist in the prevention of violence.

**Box 2: Making Connections Between Peace and Conflict-time Violence**

RADA (partner of Christian Aid) have learned that both the content and forms of messaging on GBV are important to consider when designing awareness-raising programmes. In its work, RADA makes linkages between the violence that occurs in the home and community and that which occurred during the conflict. This approach tries to overcome assumptions inherent in Sierra Leone society that situate the violence that women experience in conflict as somehow 'different' to that which they experience in the home. RADA challenges men about their violence and whether they realise that when they perpetrate violence in the home they contribute to the possibility that women will experience wider political forms of violence during a period of conflict. RADA underline that GBV is rooted in inequalities that inform violence wherever it appears. During community-based training sessions they ask male participants questions such as: "If in normal times you don't protect women, do you think you can protect them during conflict?" and "If you accept this [violence] during peace then you will have to accept it during conflict". This kind of approach demonstrates to communities that if violence against women is tolerated during peacetime then it will inevitably be tolerated and happen during conflict. The approach is particularly useful in addressing the broader roots of gendered violence during conflict that ultimately begin in women's homes and communities.

Several strategies have been used by Consortium members and partners in their awareness-raising activities. These include approaches that engage exclusively with women, exclusively with men, with men and women, at the family unit level (See Box 3) and with key 'opinion makers' such as traditional and religious leaders. The Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR), a partner of Trócaire, find that in terms of engagement, "starting from where people are already at" works best. In order to raise awareness and promote behaviour and attitudinal change, they have engaged with religious and traditional leaders to influence these 'opinion makers' own influence on their communities. CDHR have structured some of their training around messages that draw on teachings from the Bible and Koran. They have used this approach as a platform from which to demonstrate that the use of violence against women is not a sanctioned act under either religious philosophy and thereby should not be condoned. Following training sessions, the imams and priests who participate have developed action plans which include actions to communicate messages against GBV in their weekly sermons and in Sunday Schools. The implementation of these commitments are monitored by staff members who attend these services and observe how messaging is being delivered.

### **Box 3: Promoting a 'Gender Model Family'**

In designing their behaviour-change strategy, the Rehabilitation and Development Agency (RADA, a partner of Christian Aid) wanted to work broadly to contribute to eradicating inequality and changing violent behaviours. As a result of their initial assessments, they recognised that a lot of activities by agencies were being undertaken at broader community levels and felt that: "Everyone who looks at gender looks at community". A gap was identified – that of the 'family unit'. RADA recognised that the family unit was being overlooked in approaches to awareness-raising and is a key site in which violent behaviours are initiated and played out.

In trying to devise strategies to engage at the family unit level, RADA benefitted from a visit to Ghana to learn from a programme there. They adopted a practice that was used called the 'positive deviant' approach. Under this strategy, those families who demonstrate constructive ways of managing household relationships, and thereby overcome strict expectations of gendered roles, are identified as being 'different' or 'deviant' from the stereotypical norm in their communities. These families are identified as positive examples or as a 'Gender Model Family' which, through their everyday behaviours, intrinsically promote positive behaviours and relationships in the home.

Through a process of community consultation, RADA and their targeted communities identified families with such positive practices. These included those families in which the man/husband takes the kids to school, helps with the cooking, or has never demonstrated violence in the home. These families were identified by the communities themselves as the 'Gender Model Family'. A ranking exercise conducted with women in each community identified the three key areas that these women wished the Gender Model Family to promote. These were 1) prevention of domestic violence; 2) promoting a shared workload in the home; and 3) inculcating shared decision-making processes in the home. In the communities in which RADA works, domestic violence was identified as utmost priority.

In scheduled meetings and workshops held at community level, the model family discuss what is 'different' about the way they function. For example, the husband explains the benefits of not using violence on his wife and the positive aspects of sharing chores in the home on their relationship. The promotion of 'different ways of doing things' by the model family is perceived to have prompted some change such as women in communities demanding more from their husbands within the household. The men from the model families have also formed 'Men Against Violence' groups which are championing the male role in the prevention of violence in their homes.

There has been some resistance to the process by some local men. The men involved in the model family often have to deal with comments such as "these men have lost their senses". However, the model families have now become the 'go to' focal points in the community for familial issues – an unexpected role that has evolved and for which the men and women involved have to learn to

respond to, including supporting women who approach them in accessing local services for assistance with violence.

Engaging with men to prevent violence has been adopted as a strategy by a number of agencies. Of interest is the approach taken by Concern Worldwide and others who recognised the importance of enhancing understanding of masculinities among their own staff. An important observation was that “we expect our staff to teach on stuff that they practice themselves”. This is often the challenge – that it may not be clear whether the staff and partners that engage directly in awareness-raising activities are themselves already fully trained in or even supportive of concepts of equality in their own lives. As noted by one respondent: “you can only influence people if you are convinced of it yourself”. Concern Worldwide with Oxfam, COOPI and Christian Aid organised for FemNet in Kenya to come to Sierra Leone to deliver training on ‘masculinities’. FemNet worked with a Sierra Leonian organisation to co-deliver the training and create an in-country resource on masculinities. During the training male staff were encouraged to reflect on their own behaviours and how they felt about the issues they were working with communities on. For Concern Worldwide, the goal is to foster an ‘engaging men’ approach throughout their programming, including within the Education programme that addresses School Related GBV (SRGBV). Additionally, in the Concern Worldwide health programme, a change has occurred. Initiatives to support pregnant women’s access to health care has moved from being women-focused to working with men and promoting their role in familial reproductive care. Groups of men have been trained in the importance of health care during pregnancy and are passing these messages on to other men in their communities.

One respondent noted that when international organisations first came into Sierra Leone after the conflict and began working on GBV, there was an exclusive focus on women within these programmes. This respondent felt that this exclusive focus had a backlash – because it excluded men it created a particular form of resistance to GBV initiatives that now, at a later stage, needs to be tackled. From the outset, approaches that simultaneously, yet in a differentiated way, engage both men and women are considered to be more appropriate. As this respondent noted: “I learnt a lesson – when working on GBV don’t exclude one [gender], do them at the same time”.<sup>56</sup> The models of working with men presented above demonstrate a key and effective point – that “men can better engage with men – they see things from their perspective” and there is a need for greater work on masculinities to enter the field of responses to gender equality and GBV.

A challenge and lesson learned is the need to effectively manage the ways that new and often alien terminology associated with the issue of GBV and of ‘rights’ are introduced to communities. Research by CARL has demonstrated that there are “problems in translating words like justice, human rights, [and] gender acts in the local languages”.<sup>57</sup> Amnesty International have highlighted

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<sup>56</sup> This research notes that while this comments is important in respect to awareness raising and changing both violent behaviours and reporting behaviours, provision of essential response service specifically tailored to women is also exclusively needed.

<sup>57</sup> Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (no date) Baseline Survey Report: Trócaire Project Enhancing Access to Justice and the Rule of Law, CARL. Pg. 18

that in Sierra Leone there is confusion about what the term and act of rape constitutes and this is diluting understanding of the issue and the opportunity to promote effective responses to it.<sup>58</sup> It may be equally difficult for those recipients of awareness-raising activities to conceptually translate such ideas into everyday meaning. There is a need to ensure that the introduction of universal concepts such as human rights is performed in a way that is tailored and suitable and meets local capacity to absorb and integrate appropriate interpretation and perceived utility of these ideas and standards.

### **Creating an Evidence Base and Understanding of GBV**

As noted before, Sierra Leone was a 'new' context for many of the Consortium members who began operating there during and after the war. Generating a knowledge base on the nature and characteristics of violence is thereby important. As was noted before, it is important to understand the ways in which conflict may influence women's lives and experiences of violence after conflict. It is also important, however, to ensure that programming is responsive to the endemic forms of violence that women experience over the longer-term transition, including the specific challenges they may face in seeking assistance. The review of Consortium members' programme documents found examples of where GBV was cited as being 'high' in Sierra Leone. Statements such as these are however not supported by prevalence statistics, nor are there comparative references to other sites or data to demonstrate what 'high' levels of violence actually means relative to alternate contexts. It is not clear what the evidence base is and there is a role for agencies to influence a local discourse that is representative of the true picture of violence in Sierra Leone.

A number of Consortium members have produced studies on GBV. Concern Worldwide has undertaken a risk and vulnerability analysis relating to gender and HIV and AIDS in several communities in Tonkili where the organisation operates. It identified variant forms of GBV, structural inequality and discrimination, and women's poor economic, health and socio-political status as key factors in women and girls' vulnerability.<sup>59</sup> Trócaire has supported all partners to undertake research relating to access to justice and GBV. AJLC conducted a prevalence study assessing levels of GBV (Bombali, Koinadugu and Tonkolili districts);<sup>60</sup> the Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (CARL) undertook a baseline survey of knowledge and attitudes to human rights principles and the rule of law (in northern and eastern regions);<sup>61</sup> and the CDHR undertook a baseline survey related to a Campaign for the Promotion and Protection of Women's Rights (Bombali district).<sup>62</sup> World Vision has undertaken two significant qualitative studies on FGM/C with the objective of learning more about the socio-cultural mores that inform the practice and to

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<sup>58</sup> Amnesty International (2011) Impact Assessment Report: Accessing Justice Programme Sierra Leone, Amnesty International. Pg. 42

<sup>59</sup> Concern Worldwide (2010) Risk and Vulnerability Report for Gender, Equality and HIV and AIDS; Concern Worldwide

<sup>60</sup> Access to Justice Law Centre (2009) The Injuries We Do Not See: Gender Based Violence Prevalence Survey in Northern Sierra Leone, Access to Justice Law Centre

<sup>61</sup> Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law (no date) Enhancing Access To Justice And Rule Of Law In Sierra Leone Project: Baseline Survey Report, Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law

<sup>62</sup> Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (no date) Baseline Survey Report: Campaign for the Propmotion and Protection of Women's Rights, Centre for Democracy and Human Rights



develop actions to address it (see Box 4).<sup>63</sup> Plan has developed research that assesses the attitudes and perceptions of girls and boys in two districts towards the practice of FGC. The research report proposes ways to engage with families and communities in promoting alternative rites practices.<sup>64</sup>

Some of this research uses quantitative approaches which result in statistical-type assessments of attitudes and characteristics of violence. There is need for additional work that draws out the qualitative experience of violence so that programmes and responses can more adequately address women's experiential needs rather than a perceived prevalence of violence. Challenging in both quantitative and qualitative approaches however is in ensuring that ethical standards of undertaking research on GBV are upheld and a balance is maintained between eliciting useful data and the potential impact of the process on women and families who may be consulted for research purposes. There was little reference in any of the above-cited research of the issue of ethics related to research on GBV, or participant protection measures taken within the process of the research. There are many resources and tools available to assist with such approaches. For example, the Consortium provided technical inputs to the development of the WHO Guidelines on researching sexual violence<sup>65</sup> which do not appear to have been referenced in this work. There is also little cross-referencing between the research reports. For example, the Plan research on FGM/C was produced in 2010 (focusing on Northern Region) and does not reference the World Vision research produced in 2009 (focused on Southern Region). While focusing on different regions of the country there is an obvious opportunity for sharing of learning between these initiatives in relation to research approaches, comparison with overall findings and any resulting programming approaches. There is the opportunity for research to be more widely used, cross-referenced and learned from both substantive and procedural perspectives.

#### **Box 4: Longer-term Ethnographic Approaches to Research**

World Vision recognised the importance of researching a sensitive and culturally embedded issue such as FGM/C in an appropriate way by adopting an ethnographic covert approach to its research. The World Vision researcher spent a period of three months living with one of the Soweis who are responsible for initiating girls in FGM/C. The researcher posed as a health worker and was able to observe the practice and the role of the Soweis on an extensive and in-depth basis. In this way the research on FGM/C could be conducted without being subject to what Soweis may perceive as an external prejudice or judgement to their work. The research findings are being used in World Vision's work in Sierra Leone and in the West African region, contributing to regional understanding and overall approach to addressing the issue. World Vision are also using the research as an evidence base from which to advocate for a national strategy on FGM/C by the Sierra

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<sup>63</sup> World Vision (2009) Female Genital Mutilation/Female Genital Cutting: A Case Study in the Yangatoko Community Imperi Chiefdom, Bonthe District, Southern Sierra Leone, World Vision; Annastacia Olembo for World Vision (no date) FGM/C Report, World Vision

<sup>64</sup> Owolabi Bjälkander for Plan International (2010) A Community Based survey of Girls' and Boys' Knowledge and Attitudes Towards FGC, Plan International

<sup>65</sup> United Nations World Health Organisation (2007) WHO ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies, WHO, Geneva  
While specific to sexual violence the basic principles underpinning the guidelines may be applied to research on wider forms of violence also.

Leone government. The research approach and resulting depth of findings lends credibility and legitimacy to their advocacy at national levels. It corresponds to the need, in a newly structured political system, to ensure that advocacy undertaken on a sensitive issue such as FGM/C, which has hitherto never been openly spoken about, is undertaken on the basis of credible data and a sound understanding of the issue and what is required to address it.

### **Multi-Level and Comprehensive Approaches to Addressing GBV**

This report has already highlighted the need for initiatives on GBV to work from macro to micro levels and that collaborative and coordinated approaches would ensure broader coverage of gaps and needs. A multi-level approach has been adopted by two of the agencies that participated in this research.

IRC's programme has evolved from a specifically victim/survivor-centred service provision programme to a holistic and multi-faceted approach for promoting social empowerment and ensuring the protection of women. It has four components which operate at multiple levels:

1. Prevention – which focuses on promoting behaviour change, positive messaging on gender equality and working with the IRC Child Protection Programme to establish Gender Clubs in schools and specifically support adolescents girls;
2. EA\$E Programme (Economic and Social Empowerment Programme) – works with groups of 25-30 women to establish savings and loans systems which are accessed by members to assist with day-to-day livelihood needs and for establishing business ventures which members receive training for. It also brings husbands and wives together to discuss management of household finances;
3. Provision of Essential Services – provides sexual assault response and referral services to victims/survivors through three Rainbo Centres (See Box 5);
4. Advocacy – is undertaken at national, district and grassroots levels to promote effective responses to GBV. This aspect of the programme includes IRCs work to support the NWM and in particular the development of a National Action Plan on GBV which, at the time of research, was awaiting approval.

A fifth strand cuts across the programme to support the development of research on GBV. IRC plans to undertake a major study on women's access to justice. IRC staff members noted that the programme has essentially evolved "from essential services to how do you prevent" approaches. These later approaches have centred on women's empowerment and working to address the multiple factors essential to effectively addressing GBV.

#### **Box 5: Providing Sustainable Responses to Sexual Violence**

IRC established the first sexual assault referral centres in Sierra Leone. The Rainbo Centres provide essential response services to victims/survivors including clinical management, psycho-social care and referral to and support for seeking legal redress. Through the centres IRC has trained staff of Public Health Units and of the Family Support Units of the Sierra Leone Police to ensure effective

responses. Women's Action Groups (WAGs) have also been established in two of the centres to provide basic psycho-social follow-up care and support to women and girls who access the centres.

A 2005 appraisal of the Rainbo Centres found that their exclusive management by an international NGO meant that they were unsustainable in the longer term as independent entities and since then attempts have been made to transition the centres to national ownership. Various options were considered: integrate the centres into the Ministry of Health; identify a local NGO to take over the programme; outsource the Rainbo Centre staff; or re-form the Rainbo Centres staff as an organisation that would run the centres. Having explored the first three options and found them unviable, moves are currently being made to use the latter option and transition the Rainbo Centres to independent entities with their own management boards and operated by Rainbo Centre staff. There are inherent challenges in this process – ensuring that those who take over the centre are committed and maintain the same standards of service, that the centres remain an independent entity and not subject to individual agendas, and the need to secure funding by donors directly to the new management structures. IRC would recommend that services such as the Rainbo Centres should be embedded in national structures such as the health system so that there is national ownership and a sustainable approach from the outset. However, in a context such as Sierra Leone where systems and services were very weak following the conflict, the need to provide urgent and adequate services to women meant that the approach taken was appropriate at the time.

Trócaire's programme is also designed to take a holistic approach to addressing women's empowerment. It works in a tri-partite way to:

1. increase awareness on rights issues among communities;
2. enhance legal response and support; and
3. address women's vulnerability to violence by enhancing their economic empowerment.

This tri-partite approach means that the programme serves to create awareness of rights and demand for services, works to strengthen services that women need when reporting violence and provides women with opportunities to enhance their economic independence, a key factor in both protection from and dealing with violence. Organisations such as RADA, Amnesty International and Concern Worldwide noted the relevance of economic empowerment in assisting women to have the capacity to deal with domestic violence, such as the costs involved in pursuing legal redress. This type of approach acknowledges that eradicating GBV involves more than simply awareness raising but also involves enhancing the capacity of women to withstand the impact of violence on their lives and have the resources to make decisions in response to such experiences. Without economic empowerment many women will not be able to act on some of the empowering messages they are receiving from the awareness-raising programmes.

Trócaire's support to the Daughters of Immaculate Mary (DMI) is an example of constructive ways to go about promoting women's economic independence. Drawing on a model first developed and used in India, DMI employ a 'Women's World Self-Help Group' model which encompasses forming groups of approximately twenty women who contribute to a joint savings scheme. Over time the

savings build up and members can access loans from the group. Key has been ensuring self-ownership of the process by the members so that decisions on loans are held by the group themselves. Since 2009, over 3,000 women have participated in these groups, many of whom have already established small businesses. The entry point was through existing Catholic Women's Associations, however participation is not restricted by religion. Members of initial groups have mobilised further women's groups by disseminating information about the project. The overall approach has:

- Trained members on financial management;
- Created links between the group and the formal banking system – with many members engaging with and using a bank for the first time;
- Trained members on management of conflict within the family, trained women on their rights and promoted overall rights awareness;
- Trained the groups in skills such as soap making, tie-dying and management of small shops as potential business ventures;
- Encouraged members to share skills amongst themselves. For example, those who are literate are teaching illiterate members to write their name. At the start of the project many women could only use a thumb-print to 'sign' their savings books. After six months, they are signing their own names.

Members of one group consulted during the research spoke of the impact of the initiative in their lives. For some, the extra income has enabled them to send their children to school; for one woman it has given her "the confidence to speak in a public gathering"; and for others it is a resource which can be drawn on to deal with crises that hit their families. For example, the group performed a 'skit' of the project which highlighted fears associated with 'micro-credit' schemes where default on payments can lead to prosecution. Instead, the 'Women's World Self Help Group' approach allows members to borrow money for family illness and medical costs – and if the borrowing extends over a prolonged time, there is understanding and support from members until the crises can be resolved. Challenges have included inculcating trust among members at the outset – particularly in a setting affected by the corruption that informed the conflict; in facilitating a change of mind-set so that women understand their rights and their role in demanding them; and fostering new ideas such as 'saving' and attending meetings – which members noted were initially difficult but which they became accustomed to over time. DMI have also engaged with a community of 'amputees' of the conflict who reside in separate housing provided by the government and as such are separated from the community. The programme has undertaken similar initiatives with them and fostered more independent ways of living among this community. A key lesson has been the importance of 'flexibility' in the scheme – it works for these women because it is flexible, a flexibility which is determined by the group members themselves and thereby corresponds with the realities of their lives.

Trócaire's range of partners allows them to contribute jointly to the overall broader empowerment aim of the programme. The mix of partners also means that they are addressing GBV from different angles. Trócaire's partners are also using their experience to engage in advocacy at district and at national levels, meaning that the programmes reach from grassroots to the national level. For

example, AJLCs' analysis and critique of the gender laws was presented to the Sierra Leone government to advocate for reforms necessary to the laws and their implementation (See Box 6). Trócaire acknowledges that there are some challenges and gaps in terms of ensuring geographic coverage of the programme in the districts they are based in, an issue which will be addressed in forthcoming programme development.

#### **Box 6: Access to Justice**

Following the end of the conflict, the Access to Justice Law Centre (AJLC) was established to address one of the key post-conflict needs – access to justice. As noted by the Director of AJLC, a partner of Trócaire, “the conflict shaped our programmes”. Acting on the finding of the TRC that the corruption within the legal system had contributed to the conflict, AJLC conducted a survey in 2004 to assess attitudes towards the legal system. It found that access to legal justice was severely constrained for the most poor and of these, women and girls were most marginalised. In response to the findings, AJLC began addressing women’s need to access justice for issues such as GBV and other equality related problems. AJLC employs a team of paralegals to provide legal aid to women so they can pursue cases of GBV through the criminal justice system. They simultaneously work with the judiciary and the police to provide training and capacity development support so that the systems AJLC are encouraging women to use become equipped to deal with the demands that they bring to them. AJLC have also targeted macro level structures which are necessary to their work. They have developed a critique of the three ‘Gender Laws’ and highlighted gaps within the laws such as the lack of provision for health care to women under the domestic violence act.<sup>66</sup>

While partnering with Trócaire, the organisation is aware of their dependency on international organisations and donors and wish to embed a more sustainable approach to their work to ensure the longevity of their organisation while such funding is available. At the time of this research, AJLC were in negotiations with a local university to try and integrate the AJLC into the Law Faculty. In this way, the services of the organisation will be sustainable through using students to act as paralegals who will, at the same time, gain valuable experience in dealing with issues of GBV, thus generating a constituency of lawyers within the profession who will possess skills to appropriately deal with GBV over the longer term.

#### **Key Challenges and Lessons Learned**

A number of key challenges and lessons learned can be drawn the range of approaches which Consortium members and their partners are using to address GBV in Sierra Leone:

##### *The Need to Introduce and Manage Behaviour Change Approaches Effectively*

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<sup>66</sup> Access to Justice Law Centre (no date) *The Legal Loopholes We Do Not See: Legal Research on the Three Gender Acts, 2007, 2009 and the Child Rights Act 2007 of Sierra Leone in Compliance with International Human Rights Obligations to Provide Access to Justice and Protection for Women*, Access to Justice Law Centre

It is evident that as society re-calibrates after conflict, the introduction of ideas about new ways of 'being', of 'behaving' and of regulating inter-personal relationships must be tailored to the wider context, as this is where so much of the social change has happened and continues to happen as a result of the conflict. Additionally, and as in typical development settings, the desired outcome of securing socio-cultural and behaviour change may be expected to take a significant duration of time and planning for a longer-term engagement is required from the outset. The opportunity for such an approach exists at the moment where agencies are first developing their in-country strategies in response to the transition from conflict/emergency context to post-conflict or a development setting. Behaviour change and awareness-raising programmes require a longer-term approach in order to be effective and to work in line with the wider social and political changes occurring in a post-conflict context.

#### *Starting From Within Our Own Organisations*

A key learning from the behaviour change processes employed by agencies has been the need for staff members themselves to assess their own behaviours and attitudes as a basis for the way they work with communities. In Sierra Leone the issue of GBV, and awareness-raising and rights-based approaches to it, primarily emerged in this context during and after the conflict. It is important to note that the issue may be new not only for the communities that Consortium members are working with, but also for some of the staff that have been recruited to these agencies. It is imperative therefore for agencies to ensure that their own staff have reflected on their own attitudes and perceptions of issues of violence, particularly where these are mainstreamed into programmes that may not be exclusively about GBV and do not employ staff that may be typically sympathetic and knowledgeable of the issue. It is also recognised that behaviour changes is a slow process. Ongoing and consistent support is required to enable staff to adopt what they have learned and to manage the attitudes towards them and their work which they may confront from the communities in which they work. It is important to foster a continual process of learning and change, reflective of the Consortium's own philosophy, that will then assimilate from staff into the programme and their interactions with programme clients.

#### *Ensuring a 'do no harm' Approach*

One respondent to this research noted that micro-level 'conflict-sensitivity' is needed within approaches that attempt to address GBV at individual and community levels. A 'do no harm approach' needs to be central to any programming. This is particularly pertinent to a context such as Sierra Leone, where, as referenced above, naming and discussing forms of GBV is a relatively new development for this society. The majority of the partners that Consortium members work through were established since the end of the conflict and are therefore 'young'. In some of the research interviews the approaches taken prompted some questions about technical know-how and approach and whether organisations are employing and ensuring that a 'no harm' approach informs their programming. For example, in one instance a respondent offered to email pictures of a woman who had experienced severe physical beating from her husband to the consultant. These photographs were evidence being used by the police, which in any event should not have been in the possession of this staff member and in another should not be made available/public without permission of the woman in question. In other instances the level of training received by staff may

be questioned. As noted before, in contexts such as Sierra Leone, the issue of 'GBV' 'arrives' with the international community. This is not to say that violence against women did not exist, but that terminology and the framing of what was hitherto an acceptable and normal aspect of family life, to one which is now framed as a crime and a rights issue, has rapidly evolved. Changing normative, socio-cultural and personal perceptions and understanding of this issue is a sensitive and delicate process and engagement with communities can sometimes inadvertently cause negative effects if enough skill and expertise are not employed in strategy design and implementation. As noted by a Commissioner at the Human Rights Commission, a rights-based approach "requires us to be more inquiring about the way we approach" such issues. In a context that may be new, or is newly re-establishing itself after a conflict, it is necessary to be responsibly informed about GBV if you are to approach this issue sensitively.

Inconsistent messaging by partners was also noted. Some communities are in receipt of several programmes, which include both training and awareness-raising activities. Some have complained that one agency comes in and gives one message, and another arrives with a varied or inconsistent message. This creates confusion and the possibility of a resulting unwillingness by community members to either engage in these initiatives or to take the issue of GBV seriously. More coordination is needed, as is consistency on messaging. A possible approach would be for agencies to align their work with national policy frameworks. These could then form the basis of discussions in forums such as the NACGBV where some collaboration and coordination for micro level approaches could be devised.

#### *Getting in Place Structures and Normative Frameworks*

Several of the programmes cited above work to promote implementation of the gender laws. The existence of these legislative frameworks provide a basis for promoting the kinds of behaviour change that the programmes address. As noted by one respondent: "at least we have something to refer to". Without these it would be more difficult for NGOs to engage with services such as the police and judiciary. They not only provide the framework necessary for preventing and addressing GBV but also lend credibility to the efforts of those trying to promote change. This reiterates the importance of taking advantage of the post-conflict 'moment' to get in place the standards on equality and prevention of violence that will then become the platform for agencies to legitimately engage with key actors, services and community members. Additionally, while GBV is understood to primarily affect women, the process of developing frameworks such as these should promote a discourse that underscores GBV as an issue of concern for society at large. In Sierra Leone the laws are (in some sense inevitably) perceived by some to be 'against men' and 'only for women'. The kind of discourse that informs their development and the subsequent 'marketing' of these laws is paramount to gaining appropriate understanding and buy-in from society in general. Again, there is the opportunity post-conflict to introduce new ideas in a way that positions violence as a concern for everyone.

#### *Services and Responses to Violence*

There is also a need for further understanding of the landscape of violence that women confront so that services and responses can be tailored to match. The IRC sexual assault response programme

is a much-needed service. However, while services addressing domestic violence exist, there appears to be less attention to this and broader forms of GBV. It may be questioned whether the attention to sexual violence of the conflict has continued into the post-conflict arena and as a result less may be known about other forms of violence. If this is the case in post-conflict contexts such as Sierra Leone, then more needs to be done to make visible the range of wider forms of violence that women may be experiencing. Additionally, the intersection of forms of violence, i.e where multiple forms of violence constitute one experience for a woman, or where more linkages could be made between violence and wider issues such as women's political participation, could be given more elucidation and used as entry points.

### **5.1.3 APPROACH 3: Integrating GBV into Sectoral Programmes**

Three agencies demonstrated effective approaches to mainstreaming or incorporating GBV into wider sector programmes.

The relevance of identifying issues of GBV and addressing them through programmes such as education is increasingly recognised. Concern Worldwide has taken an approach that incorporates working from schools outwards to ensure that responses to GBV are embedded in schools, families and wider communities (see Box 7). Plan also addresses GBV through its education programme and as part of its overall Child Protection programming. As a result of research and analysis, Plan recognised the necessity of integrating protection considerations into their overall school construction project. Research indicated that mixed toilets were sites where abuses most occurred and as a result Plan constructs school facilities in ways that segregate boys and girls and work to reduce risk. In their engagement in schools, Plan has also incorporated approaches address violence against girls, such as tackling dropout rates of girls by raising awareness about sexual and reproductive rights.

GOAL's Disadvantaged Child and Youth Project (DCYP) has also taken approaches to addressing GBV within its activities that evolved directly from responding to conflict-related issues. The programme began working with child soldiers in 1999, providing shelter, housing and reintegration services. The programme has since evolved to addressing 'streetism' among children and transitioned its shelter to a formal education centre. Issues of sexual exploitation and risk have been addressed through the programme. Children have been provided with education on sexual and reproductive rights issues and negotiating safe-sex, a need identified by children who engage in prostitution.<sup>67</sup> Similarly, in its water and sanitation programme, GOAL take steps to mitigate against the risk of rape at public latrines by providing lighting and a care-taker system where community members who are trained to maintain the latrines are also trained in child protection and GBV issues.

#### **Box 7: Addressing GBV From Schools Out to Communities**

Concern Worldwide address GBV within its primary school Education Programme. Addressing GBV was not part of the initial programme design. Attention to GBV became integral to the programme

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<sup>67</sup> GOAL, Disadvantaged Child and Youth Project (CDYP) (programme flyer on file with author)



when enrolment had been achieved and issues of retention became the obstacle to securing parity of education. Analysis found that the main issues affecting retention of girls in schools were familial preference for boys to be educated; requirements of labour in the home by girls; corporal punishment; teenage pregnancies and GBV. A study conducted by Concern Worldwide highlighted that girls' education outcomes suffer tremendously from the impact of these forms of abuse.<sup>68</sup> As part of a coalition on education, Concern Worldwide (with Plan and others) also supported the development of a 'National Study on School-Related Gender-Based Violence' (SRGBV) which identified the physical, psychological and sexual forms of GBV which girls are subject to from fellow male school children as well as teachers.<sup>69</sup>

In order to address GBV within its existing education programme, Concern Worldwide works with a partner, Pinkin-to-Pinkin, who employ a child-to-child methodology. Together with Concern Worldwide, a multi-faceted approach has been used in the schools where they have:

- developed and disseminated a simplified version of the Child Rights Act to schools and trained teachers on the 'Teachers Code of Conduct' which was developed by the Ministry of Education but has not been subject to comprehensive roll-out across the education structures;
- set up Child Rights Clubs where children learn and become peers on child rights issues, including learning about how to report on GBV and the Teachers Code of Conduct;
- engaged with and trained the School Management Committees to encourage them to hold teachers accountable and to become a structure which children can approach and report violence.

The programme also works from the school out to the connected communities. At community level Concern Worldwide have engaged with Children's Welfare Committees (CWCs) that were established by the Ministry of Social Welfare under the Child Rights Act. Pinkin-to-Pinkin have trained the CWCs and made linkages between them and the Child Rights Clubs coordinators in the schools. Through a process of consultation and mapping, a referral pathway for reporting of SRGBV based on the structures and resources available at local levels was developed. It involves school structures as well as those external to the school environment such as CWCs and local FSUs. The mapping exercise also identified the gaps and obstacles to the reporting process. Among the obstacles identified were the lack of resources and capacity faced by the FSU. While Concern Worldwide have attempted to assist the FSU, they are required to work through higher meso and macro level structures which, due to constraints at that level, in effect block the potential for this assistance to trickle-down to community-level FSU offices such as the ones Concern Worldwide works with.

A key success of the programme has been in generating discussion and debate on 'gender' and 'GBV' within the targeted schools and communities and increased reporting of GBV issues by children. An evaluation of the programme in 2011 found that there has been some increased retention rates for

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<sup>68</sup> Mary Corbett for Concern Worldwide (2008) An Investigation into School Related Gender-Based Violence in Tonkilili District, Sierra Leone, Concern Worldwide

<sup>69</sup> National Study on School-Related Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone, (September 2010) Coalition on Education and Gender-Based Violence

girls and cited examples where girls have not accepted early marriages or attempts at trafficking and have reported the same through the referral system.<sup>70</sup> A key outcome of engaging at primary school levels has been recognising that abuses such as ‘sex for grades’ begins for children in primary school. By equipping them with knowledge of how to manage and respond to potential abuses at primary level, children progress into secondary school with such knowledge. The learning moves up through the education system by targeting the younger ages. The main challenges to these processes are the obstacles, mentioned before, that exist at the meso level within the policing and judicial systems where services are failing to respond adequately to reporting. Concern Worldwide is now linking with other organisations to develop a joint programme to advocate for strengthened responses to these issues at national level.

## **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

### *Integrating ‘new’ Issues*

There are many challenges associated with mainstreaming an issue such as gender or GBV into a wider sectoral-based programme. It can be perceived by staff as an ‘add-on’, particularly when it was not part of the initial project design. Similarly, it was highlighted during the research that there is a need for agencies to demonstrate the impact of GBV on broader issues such as education to donors in order to secure sufficient funding. In the case of some donors there is a need to emphasise that ‘quality education’ entails ensuring the safety and protection of children in schools so that learning and completion of education can take place. The mainstreaming of such issues thereby requires learning by all stakeholders as to its relevance and centrality to the overall goals of the programme.

### *Addressing Both Demand and Supply*

A key lesson for the Concern Worldwide education programme has been that raising awareness of GBV with children, school and community structures creates increased reporting. In this case, girls and their families who decide to report and seek redress interface with the fractured services, such as the police, that were noted before in this report. As a result these services have not been able to meet the demands of reporting. Additionally, many respondents to this research noted that once a report is made to police, the report gets referred on to the prosecutorial system where it also faces obstacles and which effectively moves it out of the locality where the complaint was made. It means that the blockages present at national levels effect local levels.

It is apparent that increasing ‘demand’ among children and communities requires ensuring that the ‘supply’ end functions to meet such demand. Concern Worldwide realised that simply raising awareness at school and community level was not enough, but engaging with the structures which their work interfaces with is just as important.

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<sup>70</sup> Concern Worldwide (2011) Evaluation of Concern Sierra Leone’s Education Programme (2006-2010); Concern Worldwide. Pg. 27 & 53

This lesson is true for the wider awareness-raising and behaviour change programmes discussed in the last section of this report. Engaging with communities generates some level of response - women and girls are encouraged to come forward and report the violence they experience. There is a tension between the need to raise awareness about rights to prevent violence and increase reporting and the need to ensure that when encouraged to report, women and girls receive adequate responses. This is not only important in terms of ensuring that gaps are addressed and that services function, but also from a 'do no harm' perspective. Research in many countries around the world has found that the most dangerous moment for women is when they act on and report issues such as domestic violence. There is a responsibility to ensure that when encouraging women to report, there are adequate services that will ensure her and her family's safety. Raising awareness creates expectations among women - and it needs to be considered whether agencies can ensure these expectations are met to some degree, or at least take some steps to enhancing the capacity of these systems to begin functioning. This is once again linked to identifying opportunities and needs in the transition context so that obstacles to address GBV are tackled from the outset.

It is important to note that a single programme run by an organisation such as Concern Worldwide cannot be expected to address 'everything' that is required. The joint advocacy programme is indicative of a progressive approach by Concern Worldwide to use the learning at community level to address connected issues at national level. More coordinated and collaborative approaches between organisations and government are required if both the demand and supply ends of GBV response are to be addressed. Upon the implementation of the project in another site, Concern Worldwide has modified the initial approach it took. As part of initial interventions, Concern Worldwide engaged with the FSU and local authorities from the outset. In this way linkages between the school and these structures are being developed at an early stage so that expectations on the demand and supply side can be more appropriately managed.

#### **5.1.4 APPROACH 4: Donor and Collaborative Approaches**

Trócaire and Christian Aid work exclusively in collaborative ways with partners, and Irish Aid employ broader funding partnership approaches.

For donor organisations, there is, in many situations, the need to take into account the incumbent difficulties which 'fragile state' status implies for engagement at national levels. In the case of Irish Aid, the Sierra Leone programme does not have a 'Programme Country' status yet does work off of multiannual planning and funding. A programme such as Sierra Leone requires specific technical support, strategic planning and multi annual approaches to ensure that it responds to the specifics of a post-conflict context and can take leadership roles at national levels similar to the ways that Irish Aid engages in other programme countries. Irish Aid has both a diplomatic and a development presence in Sierra Leone and as such has the potential for maximum reach and impact. The lack of actual resource capacity (small staffing numbers) has constrained the potential for more substantive engagement in the Sierra Leone context similar to those taken in other Irish Aid programme countries. For example, the research revealed that there are no clear lead donors on

gender or GBV. There had been a gender working group led by UNIFEM and the Ministry which has died out. As noted above there is little by way of strategic engagement and dialogue with government on issues such as GBV or the status of the NWM, with no specific donor gender working group. There is a clear gap – one which an agency such as Irish Aid could, to some degree, provide some leadership on, particularly on the basis of its institutional commitments to gender equality, GBV, the Consortium and its funding to partners such as the IRC. Its current work on GBV in-country constitutes the funding relationship with IRC. There is potential for a much more enhanced engagement on GBV by the Irish Aid programme. The diplomatic and bi-lateral donor status that Ireland occupies in Sierra Leone could be more effectively used in influencing the political and development arena towards issues such as GBV. The IRC noted that in the duration of its partnership, it has been very useful to approach Irish Aid for support on key policy issues that Irish Aid could raise in the arenas that it accesses at national level.

Trócaire and Christian Aid both employ strategic and longer-term partnership approaches with a range of Sierra Leonean organisations. These partners spoke very positively about their relationships with these Consortium members and noted that a partnership is more productive when is not focused solely on funding but is centred around a cooperative approach. One noted that it is useful when they can “come together to pursue the same goal. It is more sustainable.”

## **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

### *Strategic Approaches on GBV and Institutional Coherence*

While there is caution required in the types of modalities that a donor employs to engage in a fragile state, there is a balance to be had in ensuring that the programme has as much impact as possible through its implementation. A small but significant donor such as Irish Aid could engage more strategically at policy levels on a thematic issue that they are funding such as GBV and fill a much-needed gap. It could use its partnership with the IRC and the other Consortium members to inform policy dialogue on GBV. It is important that donors (such as Irish Aid) take considered institutional approaches to working in fragile states and explores what its role in a country transitioning from conflict and fragility could be and how it takes into account issues of ‘transition’. In the very least, policy dialogue could inform part of a country approach from the outset, particularly where there is a gap to be filled and an opportunity to take advantage of the reform of structures and policy setting that occurs in the post-conflict ‘moment’.

### *Substantive Partnership Approaches*

The provision of technical support was noted to be most important by the partners of Consortium members. Both Trócaire and Christian Aid provide assistance with the development of proposals and programme planning and putting in place adequate systems of accountability with their partners. One of Trócaire’s partners noted that they gained a lot from the meetings in which Trócaire brought all of their partners together to share programming experiences and learning.

Notable is that many of the Consortium members’ partners are ‘young’ organisations. The majority were established during or right after the conflict and in response to the conflict. They have

received training on GBV from a range of organisations which enhanced staff capacity. It is useful to reiterate the point that there is a need to ensure that staff members themselves assess their own attitudes and beliefs towards issues such as GBV. The same could be applied to partners. Many have exemplary skills and knowledge yet may require more technical expertise on dealing with the complexities of GBV if 'do no harm' approaches are to be assured.

## **5.2 Relationship to OECD/DAC Principles on Fragile States**

This section presents a brief analysis of the OECD/DAC Principles of Fragile States in relation to the research findings. Each of the principles are presented below and the ways in which the programmes of Consortium members relate to each is discussed.

### **Take Context as the Starting Point:**

The Principles note that "it is essential for international actors to understand the specific context in each country, and develop a shared view of the strategic response that is required." This includes the need to understand the phase of conflict, transition or post-conflict characteristic of that context. This research questions whether the Consortium or member agencies have specific knowledge of or foster specific approaches to post-conflict transition, and the inherent challenges and opportunities characteristic of these contexts. Agencies have tailored their programming to key development needs in Sierra Leone however and in respect of the issue of GBV several have supported research initiatives to ensure that programming responds to local factors relevant to GBV. Overall the programmes are responsive to their respective contexts, however more can be done to ensure they are also in line with the wider political and structural processes taking place.

### **Do No Harm**

This principle is interpreted here as directly related to 'doing no harm' in relation to GBV programming. The research found that there are many approaches that attempt to prevent the prevalence of GBV in the lives of women and girls. Of particular note is the mainstreaming approaches taken by programmes such as Plan, Concern and GOAL that ensure their activities do not create more risk and are responsibly addressing GBV as part of wider sectoral programmes. There is some room for agencies to ensure that their own and staff of partners have the technical expertise required to engage in complex social change processes that target violence and ensure that ethical standards and do no harm approaches are central to programmes.

### **Focus on State Building as the Central Objective**

The research found that in the aftermath of conflict, there are significant opportunities to take a 'state building' approach and ensure that national buy-in and strategic responses to GBV are embedded in the reconstruction and reform processes characteristic of post-conflict recovery processes from the outset. The research found that the member organisations of the Consortium have differing mandates and approaches which may determine whether such macro-level approaches are taken. Efforts by Irish Aid/IRC and (previously) Trócaire to provide support to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Children and Gender are demonstrative of approaches that support state building. However, as noted in this report, more strategic longer-term approaches are required to enhance leadership on gender equality at national levels. There is a significant gap in terms of

donor-level leadership on policy dialogue on gender equality and GBV that would contribute to ensuring state building processes respond to women's concerns and interests. There is also further opportunity for agencies to contribute to state building through aligning their programmes with national policy on gender equality and GBV.

### **Prioritise Prevention**

The Principles specifically refer to prevention of conflict and crises. Only a small number of agencies noted the relevance of conflict transformation in the design of their programmes. Christian Aid for example positions its work on HIV and GBV as relating to wider conflict transformation and AJLC (partner of Trócaire) understand their programme to be indirectly contributing to future conflict prevention. There are more opportunities for Consortium members to use conflict analysis and reports such as the TRC to inform programming development.

### **Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives**

The concept of 'security' in post-conflict states tends to focus on political/hardware issues which are largely those mentioned in the OECD/DAC Principles. There is also the need to consider issues of 'gender security' however wherein the levels of violence in women's homes, communities, schools etc. is also 'counted' as part of the post-conflict political and security paradigm. The links between preventing GBV, enhancing women's security and development then become clear. The mainstreaming of GBV into sectoral approaches is essential in this case, particularly in sectors such as policing and judicial sector development. Irish Aids dual political and development role also presents the opportunity for political and development objectives to be aligned around issues of gender security for women and girls and the need for issues of GBV to enter political, security and development arenas.

### **Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies**

The initiatives taken by Consortium members correspond most strongly with this Principle. The Principle recognises that equality and promoting women's voice is essential in state building and stabilisation. There are some gaps however. The linkages between notions of gender security, the post-conflict factors present in Sierra Leone and the ways in which programmes can specifically contribute to successful transition is not immediately evident in programme design and rationale. In many ways programmes contribute to these issues anyway by default. The report has highlighted places where engagements could be more strategic for some organisations however. The work to secure legislation on equality and GBV and to work to promote its implementation is a key strategy. More use could be made of frameworks such as UNSCR 1325 and supporting and holding governments to account on their commitments under these instruments.

The work of the Consortium members corresponds in varying degrees to the OECD/DAC Principles. As mentioned before, the Principles are not employed or well known in the work of agencies. When the Principles are interpreted specific to the issue of GBV there is some correlation to be seen. However this broadens the interpretation of the Principles from their specific focus and content.

The Principle that Consortium members' work most aligns with is the final principle 'Promote non-discrimination'. This Principle specifically relates to women's exclusion and represents the closest 'fit' between the Principles and the aims of the approaches taken by Consortium members.

### 5.3 Influence of the Consortium

The 'influence' of the Consortium on approaches at country level may be measured in different ways. These could be through reference by member agencies to its membership of the Consortium in the rationale that informs programme development; through use of the tools and resources which the Consortium has produced and/or through actual collaboration in-country between agencies on the basis of their membership of the Consortium. This research has considered these factors. It also created space for respondents to name other ways in which they may have accessed or used their membership of the Consortium in their work.

The research found that:

- There were no references made to the agencies' membership of the Consortium in the project documents reviewed for this research (aside from mention of the Consortium's 'Issues Paper on GBV, Poverty and Development' in the National Study on SRGBV supported by Concern Worldwide and Plan). Membership of the Consortium was not used to demonstrate institutional commitment to GBV in project proposals nor as a rationale for programming in Sierra Leone.
- The majority of staff of member agencies consulted for this research had never heard of the Consortium and were not aware of their agency's membership of the Consortium. Those staff who were aware of the Consortium were those who had regular access to gender focal points/gender advisers in their head offices and were mainly Ireland-based agencies. Those agencies who are branches of the Irish offices, for example World Vision Sierra Leone or Plan Sierra Leone had never heard of the Consortium. (For these agencies, the assessment of their knowledge of the Consortium takes on a different meaning given that they are not connected to head-offices that participate in the Consortium.)
- One person was aware of a CD-Rom of materials on GBV that the Consortium had produced. Approximately two knew of the Learning Briefs and had copies of those. Some were surprised to hear that there was a website with resources available through it.
- It is notable that many of the agencies are working together through collaborative forums. For example, Concern Worldwide and Plan are both members of an 'Education and GBV Coalition' that produced the study on SRGBV.<sup>71</sup> Agencies such as the IRC, Concern Worldwide, World Vision and Action Aid participate on the NACGBV. Trócaire attempted to consult on their project design with agencies such as Concern Worldwide, Action Aid and Irish Aid which, while the consultation did not eventually take place due to varying factors, does however indicate the potential for Consortium members to support and inform each others' work. The Amnesty International project evaluation notes that the Amnesty project had begun funding a partner when that partner's cooperation with Christian Aid had ended. The support provided by Christian Aid had enabled this partner to identify 'women's access

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<sup>71</sup> Sourced from: National Study on School-Related Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone (September 2010) Coalition on Education and Gender-Based Violence

to justice' as a key programming gap, which the Amnesty International programme could then support. This overlap appears incidental but could be exploited if more strategic collaboration was conceived by members. Concern Worldwide and Christian Aid jointly organised (with other agencies) the training on masculinities for their staff. Overall it is evident that there is some collaboration happening between agencies. These appear to be organic, arising from overlap of interests, as a result of participating on forums such as the NACGBV and sometimes dependent on personalities.

As noted above, many respondents were not aware of the existence of the Consortium. Others expressed surprise at learning who the other member agencies were. On the final day of the consultancy a meeting was held to deliver feedback on the consultancy to all members. At this meeting, it was evident that only the consultant knew everyone attending (as a result of the research process) – indicative that there has been to date, no specific interaction between agencies on the basis of membership of the Consortium. Overall, the Consortium itself was noted to feel “far away” and not a tangible or accessible entity to those in Sierra Leone. It must be noted that some staff members of agencies were new and not familiar with their agencies membership of the Consortium for this reason. The research project did however generate knowledge and momentum and provided an important opportunity for networking between agencies which could be maximised (explored under the recommendations below).

Measuring ‘influence’ may not be as tangible as any of the factors that were considered above however. It is important to note the influence that the establishment of the Consortium itself has had on commitments to GBV among member agencies. This has been important in ensuring that any initiatives to address GBV in-country receive institutional support and that programming approaches to GBV are acknowledged as an institutional mandate. One respondent who had worked at HQ in Dublin and as a result was aware of the Consortium, noted that the Consortium has enhanced knowledge and capacity on GBV among staff there and that this in turn filtered down to the field programmes through technical inputs and support.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The general conclusions of this research and the resulting recommendations are set out below under four thematic areas as follows:

### **Opportunities at Consortium ‘Operational Level’**

It was evident during the field research that many of the agencies in Sierra Leone had not been involved in the development of this research project. A more collaborative approach between HQ and country level would mean that the ToR could incorporate inputs from the field and result in the exercise being utilitarian at both HQ and Sierra Leone levels. It would also respond to one of the Consortiums’ aims to engage more with field levels. The Consortium has been attempting to establish linkages between HQ level and its members at country programme levels over a number of years. Evident from the experience of this research project is that further attempts to generate engagement at field level requires a more considered and long term approach.



This research process may also conclude that, at this stage of its development, it is important for the Consortium to consider what it actually means by measuring or understanding its 'influence' and what it would want its influence to be or to look like from HQ to country levels. This applies at both the level of the Consortium itself, as well as internal to member agencies themselves.

**Recommendation 1:** Future research projects that are initiated by the Consortium should be afforded longer planning time-lines and concurrently generated at Dublin and the selected field levels. Consortium members in-country should be afforded the opportunity to feed into the development of the ToR itself, the organisation of the research methodology and identification of key informants. A lead agency or a sub-committee (mirroring that of the Learning and Practice Sub-Committee that oversaw the execution of the research project) should be nominated at country-level to oversee the process.

It is also noted that this research project examined the Sierra Leone context which has experienced ten years of post-conflict transition. It may be useful to undertake a similar research project in contexts that are more recently emerging from conflict to identify key opportunities for addressing GBV in the immediate aftermath of conflict.

**Recommendation 2:** Undertake an exercise to explore the ways in which similar collective inter-organisational mechanisms such as the Consortium generate and measure their influence both within members agencies and externally. The exercise could constitute a desk review that documents learning from other such conglomerates and identifies ways to explore future opportunities for linkages between HQ and field programmes.

**Recommendation 3:** Assess how individual Consortium members are utilizing their membership of the Consortium to influence programming at country levels. A shared 'accountability' exercise could be jointly undertaken between members or an internal reflection exercise at individual levels may be preferable. Explore ways to strengthen internal utilization of Consortium membership. For example, a system of 'focal points' on the Consortium could be appointed by individual agencies within country programmes. Many agencies have internal gender or mainstreaming focal points/advisers who could also become focal points on the Consortium. A system of sharing information could be initiated from the Consortium point person at HQ level down to these focal points in-country. Alternately, 6-monthly or annual bulletins on the work of the Consortium could be shared through email across the organization or to the focal points, who in turn can share the information at country-level meetings.

**Recommendation 4:** Do more to learn from the programmes that Consortium members and their partners are implementing in contexts such as Sierra Leone and others. It is recommended that field-based practices are drawn into thematic learning seminars. On the basis of this research thematic areas that arise are: (i) Addressing GBV post-conflict; (ii) Partnership approaches to addressing GBV; (iii) Assessing post-conflict transition and GBV; (iv) Learning from awareness-raising and behavior change approaches. The seminars could fulfill three aims: Firstly, to bring

together practice from the field to enhance institutional learning within the overall Consortium; Secondly, to enhance technical capacity (which was identified as a need in this research) of field staff and staff of partners through their participation in such seminars; Thirdly, to enhance overall technical capacity of participants by including one or two ‘experts’ on the thematic issues who could present on research and learning relative to the theme of the seminar. A budget for such initiatives would need to be assigned in the Consortiums annual planning.

### **Opportunities For Programming Approaches**

This research found that there were varying levels of acknowledgement of the specifics of the post-conflict status of Sierra Leone in programming approaches to GBV. There may be little need to distinguish between post-conflict programming and ‘ordinary’ development. However, the research also identified key post-conflict opportunities, issues and factors that may have significant bearing on programming, or could be strategically engaged with as entry points and opportunities to advance approaches to GBV.

**Recommendation 5:** Member agencies should reflect further on whether there is an institutional understanding of the specific factors relevant to operating in a ‘fragile’ or ‘post-conflict’ environment. International approaches to post-conflict transition are evolving and there is much to be learned from research and practices by organisations that focus specifically on issues pertinent to conflict-time transition and transformation. Specifically, agencies should make more use of the tools that are available to inform their post-conflict programming such as reports of TRCs, conflict analysis reports and become cognisant of the broader political processes that are occurring so that opportunities within transitional reforms may be taken advantage of in programming.

### **Opportunities at Sierra Leone Level**

There are a broad range of programming approaches being employed by Consortium members in Sierra Leone. Agencies are involved to varying degrees on the issue of GBV – from full programmatic engagement to more indirect approaches. The agencies consulted also vary in terms of their actual or potential institutional involvement in the Consortium – from those with HQ membership at Dublin levels such as Trócaire, to those who are ‘branches’ of wider organisations such as World Vision. This impacts on what can be envisioned for field-level engagement as Consortium members and recommendations on how to maximise membership of the Consortium are made in consideration of these factors.

**Recommendation 6:** Take advantage of the momentum created by this research project to enhance coordination and collaboration between agencies. Use the documentation of programme approaches in this report as a basis for exploring common interests. Irish Aid already plans to convene its partners and it is recommended that GBV is a thematic area of focus.

Additionally, agencies could come together around specific events. While the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs leads a campaign for the 16 Days each year there are ways that Consortium members could organise under and support this. For example, agencies could jointly undertake or support initiatives on the 16 Days Campaign or for International Women’s Day

by pooling the small amounts of funds each might have to contribute to larger events that might have greater impact. Or undertaken joint events at regional levels.

**Recommendation 7:** Exploit and make use of the membership of the Consortium to tackle some of the key challenges to GBV programming in Sierra Leone. As highlighted in this report, there exists a gap in policy dialogue at government levels on gender equality and GBV. Irish Aid has access to political and development arenas where policy dialogue takes place. Irish Aid and non-governmental agencies could work together to develop key messages on GBV to feed into policy dialogue. Given the resource constraints on the part of Irish Aid, it is recommended that a minimalist approach is taken. It is recommended that Consortium members convene on an annual or a 6-monthly basis to hold a half-day workshop where the opportunities and constraints relating to GBV programming are discussed and identified. Out of this a small number of key messages can be sculpted which Irish Aid can use within their policy dialogue with donors and Government. This approach produces messaging that is based on programming realities. In turn this ensures the legitimacy and consistency of the messages that Irish Aid delivers. Key calendar dates/events could also be identified for the messaging to target. This minimalist approach enables some joint action to be taken to advocate on GBV at national levels without creating a burdensome workload for all involved. Irish Aid could also then feedback to partners at the next scheduled meeting on the outcomes of policy dialogue opportunities.

**Recommendation 8:** There is potential for Consortium members in Sierra Leone to make more use of each others' expertise. A number of the organisations are planning to undertake research or baseline work on GBV. Research approaches could benefit from working to a 'Reference Group' type approach. For example, a small group of people from member agencies could be invited onto a reference group to provide technical oversight to the research process. It should not be a cumbersome process, rather a Reference Group would: 1) Meet at the beginning of the research process to discuss and provide inputs to the design stage of the research; 2) Meet mid-way through the research process to provide inputs to process and any challenges met; 3) Meet at the end point to input to the final product. This approach would lend credibility to the research process, lend technical expertise from member agencies, enhance the overall research quality and ultimately maximise the potential for the research to be disseminated and used by agencies also working on similar issues. It is also evident that a number of the agencies programmes are ending in 2011/2012. Agencies could again make use of each others' expertise by inviting members to programme review meetings and gaining their inputs on programme evaluations and development. There would need to be a time commitment from members to support each others' work in this way.

**Recommendation 9:** It is strongly recommended that member agencies become more familiar with, make use of and support national policy development on GBV and its implementation. There are a range of national frameworks available which agencies can align their work with. This would: 1) demonstrate to government a commitment to supporting the implementation of their policies and strengthen the relevance of the work of the NWM in the eyes of Government; 2) ensure that agency programmes are in line with identified national priorities on GBV which have been

developed on the basis of national research and consultation; 3) ensure that approaches to GBV are rooted in broader equality and women's rights frameworks; 4) contribute to creating more coordinated approaches between government and NGOs from national to local levels. Overall it would create potential for programmes to have greater collaborative and coordinated impact.

Additionally, this research noted the need for an agency such as an international donor or a UN agency to undertake a programme of strategic capacity development in support of the NWM to enhance its capacity to both develop and implement these policy frameworks. As an entity, UN Women have the mandate to undertake the kind of longer-term strategic and technical support role that the NWM requires. Donors (such as Irish Aid) could advocate for, and provide funding to, UN Women to engage with the Ministry in order to provide longer-term and strategic capacity development support (with the potential to draw learning from Irish Aid's work with the NWM in Timor-Leste for example). An entity such as UN Women is also a key actors in terms of the need for overall leadership on national policy relating to the status of women and Consortium members would do well in engaging with UN Women at national levels in this respect.

**Recommendation 10:** An additional recommendation in this respect is for non-governmental members of the Consortium to hold Irish Aid to account on its commitments under the Irish National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325. Irish Aid should be implementing its commitments on UNSCR 1325 where they are applicable, including in post-conflict states such as Sierra Leone. Additionally, Sierra Leone has a NAP on UNSCR 1325. There are opportunities to utilise both NAPs to inform Consortium members' approaches and policy dialogue, and for non-governmental members to use these to advocate to both Governments. This could also be used as a basis for the actions suggested under Recommendation 7. The Consortium itself needs to ensure that its work on supporting the development of the Irish NAP on UNSCR 1325 and the NAP itself is shared with staff working in their post-conflict programming sites so that it can be used for engagement with the Irish Government where applicable.

Note: It is finally recommended that this research document is shared with all of the respondents who participated in this research and more widely in Sierra Leone – both for accountability purposes and to share learning from the research. A list of contacts are provide separately to the Consortium for this purpose. The recommendations below could also be used to inform discussions in the Consortium's strategic planning process in early 2012 and taken into account in planning for future Consortium and country-level initiatives.

## **Terms of Reference**

### ***‘Learning from Practice; the experiences of GBV Programming by Irish Joint Consortium Members’ in Sierra Leone***

#### **1. Background**

The Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence was established in 2005. It comprises fifteen organisations<sup>1</sup> with diverse mandates and operational approaches representing development, humanitarian, and human rights organisations, Irish Aid (Department of Foreign Affairs) and the Irish Defence Forces. The origins of the Consortium centre on the crisis in Darfur, and the international recognition of the failures of the national authorities and the international community to respond to Gender Based Violence (GBV). Acknowledging the limited experience of Irish agencies in the area of GBV and recognising the potential for a strategic engagement on the issue, the Irish Joint Consortium on GBV was established. From the outset the Consortium members were committed to fulfil key recommendations in relation to internal capacity building, programming and working with partners. This was followed by a strategic plan for the Consortium (2009-2012) which set out three key objectives:

- To ensure that actions to prevent and respond to GBV are visible and systematically addressed in the policies, procedures and programmes of all member agencies.
- To develop and strengthen skills and capacities of member organisations for more effective prevention of, and response to, GBV, at programme level.
- To inform, effect and monitor policy implementation to improve actions on prevention of and response to GBV.

To date the Consortium has undertaken many activities/pieces of work to further these objectives. An annual review process is in place and round table discussions are held on an annual basis with Mary Robinson<sup>2</sup>. It was at the 2010 annual review meeting that the Consortium made a commitment to refocus on GBV in fragile states and humanitarian contexts. The Steering Committee has selected Sierra Leone as a focus country given the large presence of Consortium members that are engaging on GBV activities in the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Action Aid Ireland, Amnesty International Ireland, Child Fund Ireland, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, the Defence Forces, Kimmage Manor (including Dtalk and KODE), GOAL, Irish Aid, Irish Red Cross, Oxfam Ireland, Plan Ireland, Self Help Africa, Trocaire and World Vision.

<sup>2</sup> In her capacity as patron of the Consortium

The documentation of 'Learning from Practice' related to GBV programming of Consortium members in Sierra Leone provides the opportunity to demonstrate what is happening on the ground in terms of programming by both Consortium members and other key development actors, and the challenges, gaps, lessons and opportunities regarding GBV programming in fragile states. It is also an opportunity to highlight the collective experience and learning of Consortium members. It is one of the key actions to advance objective 2 (as well as contributing to objectives 1 and 3) and will provide an excellent basis for discussions at the annual event in November 2011.

## **2. Rationale**

The Steering Group of the Joint Consortium agreed that in 2011, they should have a renewed focus on conflict affected and fragile states<sup>3</sup>. The 2011 World Development Report on Conflict, Security and Development notes that the development deficit is concentrated in conflict-affected, fragile and recovering states. While the direct impact of violence falls predominantly on young males who make up the majority of fighting forces, women and children suffer disproportionately from indirect effects. It has been estimated that women and children comprise close to 80 percent of refugees and internally displaced and are disproportionately targets and victims of armed conflicts. Risks of exposure to gender based violence, particularly sexual violence can increase for women and children during conflict due to a general breakdown in social and moral order, increased impunity and/or strategic attacks against civilians by armed groups. However despite the acknowledged scope of the problem, programming efforts to prevent and respond to GBV remain woefully inadequate. Moreover, recent data on conflict affected countries have shown that GBV does not abate in the transition away from war, and in some instances certain types of GBV may even increase and become normalised. Reducing the incidence of various forms of GBV is crucial to a country's reconstruction and development.

Sierra Leone, a post-conflict country and fragile state, is therefore an appropriate focus for this piece of research. During the protracted and violent conflict in the country women and girls suffered from high levels of sexual violence. While progress has since been made at the level of legislation and policy, the issue of GBV continues to be a serious challenge to development. There are several Joint Consortium members and development actors implementing / supporting GBV programmes in Sierra Leone, with various approaches and areas of focus (see Annex 1). Programmes address both prevention and response, and operate at several levels, including provision of services, the strengthening of support systems and engagement on policy and legislation, as well as sector-focused interventions. As a focus country, Sierra Leone therefore has the potential to provide a comprehensive overview of Consortium members' and other key development actors engagement with GBV in a post-conflict setting. In addition this consultancy builds on research commissioned by the Joint Consortium in early 2005, in Sierra Leone and Liberia, which focused on developing a framework for Irish agencies to respond to GBV in conflict and post conflict settings (see Annex 2 for field report). Although the main scope of the TOR is a focus on Joint Consortium members and their partners, this does not exclude exploring approaches by other development actors that are seen as relevant.

## **3. Overall Objective of the Research**

The overall objective of the research is to review GBV programming implemented by Joint Consortium members, partners and other key development actors in Sierra Leone, in order to identify promising practice and lessons learnt, with a view to informing future GBV programming.

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<sup>3</sup> The OECD DAC definition of a fragile state is 'a state with weak capacity to carry out the basic functions of governing a population and its territory and that lacks the ability or political will to develop mutually constructive and reinforcing relations with society'.

#### **4. Methodology**

The research will be based on a literature review and a field visit;

- A literature review of Joint Consortium documentation (Strategic Plan, Annual Reports, previous research and publications, etc) and programme documents of Joint Consortium members' engagement on GBV in Sierra Leone. An inception report with a proposed structure for the field visit and outline for the learning brief will be drawn up based on this.
- A field visit to Sierra Leone to document Joint Consortium programming on GBV.

#### **5. Research Questions**

- What are the different approaches and strategies of JC members and other key development actors in their GBV programming, and to what extent are these approaches in line with DAC principles in fragile states?
- What are the key challenges and lessons learned for GBV programming in fragile states?
- Has the learning of the Joint Consortium in Dublin influenced Consortium member's programming in Sierra Leone?
- Are there existing and potential collaborations of Consortium members in Sierra Leone?
- Recommendations on scale up of promising practice.

#### **6. Outputs**

The final output should be:

- a) A learning brief (similar to those produced previously by the Joint Consortium, see annex 3) The learning brief should be 4-6 pages in length, reader friendly and informative. The document should provide an overview of good practice, challenges and lessons learned in various types of GBV programming in Sierra Leone, and will be the foundation document for the Annual Consortium event, which will be held in Dublin on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2011
- b) A report to the Joint Consortium which should provide more detailed information on the practice, challenges and lesson learned by members and other key development actors. It should also include information on the engagement and opportunities of Consortium members in SL and provide recommendations to the Joint Consortium on priority areas/ focus for programming.
- c) A presentation of findings at the annual Irish Joint Consortium event in November 2011

#### **7. Consultant Profile**

- Experience of GBV programming in conflict affected and fragile states.
- Appreciation of the principles for good international engagement in fragile states (OECD/DAC).
- A strong understanding of inter-organisational coordination mechanisms and relationships to affect change.
- Excellent writing skills.
- Availability within the timeframe outlined.

#### **8. Management**

The Learning & Practice Working Group (of the Joint Consortium) is responsible for the management of this research. A small steering group (3 people) has been established and the consultant will report to this steering group.

## 9. Timeline

July	Literature review
August – September –October	Field work complete and draft report submitted
End October	Final report submitted
November	Presentation at annual Consortium event

### Consultancy Days

Literature review:	5 days
Field visit:	10 days
Report writing:	5 days
Report finalising:	2 days
Finalising the Learning Brief	5 days
Round table meeting (Nov 25 <sup>th</sup> )	3 days (1 day meeting, plus preparation & travel)
Total:	30 days

**Appendix 1** List of Joint Consortium members' GBV programmes in Sierra Leone

**Appendix 2** Field Visit Report: GBV Study (2005)

**Appendix 3** Example of a Consortium Learning Brief

**Appendix 4** Irish Aid funded mapping document '*Addressing GBV in Sierra-Leone: Mapping Challenges, Responses and Future Entry Point's*' by International Alert (2007)

**For additional information about the Consortium refer to our website; [www.gbv.ie](http://www.gbv.ie)**

**Please send an Expression of Interest, including CV, a proposed detailed research methodology and proposed budget to Bernadette Crawford: [bernadette.crawford@concern.net](mailto:bernadette.crawford@concern.net) by Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> July 2011**



# Effective Responses for Gender Based Violence

## Addressing GBV in Post-Conflict & Fragile States: A Case Study of Sierra Leone

### Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence

LEARNING BRIEF NO.7

While attention is largely given to the prevalence of Gender Based Violence (GBV), particularly sexual violence, targeted at women *during* conflict, there is increasing recognition of the need to address GBV in the *aftermath* of conflict and during post-conflict transition. Women and girls face particular challenges in dealing with both the effects of GBV that they may have experienced during a conflict and the on-going violence that they experience in their homes and communities after conflict.

Recognising this, the Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence initiated a research project to document learning on addressing GBV in post-conflict settings.<sup>1</sup> Nine of the Consortium members are operating in Sierra Leone and as a result this country was chosen as the site for the research (Action Aid, Amnesty International, Christian Aid, Concern, GOAL, Irish Aid, Plan, Trócaire and World Vision). Sierra Leone has experienced over a decade of protracted armed conflict (1991-2002) characterized by egregious abuses of human rights and humanitarian law and in which women and girls were specifically targeted for forms of conflict-related gendered violence. It has also experienced a further decade of post-conflict recovery and transition and presented an ideal site for assessing post-conflict approaches to GBV.

The OECD/DAC 'Principles on Fragile States and Situations' (hereafter referred to as 'the OECD/DAC Principles') were used as a framework for the research.

The OECD/DAC Principles acknowledge that post-conflict states require differentiated approaches to development than those employed in more stable or developing countries (**See Box: OECD/DAC Principles on Fragile States**).

#### OECD/DAC Principles on Fragile States and Situations (2007)

The OECD/DAC Principles recognise that many fragile states are those emerging from periods of armed conflict, such as Sierra Leone.<sup>2</sup> The OECD/DAC Principles promote enhanced ways for international actors to individually and jointly address the issues of insecurity and poverty common to these contexts:

1. Take context as the starting point.
2. Do no harm.
3. Focus on state-building as the central objective.
4. Prioritise prevention.
5. Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives.
6. Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies.
7. Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts.
8. Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors.
9. Act fast ... but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance.
10. Avoid pockets of exclusion.

<sup>1</sup> The GBV Consortium understands Gender-based Violence to be any act or threat of harm inflicted on a person because of their gender and is any act that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Gender based violence encompasses sexual violence, domestic violence, sex trafficking, harmful practices, forced / early marriage, forced prostitution, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation. The programmes in Sierra Leone largely focus on GBV experienced by women. Programmes that engage with men focus on their role in the prevention of violence towards women. This Learning Brief focuses on women's experiences of GBV in line with research findings on these programmes.

<sup>2</sup> In its report '2011 Report on International Engagement in Fragile States. Can't We Do Better?' (2011), the OECD identified 13 states that it considered relevant to application of the Principles. This includes Sierra Leone.

The United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, 1889 and 1960 also recognise that differentiated approaches are required in post-conflict programming. The resolutions set out to ensure that gender sensitive approaches are taken within conflict resolution, post-conflict recovery and transition and that specific approaches are taken to address GBV during and after conflict.<sup>1</sup> They also highlight the need to ensure that gender inequalities do not become entrenched in post-conflict recovery and reconstruction efforts.

The research by the Consortium similarly examined whether specific approaches to GBV programming may be required in fragile or post-conflict states.<sup>3</sup> Through qualitative interviews with staff of all member agencies active in Sierra Leone, the research reviewed the Consortium's programmes against the OECD/DAC Principles and made recommendations related to good practice.<sup>4</sup> This Learning Brief highlights some of the key findings of the research and includes some examples of programmes that Consortium members are undertaking (note that due to space constraints examples from all agencies could not be included).

While the Consortium recognises that GBV is not confined to conflict-affected contexts, the purpose of the Learning Brief is to demonstrate learning specifically relevant to such contexts. Linkages are made between the OECD/DAC Principles and examples of programming, demonstrating both the relevance of the OECD/DAC Principles to such work as well as some of the conflict-related factors relevant to GBV programming.

## 1. Approaches to GBV Programming and Adherence to OECD/DAC Principles

Consortium members undertake a variety of approaches to addressing GBV in Sierra Leone and the majority of programmes focus on women's experiences and are related to women's empowerment and equality. Different modalities of programming are also used such as direct implementation and working through partners. The research found two broad categories that capture overall programming approaches: 1) Direct Programming and 2) Mainstreaming Approaches.

### Approach 1: Direct Programming – Prevention and Response

A number of the Consortium members operating in Sierra Leone are engaged in direct programming on GBV. Programmes address the prevention of GBV through behaviour-changing and awareness-raising programmes, create access to and strengthen justice responses for women, and promote women's economic empowerment. Programmes also provide essential services to victims/survivors of sexual violence.

#### (i) Prevention: Awareness-Raising and Behaviour Change Approaches

The importance of understanding the 'picture' of violence before, during and after conflict – both in terms of trends in GBV, perceptions of the same and the ways in which endemic forms of GBV post-conflict are perceived and understood - is important in informing appropriate responses to GBV after conflict (**See Box: OECD/DAC Principle 1**).

<sup>3</sup> During the research process it was found that the OECD/DAC Principles were not familiar to many people and the term 'fragile state' not widely used in reference to the Sierra Leone context. 'Post-conflict' was more widely used and is thereby used in this paper. It is acknowledged that there are many debates about when a conflict begins and ends, when a state is 'post-conflict' and when a post-conflict' phase ends and development begins which this paper cannot address but simply uses this term for ease of reference and discussion.

<sup>4</sup> The research was conducted over a ten-day period in October 2011.

The research found that the prevalence of sexual violence during the conflict made the broader issue of GBV more visible, prompted agency responses to it and has influenced engagement on endemic forms of GBV in the post-conflict context. Many respondents to this research felt that “before the war people did not know their rights”. As a result of a lack of social, legal and political acknowledgement of GBV as an infringement of women’s rights before the conflict, the violence prevalent in their homes and communities was first named as ‘GBV’ or as a ‘rights’ issue after the conflict had ended.

**OECD/DAC Principle 1 - Take context as the starting point.**

Action Aid Sierra Leone took steps to ensure that its programming on GBV was based on an understanding of the ways that GBV had taken place historically, and used this to inform ongoing forms of GBV. When initiating programming on GBV in target communities, Action Aid Sierra Leone undertook a ‘Participatory Vulnerability Analysis’ (PVA) with community members. As part of the analysis the community conducted a time-line which identified the views of community members on trends in GBV before, during and after the Sierra Leone conflict. As a result, the community themselves, as well as Action Aid staff, could identify and understand the nature of violence before, during and after the conflict and the particular vulnerabilities facing women and girls that need to be addressed in the post-conflict context.

Agencies are therefore introducing new ways of understanding this violence in the post-conflict context. The key to much of this work has been transforming normative understanding of violence in the home and community from something that is ‘acceptable’ or tolerated, to an issue which may be considered an abuse of rights and a ‘crime’. An important element of this overall process has been the use of rights-based language by these programmes. Many organisations use international rights and national legislative frameworks as a basis for this work, particularly the three ‘Gender Laws’ which Sierra Leone introduced as part of legislative reforms since the end of the conflict.<sup>5</sup>

Using such tools not only promotes understanding and use of them by duty bearers and potential users, but also lends legitimacy to awareness-raising initiatives on GBV (**See Box: OECD/DAC Principle 3**).

**OECD/DAC Principle 3 - Focus on state-building as the central objective.**

The Access to Justice and Law Centre (AJLC), partner of Trócaire, provides legal aid to women wishing to pursue legal redress for GBV through the criminal justice system. AJLC simultaneously engages with the judiciary and the police to promote standard judicial responses to GBV, appropriate use of the ‘Gender Laws’ and provides capacity development support to strengthen the systems that AJLC are encouraging women to use. AJLC have also targeted macro level structures which are necessary to their work. They have developed a critique of the three ‘Gender Laws’ and highlighted gaps within the laws such as the lack of provision for health care to women under the domestic violence act. AJLC’s work contributes to promoting the capacity development and re-building of national systems such as the judiciary and police which are inevitably weak as a result of the impact of conflict. Engaging with national structures is key in ensuring that when women are encouraged to report violence, the systems and services are ready to respond.

It has been important to ensure that communities understand GBV in its broadest sense – as an issue arising from gender inequalities and which is prevalent within and outside of armed conflict (**See Box: OECD/DAC Principle 4 & 5**). It was felt by many of those engaged in awareness-raising programming that the ways in which GBV is being newly understood has resulted in more reporting: “this violence has always been there but now people are aware and they are talking about it”. The awareness-raising is understood to have triggered a sequence of events from generating new understanding of violence, to reporting and seeking assistance from services.

<sup>5</sup> The Sierra Leone Government adopted three ‘Gender Acts’ in 2007 which provide a legislative framework to address gender inequality, discrimination against women and GBV. These are the ‘Domestic Violence Act’; the ‘Devolution of Estates Act’ and the ‘Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act’. A Child Rights Act was also passed in 2007 which affords protection to children from violence and abuse. At the time of this research, a Sexual Offences Act was pending debate at government which, when promulgated, will provide specific legal codification and response to sexual assault.

**OECD/DAC Principle 4 - Prioritise Prevention, and Principle 5 - Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives**

The concept of 'security' tends to focus on political and state-level issues. 'Gender security' is relevant to consider however so that the violence in women's homes, schools etc. is also 'counted' as part of approaches to development and security. RADA (Rehabilitation and Development Agency, partner of Christian Aid) draws the gender, security and development nexus into their programming by making explicit linkages between the GBV that occurs in the home and community, and that which occurred during the conflict. During community-based training sessions they work with male participants to understand that "If you accept this [violence] during peace then you will have to accept it during conflict". This kind of approach demonstrates to communities that if violence against women is tolerated during peace-time then it will inevitably be tolerated and happen during conflict. The approach is particularly useful in addressing the broader roots of gendered violence during conflict that ultimately begin in women's homes and communities.

Several 'entry points' have been used by Consortium members and their partners in their awareness-raising activities. These include approaches that engage exclusively with women, exclusively with men, with men and women, at the family unit level and with key 'opinion makers' such as traditional and religious leaders **(See Box: OECD/DAC Principle 7)**. One Sierra Leonian respondent noted that when international organisations first came into Sierra Leone after the conflict and began working on GBV, there was an exclusive focus on women within these programmes. There is a risk that GBV is understood as a 'women's issue' rather than as a societal issue, and one which is relevant to and implies responsibility among men.

Given that the concept of GBV may be introduced for the first time to many communities after conflict, there is an opportunity to promote a broader understanding of the issue and ensure that approaches that simultaneously, yet in a differentiated way, engage both men and women are undertaken.

**OECD/DAC Principle 7 - Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts.**

The Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR), a partner of Trócaire, have found that "starting from where people are already at" i.e. aligning with local priorities, works best. In order to raise awareness and promote behaviour and attitudinal change, they have engaged with religious and traditional leaders to influence these 'opinion makers' own influence on their communities. CDHR have structured some of their training around messages that draw on teachings from the Bible and Koran. They have used this approach as a platform from which to demonstrate that the use of violence against women is not a sanctioned act under either religious philosophy and thereby should not be condoned. Following training sessions, the imams and priests who participate have developed action plans which include actions to communicate messages against GBV in their weekly sermons and in Sunday Schools. The implementation of these commitments are monitored by staff members who attend these services and observe how messaging is being delivered.

Awareness-raising and behaviour change approaches are viewed by agencies as activities which have created better understanding and local level responses to GBV and overall assist in the prevention of GBV.

## (ii) Response: Multi-Level and Comprehensive Responses to Addressing GBV

The research found that in order for GBV to be addressed and prioritised there is a need for programming on GBV to work at macro, meso and micro levels (**See Box: OECD/DAC Principle 2 & 9**) and for strategic approaches to be taken to institutional strengthening after conflict. Similar to many conflict-affected countries globally, in Sierra Leone much of the national services infrastructure was damaged during the conflict. Many services, such as the judiciary, policing and health and education systems had to be reformed after the conflict. Weaknesses in current services may be directly and indirectly attributed to the conflict as well as encompassing the typical challenges faced by many poorly resourced or developing countries.

### **OECD/DAC Principle 2 – Do no Harm, and Principle 9 - Act fast...but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance.**

The International Rescue Committee (IRC), with support from Irish Aid, has evolved its initial humanitarian survivor-centred service provision programme to a broader holistic multi-levelled approach in the post-conflict context. It has four basic components operating at multiple levels:

1. Prevention – promoting behaviour change and positive messaging on gender equality;
2. EA\$E Programme (Economic and Social Empowerment Programme) – establishes savings and loans systems to promote women's economic empowerment;
3. Provision of Essential Services – three sexual assault response and referral services to survivors (Rainbo Centres);
4. Advocacy – promotes effective response to GBV at national, district and grassroots levels.

This overall approach enables programming at micro levels to inform engagement at macro levels. The transition from direct service provision to capacity development approaches has been a key challenge and attempts are being made to transition the Rainbo centres for example to national ownership. IRC recommend that while ideally services such as the Rainbo Centres are embedded in national structures such as the health system from the outset, this has to be balanced against the urgent need to provide quality essential services to women.

Many respondents noted that within the processes of post-conflict reform, the issue of GBV competed with 'hardware' issues and those considered to be higher priority (such as rebuilding roads). Perception persists at national level that addressing GBV is not needed in processes of post-conflict state building and recovery. The UN women, peace and security resolutions have underscored the fundamental importance of addressing gender equality and GBV as part of political reform and state building during and after conflict. Addressing the broader inequalities that inform GBV must be prioritised within all levels of the new structures and services that are created at national levels after conflict. In line with the OECD/DAC Principle 8 *Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors*, and Principle 10 *Avoid pocket of exclusion*, collaborative and coordinated approaches between agencies is essential to ensure broader coverage of gaps and needs at all levels.

## **Approach 2: Mainstreaming GBV into Programmes**

A number of Consortium members in Sierra Leone are taking effective approaches to mainstreaming GBV into wider sector programmes. Concern Worldwide for example has taken an approach that incorporates working from schools outwards to ensure that responses to GBV are embedded in schools, families, wider communities and national systems (**See Box: OECD/DAC Principle 6**).

Overall, the research found that it can be difficult at times for agencies to secure funding for programmes that attempt to mainstream approaches to GBV. It is critical to be able to demonstrate the impact of GBV on outcomes in broader programmes such as health and education. For example, in the education sector it is well documented that 'quality education' entails ensuring the safety and protection of girls and boys in schools so that learning and completion of education can take place.

**OECD/DAC Principle 6 - Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies.**

In order to address GBV within its existing education programme, Concern Worldwide works with a partner, Pinkin-to-Pinkin to undertake a multi-faceted approach where they have:

- developed and disseminated a simplified version of the Child Rights Act to schools and trained teachers on the 'Teachers Code of Conduct' which was developed by the Ministry of Education;
- set up Child Rights Clubs where children learn and become peers on child rights issues, including learning about how to report on GBV and the Teachers Code of Conduct;
- engaged with and trained the School Management Committees to encourage them to hold teachers accountable and to become a structure which children can approach and report violence.

The programme works from the school out to the connected communities and has developed a referral pathway for reporting of School-Related GBV (SRGBV) based on the structures and resources available at local levels. The mapping exercise also identified the gaps and obstacles to the reporting process. Among the obstacles identified were the lack of resources and capacity faced by the Family Support Units (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police to respond to reporting. A key lesson for the Concern Worldwide education programme was that raising awareness of GBV with children, school and community structures creates increased reporting. It became apparent that increasing 'demand' among children and communities requires ensuring that the 'supply' end functions to meet such demand. Simply raising awareness at school and community level is not enough, but engaging with the structures which their work interfaces with, such as police services, is just as important.

## 2. Key Learning and Recommendations for Programming

Evident in Sierra Leone are contradictory views about whether the conflict still has a bearing on the current context. There remain questions as to when a post-conflict status ends, when 'development' begins and how agencies interpret these phases through their work. While there are efforts made by some agencies to take account of the post-conflict status of Sierra Leone, others simply employ approaches rooted in wider development programming, which in some cases, appear to address the post-conflict nature of the context by default rather than by design. It can be challenging to ensure that programming takes account of the political, social and economic changes that take place in post-conflict transition. However, these changes also represent opportunities which programming can take advantage of to ensure that GBV is adequately addressed. Recommendations highlight the steps that can be taken to ensure that programmes respond adequately to conflict-affected contexts:

*Recommendation 1: Use the OECD/DAC Principles to inform project design so that conflict analysis and contextual factors present in many post-conflict contexts are taken into account in a consistent manner.* Significant alignment may be seen between Consortium members' programmes and certain Principles, such as Principle 6 - *Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies* - because of the focus of many programmes on GBV as a manifestation of inequalities. However, attention to other principles would promote a more holistic approach to addressing GBV. For example, the OECD/DAC Principles promote the need for multi-level coordinated initiatives, which were also identified by this research as essential for addressing GBV in the aftermath of conflict.

Additionally, Principle 3, (*Focus on state-building as the central objective*), provides an opportunity to build national capacity so that the programmes at grass roots level are positioned within and supported by sustainable national level institutions and commitments to promoting women's equality and addressing GBV. Taking a holistic approach that corresponds with the OECD/DAC Principles will align programmes with national priorities and the strategic and practical needs of women, making them more relevant and sustainable.

*Recommendation 2: Enhance Your Organisation's Understanding of the Complexities of Post-Conflict Transition.* Develop strategic approaches to working in post-conflict contexts by:

- enhancing institutional understanding of the broader issues and the specific challenges facing post-conflict and transitional contexts;
- developing appropriate in-depth assessments in specific sites (jointly where possible) to map the particular issues that face women and girls following particular armed conflicts (such as the example in *OECD/DAC Principle 1*);
- assessing and strengthening capacity of staff within your own institutions as well as with target groups, and employing training techniques that promote reflection on personal attitudes and beliefs.

*Recommendation 3: Take Steps to Understand the Landscape of GBV and the Challenges Faced by Women and Girls after Conflict.* Draw on existing data such as reports of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, collaborate with other agencies to undertake appropriately designed research and assessments or conduct analysis with men and women to facilitate their own identification of trends of violence in their homes and communities. Use this evidence base to address the particularities of GBV post-conflict. Ensure to consider the impact of conflict-time violence as well as the endemic violence prevalent in homes and communities. Take ethical considerations into account when undertaking consultations and assessments on GBV. Ensure that staff are trained on ethical and appropriate ways of engaging on different forms and aspects of GBV.

*Recommendation 4: Identify and Utilise the Opportunities that May Exist in the Post-Conflict Moment.* Identify where there are opportunities within national level political and structural reforms that may take place after conflict to secure national commitments to gender equality and GBV. This may entail:

- supporting priorities identified by national women's networks;
- the establishment of a ministry on gender equality in new government structures with adequate resources;
- the creation of specialised units to address GBV within policing structures. Include training on GBV in police training curriculum and for the judiciary;
- the provision of essential health and psycho-social services that respond to the range of GBV that women and girls experience, including the after effects of conflict-time sexual violence, ongoing sexual violence and specific approaches to domestic and other forms of abuse. Ideally these are embedded in national structures depending on national capacity and contextual factors;
- ensuring that approaches to GBV are mainstreamed in any sector and services development such as in education and health.

*Recommendation 5: Support and Secure the Development and Implementation of a Supportive Policy and Legislative Framework.* Research has found that "countries coming out of conflict have been more attentive to GBV than non-post-conflict countries" due to the opportunities that present in transitional reforms. This must continue to be the case to ensure that opportunities are taken advantage of and that national commitments to women's rights are secured after conflict.

Align programmes and strategies on GBV with corresponding national frameworks. This will ensure that programmes are based on national priorities and support implementation of the same. This will in turn foster collaborative ways of working between agencies, and between agencies and government on the basis these frameworks.

The frameworks may also be used as tools upon which to base programming and will lend legitimacy to interventions with the police, judiciary, community-level leadership and community members.

*Recommendation 6: Work at multiple levels, best facilitated through coordinating with other agencies, so that multi-sectoral initiatives operate in connected ways at micro, meso and macro levels.* Single-agency programmes should also work to make connections from grass-roots to national level so that challenges and obstacles to addressing GBV are comprehensively addressed. Effective coordination mechanisms led by a national entity at macro and meso levels are needed to provide a platform for sharing of information and the creation of collaborative approaches.

*Recommendation 7: Through awareness-raising approaches, facilitate the introduction of new concepts in ways that enable communities to translate new terminology into everyday meaning.* Work from the basis that GBV has existed before and during the conflict, and help communities understand gender inequality as the basis for GBV that takes place as part of political violence and the GBV that exists in their homes and communities. Coordinate with agencies undertaking similar awareness-raising programmes to ensure consistency of messaging from the outset.

*Recommendation 8: Concurrently Address Both Demand and Supply Needs.* Ensure that initiatives to create awareness and encourage reporting of GBV are complimented by efforts to strengthen the capacity of response services, such as policing and health. It must be recognised that structures and systems are particularly fractured and weak following destruction that may have occurred during conflict. There is a responsibility to ensure that when encouraging women to report, there are adequate services that will ensure her and her family's safety.

*Recommendation 9: Provide leadership on and standards for approaches to addressing GBV.* International donors and NGOs can provide leadership on GBV at national level and engage in policy dialogue with government to encourage and support national leadership on the issue. Donors should also encourage and support implementing partners to address GBV and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse through wider sector programming.

*Recommendation 10: Use the UN women, peace and security resolutions in advocacy strategies with national governments,* particularly where there is a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in place, or there is need for one. Non-governmental organisations can also use the resolutions for lobbying international donors, utilizing donors' own commitments and action plans on UNSCR 1325 to lobby for more leadership, funding and policy dialogue on GBV at national levels.

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The Irish Joint Consortium on GBV comprises Irish Human Rights, humanitarian and development organisations together with Irish Aid and the Irish Defence Forces working together to tackle gender based violence.

For more information on the Consortium please go to [www.gbv.ie](http://www.gbv.ie)



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## **Annex 3**

### **Bibliography**

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The list of documents used in this review are set out below under two categories:

1. Documents that were submitted by Consortium members and largely constitute agency programme documents and those relative to the research project; and
2. Wider general references that were resourced separately to inform the overall research.
- 3.

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## **Annex 4**

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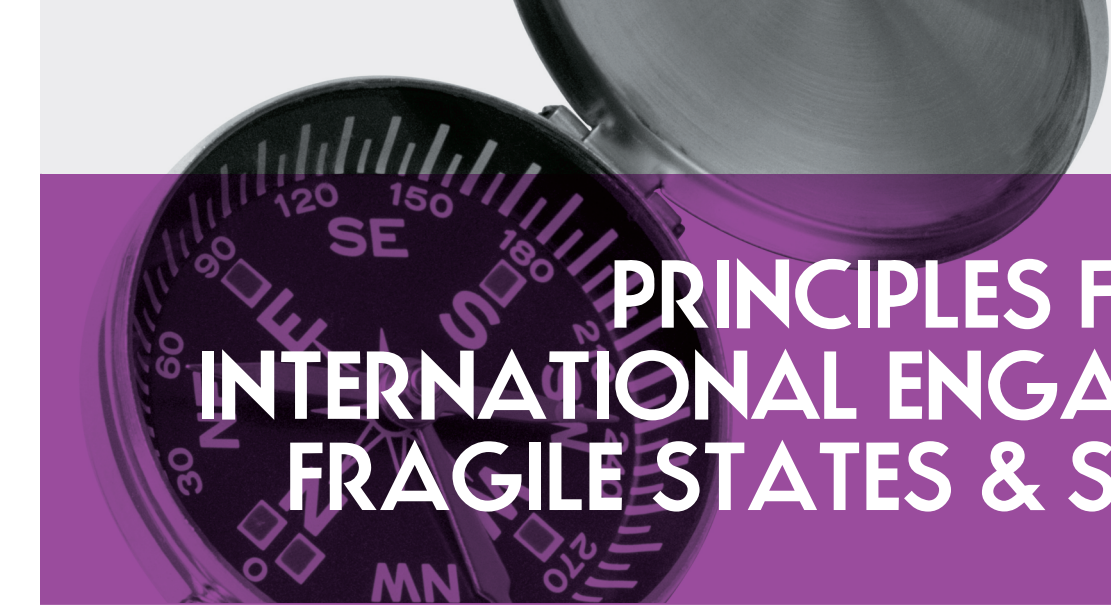
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# PRINCIPLES FOR GOOD INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN FRAGILE STATES & SITUATIONS

PRINCIPLES - APRIL 2007

## PREAMBLE

A durable exit from poverty and insecurity for the world's most fragile states will need to be driven by their own leadership and people. International actors can affect outcomes in fragile states in both positive and negative ways. International engagement will not by itself put an end to state fragility, but the adoption of the following shared Principles can help maximise the positive impact of engagement and minimise unintentional harm. The Principles are intended to help international actors foster constructive engagement between national and international stakeholders in countries with problems of weak governance and conflict, and during episodes of temporary fragility in the stronger performing countries. They are designed to support existing dialogue and coordination processes, not to generate new ones. In particular, they aim to complement the partnership commitments set out in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. As experience deepens, the Principles will be reviewed periodically and adjusted as necessary.

The long-term vision for international engagement in fragile states is to help national reformers to build effective, legitimate, and resilient state institutions, capable of engaging productively with their people to promote sustained development. Realisation of this objective requires taking account of, and acting according to, the following Principles:

## THE BASICS

- 1. Take context as the starting point.** It is essential for international actors to understand the specific context in each country, and develop a shared view of the strategic response that is required. It is particularly important to recognise the different constraints of capacity, political will and legitimacy, and the differences between: (i) post-conflict/crisis or political transition situations; (ii) deteriorating governance environments, (iii) gradual improvement, and; (iv) prolonged crisis or impasse. Sound political analysis is needed to adapt international responses to country and regional context, beyond quantitative indicators of conflict, governance or institutional strength. International actors should mix and sequence their aid instruments according to context, and avoid blue-print approaches.
- 2. Do no harm.** International interventions can inadvertently create societal divisions and worsen corruption and abuse, if they are not based on strong conflict and governance analysis, and designed with appropriate safeguards. In each case, international decisions to suspend or continue aid-financed activities following serious cases of corruption or human rights violations must be carefully judged for their impact on domestic reform, conflict, poverty and insecurity. Harmonised and graduated responses should be agreed, taking into account overall governance trends and the potential to adjust aid modalities as well as levels of aid. Aid budget cuts in-year should only be considered as a last resort for the most serious situations. Donor countries also have specific responsibilities at home in addressing corruption, in areas such as asset recovery, anti-money laundering measures and banking transparency. Increased transparency concerning transactions between partner governments and companies, often based in OECD countries, in the extractive industries sector is a priority.

3. **Focus on state-building as the central objective.** States are fragile when state<sup>1</sup> structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations. International engagement will need to be concerted, sustained, and focused on building the relationship between state and society, through engagement in two main areas. Firstly, supporting the legitimacy and accountability of states by addressing issues of democratic governance, human rights, civil society engagement and peacebuilding. Secondly, strengthening the capability of states to fulfil their core functions is essential in order to reduce poverty. Priority functions include: ensuring security and justice; mobilizing revenue; establishing an enabling environment for basic service delivery, strong economic performance and employment generation. Support to these areas will in turn strengthen citizens' confidence, trust and engagement with state institutions. Civil society has a key role both in demanding good governance and in service delivery.
4. **Prioritise prevention.** Action today can reduce fragility, lower the risk of future conflict and other types of crises, and contribute to long-term global development and security. International actors must be prepared to take rapid action where the risk of conflict and instability is highest. A greater emphasis on prevention will also include sharing risk analyses; looking beyond quick-fix solutions to address the root causes of state fragility; strengthening indigenous capacities, especially those of women, to prevent and resolve conflicts; supporting the peacebuilding capabilities of regional organisations, and undertaking joint missions to consider measures to help avert crises.
5. **Recognise the links between political, security and development objectives.** The challenges faced by fragile states are multi-dimensional. The political, security, economic and social spheres are inter-dependent. Importantly, there may be tensions and trade-offs between objectives, particularly in the short-term, which must be addressed when reaching consensus on strategy and priorities. For example, international objectives in some fragile states may need to focus on peacebuilding in the short-term, to lay the foundations for progress against the MDGs in the longer-term. This underlines the need for international actors to set clear measures of progress in fragile states. Within donor governments, a "whole of government" approach is needed, involving those responsible for security, political and economic affairs, as well as those responsible for development aid and humanitarian assistance. This should aim for policy coherence and joined-up strategies where possible, while preserving the independence, neutrality and impartiality of humanitarian aid. Partner governments also need to ensure coherence between ministries in the priorities they convey to the international community.
6. **Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies.** Real or perceived discrimination is associated with fragility and conflict, and can lead to service delivery failures. International interventions in fragile states should consistently promote gender equity, social inclusion and human rights. These are important elements that underpin the relationship between state and citizen, and form part of long-term strategies to prevent fragility. Measures to promote the voice and participation of women, youth, minorities and other excluded groups should be included in state-building and service delivery strategies from the outset.

<sup>1</sup>The term "state" here refers to a broad definition of the concept which includes the executive branch of the central and local governments within a state but also the legislative and the judiciary arms of government.