

## **Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence White Paper Review Submission**

**Nature of Views:** On behalf of The Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence

**Organisation:** Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence

**Role in Organisation:**Chair

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### **Introduction**

Gender-based violence is a universal problem rooted in the underlying inequality between men and women. This inequality is particularly evident in low and middle income countries where systems are often not strong enough to prevent gender-based violence, provide access to justice, treat, care for and support the survivors of gender based violence. Gender-based violence thrives in environments where women cannot access their human rights; it is exacerbated by poverty and can push women and families further into poverty. Ensuring women and girls have equal access to development opportunities is central to achieving women's human rights but also provides benefits to individuals, families, communities, and societies as a whole. The Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence, (the Consortium henceforth), welcomes the Irish Government's increasing focus on the broader issues of gender inequality in development and more specifically on gender-based violence. We recognise that the two approaches are complementary and encourage the continued support for both by the Government. We welcome the Consultation paper's recognition that gender equality is a key issue in the Government's fight against global poverty and a practical expression of Ireland's values as a nation.

The Consortium is made up of humanitarian and development organisations, Irish Aid and the Defence Forces who come together to promote a coherent and coordinated international response to gender-based violence. The 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 or 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, to name but a few.

We commend the Government of Ireland for its continued membership of and engagement in the Consortium through Irish Aid and the Defence Forces, which is an indication of the importance the Government attaches to the issue. The Consortium looks forward to continued sharing across organisations to ensure ongoing commitment to combating and promoting a more coherent response to gender-based violence.

The Consortium is particularly focused on the issue of gender-based violence. However throughout the document references will be made to gender equality work given the relevance to gender-based violence and its position within gender policies and structures.

### **Progress made**

The Government of Ireland has increased the scope and quality of its work on gender equality and gender-based violence in development. The 2004 Gender Policy recognises gender equality as an essential component of sustainable human development and proposes a twin track approach: having dedicated gender programmes while mainstreaming gender equality across all development

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programmes. The 2006 White Paper on Development commits the Government of Ireland to “mainstream gender considerations into all of our development cooperation activities.” The White Paper Review Consultation Paper also recognises gender equality as a key issue to consider when implementing development programmes. These documents provide a strong policy structure for gender equality.

The Government of Ireland has strengthened and deepened its understanding of gender-based violence in particular. Membership of, financial support of, and engagement with the Consortium has provided opportunities to share learning between Irish Aid, the Defence Forces, humanitarian and development organisations based in Ireland.

In 2011, the Government of Ireland launched its National Action Plan (NAP) on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and pledged continued commitment at the highest level to Women Peace and Security. This National Action Plan was developed in consultation with civil society and follows international best practice. The NAP provides a clear set of actions to be undertaken across Government Departments within a defined timeframe and with a strong monitoring structure. This NAP complements the wider policy structure on gender equality.

Staffing and resourcing of gender equality within Irish Aid has improved with a full time Gender Advisor, a number of Gender advisors and Focal Points in all Embassies and the creation of a Gender Network across Irish Aid. Funding for gender equality and gender-based violence programmes has also increased. A reduction in funding since 2009 represents a cut to the development budget as a whole, rather than any specific cuts to gender equality specifically.

The Government of Ireland has recently taken on a stronger role in development of international policy as it relates to gender equality. The Gender Specialist within Irish Aid co-chairs the DAC Gender Net, sits on the EU Gender Experts Group while the Government of Ireland played a key role in the establishment of UN Women, and has been increasingly active at international policy discussions such as the Busan High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, and the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Ireland is recognised internationally as a gender champion encouraging other partners to take more of a gender sensitive approach. The Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence welcomes this expansion into international policy as it relates to gender equality.

### **Changing context**

While many submissions to the White Paper Review will detail changes to the overall global context as it relates to development, this submission will focus more specifically on how the context has changed as it relates to gender equality and gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence has very close links to poverty and overall development. Downturns in the economy, such as the current economic recession, and increasing poverty can actually trigger an increase in violence. Of equal importance is the way in which the consequences of gender-based violence - its impact on productivity, health and well-being, and intergenerational transmission – can

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result in increased poverty and undermine development. Ultimately, gender-based violence costs by obstructing participation in development.

Successive emergencies and chronic malnutrition in many low and middle income countries have shown that gender-based violence increases levels of hunger and child malnutrition. Women play a key role in agriculture in many low and middle income countries and also have a central role when it comes to environmental sustainability. Lack of access to and control over land resources also disproportionately affects women in many patriarchal societies. While progress has been made in narrowing the gender gap in education at primary level it remains at secondary and tertiary levels in developing countries. Gender inequality and gender-based violence constrict girls' enrolment and retention in schools, leading to stubborn gender inequality in literacy levels. Maternal mortality remains high and has a strong correlation with gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence. Survivors of gender-based violence are more vulnerable to HIV which can lead to stigma and discrimination and can place extra economic pressure on households. Although increasing numbers of people are gaining access to life saving anti-retroviral therapy the number of new infections still outstrips the number accessing treatment by a ratio of five to two.

Economic growth has been a key determinant in allowing many people to lift themselves out of poverty. However many women have not been able to benefit from this growth. The recent World Development Report from the World Bank on gender equality noted that without effective policies economic growth will not reduce and could increase inequalities, including gender inequality. Increasingly, the challenging operating environment faced by many civil society organisations has also affected women's organisations in some countries.

An increasing focus has been placed on accountability in the development sector. Ensuring effective use of all development funding is to be welcomed. It is vital however that measuring change include innovative ways for measuring the more qualitative and longer terms aspects of change and support the principles that underpin Ireland's development programme, most notably human rights. This is particularly relevant in the area of gender equality as changing attitudes and beliefs can take place over a long period of time.

The international community is increasingly recognising the impact that gender-based violence has on people and their communities. The formation of a single UN entity to deal with gender issues in UN Women provides a new voice and impetus to tackle gender inequality, including gender-based violence. The international community is increasingly recognising the scale and impact of sexual violence during conflict. A UN Special Rapporteur on Sexual Violence in Conflict has been appointed and the UN Security Council has passed a number of resolutions focusing specifically on gender-based violence.

Increased international recognition has however not led to changes in the lives of women at risk of or who have survived gender-based violence. While reliable data on the incidence of gender-based violence can be difficult to get it is obvious that there are still large numbers of women affected by gender-based violence in their daily lives. Globally, one in three women is affected by gender-based violence. In Ethiopia this figure rises to 70% and in South Africa 40% of women's first sexual

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experience was forced. Greater effort is now being made to capture and analyse data on gender-based violence.

### **Key Issue**

The Key Issues laid out in the White Paper Review Consultation Paper are; Hunger, Situations of Fragility, Climate Change, Responding to Basic Needs (HIV and AIDS, Health and Education), Governance and Human Rights, Gender Equality, and the Private Sector. We welcome the inclusion of gender equality in this list of key issues and have laid out some areas where the issues of gender equality and gender-based violence would have an impact on the other key areas.

#### *Situations of fragility*

In 2000, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security in recognition of the serious impact that armed-conflict has on women and children and the potential of women to contribute to all of the processes that aim to establish and sustain peace. Since its adoption, much work has been done to monitor the implementation and impact of this resolution. The Security Council has passed numerous resolutions to support 1325 and to further enhance the role of women in peace and security, 1612 (2005), 1674 (2006), 1820 (2008), 1882 (2009), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009).

In 2010, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UNSCR 1325 the United Nations Security Council and UNIFEM both produced reports that charted progress achieved to date and highlighted obstacles to the implementation of 1325. A concern across these reports is the persistent obstacle to women's full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and their participation in post-conflict public life. Both reports acknowledge that the marginalization of women can delay or undermine the achievement of sustainable peace, security and reconciliation. The research showed that fewer than 10 percent of members of official negotiating teams at peace talks are women. Another concern highlighted was the lack of concrete action taken by states to implement UNSCR 1325.

The research also outlined recommended actions for governments and international institutions to ensure more progress is made in the area of women, peace and security. What is clear is that the context around UNSCR 1325 has changed. With the benefit of time we now have a better understanding of what needs to be undertaken to ensure UNSCR 1325 achieves widespread implementation.

We urge Irish Aid, in its work with partner organisations and in national level political reform, to continue to take steps to address the persistent obstacle to women's full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, in their participation in post-conflict public life and to advocate for concrete actions to be taken by states to implement UNSCR 1325.

Much attention is given to the prevalence of gender-based violence during times of conflict. Increased recognition should also be given to addressing gender-based violence in the aftermath of conflict and during the post-conflict transition. Recognising this, the Joint Consortium on Gender

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Based Violence commissioned a research report on addressing gender-based violence in post-conflict situations. In brief, the report recommends that development programmers should use the OECD/DAC principles on fragile states to inform their project design, that strategic approaches should be adopted to enhance organisational understanding of the complexities of post-conflict transition and that steps should be taken to understand the landscape of gender-based violence and the challenges faced by women and girls after conflict. The report also recommends that development programmes should look to identify and utilise the opportunities that may exist in the post conflict moment, for example within national level political reform and structural reform and that they should support and secure the development and implementation of a supportive policy and legislative framework. The recommendations from this report have implications for all members of the Consortium including Government.

### *Responding to Basic Needs (HIV and AIDS, Health and Education)*

#### HIV

Half of the people living with HIV are women. In Irish Aid focus regions, women are disproportionately likely to be affected by HIV, including in sub-Saharan Africa where they comprise 59 per cent of all people living with HIV. There is therefore a great need to continue reducing the particular vulnerability of women to HIV.

Studies show that women who experience gender-based violence are more vulnerable to HIV. Women who are living with HIV are also at a greater risk of gender-based violence. Consequentially, actions to reduce HIV prevalence amongst women need to take place in tandem with gender-based violence programmes. Ireland is known internationally for its work on HIV and has an opportunity in the White Paper Review to ensure greater cohesion and integration of HIV and gender equality responses, ensuring continued focus on women's particular vulnerability to HIV and gender-based violence.

#### Education

Gender-based violence within education has been identified as a major barrier to children accessing their right to education, and is often more prevalent and widespread in countries experiencing conflict or emerging from emergencies. While education components are critical for a quality education, issues of inequality (particularly gender inequality) prevent boys and girls achieving equality of outcome. Schools are key sites in which we learn, perform and shape our identities including those of gender and so it is critical that Irish Aid support holistic programmes focusing on increasing access to safe, equitable and quality education.

We commend the Government of Ireland for the actions they have taken to support initiatives that focus on girls' education, prevent and respond to school related gender-based violence, maintain a focus on education as a mechanism to break inter-generational poverty and inequality and encourage education as a tool for promoting gender equality and parity of opportunities for the next generation. We encourage continued support for these initiatives.

### *Governance and Human Rights*

The Consultation Paper clearly recognises the need to distinguish between the participation of men and women in human rights and governance activities. The Government of Ireland should recognise that women are already heavily sidelined in these domains and continue to work to remove barriers to women's participation in decision making. They may require additional support to participate in the decision making processes that affect their lives. At the beginning of 21st century, women represented only one in seven parliamentarians, one in ten cabinet ministers, and one in twenty Heads of State or Government. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the average for women's participation in national parliaments is 17.8 percent. However Rwanda is the first and only country in the world to have a majority of women in its parliament, at 56 percent of seats in the lower house. Ensuring women's participation in conflict resolution and post conflict peace building can provide opportunities to increase women's participation in decision making. Community level organisations can also provide an important opportunity for women to acquire initial confidence and to articulate their opinions. Low levels of education, poverty, patriarchal norms, lack of family support, increasing levels of gender based political violence, traditional religious and conservative views, lack of self confidence, and marginalisation can all inhibit women's political participation.

### *Gender Equality*

The prominence of gender equality and gender-based violence issues in the White Paper is a positive development. However it should be strongly acknowledged that the root cause of gender-based violence is the fundamental inequality between men and women. Furthermore, resources need to be focused on the prevention of gender-based violence, as well as treatment and support for survivors.

We commend the Government of Ireland for its support, through Irish Aid, to the quality programmes that are implemented through humanitarian and development organisations, civil society organisations supported within the priority countries, internationally and led by Irish Aid and the Defence Forces themselves. While we recognise there have been some issues working with national women's machineries, we encourage the continued support to ministries with responsibilities for gender equality as well as women's organisations and to women themselves. We support the continued drive to gather learning and evidence to support more effective interventions and to push the sector forward. Gender-based violence does not take place in a vacuum but interacts with the environment surrounding it. We welcome the recent focus on gender-based violence in fragile states but also acknowledge that endemic gender-based violence can have a serious affect on the lives of women in a wide variety of environments. With increasing recognition that prevention of gender-based violence is possible we encourage the Government of Ireland to ensure both prevention of and response to gender-based violence are included in the overall programme. We also note the **need** for a multi-sector response to gender-based violence encompassing health, psycho-social, security, legal and judicial.

It is imperative that the Government of Ireland continues to consider gender equality as a strong component of all its work, particularly that of Irish Aid. The chairmanship of the OSCE and the upcoming EU Presidency provide opportunities for the Government of Ireland to continue to promote the cause of gender equality and to be a leader in this area. With 2015 fast approaching and a reorientation of the overarching global development goals, currently the Millennium Development Goals, it is vital the Government of Ireland continue to push for gender equality to be at the heart of all development goals.

### *Hunger*

The Consortium welcomes the Government of Ireland's commitment to the issue of hunger and encourages continued leadership, based on the overarching principles of the Right to Food. Access to agricultural inputs is hugely different for men and women in low and middle income countries. Closing this gap could lift an estimated 100-150 million people out of hunger. We encourage continued learning and implementation of gender mainstreaming into the hunger response. We encourage continued leadership on the Scaling Up Nutrition process and to ensure clear integration of the 3 pillars of the Hunger Taskforce Report, particularly agriculture and nutrition and the central role of women, at programming and policy levels. We also encourage greater attention to effective post-emergency rehabilitation to ensure that local agricultural resilience and local initiatives are strengthened to prevent women and girls from having to engage in risky coping strategies.

We encourage a continued focus on the relationship between poverty, hunger and gender-based violence. Gender-based violence impacts on food security and the economy of a household. The experience by women of violence can lead to reductions in food productivity, particularly when they carry the primary responsibility for food provision. Another critical element in the inter-relationship between poverty, hunger and gender-based violence is the issue of land rights, a factor that is underpinned by gender inequality. Access to land is critical for small-scale food producers. Losing it and becoming landless is feared by many smallholders, as it will mean losing food security and opportunities for development. It is the most marginalised groups in society who are most susceptible to land grabbing – which makes preventing it a crucial issue for poverty reduction and human rights. For women all over the world, lack of access to and control over land is a major determinant (and outcome) of gender inequality. Compounding this, gender-based violence is often a common feature in conflicts over land.

We are encouraged to see hunger as a key issue in the White Paper review. However we strongly urge that the Government of Ireland includes the impact that land grabs and forced evictions has upon gender inequality and look to address this when developing or updating policies on hunger. We also encourage the Government of Ireland to support the development of internationally applicable standards on good governance relating to land tenure and management of natural resources. Alongside this, we highlight how international human rights laws, such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR), guarantees women their human rights, including the right to housing. The Consortium welcomes Ireland's active promotion of these human rights instruments and calls on the Government to continue to promote respect for these human rights instruments when working with national governments and multilateral organisations.

### *Climate Change*

The impact of climate change is different for women and men, with women likely to bear the greater burden in situations of poverty. Women's voices must be heard and their priorities supported as part of climate justice. In many countries and cultures, women are at the forefront of living with the reality of the injustices caused by climate change.

While there is recognition of the challenges associated with climate change within overall policy documents such as Irish Aid's (2007) Environmental Policy for Sustainable Development and the White Paper, we see a need for an increased focus on the relationship between climate change and gender inequality. Where Irish Aid works with national governments, multilateral organisations, international agencies and civil society organisations to develop policy that contributes to sustainable development and climate justice, the Consortium encourages the Government of Ireland to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across such policies.

### **Ways of working**

The 2004 Gender Policy and the 2006 White Paper provide the overarching policy framework for gender and development work, including gender-based violence, carried out by the Government of Ireland. We recommend that the Gender Policy continues to be implemented and that the White Paper considers the following points in the review.

The 2010 Review of the Gender Policy made a number of recommendations including the need to maintain a human rights based approach to gender equality in order to ensure that the strategic as well as the practical needs of women are being met. While the Government of Ireland has increased its work on gender equality both through additional resources and through a higher profile accorded to the issue, it is imperative that the Gender Policy keeps pace with these developments and that the White Paper Review process solidifies these changes.

The Gender Policy calls for an action plan and the Gender Policy review calls for a Results Framework for Irish Aid's gender and gender-based violence work. While we recognise that there are important differences between the two methods we feel that the information should be shared in a replicable way year on year for accountability purposes. We support the development of a results framework that lays out the outcomes that the Government of Ireland is trying to achieve, the resources required to achieve these outcomes, sex disaggregated indicators of success and systems to monitor its implementation and impact. We encourage the Government of Ireland to ensure that the whole gender programme is included in this results framework, including Irish Aid HQ work, bilateral programmes, mainstreaming of gender across Irish Aid, work supported through Irish NGOs, and work supported through multilaterals.

We encourage strong consultation with civil society in the development and implementation of this results framework. We also encourage the stronger inclusion of civil society on gender and gender-based violence work in priority countries and in multilateral initiatives.

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We recognise and commend the Government of Ireland's commitment to the Busan Joint Gender Action Plan. We note however that in order to achieve gender equality it is necessary to adopt a rights based approach to all gender policies and programmes. We therefore recommend that the Government of Ireland and Irish Aid advocate for a rights based approach when implementing the Busan Joint Gender Action Plan.

The high quality work of the Consortium on gender-based violence provides a hook to engage organisations and those in leadership positions in gender issues. We also encourage the Government of Ireland to more consistently engage with civil society members on the broader issues as they relate to gender equality and provide a space to continue that engagement.

The adoption of a specific gender equality budget by Irish Aid is very positive and welcomed by the Consortium. We encourage the Government of Ireland and Irish Aid to establish a system where spending from the gender equality budget can be tracked on an annual basis.

We agree with the Gender Policy Review that greater clarity around the twin track approach to gender equality is needed. We recognise that many of the challenges of mainstreaming gender considerations are shared across organisations working on gender equality and encourage the Government of Ireland and Irish Aid in particular, to continue to strive for greater understanding of and best practice approaches to mainstreaming.

The White Paper Review should continue to remain rooted in international obligations to women's human rights including the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Platform for Action; as well as the Millennium Development Goals.

The inclusion of the trade portfolio in the Department of Foreign Affairs purview provides opportunities and challenges. There is a need to ensure that trade policies do not negatively impact on progress made by Irish Aid in its gender equality programmes. Future trade policies should incorporate an impact assessment of that trading policy upon gender equality and human rights. As well as providing support to initiatives that promote women as economic leaders.