



Irish Aid

Government of Ireland
Rialtas na hÉireann

Gender Equality Policy

Review Report- Executive Summary.

**By: Sinéad Murray,
Aisling Swaine (consultant)
Áine Doody**

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Executive Summary

1. Introduction

The Irish Aid Gender Equality Policy was published in 2004. It sets out a policy framework for Irish Aid's approach to gender equality and includes strategies and recommended areas of intervention to advance its implementation. The policy's goal is to **"support the achievement of gender equality as an essential component of sustainable human development."**¹ The objectives of the policy are to:

- Advance equal rights for women and men.
- Eliminate gender inequalities in access to, control of and benefit from resources and services.
- Support women's equal participation with men in political and economic decision making.

The policy sets out two strategic approaches for implementing the policy:

- Mainstreaming and
- Direct support to gender equality and women's empowerment programmes

Adopting this twin-track approach, the policy then outlines how these strategies might be applied in policy dialogue, general budget support, sector-wide approaches, area-based programmes, partnerships with civil society organisations, working with multilateral organisations, institutional development and capacity building for partners and within Irish Aid.

This report details the findings of an internal review which took place in 2010 to identify the key challenges and areas of progress in the implementation of the policy with a view to updating it. The review entailed an examination of documentation, consultations with staff and a small number of Civil Society Organisations, and a study of the external environment undertaken by the independent organisation, BRIDGE. Data from a review of Irish Aid's progress towards addressing gender equality undertaken in 2003 provided a baseline against which key areas of progress and continuing challenges were viewed.

2. A Changing Environment

From the outset, it was important for the review team to take cognisance of a number of key issues which have emerged, both internal and external to Irish Aid, since the publication of the Gender Equality Policy in 2004. These include the disproportionate impacts of climate change, increased food and fuel prices, and the global financial crisis on poor women and girls. In addition, there is increasing recognition of the severity of the problem of Gender Based Violence (GBV), particularly in conflict situations. Furthermore, recent reforms of aid delivery, most notably the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action, have provided new opportunities and mechanisms to translate donor and government commitments on gender equality into improved practice. New policy commitments to gender equality are set out in the Irish Government's *White Paper on Irish Aid* (2006). These commitments are reinforced in Ireland's *National Women's Strategy* (2007-2015) and echoed by the Hunger Task Force report of 2008 in which explicit consideration is given to 'women and agriculture'.

All of these issues and developments have had and will continue to have implications for the implementation and achievement of the objectives of the Irish Aid Gender Equality Policy.

¹ DCI (2004) Gender Equality Policy pg 7

3. Findings of the Review:

3.1 Notable Areas of Progress

Gender Mainstreaming: Progress in gender mainstreaming can be seen in strengthened gender analysis in Irish Aid's Country Strategy Papers, cross-sectoral ways of working at Embassy level and strengthened efforts to address mainstreaming with Civil Society and UN partners. Some examples of progress include:

- In Zambia, Irish Aid succeeded in getting cross-cutting issues, including gender equality, back on the education sector agenda.
- In Ethiopia, an Irish Aid supported programme to increase girls' access to education is also expected to positively influence the environment for girls by reducing sexual violence and harassment and promoting a 'girl-friendly' atmosphere.
- In Uganda, Irish Aid supported the Ministry of Lands Housing and Urban Development to mainstream gender and HIVAIDS perspective in the draft land policy. The Ministry now have a draft policy that is gender responsive.
- Within the Mozambique education programme, Irish Aid supported the development of a study to assess the problem of GBV and a Ministry-approved strategy has now been developed in Niassa province.
- In Malawi, Irish Aid is playing a lead role in mainstreaming gender within the development of the sector wide approach for agriculture and the framework for the implementation of the Farm Input Subsidy Programme.

Policy Dialogue at International Level: Irish Aid has increased its engagement in international policy dialogue on gender equality. The HQ Gender Adviser is active in a number of multilateral fora in particular the OECD DAC Gendernet. Irish Aid was especially active on the DAC Gendernet in preparations for the High Level Forum, held in Ghana, Accra in 2008, the outcome of which had a strengthened focus on advancing gender equality. Irish Aid, through the Multilateral Section, has also played an instrumental role in influencing the establishment and structure of the new UN gender entity (See box 15 for more details). Progress in this regard demonstrates how strategic policy dialogue coordinated between the wider Department of Foreign Affairs and Irish Aid can have an impact on advancing gender equality.

Increased Attention and Resources to the Issue of GBV: Irish Aid's membership of the Joint Consortium on GBV has been instrumental in prompting increased institutional attention to the issue of GBV. Funding to GBV increased to €4.7 million in 2008 and nearly all programme countries now address GBV as an integral component of their programme. Irish Aid's work on GBV recognises it as a manifestation of gender inequalities and this approach must be maintained to ensure that work on addressing structural and socio-cultural inequalities, women's rights and gender mainstreaming are not side-lined.

Strengthened approaches to internal gender mainstreaming in Programme Countries: Nearly all programme countries have staff members assigned to gender equality. Team-working as well as leadership, the strategic use of external expertise and strengthened MfDR have been key to progressing gender equality objectives. One of the key challenges for gender advisors has been to balance the direct management of programmes such as a GBV programme with providing support to gender mainstreaming across the programme.

Managing for Development Results (MfDR): The adoption of the 'MfDR' approach by Irish Aid has provided an opportunity for strengthening a focus on gender equality across the organisation. The Zambia programme, in particular, has developed a revised results framework for their country programme which has a strong focus on gender equality results. The Multilateral section plans to develop a results framework for its core funding to UN agencies and the inclusion of gender indicators will greatly improve Irish Aid's monitoring of these bodies. The development of a results framework for the Gender Equality Policy should help advance its implementation across the institution.

Coherence: There has been increased coherence on gender equality between Irish Aid and the wider DFA through units such as the Conflict Resolution Unit and the Human Rights Unit, including in the development of Ireland's National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

The development of institutional positions on priority gender issues such as GBV would be a useful way of strengthening collaboration.

3.2 Continuing Challenges

Understanding Concepts and Approaches to Addressing Gender Inequality: Not all staff members across the organisation fully understand the concepts related to gender equality, empowerment or transformative approaches contained within the Gender Equality Policy and are unsure of how to apply them to their work. While the objectives of the policy remain valid, there has been a tendency to focus on meeting practical gender needs rather than more strategic gender needs. As many of Irish Aid's international CSO partners are engaged in service delivery, many of the projects being supported are addressing practical gender needs in the areas of health, education, access to food etc. Effective gender mainstreaming should ensure that projects/programme are also addressing more strategic gender needs by analysing, and where appropriate addressing unequal access to decision-making processes and resources which underpin inequity and disempowerment e.g. unequal access to land or discriminatory legislation.

Also, the 'twin-track' approach is not set out clearly enough within the policy and needs to be clearly elaborated through training/guidance for staff.

Country Strategy Paper (CSP) Development: In general, gender analysis in the CSPs is stronger now than in 2003 although there is a continuing lack of sex disaggregated data being used to inform analysis. The extent to which this gender analysis informs the development of the country programme varies from country to country. Overall the CSPs could be strengthened by highlighting the intersection of gender with other issues such as vulnerabilities and risk, or with the other cross-cutting issues. Reporting on gender equality in annual reports remains weak and the ongoing work in Zambia on strengthening gender mainstreaming in reporting should provide useful learning in this regard.

Dialogue with Irish Civil Society organisations (CSOs)² on Gender Equality: CSO partners highlighted that any policy dialogue that has taken place with Irish Aid on gender equality has been "sporadic and ad hoc with little advance notice." The only forum where dialogue on gender related issues regularly takes place is within the *Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence*. This forum may, to some degree, have occupied the space that could be available for dialogue on wider gender equality issues. CSOs noted that they are unaware of where, when and how Irish Aid engages in policy dialogue on gender equality at international level and would like more opportunity to comment on the development of national positions.

Institutional Capacity Development: The majority of staff at HQ and in the missions have not received any training on gender equality yet are expected to be competent in gender mainstreaming. The majority consulted were not familiar with the policy. There is a significant need for a longer-term incremental and differentiated approach to roll-out tailored training across the organisation which could form part of the development of an organisational training strategy.

Supporting partners capacity development: There is need to reflect on Irish Aid's engagement and lessons learnt with respect to supporting national women's machineries, including in post-conflict situations.

The Need for Support to Specialised Interventions: The 'twin-track' approach is not set out clearly enough within the policy and needs to be further elaborated. The South Africa programme provides a clear example of this twin-track approach where strong gender analysis resulted in a more holistic gender mainstreaming approach in relation to HIV and AIDS, while at the same time providing a clear rationale for implementing specific initiatives on gender equality and GBV.

Hunger Task Force: There is a need to ensure that the strong focus in the Hunger Task Force Report on the role of women in agriculture is consistently reflected in policy dialogue and programme implementation.

² A consultation was held with a number of CSOs involved in gender equality including Banulucht, Trocaire and Dochas.

Monitoring expenditure on gender equality: Funding for gender equality and women’s empowerment is frequently underreported. There is limited understanding of how and when the cross-cutting codes should be used and no current capacity to implement the DAC gender equality policy marker (beyond the Financial Controller and the Gender Adviser). In the current budgetary context in particular, it will be important that Irish Aid can monitor expenditure on gender equality.

3.3 Summary of the Findings:

Below is a table comparing the key findings of this review with the main shortcomings found in the 2003 review of Irish Aid’s progress towards addressing gender equality. This table shows that there has been some important progress in particular aspects of both institutional and programmatic approaches to advancing gender equality.

Table 1 - Comparing Baseline from 2003 to 2009/2010	
2003 Review	2009-2010 Review
<p><i>Policy:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confusion about ‘gender’ as a concept. Guidelines for NGO cooperation only policy with gender included. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confusion about concepts remains with some staff – particularly in relation to how to apply them to their work. Gender equality increasingly visible in policies, strategies and guidelines; for example CS and E&R section policy and guidelines; the UN Multilateral section agreements with UN agencies.
<p><i>Gender Mainstreaming:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender not mainstreamed well. Tendency for a ‘women as beneficiaries’ approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased attention to ‘mainstreaming’; Embassies have piloted structures to advance mainstreaming; evidence of mainstreaming in implementation of CSPs. Stronger analysis evident but ‘Women as beneficiaries’ approach still used in some CSPs.
<p><i>Budget:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘Women in Development’ (WID) budget line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved coding system in place; problems with applying codes and DAC gender equality policy marker Specific gender equality budget line now in place at HQ.
<p><i>Gender Focal Points:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focal Points at Embassies; Half-time Focal Point HQ. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender advisors/officers/focal points now in all Embassies. Full time gender advisor at HQ.
<p><i>Sharing of Information:</i></p> <p>No ‘knowledge management system’ in place</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More focus on knowledge management across Irish Aid. Intranet established with a gender equality page.
<p><i>Training:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No specific training on gender equality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No training strategy in place. Gender Mainstreaming training in 7 Embassies; One session at headquarters; Funding to DTALK for training on gender mainstreaming and GBV.
<p><i>Multilateral/External Coordination on GE:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited involvement in multilateral fora. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQ Gender Adviser participates actively in OECD/DAC Gendernet and is on its Bureau. Also inputs regularly to other multi-lateral fora
<p><i>Coherence:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No reference to links with wider DFA political work on gender equality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased links with wider DFA departments and inputs by Irish Aid on gender equality to their work streams.

4. Conclusions

Effectiveness: Implementation of the Gender Equality Policy has been challenging. Overall, however, the evidence shows that significant progress has been made in a number of areas, even if the degree of progress has been very variable across Irish Aid. Many of those consulted stressed the importance of leadership to drive policy implementation, sufficient resources and a specific budget line that can be used for strategic aspects of policy implementation at both HQ and Embassy levels. Irish Aid’s approach to gender equality must be transformative by addressing the underlying socio-cultural behavioural and attitudinal norms which uphold discrimination against women and perpetuate gender inequalities. Externally, the new ways of working in accordance with the Aid Effectiveness agenda

provide key challenges and opportunities for implementing Irish Aid's commitments to gender equality.

Relevance: Internally, the Gender Equality Policy remains relevant to Irish Aid and is also clearly relevant to the wider DFA. The White Paper and the Hunger Task Force Report have been two key policy developments which need to be reflected in the implementation of the gender equality policy.

Sustainability: The appointment of gender advisers at Country Programme level and gender focal points as part of the Gender Network at HQ level indicate huge progress and are an essential means through which to institutionalise approaches to policy implementation. Structures and systems being put in place have also strengthened sustainability such as funding guidelines for NGOs. However, these developments will need to be maintained and staff members given the time, support and resources to fulfil the potential of these roles. Externally, the most challenging aspects of sustaining gender mainstreaming is the development of partner capacities. Support to National Women's Machinery requires further analysis and consideration on developing effective strategies for engagement and capacity building.

Impact: Reporting on gender equality is weak. There remains a shortcoming in terms of the availability of information on *impact*. Progress is being made - analysis is getting stronger, baselines are being put in place and further efforts to develop effective results frameworks that contain qualitative gender indicators will make a difference. The evolving MfDR approach is an opportunity to develop a results framework for the policy to measure and provide accountability for policy implementation.

5. Key Recommendations

Below are the key recommendations emerging from the review:

Advancing Implementation of the Gender Equality Policy

1. Maintain the conceptual basis of the Gender Equality Policy but update it to:
 - Reflect changes in the internal and external environment.
 - Become more Irish-Aid specific – include references to specific areas of Irish Aid's work.
 - Address some of the gaps identified through this review.
 - Set out clearly the twin-track approach and provide other relevant frameworks/tools for practical application of the policy by staff members.

Strengthening the results focus of Irish Aid's work on gender equality

2. To enable us to monitor Irish Aid's implementation of the Gender Equality policy, a 'results framework' should be developed which will link policy and practice – this framework could be used as the basis of an annual report for senior management on addressing gender equality in Irish Aid.
3. Gender equality must be more effectively mainstreamed across results frameworks. A more systematic approach to using gender analysis and sex disaggregated data should be incorporated into CSP development. The learning from the Zambia model should be shared more widely across Irish Aid.
4. Guidelines for all CSO funding schemes should be reviewed to ensure that they are coherent with our gender equality policy and strategy. These guidelines should provide guidance on strengthening gender equality results and on developing gender specific and gender disaggregated indicators in log frames.

Policy-engagement

5. In line with strategic priorities and areas of comparative advantage, Irish Aid should prioritise the following areas in its international level policy dialogue;
 - Gender Equality and Hunger.
 - Addressing Gender-based violence
 - Gender Equality and Aid Effectiveness.

Institutional positions on these 3 priority areas should be elaborated in a revised policy.

The gender equality network and the proposed annual reporting mechanism on gender equality should be used to ensure that international level dialogue is informed by field level priorities and evidence.

6. The opportunities reflected through the Hunger Task Force Report (2008) which has a strong focus on 'women in agriculture' must be prioritised:
 - In addition to supporting gender specific projects and programmes through the work of the Hunger Unit, it is also important to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across all Irish Aid responses to hunger. The mapping exercise currently being conducted could provide some important information on "entry points" for hunger and gender equality.
 - Research should be supported in order to better understand the links between hunger, agriculture production and gender inequality.
 - The Hunger Unit is organising training to develop staff capacity to understand the causes and consequences of hunger. This is an excellent opportunity to include a training module on mainstreaming gender in Irish Aid's responses to hunger.
7. Irish Aid should provide the UN Women with financial support consistent with the levels of support on gender equality provided heretofore through the various UN bodies and funds (including UNIFEM and UN-DAW). Engagement on policy should be consistent with priorities proposed in Recommendation 5.

Resourcing

8. Maintain the current allocation of human resources to support implementation of the Gender Equality Policy both at HQ and programme country level. In addition, a JPI should be assigned to the gender portfolio.

The Gender Network has a key role to play in facilitating communication and strengthening accountability and coherence across Irish Aid and all Sections and Programme Countries should be represented, as well as other relevant parts of DFA.

9. The HQ gender budget line should be used to support research, learning, knowledge dissemination and capacity-building on gender equality.
10. The proposed annual report on gender equality should include an analysis of expenditure trends on gender equality, both funding to specific initiatives and gender mainstreaming.

Institutional Capacity Development and knowledge management

11. As part of the development of the Irish Aid training strategy, develop a strategic and clear programme of incremental and differentiated training on gender equality for staff across the organisation, including but not limited to induction processes. Mainstreaming gender equality should be a component of all future training on MfDR.

There is a need for training on the implementation of the Irish Aid coding system to track expenditure on gender equality.

Capacity Development of Partners

12. Capacity Development is a key challenge. In order to support this process Irish Aid should develop a position paper to inform engagement with National Women's Machinerys, including in fragile states. This should include an analysis of the role of UN Women and how Irish Aid can best support the capacity development of NWM's through its support to UN Women. Research conducted to inform the paper should include analysis of international trends alongside learning from Irish Aid's own support to these entities in Timor-Leste, Ethiopia, Tanzania and elsewhere.