

Gender Equality, one decade into the 21st century

Ireland's support to women's empowerment
in the developing world



Photo: Maxwell Photography

Women market traders caught in a downpour, Dedza, Malawi

Gender equality is both a human right and fundamental to sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction.

Yet inequality remains deeply entrenched in every society. While significant gains have been made to empower women worldwide, great challenges remain. Women struggle to find decent employment and often get paid less than men who do the same work. In some countries women and girls are still denied access to basic education and health care. Women in all parts of the world suffer violence and discrimination. They are under-represented in political and economic decision-making processes.

The Irish Government has, for many years, supported initiatives that advance gender equality in the developing world. Irish Aid's 2004 Gender Equality Policy sets out a pathway for the implementation of commitments on gender equality. The policy has **three objectives**:

1. To advance equal rights for men and women

2. To eliminate gender inequalities in access to, control of, and benefit from resources and services

3. To support women's equal participation with men in political and economic decision-making

Irish Aid promotes gender equality by working with a range of different partners and using different strategies:

- > In Irish Aid's nine partner countries, we work directly with the central and local governments on improving gender equality and on supporting strengthened service provision in health care, education, the police, judiciary, etc.
- > We work on gender equality with Irish non-governmental organisations, local NGOs, community- and faith-based groups in developing countries.
- > Irish Aid supports the gender equality work of multilateral organisations such as the European Union and the United Nations.
- > We work with other parts of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade on gender equality. For example, during 2010 we worked with the Conflict Resolution Unit to develop an action plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (see page 3).
- > We work with research institutions and universities to build knowledge and gather evidence to support effective gender equality policies, planning and implementation.
- > Irish Aid works internally on improving its own performance with regard to gender equality through capacity building and training.

Objective 1:

To advance equal rights for men and women

A rights-based approach is fundamental to all of Irish Aid's work on gender equality. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, which was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is an international bill of rights for women. This Convention provides the basis for realising equality between men and women including equal access to political and public life, as well as to education, health care and employment opportunities.

A key focus of Ireland's work under this objective is combating gender-based violence (GBV). While the number of women exposed to violence varies considerably around the world, violence against women remains a universal phenomenon. Women are subjected to different forms of violence, including physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence, with the perpetrators most often being intimate partners.

In 2010, Irish Aid supported partner government responses to GBV both nationally and locally in Uganda, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Ethiopia and Timor Leste. We also supported civil society and multilateral organisations working to combat gender-based violence.

Empowering Asha



The Kivulini Women's Group, supported by Irish Aid, is based in Mwanza Tanzania. Its members receive training on human rights with a focus on domestic violence and also on income generating activities. 35-year old Asha Mohammed (pictured above) joined the group three years ago. Like many of the women in the group, she was poor and suffered physical abuse at the hands of her husband. Asha and her colleagues in the women's group have established a small but successful yoghurt making business.

The 24 members share the monthly profits and Asha's family income has increased significantly since she joined the co-operative. She now takes home 80,000 Shillings per month (€40). In a country with an average annual income of €205 this represents a significant family income.

Irish Joint Consortium on Gender-Based Violence

In 2004 a group of Irish development agencies and Irish Aid discussed how best to respond to the high incidence of rape perpetrated during the conflict in Darfur, Sudan. This led to the establishment of the Irish Joint Consortium on Gender-Based Violence, which now also includes the Irish Defence Forces (regularly deployed as UN Peace Keepers). The aim of the Joint Consortium is to share learning and expertise and strengthen members' capacity to respond to and prevent GBV.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the situation of gender-based violence is shocking. Statistics reveal that about 1,100 cases of sexual violence are documented each month, which amounts to on average 36 victims a day.¹

Asha's husband, a carpenter, initially resisted her involvement in the women's group. The group tries to overcome this resistance by encouraging the involvement of men, building their understanding of gender equality through community discussions, and in doing so they now have the support of the local elders. Asha's husband has become much more positively engaged in family issues and the violence against Asha has stopped. He now advocates against gender-based violence among his male peers in the community. He is also supportive of the family planning methods which Asha has taken up since joining Kivulini.

In 2010 Ireland spent over €3.6 million supporting initiatives to combat gender-based violence in the developing world.



Photo: UNMIT Timor-Leste

Deborah Pata-loane, a member of the all-women Samoan police contingent serving with the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste, faces the media on arrival in Dili.

UN Security Council Resolution 1325

UNSCR 1325, adopted in 2000, marks a watershed in global recognition of the unique and disproportionate impact of conflict on women and girls. The Resolution highlights the critical role of women and girls in conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peace building and state building, and places gender equality at the forefront of the UN Security Council's deliberations on peace and security. UNSCR 1325 also calls for the protection of women and girls from gender-based violence in conflict and fragile situations.

On the 25th of November, 2011, Ireland launched its National Action Plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325. It sets out a range of actions to support the implementation of the Resolution, involving Irish Aid and other parts of the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Irish Defence Forces and An Garda Síochána.

Civil society funding for gender-based violence

Irish Aid supports civil society organisations working on gender equality and responding to gender-based violence.

Trócaire, a recipient of multiannual funds from Irish Aid, supports a range of services, including **shelter and legal aid** for women who have survived gender-based violence, rape, domestic abuse or trafficking, in Cambodia, Sierra Leone, Pakistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador and Kenya.

In Tanzania, Irish Aid has supported the NGO 'Women in Law and Development in Africa' to improve the responsiveness of **gender desks in police stations** across the country. 26% of all police stations now have functioning gender desks and staff have received training on how to attend to GBV cases.

In Sierra Leone, Irish Aid supports the NGO International Rescue Committee to run **sexual assault referral centres**, known as Rainbo Centres. 1,900 clients received free psycho-social, medical and legal services at these centres in 2010.

The Irish Red Cross



Photo: Maxwell Photography

Residents of displaced people's camp Place La Paix, Port au Prince, erected to house thousands of Haitians made homeless by the earthquake that hit in January 2010

Since 2009, Irish Aid's Emergency and Recovery Section has been supporting the Irish Red Cross to put in place a coordinated response to gender-based violence across the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), which operates in 186 countries. The Irish Red Cross now plays a leadership role on GBV responses across the international Red Cross movement. The appointment of a gender-based violence coordinator for Haiti in the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, can be seen as an indicator of the increasing recognition within the IFRC and its national societies, of the need to increase GBV prevention and responses.

Objective 2:

To eliminate gender inequalities in access to, control of, and benefit from resources and services

Irish Aid delivers on this objective by strengthening women's access to improved basic services such as health care and education, and improving women's access to, and control of resources such as land and capital.

In practical terms this involves supporting governments and NGOs to improve basic services so that women can better avail of them. It also includes supporting legislative reform on issues such as women's property rights.

Supporting women farmers



Photo: Danny Rowan

Closing the gender gap could alone lift 100-150 million people out of hunger.²

Agnes Malcom is just one of 1.7 million farmers in Malawi who bought improved seeds and fertiliser in 2009 as part of the Malawian Government's Farm Subsidy Scheme. As a result, Agnes' maize yields have improved significantly; this means she can now afford to send her children to school. This highly successful scheme, supported by Irish Aid, has helped Malawi, once reliant on food aid, to become a net exporter of maize.

Gender and hunger

Increasing women's access to agricultural resources and services is a key part of Ireland's work to address hunger. The Hunger Task Force prioritises increasing smallholder agricultural productivity, especially among female farmers. The 2010 report from Ireland's Hunger Envoy notes increased investment in agriculture within developing countries, but with limited impact on vulnerable smallholders, especially women. The report reiterates the importance of focusing on smallholder farmers, especially women, "both in their capacity as farmers, non-farm income earners and frequently as heads of households."³

Supporting women's role in economic decision-making is another important element of meeting this objective. The 2008 Hunger Task Force Report recommended the strengthening of farmers' organisations, particularly those which actively target poorer farmers and women as members. Irish Aid provides support to a number of NGOs working on women's economic empowerment, including strengthening women's role in decision-making.

Central to Irish Aid's work to combat hunger is addressing undernutrition during pregnancy and during the first 1000 days of an infant's life. This has become an increasing priority both in international advocacy and in Irish Aid's programmes in Malawi, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Zambia and Mozambique.

NGOs are key partners in our work on hunger reduction

In Ethiopia, funding is provided to Farm Africa's "Rural Women's Development Project", a small scale credit and savings project which supports women to set up village savings, lending and assets groups.

The Irish NGO Bóthar received a grant to implement a sustainable livelihoods and women's empowerment programme in Zambia. The project aims to empower poor and disadvantaged women-led farmer groups in Central Province, Zambia.



Photo: Pianos
Bintu Koroma, health worker, examines pregnant woman at Kroo Bay Community Health Centre, Liberia



Photo: Self Help Africa
Muslim girls in classroom, Southern Nations and Nationalities People's Region (SNNPR) in south-central Ethiopia

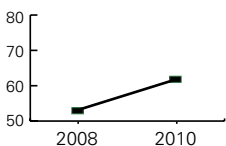
Reducing maternal mortality

The 5th Millennium Development Goal (MDG 5) is to reduce maternal mortality by three quarters by 2015. In many parts of the developing world this goal will not be reached. Sub-Saharan Africa alone recorded 270,000 maternal deaths in 2005, which accounts for half of the world's maternal deaths⁴. The 2011 MDG progress chart indicated no progress on MDG 5 for this region, although individual countries throughout Africa have made some progress in reducing maternal mortality rates.⁵

A woman in a developing country is 97 times more likely to die as a result of pregnancy than a woman in a developed country.⁶

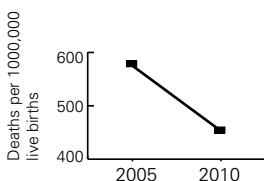
In 2010, Irish Aid supported maternal and reproductive health programmes in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Sierra Leone, contributing to a reduction in maternal mortality.

Contraceptive Acceptance Rate %, Ethiopia



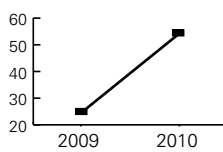
Ireland contributed to Ethiopia's Health MDG Fund which included support for reproductive health. Contraceptive Acceptance Rates in Ethiopia continued to increase between in 2008 and 2010.⁷

Maternal mortality, Tanzania



Ireland has provided support to the Tanzanian Government's Health Basket Fund to strengthen health systems since 2000. This has contributed to improvements in maternal health care. Maternal mortality has declined substantially between 2005 and 2010.⁸

% of deliveries that took place in IRC supported clinic, Kenema, Sierra Leone



Support was also provided to the NGO International Rescue Committee's emergency obstetric and neonatal care programme in the Kenema District of Sierra Leone. As a result of this programme, the estimated percentage of births which took place in the IRC-supported health facilities more than doubled between December 2009 and November 2010.⁹

Gender equality and education

Gains have been made in the school enrolment of girls. While in 1999, the girl:boy ratio was 79:100 in primary schools in Mozambique, that figure went up to 94:100 in 2008. Similar improvements have taken place across southern Africa in the past decade, especially in secondary schools, where improvements were badly needed (see table below).¹⁰

Secondary School Gender Parity Index
(number of girls in school per 100 boys)

Year:	1999	2008
Mozambique	62	75
Uganda	66	85
Zambia	77	83

Gender equality is a key principle of Irish Aid's education programming. In 2010, Irish Aid contributed €25.5 million to the education sectors in Zambia, Lesotho, Uganda and Mozambique. Education is crucial to advancing the rights of women, as research has shown that education empowers women and girls to make decisions that can improve their lives and that of their families. This is reflected in the following statistics:¹¹

- > Every extra year of schooling reduces a young woman's risk of early pregnancy by 10%.
- > In sub-Saharan Africa, investing in the education of girls has the potential to boost agricultural output by 25%.
- > For a girl, each additional year of primary education increases her potential income by 15%.

Objective 3:

To support women's equal participation with men in political and economic decision-making

In order to improve women's political and economic empowerment, Ireland supports initiatives to increase women's representation in democratic processes and in decision-making. Irish Aid also supports women's organisations which advocate for greater participation of women in public life. Supporting civil society organizations working on the economic empowerment of women, is another important component of meeting this objective.

Women candidates in Uganda's elections



A supporter holds up a poster of a female candidate during the 2010 elections, Mbale, Uganda

During 2010, Irish Aid funded the Uganda Women's Network and the Women's Democracy Working Group to conduct training for aspiring female political candidates in the national and local government elections. Of the 2,500 women trained, 2,214 were nominated and 1,546 were successful in getting elected. The number of women parliamentarians in Uganda has increased significantly over the last decade from about 7% of women in Parliament in 2001 to over 30% following the 2011 elections.

Inheritance laws in many African countries can result in women and children facing eviction after the husband and father dies, simply because women cannot inherit family property.¹²

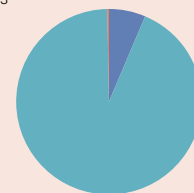
Irish Aid's Civil Society Fund supports organisations working on gender equality and women's empowerment throughout the developing world. In Central America, a project entitled "Central American Women Exercising their Political Rights" aims to strengthen the political participation of marginalized women so that public policies, services and legislation better reflect women's rights. The programme targets elected women councillors and local women's associations in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.



Members of El Salvador's Colectiva Feminista at a protest rally in San Salvador in 2009.

Ireland has been supporting the gender equality programme of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for a number of years. The IPU aims to strengthen the role of women in politics, supporting women in parliament or running for parliament, and strengthening gender mainstreaming in parliaments.

Women's representation in parliaments¹³



- Countries where women dominate parliament (1)
- Countries where men dominate parliament (177)
- Countries with an all male parliament (12)



Michelle Bachelet is UN Women's first Executive Director



Female Afghan MP Fawzia Koofi. Christian Aid partner AWN worked with MPs like Fawzia to make changes to the Shiite Personal Status Law to protect marginalised women and girls.

UN Women

The establishment of UN Women in June 2010 was a landmark event which offers a unique opportunity to accelerate progress towards women's empowerment and gender equality.

Ireland played an active role in the final intergovernmental negotiations to establish UN Women. Ireland advocated that the new agency should hold the UN system to account with regard to international commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment, that UN Women would be inclusive in its consultations with civil society organizations, and that UN Women would be an active agency in countries with an operational UN office.

Women perform 66 percent of the world's work, produce 50 percent of the food, but earn 10 percent of the income and own 1 percent of the property.¹⁴

Christian Aid and the Afghan Women's Network – Influencing the Shiite personal law

Irish Aid provides financial support for Christian Aid's work in Afghanistan, which supports a local organisation called the Afghan Women's Network (AWN). In March 2009, Afghanistan's President Karzai tabled a new Shiite Personal Law in government, which seriously undermined women's rights and women's position in society. By the end of 2010, following an intensive period of lobbying and advocacy, AWN, together with other organisations, had successfully sought the amendment of 72 articles in the Shiite Personal Law.

Some examples of these successes are:

- > Article 94 now states that girls must be at least 16 years and boys 18 years to marry.
- > Article 123 stated that women were not permitted go out of the house without the permission of their husbands – this has now been revised so that women do have the right to go out "for legal purpose" without permission.
- > Article 123 stated that a wife was not permitted to use her personal property without the permission of her husband; this law has now been rescinded.

Notes:

1. Source: United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, <http://monusco.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=4111>
2. Hunger Task Force report 2010: <http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/article.asp?article=1404>
3. FAO, the state of food and agriculture, 2010-2011
4. UN World's Women report launch speech: http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs//2010/101020_DESA.doc.htm
5. Millennium Development Goals- 2011 Progress Chart: <http://unstats.un.org/>
6. "A woman's lifetime risk of maternal death is 1 in 7300 in developed countries versus 1 in 75 in developing countries." World Health Organization, http://www.who.int/making_pregnancy_safer/events/2008/mdg5/factsheet_maternal_mortality.pdf
7. Percentage increase of 53 to 62%, source: Government of Ethiopia. Contraceptive Acceptance Rates is the number of new users who have begun using any method of contraception over the period in question. It's usually per 1000 women aged 14-49yrs. It indicates the rate of EXPANSION in use of contraception.
8. Maternal mortality (deaths per 100,000 live births) declined from 578 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2005 to 454 in 2010, source: Government of Tanzania
9. Source: International Rescue Committee
10. Source: Education Counts Towards the Millennium Development Goals, UNESCO: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001902/190214e.pdf>
11. The figures for 2008 are the most recent available and were produced with the support of Irish Aid to the UNESCO-based Global Monitoring Report.
12. http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/WWW_full%20report_color.pdf
13. Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, www.ipu.org
14. UNICEF, 'Gender Equality – The Big Picture', 2007, <http://icpd2015.org/assets/pdf/Gender%20Equality.pdf>



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<http://www.irishaid.ie/article.asp?article=1832>

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