

Irish Consortium  
on Gender Based  
Violence



# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Irish Consortium  
on Gender Based  
Violence



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## Message from **our Chairs**

Welcome to the Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence (ICGBV) Annual Report 2023. We are grateful for this opportunity to reflect on the past year. With it, we are reminded of and inspired by our members' dedication to the prevention, mitigation, and response to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and our collective ambition to end GBV.

In September 2023, GOAL took on the hosting of the Consortium for the next two years with I, Siobhán Walsh, GOAL CEO, as Chair, and Mary Van Lieshout, GOAL Deputy CEO, as Co-Chair. We appreciate the unwavering commitment of our predecessor, Caoimhe de Barra, and the Trócaire team for their dedication to the ICGBV mission.

Unfortunately, in 2023, GBV remained a systematic crisis, affecting one in three women worldwide. As conflicts escalated, so did the incidents of multiple forms of GBV, highlighting the clear correlation between man-made humanitarian crises and the rise of GBV. In war-ravaged regions such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo<sup>1</sup>, Ukraine<sup>2</sup>, Sudan<sup>3</sup>, Syria<sup>4</sup>, and Gaza<sup>5</sup>, GBV reached alarming records. The risk was especially severe for the 60 million forcibly displaced women and girls, whose vulnerability to GBV was greatly exacerbated<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (18 May, 2023). UNICEF calls for urgent action to respond to alarming levels of increasing sexual violence against girls and women in eastern DRC. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-calls-urgent-action-respond-alarming-levels-increasing-sexual-violence-0>. Accessed on 24 July 2024.

<sup>2</sup> A. Burgess (24 February, 2024). Conflict-related sexual violence survivors lead push to uncover rape as a weapon of war in Ukraine. ABC News. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-25/conflict-related-sexual-violence-rape-ukraine-weapon-war-crimes/103488584>. Accessed on 22 July 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (18 June 2023). Crisis Continues: GBV Sub-Sector Sudan Situation Brief Update.

<sup>4</sup> UNFPA & GBV AoR (2023). An overview of gender-based violence in Syria.

<sup>5</sup> GBV AoR (20 October 2023). Gaza Crisis: Gender-Based Violence Concerns and Priorities.

<sup>6</sup> UNHCR (2023). Gender-based violence global report 2023. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/global-report-2023/outcome-areas/gender-based-violence>. Accessed on 22 July, 2024.

2023 also broke climate records as the warmest year on record<sup>7</sup>. Extreme weather events continue to remind us that climate change exacerbates violence against women and girls by amplifying gender inequalities<sup>8</sup>. In situations of limited resources, such as drought or natural disasters, women face an increased risk of being forced into sexual exploitation in exchange for necessities like food and water. Additionally, they often have to travel longer distances to find clean water and firewood, making them more vulnerable to sexual assault<sup>9</sup>.

As the WHO declared an end to the global health emergency and COVID-19 restrictions, the pervasive impact of GBV began to emerge. The surge in reported GBV cases during lockdowns revealed the dire situation that many had been enduring in silence, compounded by protracted lockdowns and reduced access to services<sup>10</sup>. A report released by UN Women showed that almost 1 in 2 women reported that they or a woman they know experienced a form of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic<sup>11</sup>.

Rapid advancements in technology also present challenges, and risks for GBV. A critical achievement of the ICGBV in 2023 was the publication of research which summarised the GBV related risks and opportunities presented by these advancements. Thanks to the support of Ambassador Fergal Mythen and Roderic O’Gorman TD, Minister of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth of Ireland, this research was presented by ICGBV at one of the largest side events at the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the principal global platform exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality, the rights and empowerment of women.

Throughout the year the ICGBV made solid progress, summarised in this report. The publication “Women’s Voices: Local Women’s Voices on Women, Peace and Security”, captured how the ICGBV facilitated bringing perspectives and recommendations from women civil society leaders living under conflict to the attention of power holders at the

<sup>7</sup> World Meteorological Organisation (30 November, 2023). 2023 shatters climate records with major impacts. <https://wmo.int/news/media-centre/2023-shatters-climate-records-major-impacts>. Accessed on 22 July, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence (22 March, 2022). Gender-Based violence and its intersection with climate change.

<sup>9</sup> SolimanHelene, A., Carlsson Rex, & Warren, D. (2022, December 09). Climate change and gender-based violence: Interlinked crises in East Africa. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/climatechange/climate-change-and-gender-based-violence-interlinked-crises-east-africa>. Accessed on 26 July 2024.

<sup>10</sup> A. Linus Oluchukwu, et al. (2023). Global rise in gender-based violence against women and girls during COVID-19 lockdown: An insight from Africa. Cogent Arts & Humanities, 10(1), 2188772.

<sup>11</sup> UN Women (2021). Measuring the shower pandemic: violence against women and girls. Data analysis of Rapid Gender Assessment Surveys.

highest level of the UN Security Council. It is crucial that we continue to keep the voices of people at risk and survivors at the heart of our work. Accountability to GBV survivors at local, national and regional levels was the focus of our public 16 days event. We strive to optimise the power of the collective to influence change. Change requires resources, therefore advocating for financing of GBV will continue to be a cornerstone of our work.

We also welcomed Róisín Gallagher, our new ICGBV Coordinator who brings new perspectives from her wealth of experience across humanitarian, development and peace support contexts.

Our thanks to all the CEOs of the Consortium who attended our annual meeting to reaffirm their commitment to ending GBV. That commitment is crucial as we look ahead at the scale of the GBV crisis globally.

We will continue to amplify the voices of survivors and those at risk, focusing on Survivor-Led Accountability.

We truly hope this report adequately reflects the important work of the ICGBV and our Sister Consortia in Sierra Leone and Malawi in 2023 and encourage you to explore our research and other resources further.

We look forward to advancing the critically important work of the ICGBV in the coming year.

Best wishes,



**Siobhán Walsh,**  
CEO GOAL,  
Chair ICGBV



**Mary Van Lieshout,**  
Deputy CEO GOAL,  
Co-Chair ICGBV



# WHO WE ARE

## ICGBV Background

The ICGBV, currently hosted by GOAL brings together fourteen international human rights, humanitarian and development NGOs, Irish Aid, and the Irish Defence Forces. Established in 2005 as a response to reports of ongoing and systematic sexual violence against women and girls in the Darfur Region of Sudan, it works collaboratively to increase knowledge and understanding of GBV and to promote high-quality programming and policy responses in humanitarian, development and peace support settings.

## ICGBV Members

The Consortium members are ActionAid Ireland, Aidlink, Christian Aid Ireland, Concern Worldwide, Self Help Africa, Irish Defence Forces, GOAL, Ifrah Foundation, Irish Aid (Department of Foreign Affairs), Irish Red Cross, Oxfam Ireland, Plan Ireland, Trócaire and World Vision Ireland.

In 2023, members continued to demonstrate their commitment to ending GBV and the Consortium's work through collaboration and participation in the Consortium's governance and operation structures. All member organisations are committed to ending GBV, even where this is not the primary focus of their work.





## International Consortia

To achieve greater in-country collaboration between members, the ICGBV established Consortia in **Sierra Leone** and **Malawi**. These networks promote shared learning and collaboration to further support local empowerment and programming.

The Malawi Irish Consortium on GBV (MICGBV) was established in 2014, and is composed of ActionAid, Concern Worldwide, GOAL, Oxfam, Irish Aid, Irish Rule of Law, Trócaire and Self Help Africa with UN Women as a collaborator.

The Irish Working Group on Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone (IWGGBV-SL), established in 2016, is composed of Action Aid, ChildFund International, Christian Aid, Concern Worldwide, Embassy of Ireland in Sierra Leone, Forum Against Harmful Practices (FAHP), GOAL, International Rescue Committee, Plan International, Purposeful, Rainbo Initiative, SEND-SL, Trócaire, UNFPA, UNWOMEN, and World Vision.



## CEO Roundtable

During the ICGBV's inception, former President of Ireland Mary Robinson, the first Patron of the ICGBV (2005-2015), required that CEOs and leaders of member organisations convene once a year to share updates on progress towards reaching the Consortium's objectives, and to re-pledge their commitment to the Consortium and the prevention, mitigation and response to GBV.

This commitment continues, and on January 17, 2023, the CEOs and leadership of all ICGBV members gathered for the Annual CEO and Leaders Roundtable in Iveagh House, the Headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs. Minister of State Seán Fleming TD gave the opening remarks and highlighted the importance of ending GBV and achieving gender equality.

Key themes that attendees addressed included:

- Commitment to ending GBV and gender inequality
- GBV programming
- Learning and sharing of practices and knowledge
- Intersectional approach
- Supporting women-led organisations
- Feminist values
- Funding and investment addressing GBV
- Women, Peace & Security
- Sustainable Development Goals

Minister Seán Fleming TD noted the significant increase in focus on GBV in the work of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Irish Aid, and in supporting programming that works to address GBV. Minister Fleming called on the Consortium to keep this issue on the agenda and to continue our collaboration in the future.



Picture of CEOs and Leaders of the ICGBV members. Top Left to right: Gillian Barnett, CEO (World Vision Ireland); Jennifer McCarthy Flynn, Coordinator (ICGBV); David Regan, CEO (Concern Worldwide); Anne Cleary, CEO (Aidlink); David Dalton, Executive Director (Self Help Africa); Karol Balfe, CEO (ActionAid Ireland); Director General Michael Gaffey (Irish Aid); Dualta Roughneen, Head of Programmes (Plan International Ireland); Rosamund Bennett, CEO (Christian Aid Ireland); and Brigadier General Kevin Campion (Defence Forces). Bottom left to right: Leonie Kerins, Executive Director (Ifrah Foundation); Siobhán Walsh, CEO (Goal Global); Minister of State Seán Flemming, TD (Department of Foreign Affairs); Caoimhe de Barra, CEO and Chair (Trócaire and ICGBV); Jim Clarken, CEO (Oxfam) and Deirdre Garvey, Secretary General (Irish Red Cross)



# WHAT WE DO

The ICGBV's Strategic Plan 2021-26 sets out three key priorities:

## 1. Promote **GBV Prevention**

programming and Gender Equality as a Fundamental Component of Ending GBV. This requires addressing power imbalances and the social and gender norms that justify gender inequality.

## 2. Advance **Risk Mitigation**

within Humanitarian and Development Work. This requires first identifying GBV risks and then taking specific actions to reduce those risks.

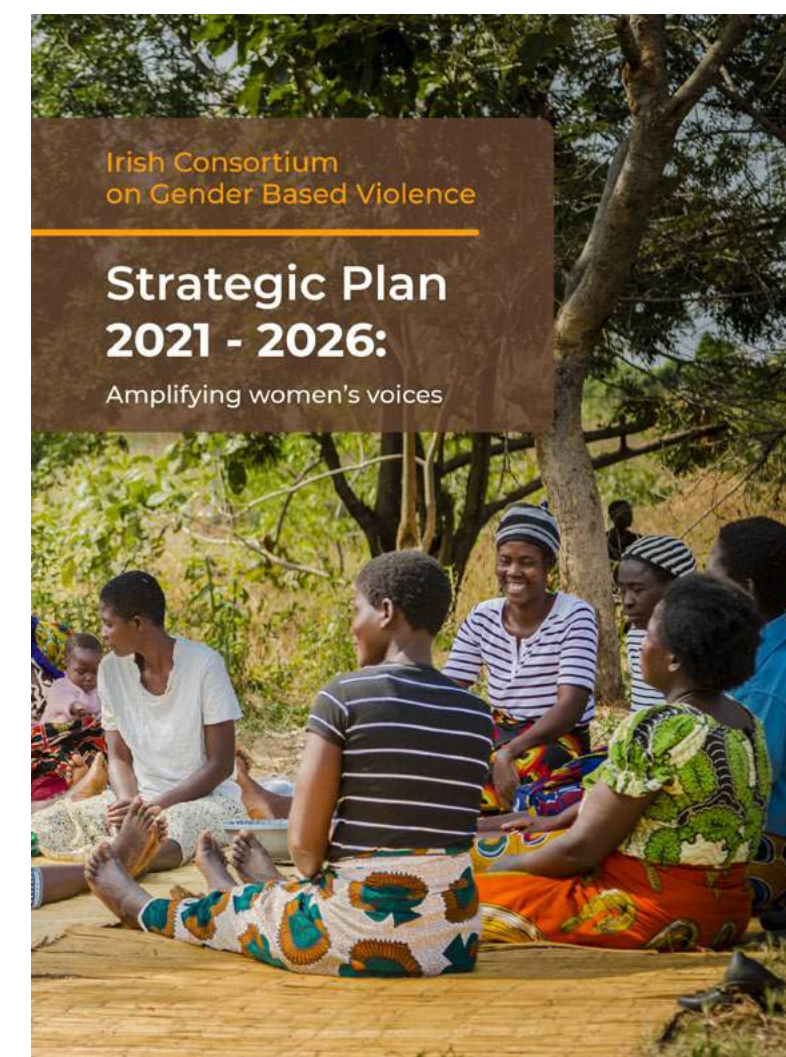
## 3. Strengthen the **Response to GBV**

in Humanitarian and Development Contexts. This includes improved access to security and justice, psychosocial support, safety and risk mitigation, and health care in humanitarian crisis and development work.

These strategic priorities form a framework that is underpinned by the understanding that gender inequality (in combination with intersecting inequalities) represents a root cause of GBV and, as such, serves as a primary analytical lens for identifying best practice approaches to prevention, risk mitigation, and response.

The priorities represent a road map for the ICGBV's work within its member organisations and identify the specific areas of work for the ICGBV's collective action. We believe that every person, regardless of their gender or sexuality, has the right to live free from violence.

This Annual Report details the work of the ICGBV and its members under each Strategic Priority.



**ICGBV Strategic Plan 2021-2026: Amplifying Women's Voices.** Cover: Members of a Village Savings and Loans Group (VSL) conduct weekly meetings under a tree to count and record their savings in Chagunda Village, Traditional Authority (TA) Kambwiri, Salima District, Malawi. © Bazar Productions



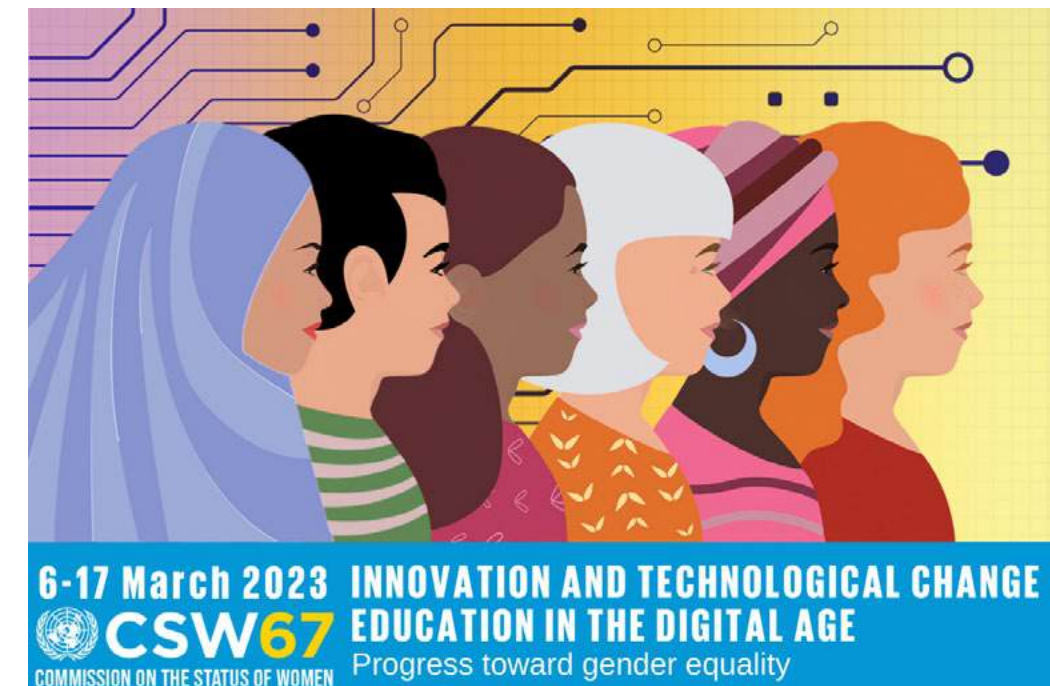
# Strategic Priority 1: Prevention

## 67th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67): Technology and GBV Paper Launch

The Consortium joined the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in hosting a Side Event at CSW67 at United Nations Headquarters in New York on March 6<sup>th</sup>. The event explored how technology has both exacerbated the pandemic of violence against women and girls and provided opportunities for prevention, mitigation, and response in humanitarian and development contexts. This was a unique opportunity to hear the voices of women who have been directly impacted by GBV and the local organisations working to end GBV with whom the ICGBV works.

There were over 500 in-person attendees and significantly more online, including video contributions from member organisations. The topic resonated with public representatives and GBV practitioners alike. Panel speakers also shared how Ireland has responded to technology-facilitated GBV domestically.

The event was opened by Ambassador of Ireland to the UN, Fergal Mythen, and Roderic O’Gorman TD, Minister of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and moderated by Jennifer McCarthy Flynn, ICGBV Coordinator. The strong panel included Dr Jennifer Okeke (National Women’s Council), Rebecca Kallih (Rainbo Initiative, Sierra Leone), Hon. Neema Lugangira (MP, Tanzania), and Sarah Schlitz (Federal State Secretary, Belgium).



The ICGBV launched our policy paper entitled “Technology and Gender-Based Violence: Risks and Opportunities” at the event. The paper draws on our members’ experiences and insights and locates them within current policy thinking. It shares key recommendations for governments, non-governmental organisations, and technology providers.

A recording of the event can be [viewed on YouTube](#) and the published policy paper can be [read on our website](#).

Photo credit: **UN Women**

## International Women’s Day

International Women’s Day is celebrated on March 8th every year. In 2023, we worked with the Malawi Irish Consortium on GBV and the Irish Gender-Based Violence Working Group in Sierra Leone to share key messages celebrating women and girls in all their diversity.

## Malawi Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence (MICGBV)

The [MICGBV](#) International Women's Day event was organised to address women's economic constraints in Malawi, particularly the high dropout rates among girls in upper primary school and the gender gap in agricultural productivity. The event provided a platform for grassroots women to receive motivational talks on women's economic empowerment and education on forms of GBV.

In line with the theme of International Women's Day and CSW68, MICGBV highlighted the role of innovation, technology, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality. The event presented business start-up kits to five women with disabilities who are particularly vulnerable to poverty. These kits, tailored to their chosen fields of entrepreneurship, aim to support the creation of sustainable income-generating activities and boost their livelihoods. By accessing economic opportunities, women can build livelihoods that will support their long-term recovery from violence, thus overcoming financial dependence on others and reducing the risk of violence associated with economic vulnerability and gender inequality.

The event was a powerful reminder of the importance of investing in women as a human rights imperative. Over 100 grassroots women from three districts in Malawi—Mchinji, Lilongwe, and Dedza—attended. Participants represented various grassroots women's groups, including village savings and women's forums from the respective districts. The event underscored that investing in women is not just a moral obligation but also fosters more inclusive economic growth and benefits everyone in society.



Participant receiving a startup kit from MICGBV chair, and representatives from Irish rule of Law and Lilongwe District council.  
Photo credit: **MICGBV**

## Irish Working Group on Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone (IWGGBV-SL)

The [IWGGBV-SL](#) developed a [policy brief](#) on the implementation of the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act of 2019. Published in December 2023, this brief critically examines the Act, highlighting its successes, identifying gaps, and offering actionable recommendations for further enhancement. The brief concluded that the Act faces significant technical challenges in legislative, reporting, investigation, prosecution, conviction, and imprisonment processes. The IWGGBV-SL proposed recommendations to improve programme quality, data management, and law enforcement efficacy to address these issues.

The IWGGBV-SL will collaborate with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, and the Family Support Unit to develop and implement plans for the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act and the report's recommendations.



*IWGGBV-SL  
Policy Brief on the  
Implementation of  
the Sexual Offences  
(Amendment) Act of  
2019.*



## Member Spotlights: **PREVENTING GBV**



## act:onaid

### Action Aid

ActionAid Ireland's Women's Rights Programme III (2023-2027), is dedicated to improving the safety, security, and economic wellbeing of women and girls in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Nepal. ActionAid is using a gender transformative approach to tackle the root causes of GBV and support women leaders and women's rights groups to hold their governments accountable.

In Kenya, they have been working with their partner, Kamuthe Women's Network (KWN) in Garissa, to eradicate Female Genital Mutilation. Despite being outlawed in Kenya in 2011, FGM remains a pressing issue in the country and other parts of Africa, largely due to traditional beliefs and practices. Thousands of Kenyan girls still undergo this painful and dangerous procedure.

*Women participating in VSLA meeting, Kenya. Photo credit: ActionAid*

Makka Wassim, a dynamic group leader of KWN, along with her fellow activists, has been continuously working to eradicate these harmful practices for the past ten years. Despite threats, abuse and backlash, Makka and the KWN have made tireless efforts to shift the thinking of cultural and religious leaders about these harmful practices and demand policy implementation.

In communities where religious leaders are actively speaking out against FGM, cutters have stopped the practice and joined the Network. KWN has a seat at the table with county referral services to ensure cases are monitored and dealt with in a survivor-centred way. At the same time, they continue to advocate, alongside ActionAid for the full and effective implementation countrywide of policies prohibiting FGM.



## Member Spotlights: **PREVENTING GBV**



### **Christian Aid**

Christian Aid Ireland (CAI) has had a highly successful long-standing partnership with local partner SARCAF (Service d'Accompagnement et de Renforcement des Capacités d'Auto promotion de la Femme au Sud- Kivu) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Country Team, focusing on GBV in South Kivu.

The intervention's holistic nature, spanning individual support, community awareness raising, and societal advocacy, reflects CAI's commitment to combating GBV and promoting lasting positive change. The Ecological Framework analysis tool is used to identify GBV root causes and develop prevention and response strategies at individual, relational, community, and societal levels.

At the individual level, CAI supports SARCAF in working with GBV survivors to aid in their recovery by strengthening local referral pathways for psychosocial, medical, and legal services. Survivors receive financial support for accessing these services and livelihood

*Training by SARCAF, Christian Aid Partner of GBV programme participants on income-generating activities, South Kivu, DRC.*

support to enhance their economic independence. 30 Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs), which act as mutual support groups, have been set up independently, demonstrating the cascading impact of this work.

At the community level, SARCAF leads efforts to instigate behavioural change, conducting sensitisation sessions on GBV issues and training local leaders to be agents of change. Testimonies from police stations demonstrated improvements in referral procedures, with one officer noting how SARCAF training enabled him to conduct the medical requisition correctly in coordination with health centre officials. At the societal level, the project establishes links between provincial and national-level Protection and GBV fora as part of an advocacy effort to address women's rights.



## Member Spotlights: **PREVENTING GBV**



**Óglaigh  
na hÉireann**  
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

### **Irish Defence Forces**

In response to a number of high-profile allegations of GBV and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) over the last number of years, namely from the Women of Honour and subsequently the Independent Review Group (IRG), the Irish Defence Forces implemented measures to tackle such behaviours.

One of the early action initiatives was the development of the Sexual Ethics and Respectful Relationships (SERR) workshops. The training material was produced by the Gender Equality and Diversity Officer and Personal Support Staff (PSS), and an initial trial was run at several locations in the Defence Forces.

In 2023 Professor Louise Crowley, University College Cork, strengthened the workshop and developed the Bystander Intervention programme. This initiative aimed to tackle inappropriate behaviour and understand the complex framework of being an ethical bystander in a hierarchical system for people of all ranks and persons in authority.

Professor Crowley delivered the subsequent workshops with the assistance of the Military Champion, attended by approximately 1,000 troops.

Training will continue into 2024, with its long-term effectiveness to be assessed. Full implementation across all Defence Forces personnel will take several years. Initial feedback suggests the training will significantly enhance workplace safety and promote a culture of appropriate behaviour.

*SERR Trainer Professor Louise  
Crowley and Assistant Chief of Staff  
Brigadier General Rossa Mulcahy.*  
Photo credit: **Irish Defence Forces**



## Member Spotlights: **PREVENTING GBV**

**CONCERN**  
worldwide

### Concern

Concern implemented the Graduation model in Malawi (2018-22), aiming to improve the livelihoods, income, self-confidence, and social inclusion of people living in extreme poverty. The programme, which included a gender transformative approach called Umodzi, was evaluated through a Randomised Control Trial (RCT) led by Concern and Trinity Impact Evaluation Unit at Trinity College Dublin.

*Umodzi session for couples in Mangochi.*  
Photo credit: **Justyna Maciejczak, Concern**

The programme was structured into three treatment arms, each receiving a range of inputs. All three arms experienced increases in consumption, food security, and income. However, adding Umodzi sessions to female-targeted households boosted household income, livestock ownership, women's agency, and male mental wellbeing.

This research is the first to examine the gender dynamics of the Graduation model specifically, contributing to the global evidence about what works in reducing Intimate Partner Violence and serving as a catalyst to adapt or expand Concern's approach to the prevention of gender-based violence in future programming.



## Member Spotlights: **PREVENTING GBV**



Community Action Group in Balaka District, Malawi. Photo credit: **Oxfam**



### **Oxfam**

In 2023, Oxfam continued its critical work in gender justice, focusing on challenging and changing the systems and norms that perpetuate gender inequalities. This included ensuring that women and girls have equal rights, opportunities, and a voice in shaping their own lives and communities.

One example of their implementation of this objective was their Building Community Action on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls programme, which included partnering with community protection structures in Malawi to raise awareness of GBV.

Oxfam supported the provision of programme tools such as megaphones and phones for local child protection workers and community gender champions to support their work.

The increase in GBV reports, averaging approximately 20 per month, showed the programme's impact. The programme's success also proved its potential scalability in other communities, which Oxfam is now exploring. In addition, accountable governance initiatives led to a small increase in budget allocation for GBV services to 10%.



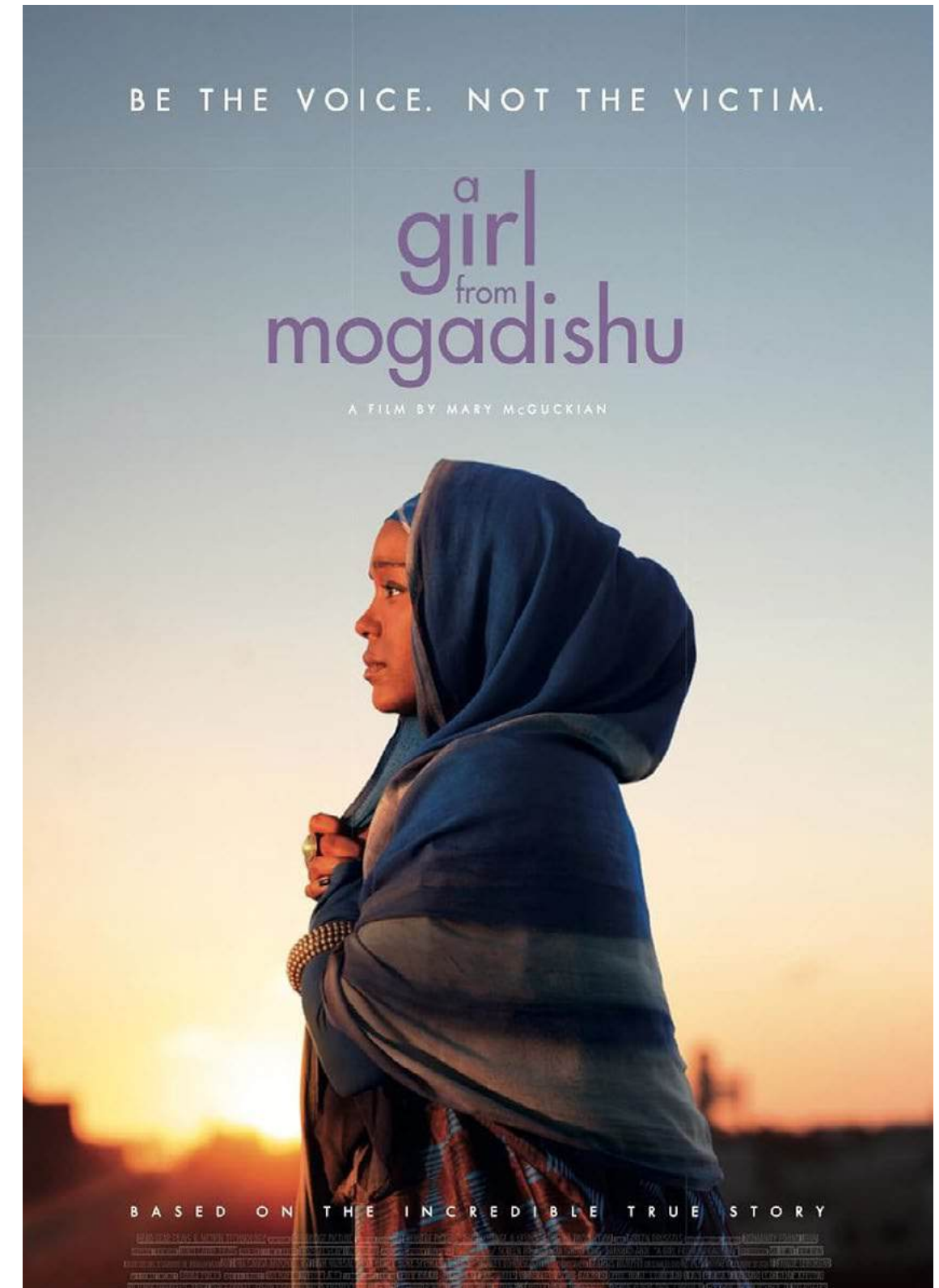
## Strategic Priority 2: Mitigation

### “A Girl from Mogadishu” Film Screening

On September 13<sup>th</sup>, through a partnership with the Irish Global Health Network, Ifrah Foundation, Irish Family Planning Association, and AkiDwA Ireland, the story of Ifrah Ahmed’s experience of GBV and journey from Somalia to seeking refuge in Ireland was recounted in a film screening at the Lighthouse Cinema, Dublin.

In the movie, Ifrah recounts her traumatic childhood experiences of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) when applying for refugee status. This re-traumatises her and pushes her to devote her life to pursuing the eradication of FGM.

The film follows Ifrah on this mission as she emerges as one of the world’s foremost international activists against FGM. A Girl from Mogadishu celebrates Ifrah’s successes and attempts to shine a light on the power of testimony. When women find the courage to stand up, speak out, and tell their truth, the impact can inspire a meaningful catalyst for change. The film was followed by a panel discussion with Ifrah Ahmed (Ifrah Foundation and subject of the film), Dr Caroline Munyi (Migrant Women’s Health Coordinator, AkiDwA) and Alison Spillane (Research and Policy Coordinator, Irish Family Planning Association). With an attendance of over 100 persons, the event was completely sold out and was very successful in highlighting a less-discussed form of GBV – female genital mutilation.



A Girl from Mogadishu film poster.



## Publication: Women's Voices: **Local Women's Voices on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)**

During Ireland's tenure on the UN Security Council (2020-2022) and in its role as co-chair of the Informal Expert Group (IEG) on WPS (with Mexico), the ICGBV supported the Department of Foreign Affairs by hosting 'listening sessions' to gather the experiences of local women and civil society from the countries under review by the Security Council. A summary of each IEG meeting was sent to the UN Secretary-General and published as an official document of the Security Council. The outcomes of the sessions were compiled into a position paper which emphasised: women's participation in all areas of society, intersectionality, regional contextuality, National Action Plans (NAPs) on WPS, GBV service access, food security, investing in localization, and ending impunity. Experiences and recommendations from across eleven listening sessions were compiled into a position paper titled ['Women's Voices: Local Women's Voices on Women, Peace and Security.'](#) published in October 2023, WPS month.

Speaking at the launch, Mary Van Lieshout, Co-Chair of ICGBV, said: 'These sessions provided an excellent platform for local female civil society leaders to give first-hand information on the reality for women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected contexts and allowed Ireland to incorporate grassroots learning into recommendations that were brought to Informal Expert Group meetings at UN Security Council'.

We want to thank the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the UN, Irish Aid and the Department of Foreign Affairs for creating this opportunity and for their ongoing support of the important mission of the ICGBV. A very big thank you to the key authors and contributors of this paper, most especially the women and civil society speakers who shared their lived realities with Jule Zeschky, Áine Hanrahan, Abby Ryan, Jennifer McCarthy, Flynn and the ICGBV members.

## Presentation to **the Oversight Group**

On December 6th, ICGBV Coordinator Róisín Gallagher presented to the Oversight Group on Ireland's 3rd National Action Plan on UNSC1325, the Consortium's Listening Sessions, captured in the above mentioned WPS publication.

Government and civil society members of the Oversight Group were interested in hearing how the listening sessions organised by the ICGBV provided an excellent platform for global women's human rights activists to share first-hand information on the reality of women and girls living in conflict-affected contexts.



*Róisín Gallagher (Coordinator), Nora Owen (former Minister of Justice and Chair of the Oversight Group), and Áine Hanrahan (former ICGBV Policy and Research Officer)".*

## Member Spotlights: **MITIGATING GBV**



*Minister Seán Fleming, Minister of State for Diaspora and International Development, and Maria Munir, CEO AWSAD, in a Safe House in Addis. Photo credit: Irish Aid*



### **Irish Aid**

Irish Aid's support has been essential in the Embassy of Ireland in Ethiopia's efforts against GBV, particularly within the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda.

Significant initiatives involved supporting peacebuilding in the Somali Regional State, building the agency of women ex-combatants, and promoting women's leadership through a Women's Dialogue Space. The Coalition of Women's Voices for National Dialogue gained from their support, ensuring women's roles in national debates.

The embassy assisted GBV survivors in conflict areas through recovery programmes with Unicef, UNFPA, and Trócaire. At the African Union, they advocated for the WPS agenda, mirroring Ireland's commitment to gender equality and peace.

Support to UN Women, in collaboration with the Transitional Justice Working Group of Experts, resulted in a high-level woman-only national consultation on policy options for transitional justice in Ethiopia. Additional consultations were held with survivors of conflict-related SGBV survivors in Tigray and Amhara, informing the development of a comprehensive Transitional Justice Policy.



## Member Spotlights: **MITIGATING GBV**



*A group of school children participate in the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV commemorations. Photo credit: GOAL*



### **GOAL**

In Zimbabwe, GOAL implemented GBV prevention, response, and risk mitigation work through various economic, food security, and livelihood programmes. The Gender Action Learning System (GALS), a community-led participatory approach, addressed the power relationships at the root of inequality and transformed negative and social norms contributing to GBV.

Male engagement initiatives complement the GALS approach, enabling men to discuss issues that may trigger GBV at the community and household levels. GOAL works closely with traditional leaders, community influencers, and government stakeholders to ensure acceptance by local community members.

Mobile awareness campaigns, couple's sessions, positive parenting sessions, and engagement through the arts and sports were key in raising awareness on GBV and the referral pathway in communities.

GOAL and its locally-led NGO partners specialising in GBV support initiatives that challenge harmful norms and values perpetuating GBV. The UPLIFT programme focuses on protection, resulting in efforts to fight GBV and helping communities through response services such as safe shelters and legal, medical, psychosocial, and counselling support.

### **From May 2021 to August 2023, under the UPLIFT programme, GOAL and partners Musasa and Childline:**

- Supported 309 female survivors with shelter support
- Responded to 1,818 physical, 1,730 sexual violence, 1,823 economic and 420 emotional abuse cases, guided by the survivor-centred approach
- Facilitated 1,595 legal services for survivors

Communities have been at the forefront of GOAL's work to address GBV, which includes supporting and empowering them to lead the process of identifying their own challenges and developing their visions and actions to tackle them.



## Member Spotlights: **MITIGATING GBV**



### **Aidlink**

Aidlink works towards gender equality by promoting gender sensitivity and rights-based education. By training students, teachers, and management boards, they foster a child-friendly learning environment and combat harmful practices such as early marriage and FGM. Their community volunteers identify and re-enrol out-of-school children, especially girls and those with disabilities.

*RoC club members, Turkana, Kenya.*  
Photo credit: **Girl Child Network**

The organisation is dedicated to supporting girls' education by providing sanitary products, installing toilets with washrooms, and establishing Rights of Child Clubs that deliver human rights education. These efforts are crucial in addressing harmful practices including beading for girls in Turkana and related early marriage for higher dowries.

The Rights of Child Clubs play a vital role in empowering children to advocate for their rights and spread awareness within their communities, contributing to an increase in girls returning to school.



## Member Spotlights: **MITIGATING GBV**



### **Crois Dhearg na hÉireann Irish Red Cross**

#### **Irish Red Cross**

The Irish Red Cross implements its Protection, Gender, and Inclusion (PGI) integrated approach to tackle the causes, risks, and consequences of violence, discrimination, and exclusion. This strategy integrates essential themes such as GBV, child protection, violence prevention, and disability inclusion. The PGI toolkit included tools for addressing the various impacts of disasters on individuals, focusing on preventing violence, discrimination, and exclusion, alongside guidance on referrals, case monitoring, and management.

*The PGI Centres operated by Bangladesh Red Crescent offer psychosocial support-style activities, such as origami and games sessions, and skills-based programmes, one of which is sewing skills, for young women survivors of GBV. Photo credit: **Irish Red Cross***

Since 2017, the Irish Red Cross has prioritised PGI in the Cox's Bazaar response, deploying specialists to work with the Bangladesh Red Crescent. Initiatives have included awareness campaigns, the provision of dignity kits, the training of female volunteers, the establishment of PGI-focused community centres, and the creation of safe spaces for survivors and at-risk individuals.

The Irish Red Cross' commitment to PGI is further demonstrated by creating a dedicated pool of technical specialists within the Red Cross Surge Roster, marking a key advancement in their humanitarian response.



# Strategic Priority 3: Response

## 16 Days of Activism

On December 7th, as part of the global 16 Days of Activism against GBV campaign, the ICGBV hosted its annual event. The webinar entitled [“Strengthening Survivor-Centred Accountability for GBV”](#) was opened by GOAL CEO Siobhán Walsh and moderated by Paisley Dodds, Investigations Editor for [The New Humanitarian](#).

The panel discussion included esteemed speakers such as Daniel Kettor from the Rainbo Initiative, representing the Irish Working Group on Gender-Based Violence in Sierra Leone, Iheoma Obibi from Alliances for Africa representing Solidarity of African Women Rights, Mary-Louise Lynch from Survivors Informing Services and Institutions (SiSi) Ireland, and Lingalireni Mihowa from Oxfam, representing the Malawi Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence (MICGBV).

The panellists discussed the importance of a survivor-centred approach in GBV advocacy, prevention, and intervention-related work.

Daniel Kettor shared experiences of civil society engagement in updating the 2019 Sexual Violences Act in Sierra Leone. Iheoma Obibi provided a regional perspective under the Maputo Protocol, while Mary-Louise Lynch highlighted the difficulties experienced by survivors in accessing justice in Ireland. Lingalireni Mihowa brought to light survivor-centred accountability under mobile and formal legal systems.

The event was a great success, with over one hundred participants, and furthered the ICGBV thinking in relation to survivor-centred and survivor-led approaches to accountability. The attendees represented a wide range of organisations, including IOM, UN agencies (UNHCR, UNFPA), CARE, IRC, Cordaid, Unicef, Save the Children, USAID, Irish VAW agencies, the European Policy Centre, and the academic sector. Countries represented included the UK, Yemen, Norway, the USA, and various countries across Africa.

## Speakers and Panellists



**Siobhán Walsh**  
CEO, GOAL Global, ICGBV Chair -  
Opening Address



**Paisley Dodds**  
Investigations Editor, The New  
Humanitarian - Moderator



**Daniel Kettor**  
Executive Director, Rainbo Initiative



**Iheoma Obibi**  
Representative, Solidarity for  
African Women's Rights (SOAWR)



**Mary-Louise Lynch**  
Founder, SiSi



**Lingalireni Mihowa**  
Country Director, Oxfam Malawi  
Lead for Gender Justice, Oxfam  
Southern Africa



### Training Event on GBV Monitoring, **Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL)**

From September 19th to 21st, the Consortium hosted a three-day training on Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) in GBV programming. The training took place at McKee Barracks, Dublin, and was facilitated by external consultants Katy Chadwick and Sophie Namy.

20 participants from across member organisations, including those from Nepal, Burundi, and Central America, travelled to Dublin for this energising in-person training, the first since the ending of COVID restrictions.

The participatory training aligned with the latest evidence on best practices, prioritising ethical and safe design and focusing on decolonisation and localisation of MEAL for GBV programming.

The concepts, tools, and approaches were applied directly to fictional case studies to practice and integrate what was discussed in the learning. Participants learned about data-driven strategies for enhancing programming and how MEAL priorities shift regarding GBV programme contexts.

The content applied to both development and humanitarian settings in order to deepen understanding of the core principals for respectful, ethical, safe, and survivor-centred approaches to MEAL for GBV programming.



*MEAL training participants.*

## Translation and Rollout of the Guide on Ethical Storytelling

French and Spanish versions of the [ICGBV's Guide to Ethical Storytelling on GBV](#) were published in April 2023. The ICGBV initially published the Guide to Ethical Storytelling on GBV in 2022, which was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback. The guide was initially released in English, and due to the uptake and interest in ensuring survivors' ownership and safety in communications, it was subsequently translated into [French](#) and [Spanish](#). This extended its reach across international organisations and further increased its global impact. The guide was included as a humanitarian resource by DisasterReady, which contributed to its wide reception.

The guide aims to help organisations discuss GBV in a way that respects and protects those who have experienced violence. It is divided into three sections, each highlighting the relevant phases of storytelling in cases of GBV: Before engaging with a survivor, while engaging with a survivor, and after engaging with a survivor.

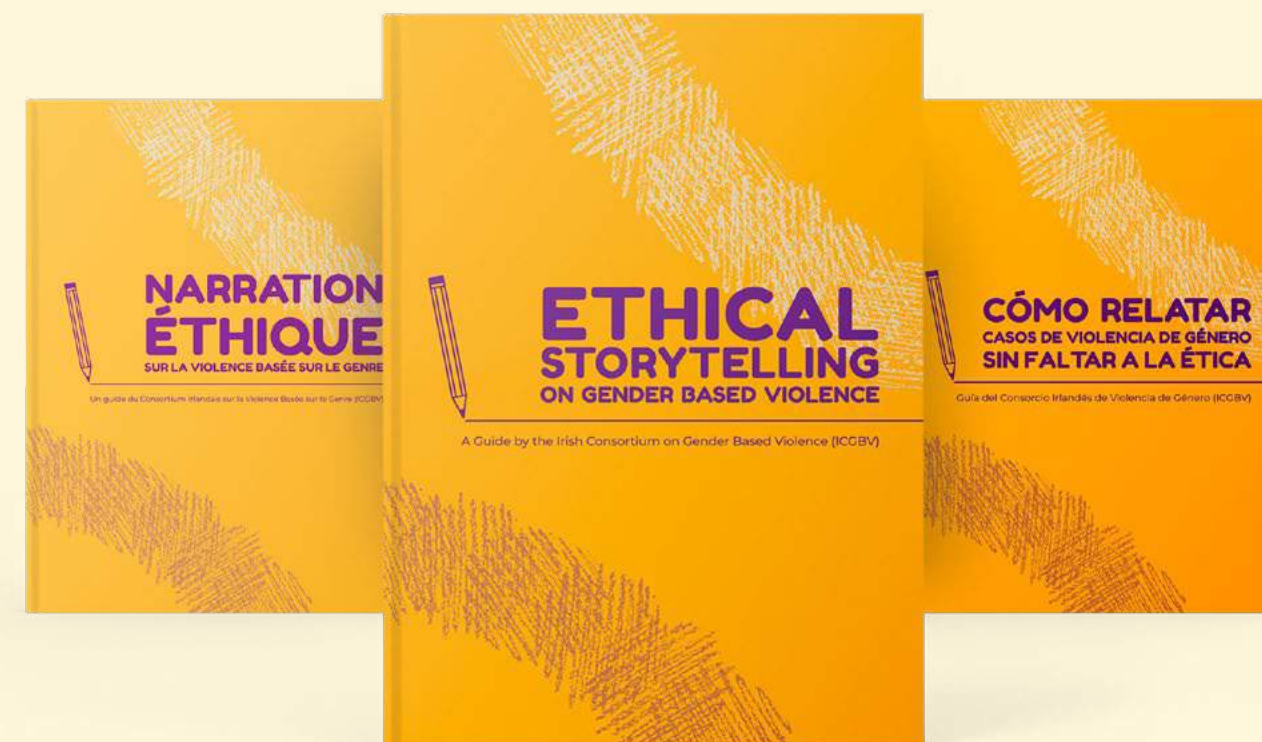
In addition to the guide's publication, the Consortium held an internal event to assist members in using the guide and developing and releasing communication materials on GBV. The session brought together the experiences of ICGBV members and partners who had used the guide, encouraging others to roll it out across their organisations. The session served as a forum for exchanging insights and challenges, including language nuances such as the use of 'victim' and 'survivor'.

The guide continues to be a valuable resource in the field of GBV, promoting respectful, ethical, and safe storytelling.



# ETHICAL STORYTELLING ON GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

A Guide by the Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence (ICGBV)





## Member Spotlights: **RESPONDING TO GBV**



### Plan International

Plan International Ireland continued to be instrumental in their project to respond to and prevent sorcery-accusation-related violence (SARV) in Papua New Guinea, particularly in post-conflict Bougainville.

For decades, Papua New Guinea has seen high levels of SARV. SARV involves violence and harm directed at individuals who are accused of practising sorcery or witchcraft. It stems from a belief that someone has supernatural powers, leading to accusations and subsequent violence. Despite an amendment to the country's criminal code making sorcery-related torture and killings punishable by law and a SARV National Action Plan, SARV remains prevalent today.

With EU funding, Plan International Ireland implemented a two-year project to prevent SARV and provided services for survivors.

Behavioural change within communities tackled the root causes of harmful practices alongside advocacy for the effective implementation and resourcing of the SARV National Action Plan.

This project, the first of its kind in Bougainville, made significant strides in protection and violence reduction:

- Eight Women Human Right Defender groups, comprising 140 women, were established to combat tolerance of SARV and GBV, foster self-worth and increase access to responsive services.
- 12 community-based support groups for men were established to aid dialogue on gender equality and positive masculinity and provide psycho-educational support.
- 157 community leaders and facilitators (43% women) received training in peacebuilding, conflict transformation, trauma and healing, restorative justice, and the SARV Act.

*Celine, 30, is a women's human rights defender, Champion of Change facilitator and role model for other young women in South Bougainville. Photo Credit: Plan International Ireland*



## Member Spotlights: **RESPONDING TO GBV**



### Self Help Africa

In 2023, Self-Help Africa (SHA)'s approach to addressing GBV included gender sensitisation and transformation, and providing economic opportunities for women to reduce their vulnerability to GBV. SHA's work involved educating beneficiaries, staff, and partners about GBV, challenging societal norms that condone GBV, and prioritising women's participation in training and employment opportunities.

SHA provided support to GBV survivors by referring them to counselling services, medical and legal assistance, and other relevant services. They also supported survivors in holding perpetrators accountable by referring them to the appropriate duty bearers and response personnel.

SHA's Family Life Model aims to create gender equality within the home and community by sensitising and mobilising husbands to live equitably with their wives and ensuring equal opportunities for boys and girls. The model also aims to contribute to a higher level of women's and girls' participation and decision-making at both household and community levels.

SHA's programmes have seen an increase in women's voices, choices, and control. Their work in Malawi, in collaboration with the Dedza Gender and Development Office, has led to the formulation of the Chief Wide's Council (CWC) and Gender Action Group (GAC) for Traditional Authority Chauma. After establishing the GAG and CWC, a GBV referral pathway was established for TA Chauma in Dedza, identifying stakeholders and service providers critical in supporting and providing services on GBV.

*Stella Billiat, a participant in GBV programming in Malawi, and her daughter.*  
Photo credit: Self Help Africa.



## Member Spotlights: **RESPONDING TO GBV**



### World Vision

World Vision's work against GBV primarily focused on humanitarian projects, strongly emphasising prevention and response through community-based structures, schools, and specialised services.

Key initiatives included the provision of Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS), which offered a secure environment for survivors and vulnerable women and girls to engage in psychosocial support activities, vocational skills development, and awareness-raising on their rights.

The centres also provided income-generating activities (IGAs), offering business start-up training and kits to women's groups. They facilitated management and referrals for those in need of specialised support.



*Samar\* uses the sewing machine during the vocational training to create clothes. Northwest Syria.*  
Photo Credit: **World Vision Ireland**

Community sensitisation helped with community acceptance, especially working with community leaders to make them aware of the activities and the importance of women having access to safe spaces. Awareness-raising efforts aim to mitigate and ultimately eliminate GBV in the community.

The project ran from 2017-22. In Melut, South Sudan, over 900 women benefited from the IGA groups, and their businesses ranged from selling sorghum and coffee to tailoring. In Syria, the project supported 17,475 women and girls at risk of GBV and GBV survivors to safely access gender protection services.

The contexts in which World Vision works are extremely fragile. Providing spaces for women to gather, interact and heal from their experiences is very important in combatting GBV.



## Member Spotlights: **RESPONDING TO GBV**

# Trócaire

### Trócaire

Trócaire, in partnership with local organisations, delivered specialised GBV programmes and supported women's and girls' voices and influence in all programme countries. Trócaire engaged in two key global initiatives to improve practice within the wider sector, namely:

Women-led organisations (WLOs) were supported in co-leading GBV subcluster coordination mechanisms in Somalia and South Sudan. This initiative, which included Participatory Action Research with those WLOs to document their experiences, resulted in the *Women-Led Organisations: Leadership in GBV Coordination Resource Package*, which has been disseminated globally by the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR), a partner in the initiative.

*Anna Tazita (left), Executive Director of Women For Change, and Yusra Ali (right), Director of Active in Development Aid, pictured during a workshop focused on resource mobilisation. Photo credit: Trócaire*

In partnership with the Global Women's Institute at George Washington University, the GBV AoR, and the IASC (Mental Health and Psychosocial Support) MHPSS Reference Group, consensus-based global guidance in six languages on the provision of MHPSS services to GBV survivors in humanitarian settings was developed for frontline service providers to improve their practice.

The impact of these initiatives has been significant. The MHPSS-GBV Consensus Project resolved areas of divergence, ensuring MHPSS services and interventions are safe and appropriate for GBV survivors. The WLO GBV Leadership Project led to more inclusive cluster coordination mechanisms that reflect local women's and girls' realities and priorities.



## Member Spotlights: **RESPONDING TO GBV**



### **Ifrah Foundation**

Ifrah continued its essential work in Somalia, focusing on building the capacity of community leaders to address Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and GBV and in 2023 introduced the sustainable community-based SASA!<sup>12</sup> Approach.

The SASA! Together model, a proven method to combat GBV, was developed by Raising Voice in Uganda and has been adopted globally. The programme aims to support communities in addressing their most pressing issues.

The Ifrah Foundation, in collaboration with UNFPA Somalia, adapted the SASA! Model to address FGM and GBV in Somalia. Providing the space and tools for communities to address issues they face enhances to programmes sustainability.

Five SASA! community mobilisers were trained in two regions in 2023. They engaged in bi-weekly sessions with community leaders, initiating the START phase of the programme. By the end of 2023, 164 community members had been trained. An assessment of the approach will be conducted in 2024.

<sup>12</sup> "SASA!" means "now" in Kiswahili and is an acronym for the four phases of the approach: Start, Awareness, Support and Action.

*Gathering of community activists during  
SASA! Session in Somalia 2023.  
Photo Credit: Ifrah Foundation*



# GOVERNANCE AND OPERATIONS

## Rotation of Chair

On September 1, 2023, GOAL took on the role of Chair of the ICGBV, with Siobhán Walsh and Mary Van Lieshout leading as Co-Chairs for the following two years. In her inaugural statement, Siobhán Walsh reflected on GOAL's longstanding commitment as a Consortium member, emphasising its contributions to knowledge development, capacity building, and training. Highlighting the need for unwavering collective commitment, she called for sustained leadership to maintain a global focus on GBV.



**Siobhán Walsh,**  
CEO GOAL,  
Chair ICGBV



**Mary Van Lieshout,**  
Deputy CEO GOAL,  
Co-Chair ICGBV

## New ICGBV Coordinator

The ICGBV welcomed Róisín Gallagher as its new Coordinator in November 2023. With over 20 years of humanitarian and development experience, supporting programmes across Africa, Asia & the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, Róisín brings a passion for human rights, social justice and gender equality.

The Consortium would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to the previous Coordinator, Jennifer McCarthy Flynn, and Áine Hanrahan, who filled the Coordinator role from August until December 2023.



**Róisín Gallagher,**  
ICGBV Coordinator

## Steering Committee

Member representatives attended four Steering Committee (SC) meetings in 2023. The SC provides overall leadership for implementing the ICGBV Strategic Plan and governing the Consortium.

## Learning and Practice Group

Member representatives attended three Learning and Practice (L&P) meetings in 2023. The L&P provides operational insight and expertise to achieve the Strategic Plan goals.



## External Committees

The Secretariat represented the ICGBV and contributed to the work of:

- GBV Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR) of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines on GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Settings Reference Group
- DOCHAS (Safeguarding WG)
- The National Observatory on Violence Against Women
- National Steering Committee on Female Genital Mutilation
- Irish Department of Foreign Affairs Committee on Human Rights
- Oversight Group on Women Peace and Security

## Finance

The Consortium continued prudent management of its resources with the support of the host organisations Trócaire from January until September and GOAL from August to December. Core funding is provided through membership fees including Irish Aid funding. The key focus of the financial management strategy is to strengthen its long-term financial sustainability and maintain the two-person staff team to ensure the Consortium delivers on the the ambitious Strategic Plan and Survivor Centred Accountability work. A contingency fund was established to support this as part of the 2023-2024 annual budgeting process.

## Looking Ahead

In line with the ICGBV 2021-2026 Strategic Plan, the Consortium will continue to draw on and elevate the voices, input and priorities of grassroots and women's rights organisations that are women-centred and women-led. Our efforts will be guided by our three Strategic Priorities: **Prevention, Mitigation, and Response.**

Beyond our continued efforts of building a strong alliance of committed GBV responders, we also look forward to furthering our work in research and advocacy in 2024, including advocacy for increased finance to combat GBV. We plan to publish new research on best and emerging initiatives in relation to Survivor-Led Accountability. This initiative will gather evidence of effective practices in GBV prevention, mitigation, and response, which have been survivor-led.

We look forward to a year of increased member collaboration, strengthened learning, and solidarity, towards the advancement of our ambitious mission.



# Irish Consortium on Gender Based Violence

MOVING  
**BEYOND**  
FEAR

**act:onaid**

**Aidlink**

christian  
**aid**

**CONCERN**  
worldwide



Óglaigh  
na hÉireann  
IRISH DEFENCE FORCES

**GOAL**



 **Irish Aid**  
An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs



**Crois Dhearg** na hÉireann  
Irish Red Cross



**OXFAM**  
Ireland



**Self Help**  
**AFRICA**

**trócaire**

**World Vision**  
Ireland