

Irish Consortium
on Gender Based
Violence



From Survivor-Centred to Survivor-Led:

Lessons from Promising Survivor-Led GBV Accountability Initiatives

Lead researcher: Brenda K. Kombo JD, PhD.

With: Rósín Gallagher and Niamh O'Connor McCabe

Presented by Niamh O'Connor McCabe

Background and Purpose of the ICGBV



Formed in 2005 in response to high levels of sexual violence in Darfur, Sudan.

The ICGBV is an alliance of 13 humanitarian and development organisations, including Irish Aid and the Irish Defence Forces.

Sister Consortia in Malawi (2014) and Sierra Leone (2016).

Objectives:

- Increase understanding of GBV
- Ensure high-quality programming and policy responses in humanitarian and development work.
- Build leadership to advance a vision of a world without gender-based violence.

FROM **SURVIVOR-CENTRED** TO SURVIVOR-LED ACCOUNTABILITY



→ United Nations Security Council
Resolution 2467

→ The Committee on the Elimination of
Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

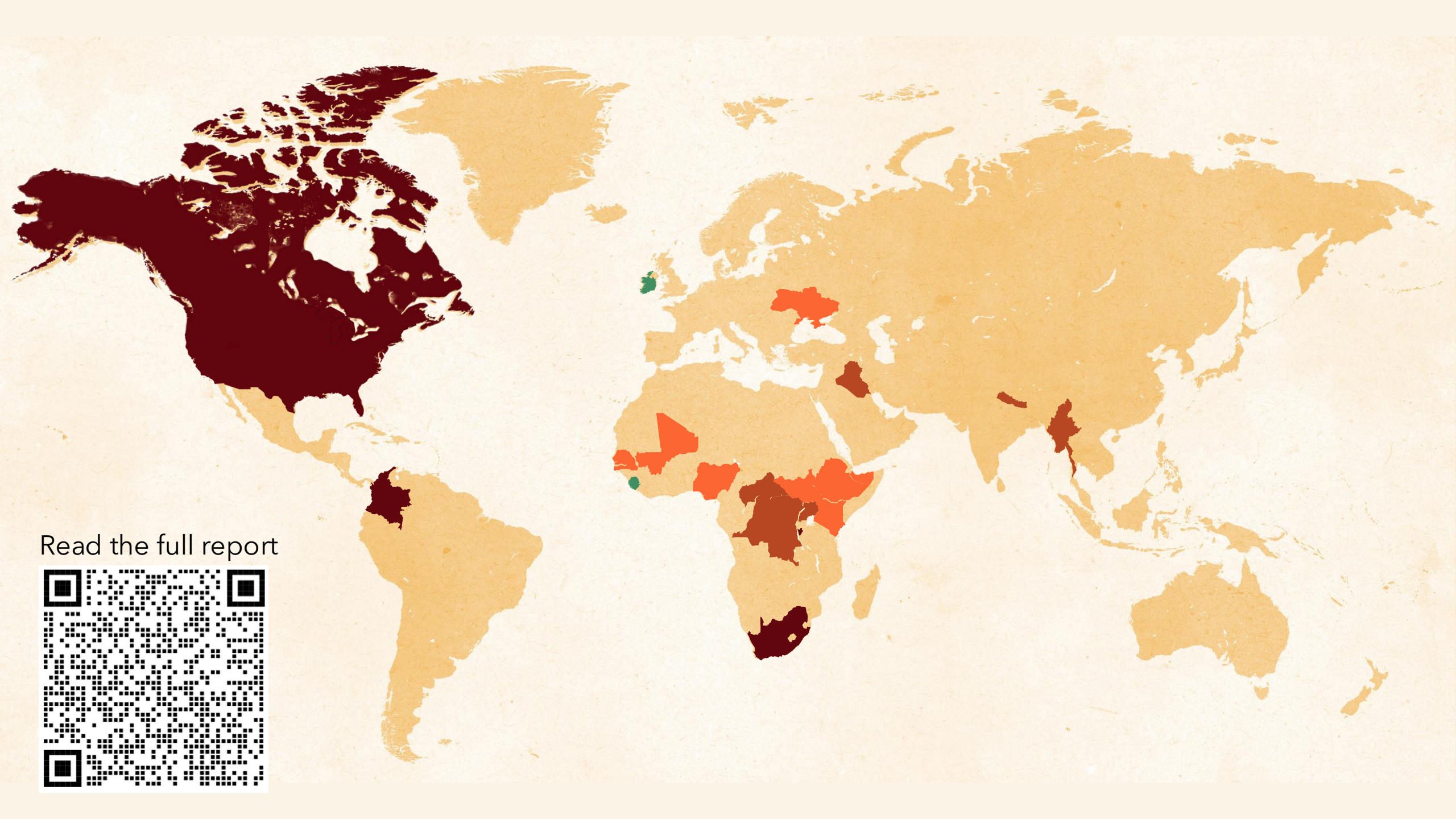


Ambiguity de-centres survivors

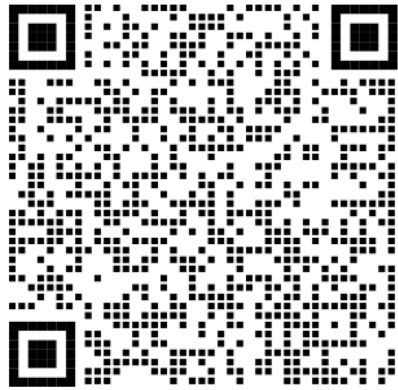
FROM SURVIVOR-CENTRED TO **SURVIVOR-LED** ACCOUNTABILITY

'...**survivor centred** is where we accompany survivor's activism to determine their priorities and agendas [...] To be **survivor led** then, would **mean that survivors are creating these spaces, priorities and decisions completely by themselves.**'

Mukwege Foundation Representative



Read the full report



Findings: Continuum of Survivor Engagement

<i>Initiatives that do not consider survivor experiences or perspectives</i>	<i>Initiatives that acknowledge survivors but do not engage them</i>	<i>Initiatives where survivor input is solicited</i>	<i>Initiatives that are either developed or implemented by survivors but where survivors do not play a lead role in all stages</i>	<i>Survivors lead all the stages of the initiative</i>
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Survivor-blind	Survivor-aware	Survivor-informed	Survivor-centred: survivor-conceived or survivor-implemented	Survivor-led
survivors out	survivors seen	for survivors	with survivors	by survivors

Risks and Challenges

Common challenges:

- trauma
- stigma
- lack of funding
- technical skills
- safety and well-being

Response:

- Healing is central to sustaining leadership

*'We must avoid ... **"trophy survivors"** on occasional high-profile platforms - optics that has little to do with reconfiguring and validating the **real expert power of survivors** from within their own stories.'*

Dolan, Hovil, and Pasquero 2024, 20

Caution of over-burdening survivors



5. Recommendations

Researchers

Co-design, conduct and publish GBV research **with survivors**.

States

Establish survivor-engagement bodies through which survivors inform and are informed about decision

Practitioners

Challenge the power dynamics that prevent, hinder or render survivor-led initiatives invisible.

Sharing the Findings

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act:onaid

Workshop on survivor-centred and survivor-led approaches



CSW69 Event Recording



16Days Webinar Recording

Continuing the Research

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1. Create a working definition of **survivor leadership**
2. Examine how **survivor engagement** is enabled in practice
3. To understand the impact of **funding/cuts** and broader contextual factors
4. Develop Continuum of Survivor Engagement into **a practical self-evaluation tool**



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

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Preliminary Findings

Barriers facing organisations:

1. International Funding Cuts
2. Government Interference
3. Funder concerns

Organisational impact of Survivor Leadership

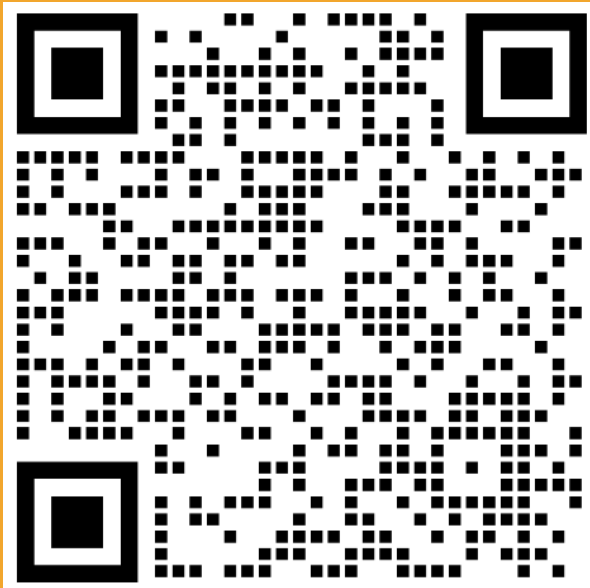
- Greater accountability, credibility and legitimacy
- Better programme design & impact

"Our credibility rests on **lived experience**, not on proximity to it."

"...Survivor-centered practice can be adopted by any institution. Survivor leadership requires it to **share or cede power**."

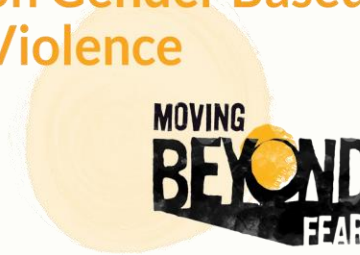
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