

Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence submission on Irish Aid White Paper 2018

The Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence (ICGBV) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation process that has been put in place to inform Ireland's new International Development Policy. ICGBV commends the Government's commitment to develop a new international development policy in a consultative and participatory manner and in particular its commitment to reaching 0.7% of GNI in ODA by 2030. This demonstrates Ireland's genuine commitment to ending poverty and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

More specifically, we note that Gender Equality is given prominence as one of five priorities for transformation, alongside targeted efforts focussing on education of girls, access to health, women, peace and security and Gender Based Violence (GBV) and is matched with an ambition to redouble efforts to integrate gender. In this regard, we feel that it is important that more specific detail under the overall ambition around GBV as a key manifestation of gender inequality is articulated to ensure that the Government is actively building on the progress that they have already made while also adapting to changes in the global context to respond to new and emerging areas of need.

Our comments, in response to the public consultation paper have to do with issues of focus, and suggestions on the priorities and interventions under each of the four headings.

1. What elements of Ireland's international development experience should the new policy reflect?

A respect for **human rights** has been a hallmark of Ireland's international development programme. As the report from the review of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade noted "*the Committee endorses the call to ensure ... a strong commitment to maintaining Ireland's proud tradition of a foreign policy based on equality, human rights and solidarity with those suffering from poverty and injustice*". GBV is a widespread manifestation of discrimination and abuse of human rights.

Given Ireland's strong position on the need to eliminate **GBV** it would be important that this strong message continues to be front and centre of Irish foreign policy. Ireland should continue to be a leader in both voice and action on the work towards eliminating GBV and should position it as a core component of international foreign policy, a **flagship priority** for DFAT's White Paper on International Development. Current growing global movements highlight the proliferation with impunity of GBV, especially sexual violence, and the backlash such movements are receiving, demonstrate both the strategic importance and opportunity for maintaining this focus on GBV.

ICGBV recommends that this flagship priority on GBV for Ireland should take a multi-pronged approach, integrating GBV work and considerations throughout all programmes within the three designated intervention areas, extensive funding and support to GBV specific programmes and considering the intersections between GBV and the five priorities for transformation (discussed in question 3), all showing Ireland as a leader on GBV worldwide.

Having been a key member in the creation of the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence, a unique organisation worldwide, connecting government, human rights, humanitarian and development organisation working towards the goal of eliminating GBV in all its forms, everywhere, Ireland already

has a unique and credible reputation on GBV work. This commitment to working on GBV was enhanced all the more by Ireland having co-chaired the negotiations on the creation of the SDGs, which set standards for the reduction of GBV, and continues through Ireland's strong leadership against GBV in the current role as Chair of the Commission on the Status of Women. Given the likelihood of an increased budget for overseas development assistance, this work can be enhanced and expanded as a core component of Ireland's international development cooperation and humanitarian action.

Why focus on GBV as a flagship priority for DFAT?

The scale and proliferation of the human rights violations resulting from different forms of GBV and across every strata of society globally, demands its prioritisation. GBV by its very nature violates the right to physical integrity and in some cases the right to life. It is systematic, predicated on the unequal power relations between genders and the social norms and legal frameworks that sustain it.

Gender-based violence occurs in every country, in homes, streets and workplaces, and is particularly prevalent during times of conflicts and crises. GBV undermines the mental, physical and social well-being of women and girls violating their human rights, undermining dignity and security and can have a negative impact on long term peace and stability while remaining shrouded in a culture of silence.

While GBV is an endemic problem, it is also a pattern of intentional abuse, however things can be done to reduce, prevent and address GBV and the world has an obligation to stop it.

How to have GBV as a flagship priority?

The circumstances in which GBV is perpetrated are so varied and the motivations so deeply rooted, effective responses to GBV must be holistic and address issues at a number of levels. The Consortium welcomes Ireland's specific focus on violence against women and girls as they are disproportionately affected by GBV. We urge Ireland to continue this focus to ensure there are adequate services for women and girls. This focus and related funding however should not be to the detriment of support available to others subjected to GBV including for example LGBTI populations. We would therefore urge Ireland to increase and make accessible funding dedicated to GBV programming, through civil society, bilateral and multilateral funding streams, to *all* those experiencing or vulnerable to it without discrimination.

GBV should be integrated through all programmes within the three intervention areas, protection, food and people

A. People – Social Protection, Education and Health

GBV has important **health**, livelihoods and social consequences for survivors themselves as well as for their families and communities. In extreme cases this violence can lead to severe trauma, disability or even death, but in all cases has long-term and typically life-long impacts on survivors. GBV can hinder their ability to earn a living, access education and participate in social and political life. As a result, GBV can lead to exclusion or isolation, marginalisation, and lack of participation in decision making thus perpetuating inequality, poverty and impeding opportunity for development. As well as this, expenses for GBV related health care divert spending from food and other household and living expenses. GBV is a risk factor for **HIV/AIDS** which in turn impacts on household food security and a woman's physical and mental health and earning capacity.

To ensure rights and positive health outcomes, it is of utmost importance that there is an integrated response to GBV with effective coordination among different actors, as well as a prioritisation of prevention and response programmes. A healthcare system's response to GBV requires a comprehensive whole of systems approach. Some specific reforms include developing institutional policies and protocols for treatment of survivors, training all health centre staff on national laws and policies dealing with GBV as well as compassionate or empathetic case management consistent with a survivor centred approach, ensuring confidentiality for women's health services, strengthening referral networks and access to them, including to safe justice mechanisms, providing emergency supplies, raising awareness, informing survivors about available services, and monitoring and evaluating specialist services.

School related GBV represents a considerable barrier to participation in and benefitting from education. Violence inflicted on children in, around, or on their way to and from school, leads to an unsafe and unwelcoming learning environment and can prevent students from going to school at all. This is particularly true in some developing contexts where parents are concerned to send their daughters to school lest they risk violence, exploitation or defilement on their way to school or within the environment of the school. School related GBV is an enormous global problem and millions of children across the world experience fear and violence every time they go to school.

It is important that at a time when increased focus is coming towards the provision of **education** to meet, for example, the SDG targets on education, that attention is paid to ensuring that school environments are safe for everyone and that the protection of children from violence and the fear of violence from both other students, teachers and other adults is a priority. Furthermore, attention should be paid to tackling gender inequality and GBV within educational settings across all levels – through national legal and regulatory frameworks and interventions, teacher training institutions, at a community and family level, within educational curricula, and in schools.

B. Protection – Peace, Conflict Prevention and Fragility

In an era of growing insecurity, women and girls face particular risks in **conflict**. Although low reporting and data gaps limit reliable evidence, research indicates that sexual and GBV increases during conflict. The threats women and girls in particular face include the strategic use of sexual violence as a weapon of war; as well as increased perpetration of sexual and gender-based violence during wartime, including intimate partner violence, child marriage as well as other, often less visible, forms of violence and discrimination. These forms of violence, indeed all forms of GBV, often persist long after the end of formal hostilities and can have lifelong implications that impact women's social, cultural, economic and political participation. Ireland should continue to support inclusive initiatives that prevent violence, promote conflict resolution, build peace to address and advance recovery and development to address GBV, including long after countries emerge from acute crisis and active hostilities.

The Consortium urges Ireland to fully realise the commitments made through becoming a partner of the **Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies** and the **GBV related commitments of the World Humanitarian Summit**.

Protection interventions funded through bilateral donors and pooled funds are estimated to be around 3-4% of all humanitarian spending. A recent analysis of Central Emergency Response Fund allocations from 2011-2016 found that the protection sector received between 4.6-7.7% of total funds allocated. Looking at spend on GBV interventions within the protection funding, an analysis of Country

based Pooled Funds from 2014-16 found that GBV interventions received at most 30% of protection funding and at most 3% of total pooled funds.

The Consortium welcomes Ireland's **commitment to increasing funding to protection and GBV prevention and response in humanitarian contexts**. We would like to see this commitment being met and we encourage Ireland to work with and encourage other donors to meet funding gaps in protection and GBV prevention and response programming in emergencies, especially in light of efforts by some member states to undermine progress in this regard in recent years.

The Consortium recognises the contribution Ireland has been making to the IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GENCAP), Protection Standby Capacity Project (PROCAP) and the Rapid Response Initiative. Another mechanism to directly contribute to **building capacity within the area of addressing GBV in emergencies** is through the GBV Area of Responsibility (within the Global Protection Cluster). They have trained advisers who support capacity building at country level within sub GBV clusters. Despite this support, the need for on the ground training, especially in fragile contexts, is significant.

Ireland should set an ambitious agenda to ensure that training on responding to GBV in emergency situations is rolled out in a holistic manner, to front line aid workers, community leaders, government, and other relevant stakeholders and power brokers. One such initiative, aimed at trying to reduce this gap, that has been rolled out between DFAT, UCD and the ICGBV is the **International Summer School on Addressing Gender Based Violence in Emergencies**. This course was piloted in 2018, and has demonstrated a promising partnership between academic institutions and humanitarian NGOs and practitioners. More initiatives like this should be sought out and supported to address capacity gaps identified at the frontline and emphasised in the GBV AoR Capacity Building Strategy.

One idea that could be considered would be the creation of a **Mobile Technical Unit within DFAT**, in order to deploy staff to crisis and emergency situations, bringing with them GBV and protection expertise. The ICGBV would be happy to discuss this concept further and find ways to support the Department in this endeavour.

The work to **protect** affected populations goes beyond the protection of refugees and migrants solely, and includes the protection of people without regard to who or where they are or any such related status. The language of protection as enshrined under International Humanitarian Law should not be expanded to artificially encompass issues such as the protection of borders, economic relations, security, stability or other political agendas. Humanitarian protection is "all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and spirit of the relevant bodies of law (i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law)".¹ The protection mainstreaming principles of do no harm, accountability, meaningful access and participation and empowerment must be integrated throughout all programming. If these are diligently applied it will make huge strides towards addressing gender inequality and GBV.

The Consortium urges the Department, in its work with partner organisations and in bilateral policy engagement, to continue to take steps to address the barriers that have been erected through negative gender norms to **women's full involvement in the prevention and resolution of conflicts**, in

¹ The definition of protection, resulting from a series of ICRC - convened seminars (1996-99), and formally endorsed by the IASC.

their participation in post-conflict public life and to advocate for concrete actions to be taken by states to implement the women, peace and security agenda.

Women's full and equal participation in peacebuilding is not only important for women, it is vital for societies as a whole and for wider and longer lasting peace. Evidence demonstrates that women's meaningful participation in peace processes increases the probability that a peace agreement will last two years or more. Ireland should continue to advocate internationally that all peace processes at the very least meet the 30% gender quota for women's participation, and beyond this, supports the leadership of women in those processes. For truly inclusive and transformative peace processes, Ireland should fund initiatives to train and empower women to not only participate in, but also drive, these processes. It is important that this support is provided not only at the national level, but also at the grassroots level. Economic, political and social inequalities, as well as inequalities based on ethnicity, disability or age amongst others, all shape individual women's experiences, and the perspectives they bring to peacebuilding activities, so care must be exercised not to exclude any perspectives. **Initiatives must be funded at the grassroots level, supporting diverse civil society organisations to represent the diversity of women's experiences and perspectives in peacebuilding.**

C. Food – Nutrition, Agriculture and Inclusive Economic Growth

Despite the links between GBV, gender inequality and **poverty**, to date GBV programmes have tended to focus on health and legal issues rather than food security. Deep-rooted gender inequalities in the distribution of power, resources and responsibilities create a spiral of poverty, GBV and food insecurity. GBV has impacts on **food security** and the wider economy of a household, when women experience violence it can lead to reductions in food productivity, particularly when they carry the primary responsibility for food production. Women also tend to carry a disproportionate burden of responsibility in ensuring household access to food, at a huge personal risk. This can result in the need to resort to transactional sex, sale of personal assets and reduced personal food consumption to ensure that there is more access to food for other family members. All of this occurs while also often facing exclusion from meaningful participation in household decision making including on the use of household resources.

Models such as farmer field schools, community dialogues and household approaches need to work effectively to improve and strengthen men and women's life skills and knowledge of agronomic practices whilst raising awareness on human and women's rights, gender stereotypes and how to eliminate GBV and prevent HIV/AIDS.

Another critical element in the inter-relationship between poverty, hunger and gender-based violence is the issue of **land rights**. For women all over the world, lack of access to and control over land is underpinned by structural inequality based on gender norms, enforced and maintained by discriminatory regulatory frameworks, which exacerbates poverty and thus increased vulnerability and risk of exposure to other forms of violence. Compounding this, gender-based violence is often a common feature in conflicts over land, both at community and broader levels including armed conflict.

There are significant economic implications of GBV. People who have been abused can have decreased productivity, as a result of both physical and psychological factors, which can impact their ability to work, and lead to difficulty generating income. Other factors such as seasonal financial pressure and food insecurity can exacerbate the levels of GBV committed. Violence can be increased in the 'hungry months' during the summer when households experience food shortages.

Therefore the Consortium encourages a continued **focus on the relationship between poverty, hunger, livelihoods and acts of GBV**. In particular a focus on ensuring that programmes do not have unintended consequences that increase the likelihood of perpetration of GBV. Efforts to promote agri-trade should be informed by and prioritise protection of the livelihoods and food security of small household producers especially subsistence farmers above the financial gain of Irish producers. Thinking beyond a simplistic numerical representation of men and women in programmes, towards substantive and meaningful efforts to improve gender equality and input (into design and decision-making) and outcomes from and for women in all phases of programming is crucial. Including engaging men and boys as change agents and champions in the process of women's and girls' empowerment and providing opportunities for women to express their opinions in public and have their views incorporated into decision-making processes.

Ireland's policies and programming on land and inheritance rights, agricultural development, economic and livelihoods security should be tailored to the realities of the constraints that rural women and girls face. For example these policies and programmes should recognise women's right to ownership of assets, access to resources and roles in decision-making over household resources. They should acknowledge the structural inequalities that are barriers to women being able to claim and access these entitlements and include provisions that reflect this reality. They should also ensure the provision of access to multi-sectoral services for GBV in rural areas as part of women and girl's empowerment strategies.

Support to specific programmes focused on prevention, response and accountability on GBV, establishing Ireland as a committed leader on addressing GBV worldwide

Ireland has already a number of significant and important programmes specifically addressing GBV, and it is important that these continue to be supported. Any further support to GBV programmes should be considered from the perspective of the three core pillars of response, prevention and accountability.

Response – All programming should acknowledge the Centrality of Protection and take a **survivor centred approach** ensuring dignified access to essential services; provision for both specialised and generalised support, such as psychosocial support services, legal and medical support services, programmes dealing with income generation, etc.

Prevention – There should be a focus on identifying and supporting processes that challenge cultural norms and promote transformational change including in attitudes and behaviours that enable all forms of GBV to occur with impunity. This can include community mobilisation, including the provision of women only spaces, programmes on engaging men and boys to prevent GBV and programmes on engaging faith leaders to prevent GBV.

Accountability and addressing impunity – Access to justice and ensuring effective legal protection for citizens is a question of governance and functioning legal systems and services. Programmes can include working with police and lawyers, strategic litigation, campaigning, advocacy, policy work, research and movement building.

2. What are the implications of the changing global context for Ireland's international development cooperation and humanitarian action?

The past few years have seen great endorsement from the Irish public, with recent referenda, of Ireland being a more accepting country that puts a focus on equality and human rights. This is a story that we can and must bring to the world in terms of encouraging other countries towards a similar stance for respecting the universality of human rights and standing firmly against any manifestation of inequality and discrimination, including forms of GBV.

One of the opportunities to share this story is through Ireland's expanding global footprint. Though some progress has been made in advancing the struggle for equality between men and women, GBV is prevalent in all corners of the world in both the public and private sphere, and frequently with alarming levels of acceptance and impunity. **Some of the most pernicious forms of GBV are particularly prevalent in situations of humanitarian crisis, whether involving natural disasters or directly caused by humans as in the case of armed conflict.**

Data shows that GBV is also a factor in the continuation of insecurity and poverty, which is why it is such a critical aspect of both development and humanitarian programming. Ireland must continue to focus its development cooperation and humanitarian action on the most vulnerable people.

More **funding** and resources need to be given to ending the worldwide crisis that is violence perpetrated based on gender differences. With regard to Ireland's approach to addressing GBV, the ICGBV recommends there is an appropriate balance of funding across interventions that **support GBV response services**, that offer multi-sectoral services to GBV survivors, and **prevention focused interventions**, which aim to end societal norms and systems that perpetuate GBV.

While the world becomes more engaged with gender equality, there is a substantial focus on issues of women's economic empowerment and girls' education, as they are more inspiring and positive narratives in the world of communications. However GBV is not as favoured in narratives and stories relating to gender equality as it is seen as a negative story. What is fundamental is that GBV is inextricably linked to all matters of gender equality. Working on eliminating GBV should not be subject to the need for a positive story, and it is clear to see that from the public engagement around #metoo, that the public is engaged on issues of GBV. Ireland can embrace a position as a leading donor against all forms of GBV, and ensure that the focus on eliminating GBV through all cycles of programming is maintained.

3. **Do the proposed priorities respond to the changing context and contribute to the achievement of our vision of a more equal, peaceful and sustainable world?**

GBV cannot be considered as purely being an issue related to peace or non-violence, leading to the treatment of the symptom and not the cause. At its most basic acts of GBV are a demonstration of the inequality between the genders, and its manifestation through physical violence is just one form of GBV, it also manifests through economic, social and cultural violence.

Gender Equality needs to be the frame through which we understand all of our interventions. If we are not considering gender equality and gender issues in all of our development and humanitarian contexts and interventions then we are certainly missing a part of the story. Even in contexts where it seems that gender equality would not be a factor, not considering the gendered aspects of our work can mean that there are unintended negative consequences, generally for women and girls, and that existing inequalities can be reinforced.

Gender-based violence is a universal problem rooted in the underlying inequality between men and women and embedded in deeper societal norms of gender inequality, driven by factors such as traditional patriarchal and religious norms, conflict, insecurity and poverty.

GBV cannot be eliminated without **addressing the root causes of GBV through challenging the social norms** that reinforce power imbalances and structural inequality between women and men that condone and sometimes even encourage violence against women and girls. Systemic reviews of GBV interventions, particularly relating to prevention of intimate partner violence, have shown that GBV programmes are most successful when they transform power dynamics and actively promote and support gender equality.

Since the creation of the SDGs there has been increasing focus on the call to **Leave No One Behind**. A call that recognises that development has not been equally balanced and if we do not redress this, we will not achieve the goals of the SDGs. However in addition to the call to Leave No One Behind, priority needs to be given to ensuring that we **reach the furthest behind first**. Those with marginal and intersecting identities have seen little movement towards equality, human rights and few avenues out of situations of poverty and vulnerability. As discussed above, GBV can be both a cause and effect of these types of imbalances.

The priority to **reduce humanitarian need** in the upcoming White Paper is an extremely important one. Humanitarian crises have become more complex and embedded. We acknowledge the necessary linkages between humanitarian assistance and development and its relevance to GBV programming. Protection and GBV programming should be cornerstones to responses in emergency, conflict affected and long term development contexts Engaging in more development type programming such as GBV prevention in long-term humanitarian crises is important for respect, dignity and equality for all.

Good **governance** or ‘good enough governance’ is essential to a functioning State. However, while it is related to governance, human rights, given its importance, needs to be enumerated clearly as a separate priority. At a time when human rights are under attack globally, whether through closing civil society space, restricting definitions in relation to the SDGs or increased populist rhetoric used on the international stage, it is even more important that Ireland centres its development cooperation and humanitarian action within the framework of respect for and fulfilment of human rights.

The intersections between **climate change**, gender inequality and GBV are beginning to be acknowledged. The added pressure that climate change puts on food and economic outputs are well understood. This combinations of factors have, as discussed above, always been pinch points for increased likelihood of GBV. It is important for Ireland to continue its research and learning in this area, so that Ireland can not only mitigate against climate risks and impacts but also prevent and adequately respond to GBV in these contexts.

4. How can we improve delivery of Ireland’s international development cooperation and humanitarian action?

The Consortium welcomes a **transparent breakdown of the allocation of funds to gender equality and women’s empowerment** on an annual basis, especially considering the goal to double the allocation to the gender spend in the coming years. This should be supported by the development of a **strategy or action plan on gender equality**, which should include developing outcomes that Ireland

aims to in the area of gender equality, resources required to achieve these outcomes, gender disaggregated indicators of success and systems to monitor its implementation. We recommend that Ireland ensures that all components of the aid programme be included in this action plan, including DFAT's HQ work, bilateral programmes, mainstreaming of gender across the Department, work supported through Irish NGOs, and work supported through multilaterals.

Long-term and flexible funding is critical for effective gender equality programming. Addressing the root causes of gender inequality and tackling GBV cannot be achieved in short funding streams, but instead requires a long-term holistic approach. The Consortium recommends that Ireland finds a balance between supporting the scale up and expansion of existing GBV interventions and innovative programmes that are developing creative approaches to preventing and responding to GBV.

GBV is an entrenched reality in all countries in the world. It requires smart programming at all stage and across many sectors, programming from beginning to end. It also requires a commitment to the long-haul – this is not something that will be resolved overnight, and it needs to have a longer term vision and funding predictability to match. Ireland can and should continue to be a leader on GBV, making it a flagship priority, and endeavour to bring others along with it.

In closing, we value the opportunity to contribute to the development of this new policy, and look forward to working together towards the goal of achieving a more equal, peaceful and sustainable world that builds on Ireland's strengths and reflects the experience of Irish people and our own development path.