Featuring highlights from IRC’s partners working to deliver Women’s Protection and Empowerment programming across the world
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Women and girls in Gedaref state Sudan in a volleyball recreational session
Introduction

This learning brief was created through the Women’s Protection and Empowerment (WPE) Irish Aid-IRC Strategic Partnership which focuses on responding effectively and with accountability to women and girls experiencing gender-based violence (GBV) in humanitarian settings.

The purpose of this learning brief is to share reflections and updates from global and regional Women’s Protection and Empowerment (WPE) learning fora. These fora engage over a hundred members of staff and partners delivering GBV prevention and response programming from across the world each year. Initially, the learning forum only engaged a small group of WPE team members in East Africa but, since 2017, colleagues from more and more countries have attended. In 2022 we reached WPE teams and partners from 45 countries across Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Europe and the United States.
The International Rescue Committee (the IRC) plans to continue to build on the successes of the Irish Aid Strategic Partnership with an increased focus on strengthening our partnership approach with women’s rights organizations and networks. This learning brief is dedicated to our partners, and to sharing learning and reflections on strengthening the IRC’s partnership work. It highlights some of the many organizations working with the IRC to deliver WPE programming across the world. We will be highlighting more partnerships in future learning briefs. As usual, this brief also includes updates on the IRC’s WPE technical innovation and learning work.

Women’s Protection and Empowerment programming is a feminist, women’s rights based, movement-building approach to addressing GBV against women and girls in humanitarian crisis. Only through feminist partnership with community-based groups, organizations and networks led by women and girls, can the IRC successfully advance the protection and empowerment of diverse groups of women and girls across the world.

Within the IRC, the WPE team aims to promote and role model feminist approaches to partnership which respect and resource women-led and women’s rights groups and organizations to address GBV in each crisis. We thank our partners for their continued dedication, patience, and hard work.

Please read our annual Irish Aid funded WPE Learning Brief series from 2019 available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish. Each brief captures innovation and learning from WPE programming across the world.

We are grateful to Irish Aid for their continued support of this Strategic Partnership which began in 2014 and has been extended until 2024. The partnership supports a breadth of critically needed WPE activities. These include:

- acute emergency WPE response funds,
- long-term transformative WPE programming in protracted crisis in East Africa,
- WPE policy and advocacy efforts to keep GBV programming prioritized and funded within the humanitarian system, and
- shared learning between WPE teams in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the United States.
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IDP women and women from the host community work side by side in small income-generating activities (oil extraction) in Burundi
Reflections on feminist partnerships

By Sophia Ngugi, Senior Technical Advisor, Women’s Movement Building and Participation, Violence Prevention and Response Unit, the IRC

Feminist partnerships and localization

Localization is essential to ensuring impact in the communities we work with. There has been an increased call for more “localized” approaches across the humanitarian and development sectors. While the usage of the term “localization” is controversial in its connotation, I will use it here as it’s so commonly used in humanitarian settings. Localization is defined as “a process of recognizing, respecting and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action, to better address the needs of affected populations and to prepare national actors for future humanitarian response”.
There is a general agreement that working with organizations closer to the populations that the project wishes to work in is imperative in getting the contextual understanding correct and decolonizing how we work by collaborating with global south actors. However, the localization process is problematic where the colonial and patriarchal structures of international NGOs (INGOs) are transferred to the local NGOs (LNGOs). The IRC has been working with partners to achieve more feminist approaches to localization. This allows for partnerships that share resources and skills more equitably. Partnership requires awareness of power dynamics with an equal and meaningful partnership mindset.¹

In this write-up, I reflect on the lessons that have been learned, and the key considerations in pursuing feminist and sustainable partnerships when working with women-led and women’s rights organizations.

**Development and sustainability of partnerships**

The IRC’s evidence review, *Partnerships with Grassroots Women-Led Organizations*, outlines several factors that influence the development and sustainability of partnerships between INGOs and grassroots women-led organizations. They include:

**a) Trust and accountability**

Successful partnerships are built on trust and accountability and require complementarity between the INGOs and women-led and women’s rights organizations. The evidence review recognized that each partner has a role to play, that the functions are complementary, and value is placed on all.

b) Capacity strengthening
Capacity sharing is a two-way process, hence the need to challenge the often-colonial approach to localization that “targets” global south organizations as “recipients”. An important aspect of any partnership is the opportunity for shared capacity strengthening and cross-learning. There is value in seeking guidance and appreciating the contextual knowledge that local actors have. This replaces the one-way capacity building that is often the default assumption of INGOs to LNGOs. A two-way capacity assessment of partner organizations allows partners to identify their own needs and request support and resources from partner INGOs, thus making capacity sharing more relevant and responsive. This also applies to other assessments, often conducted at the onset of emergencies or when designing projects, including gender analysis and services mapping, among others.

c) Risk and compliance
The definition of risks needs to be considered. Often the INGOs provide different levels of security provisions to the local NGOs. In other cases, the LNGOs are hindered from implementing programs that they deem fit and safe to “reduce risks”. The acceptance of the LNGOs and, thus, security risks, could be different from that of the INGOs.

d) Funding
The evidence review states, “There is strong evidence showing that supporting autonomous women's rights movements is the most significant factor in successfully recognizing and addressing GBV at the national level”. Funding that considers not only the programmatic but also operational costs for organizations is an essential factor in sustainability. Furthermore, if we are to ensure equitable access to resources and opportunities it is important to consider how funding and resources are shared.

Reflections and lessons learned in promoting feminist partnerships
The IRC has committed to working with partners and challenging the power dynamics between us and the organizations we partner with. At the IRC’s Violence Prevention and Response Unit, we are implementing many projects that aim to not only partner, but to do so with a feminist approach. Having been involved in some of these projects myself, here are my reflections on what we have learned.

What has worked to promote a feminist way of partnering?
a) Shared principles and ways of working
Jointly agreeing on principles, ways of working, and the decision-making process at the beginning of a partnership facilitates ownership and provides a reference for ongoing engagement and regular review.

For example, in two of our projects, Building Local Thinking Global and Listen Up!, we held start-up meetings with partners to define principles and ways of working. Together, we defined the feminist guiding principles that all coalition members signed. These remained important references, and the project team regularly reviewed how we were adhering to them.
b) Co-design and shared ownership

The design stage is often the most challenging as we often engage in processes that are time-sensitive, so we do not always engage potential partners. We have discovered that having a joint process of developing the theory of change during a project’s start-up ensures more successful shared ownership.

Examples of useful participatory aspects in projects include setting up steering committees, ensuring some activities are led by partners, and co-developing resources with partners.

Shared ownership also means sharing credit and acknowledgment, thus valuing the contribution of the partners. One example of this is a paper on feminist practice in humanitarian settings that was co-authored by IRC staff and partner organizations. In addition, ensuring equality in visibility is important. For example, including the organizations’ logos in alphabetical order in materials such as PowerPoint slides can be a small but impactful way of supporting equitable partnership.

c) Strategic engagements and relationship building

It is critical for the INGO to have the right mindset to enable meaningful partnerships and a practical environment to support longer-term engagements (including the intent to review and address policy and structural barriers). It takes time to build collaboration – and often

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**Examples of feminist partnership principles from our Building Local Thinking Global and Listen Up! projects included:**

- **A common foundation**
  We are driven by feminism and activism and place these at the center of our partnership.

- **Transformation**
  We work together to shift power and resources to local organizations to lead action in emergencies.

- **Independence**
  We respect the autonomy and perspective of each member.

- **Transparency**
  We are honest and open in our communications with each other.

- **Mutual accountability**
  We are accountable to women and girls. We deliver on our commitments to each other and contribute to collective action.

- **Ownership and sustainability**
  We consider all members as equal owners, each with a voice and a role to play in determining our direction and priorities.

- **Curiosity**
  We seek to learn, capture best practice, adapt our approaches, and evolve our work.

- **Solidarity**
  We are fueled by our commitment to end injustice and violence against women and girls.

- **Influence**
  We demand that women and girls participate in humanitarian funding, strategies, and policies.
the duration of a project does not allow for this. Building relationships allows for more informed engagements, but it is impossible to achieve this when there is an urgency of project design collaboration. Strategic discussions with organizations that we plan to partner with, without the pressure of specific deadlines, have proved helpful in facilitating better engagements for project design. When we build relationships with partners, we have a better chance to develop shared understanding which, in turn, facilitates other opportunities.

d) Funding and resources linked to capacity sharing
Funding is an important aspect of a partnership. It requires support and recognition of technical expertise and operational challenges, thus sharing resources in ways that are not exploitative to the LNGOs. Having support for the operational aspects of an organization supports sustainability beyond specific projects. Support for funding for the uptake of the skills, models and tools ensures that the tools go beyond development to implementation.

e) Movement-building and peer-to-peer learning
Where there are multiple partners working on the same project, there are opportunities for cross-learning and furthering movement-building around areas of shared interest. This further supports ongoing learning where staff from different organizations engage beyond the life of the project. Aspects such as technical leaders’ communities of practice and peer-to-peer learning need to be factored into the project design and implementation. Where flexibility of the design allows for learning and adapting during emergencies, more responsive programming is supported.

Key considerations for feminist partnerships
As we seek to not only partner, but to partner better, I suggest we consider three key questions:

1. Should we be partnering?
There are several different factors to consider before deciding on a partnership. While convenience is not a reason to hinder partnership working, thoughtful engagement is required to ensure all stakeholders are fully involved. Where the partnership is not feasible, reflecting on hindering factors and seeking to address them will support future partnerships. There may be some instances where, for example, budget or time considerations may not allow for meaningful engagement. Checking our systems to ensure that the partnership is productive for both the IRC and partners is critical.

The amount of funding for the design of a project has been a hindrance in some instances where a partnership would have been ideal. In some project designs that I was engaged in, ensuring that funding was sufficient for the project implementation was a challenge, but support from the senior leadership helped to address the gaps and allowed for the project design. It is therefore possible that a project design may not be partnership friendly. Exploring solutions for this during the design stage helps to ensure the project is implemented in a way that does not cause more harm.
2. Would it be better for us to get out of the way?

Often, we jump into partnership opportunities with local organizations but, before we do, we should always ask, “What value will the IRC add to this opportunity?”

Some opportunities may be ideal for local organizations or organizations with less complex structures to lead, in which case the IRC needs to step away and allow those organizations to directly access funding.

3. Do we need to check our commitment and practice to decolonizing aid?

By checking our commitments and practice to decolonizing aid, we can reflect honestly on how we partner and structure the power dynamics with partners. Linked to this is the assumption that the IRC should have the prime opportunities, thus not challenging our way of working that supports decolonizing aid. An example of this would be the IRC being a sub to a local or national organization, not just an international organization. Doing this requires that we explore the value that we add and the roles within a partnership relationship while being intentional about resources that go to partners.

Conclusion

As we seek to work in partnership more often, there is a need for continuous reflection and adjustment as we keep learning. We are not only seeking to engage with more organizations, but also to be an organization of choice for CSO partners. An article by Leila Beiling on feminist partnerships outlines several challenges that, as an organization seeking to partner more, we need to keep checking ourselves against. These include a lack of inclusion and transparency, imposing INGO strictures onto LNGOs, power imbalances, partnerships that do not develop organically but are forced by donor requirements, technocratic approaches to partnership that hinder relationship building, and extractive practices. While we keep learning, we have a great opportunity to promote feminist ways of working in partnerships.
WPE Technical Innovation Updates 2022

This section features innovation and learning updates from the IRC’s Violence Prevention and Response Unit Technical Innovation and Learning teams. These teams advance WPE programming, learning and good practice in collaboration with IRC’s WPE country program teams and partners. The IRC provides technical support to other organizations who are interested in implementing the approaches outlined below, and the existing approaches on the GBV responder’s website. For further information, email VPRUmailbox@rescue.org.
Introducing the **Safe at Home** resource package

The **Safe at Home resource package** is the first program approach developed for humanitarian settings aiming to prevent and respond to co-occurring intimate partner violence and child maltreatment. The approach builds from the IRC’s existing programming models, *Engaging Men through Accountable Practice* (EMAP) and *Families Make a Difference*.

The curricula, which were piloted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Myanmar, and Tanzania, combine knowledge-building, critical reflection and dialogue, and skill-building approaches to address power inequity within the home and improve power balance and sharing within the family. Participants engage in separate same-sex discussion groups over 18 weeks for women and 24 weeks for men. The women’s and men’s curricula are complemented by a family curriculum where couples meet once a month (twice with their children) for five months to build critical relationship skills such as developing a vision and goals for their family, supporting joint financial decision-making, improving communication, establishing family rules, and improving joint decision-making on family planning.

The curricula aim to:

- unpack men’s power and privilege,
- support reflection on the consequences of violence against women and children,
- reduce barriers to accessing response services,
- deepen couples’ understanding of child development while building positive discipline

**Get to know the Safe at Home resource package**

- Module 1: Safe at Home at a glance
- Module 2: Women’s, men’s and family curricula and co-occurrence response guidance
- Module 3: Inclusion curricula
- Module 4: Safe at Home learning

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**PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT:**

**Gender Violence Recovery Centre**

The Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) is a non-profit making, non-partisan charitable trust of the Nairobi Women's Hospital (NWH) in Kenya. GVRC strives to bring back meaning to the lives of survivors of GBV through free survivor-centred medical treatment and psychosocial support.

GVRC implements an integrated GBV response model that is informed by the needs of survivors. Currently, they are supporting Kenyan government health facilities to adopt their model, as it is cost effective and safe for GBV survivors.

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skills and empathetic communication strategies, and

- engage participants on valuing girls, understanding the intergenerational cycle of violence, and reflecting on family reputation.

Results of the pilot impact evaluation from 200 couples in the DRC show a significant decline in co-occurring IPV and child maltreatment, and significant reductions in the likelihood of women experiencing IPV. Female participants are 86% less likely to report physical IPV, 74% less likely to report sexual IPV, and 80% less likely to report emotional IPV when compared to women on the waitlist. The program also saw a significant increase in gender equitable attitudes and power-sharing among couples, an improvement in positive parenting techniques, a decrease in the acceptance of harsh discipline, and a decline in child maltreatment.

The Safe at Home resource includes:

1. Women’s, men’s, and family curricula.

2. Short inclusion-focused modules to address the stigma and discrimination facing women and girls with disabilities, older women, and intimate partner violence (IPV).

3. Response guidance for the collaboration between GBV and child protection case workers to support cases of co-occurring violence.

4. Guidance on how to better serve older women through case management practice.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT: Rehabilitation and Development Organization

Rehabilitation and Development Organization (RaDO) is an Ethiopian NGO working in disability, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and GBV.

RaDO runs a women’s center, creates GBV awareness within the community, and engages community structures for outreach activities. RaDO also engages public structures to mitigate the risk of GBV and link survivors with response services. In all RaDO interventions, a survivor-centred, multi-sector approach is adopted.
Expanding the *Engaging Men Through Accountable Practice* (EMAP) framework

The IRC and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are working in partnership to expand the reach of the *Engaging Men through Accountable Practice* (EMAP) to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls approach. It is the IRC’s flagship GBV prevention approach. With the launch of UNHCR’s GBV strategy in 2020 and an increased focus on prevention, UNHCR and the IRC have been partnering to deliver EMAP Training of Trainers (ToTs) to UNHCR staff and partners across Asia, the Americas, Africa and the Middle East.

Due to COVID-related restrictions, the training is offered as an online course. It consists of four hours of live sessions per week for eight weeks and includes interviews with GBV experts, short animated videos to explain key concepts, and presentations on EMAP core content and tools. Live sessions allow participants to practice teaching back content to peers, and ToTs participants who complete online sessions and assignments are invited to participate in a certification process. Four cohorts of participants will take part in the ToTs in 2022. The partnership is generously supported by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM).
**Child and Adolescent Survivors Initiative (CASI) learning program**

The Child and Adolescent Survivors Initiative (CASI) learning program aims to strengthen the technical capacity and leadership of child protection and GBV actors in humanitarian settings. Its objective is to meet the diverse and specific needs of child survivors of sexual abuse in South Sudan, Yemen, and Nigeria.

The group coaching, which took place online from 2020 to 2022, covered themes such as the intersection of child sexual abuse and early and forced marriage, caring for child survivors of sexual abuse with disabilities, psychosocial support for child survivors of sexual abuse, working with non-offending caregivers to support child survivors of sexual abuse in their healing, and caring for boy survivors of sexual abuse. In-person refresher training was provided in Nigeria and Yemen.

**PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:**

**Child Protection and Peer Learning Initiative**

Child Protection and Peer Learning Initiative (CPPLI) is a women-led organization in Northeast Nigeria. CPPLI implements projects to prevent and respond to GBV and empowers women and girls through GBV case management. Through the CP and GBV Working Group in Northeast Nigeria, CPPLI collaborated with different local government offices to enact laws to prevent GBV and adopt a child rights act and violence against person prohibition (VAPP) policy in Adamawa state.

CPPLI was selected to be a partner of the CASI learning program, which allowed the organization to help strengthen the technical capacity and leadership of child protection and GBV actors and meet the needs of child survivors of sexual abuse in Nigeria.
In total, the CASI learning program engaged 75 child protection and GBV supervisors and managers who went on to train 137 caseworkers, as well as community-based organizations and community leaders.

The CASI learning program also strengthened the institutional capacity of the following child-focused and women-led local organizations in South Sudan, Yemen, and Nigeria:

- Universal Intervention and Development Organization (UNIDOR),
- Active Youth Agency (AYA),
- Royal Heritage Health Foundation (RHHF),
- Child Protection and Peer Learning Initiative (CPPLI),
- Yemen Women Union (YWU), and
- Sustainable Development Foundation (SDF).

Each organization received a sub-award of $30,000, as well as training and support in monitoring and evaluation, safeguarding, and financial reporting. The organizations used their sub-awards to offer Caring for Child Survivors of Sexual Abuse (CCS) training to their caseworkers, community-based organizations, and other service providers, and provide case management services to nearly 1,800 children over three months.

The CASI learning program:

- strengthened the knowledge and skills of caseworkers and supervisors – and adjusted their beliefs and attitudes – so they could provide quality care to child survivors of sexual abuse,
- increased confidence in providing case management services to the child survivors of sexual abuse, and
- strengthened local technical expertise and leadership in South Sudan, Yemen, and Nigeria.

The CASI learning program participants developed five role-play videos in English, French, and Arabic – these can be found on Kaya. In addition, the CCS Guidelines are currently being updated with learning from CASI and will be available in 2023.
Digital literacy for women and girls

Digital literacy training allows women and girls to pursue their potential. Its benefits include empowerment, access to information, job opportunities, and gender equality. Information and communications technologies provide a platform for women and girls to actualize and share their talents. These platforms impact their choices, power, and security by providing tools that can break their existing constraints on movement, social contact and agency.

Evidence suggests that a gendered approach to digital literacy is needed, because patriarchal socio-economic and cultural barriers often prevent women from accessing digital technologies. With a gender-responsive, trauma-informed and safety-prioritizing approach to digital literacy, we can support women and girls to exercise their rights and access resilience-building information. The curriculum is available in Arabic, Burmese, English, French and Spanish. It is a great opportunity for country programs with digital inclusion, digital skills, or other related funding opportunities.
Adapting the *Girl Shine* approach to prevent and respond to early marriage

Through the *Early Marriage in Crisis* project, the IRC strengthened the original Girl Shine program model to prevent and respond to early marriage. The *Girl Shine* approach now includes additional life skills content for girls who are married, divorced or have children, as well as those who are at risk of early marriage.

In the WPE Learning Forum 2022, Meghana Kulkarni, interim adolescent girls specialist, spoke about how new life skills content could be facilitated for both married girls and girls at risk of marriage in separate sessions. She said, “Married girls and unmarried girls have different lived experiences, therefore the content delivered to each of these groups will differ. For example, facilitators or mentors will share information on prevention and consequences of early marriage with unmarried girls, whereas this material may be alienating to married girls. In particular, sessions discussing sexual wellbeing should be approached with care.”

Lillian Najjuka, prevention officer with WPE Uganda, explained how communication and trust between girls and their caregivers had improved as a result of the intervention. She said, “After this intervention, the WPE team noticed vast improvements in relationships, especially between mothers-in-law and adolescent girls. Mothers-in-law are now encouraging adolescent girls to visit the Women and Girls Safe Space and interact with other girls of their age.”
The GBV Minimum Standards project

The IRC is currently implementing a new project to promote The Inter Agency GBV Minimum Standards as part of the global rollout led by the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility (GBV AoR). This project aims to build the capacity of national GBV-focused organizations. It aims to leverage existing coordination mechanisms and networks to engage diverse GBV actors to use the GBV AoR's Minimum Standards.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:
Forum for Women in Development, Democracy and Justice

Forum for Women in Development, Democracy and Justice (FODDAJ) is a women's rights organization in Kenya that focuses on GBV prevention and response, advocacy, legal aid, and humanitarian response.

FODDAJ implemented an IRC-funded program that built the capacities of women's groups and created movement to advocate for GBV prevention and response. The focus of their capacity-building activities included strengthening internal structures of organizations for improved GBV program delivery, case management, referral pathways, clinical care of GBV survivors, and community engagement through partnership, networking, and coordination.

IRC Women's Protection and Empowerment (WPE) Learning Brief
The GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS)

Primero is a cloud-based information management system designed to support GBV and child protection service providers to securely collect, store, manage, and share data on case management and incident monitoring. Primero houses different modules, including the GBVIMS+ (a digital enhancement of the paper based GBVIMS) and CPIMS+ (the Child Protection Information Management System). In 2021, an upgraded version (version 2) of Primero was released to include additional case management support tools, enhanced features, and a more user-friendly interface.

In 2022 the IRC rolled out the first-ever joint instance of Primero GBVIMS+ and CPIMS+ in Colombia, and additional rollouts are planned for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico. IRC Yemen, North-East Syria, Jordan and Tanzania WPE teams launched Primero GBVIMS+ version 2 in 2021/2 and IRC country programs currently using GBVIMS+ version 1 will shift to version 2 in the coming months, including Lebanon, Iraq and Bangladesh. The IRC has also joined interagency Primero roll outs in South Sudan.

Innovation with health actors: In 2021, the IRC and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), through the GBVIMS Steering Committee, undertook a series of formative learning exercises to determine what the common challenges were and begin a meaningful discussion on addressing these gaps. Through a literature review, systems
analysis, and key informant interviews, key trends were identified. These indicated that the clinical management of rape and intimate partner violence survivors was consistently perceived as lacking adequate means to collect, manage, store, and share data in humanitarian settings. They also identified that the confidential storage of survivors’ information is generally not well executed. On top of this, they found that innovative and thoughtful digital system design and functionalities could improve the quality of care and survivor-centeredness of services, while strengthening opportunities for evidence generation.

Consultations also indicated that improved digital health systems would strengthen the continuum of care for survivors between health services and psychosocial support services. While the digitization of patient records would be advantageous for security, data quality and efficiency alone, an information system could play a significant role in delivering functionalities that actively support the provision of quality services and easing the burden of work and responsibility for health care providers as regards information management. The IRC is currently in discussions with UNFPA to access follow-up funding for the digital tool development.

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT: Save Somali Women and Children

Save Somali Women and Children (SSWC) is a women-led and women-centred organization striving to create safe and sustainable communities by supporting women to overcome marginalization, violence, and poverty. SSWC believes that women are central to transforming their own lives and the lives of the communities and populations of which they are part.

SSWC implements GBV prevention and response services and operates a shelter for women and girls in Benadir Mogadishu. This safe space offers women and girls psychosocial and basic emotional support, as well as the opportunity to learn new skills so they can become more self-reliant and empowered.
PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT: PROINCO Foundation

The PROINCO Foundation is dedicated to promoting the rights of women and children in Colombia. In partnership with IRC, PROINCO has strengthened services to protect women from violence during migration.

PROINCO’s initiatives include the empowerment of support networks among women, the promotion of rights, and the implementation of strategies to prevent GBV as well as community-based activities supporting women's interests and capacities.

PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT: Crown The Woman

Crown The Woman - South Sudan (CREW) is a women-founded and women-led nonprofit, non-governmental, non-political, humanitarian and national grassroots organization. It aims to empower girls and women and ensure they are able to harness their potential.

This photo captures one of the CREW psychosocial support activities called “the web of sisterhood” which encourages women to be each other’s sister’s keeper to reduce violence against women and girls collectively.

Working in partnership with the IRC and Irish Aid, CREW is delivering a project called Responding to GBV in acute emergency protracted humanitarian crises in Juba Way Station. Activities include group-based psychosocial support and GBV case management in an established women and girls’ safe space. CREW also delivers community engagement activities to prevent GBV, delivers information on the GBV referral pathway, and provides legal advice to GBV survivors.
PARTNERSHIP SPOTLIGHT: Humane-Aid for Community Organization

Humane-Aid for Community Organization (HACO) is a non-governmental organization in South Sudan that works on issues including education, general protection, health, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), GBV, food security and livelihoods.

In partnership with the IRC, HACO has been implementing a WPE project in Mangaten Internally Displaced People’s camp. Project activities include stakeholder training on human rights and protection topics, legal awareness sessions and referrals to courts and leadership training.

HACO also engages in GBV coordination forums and safe space activities like skill-building, basic individual counselling, and information dissemination. They use the radio to engage in media advocacy work on human rights, patriarchal dominance, and harmful cultural practices that fuel gender-based violence in the society.

Angelina Nyawika Gadtet during a feedback session with HACO staff.
Adolescent girls in South Sudan after a Girl Shine life skills session where they received dignity kits. 2021 Photo: Glory Makena/IRC
Recommendations

The following recommendations have been captured and shared with the aim of strengthening feminist partnership approaches within WPE and GBV programming:
1. Understand the barriers already outlined by women-led and women’s rights organizations which limit resourcing and participation in humanitarian response.

2. Acknowledge and work to transform existing power dynamics, bias and inequality within humanitarian funding structures and ways of working which privilege INGOs.

3. Build trust and accountability by explicitly recognizing the value and expertise of women-led and women’s rights organizations and creating space within GBV coordination groups and programming for women-led and women’s rights organizations to lead.

4. At the start of a partnership, jointly agree on principles, ways of working, and the decision-making process to guide the partnership.

5. Establish mechanisms to promote mutual accountability to these partnership principles and ways of working.

6. Design early and with enough time for dialogue and strategizing outside of any donor-driven deadlines or single funding opportunities.

7. Contextualize the GBV Minimum Standards and programming approaches to be responsive to the existing services and systems of women-led and women’s rights organizations.

8. Ensure co-design and shared ownership of GBV programming theories of change, proposals and budgets.

9. Share funding equitably to ensure adequate funding for women-led and women’s rights organizations to deliver GBV programming, including both operational and programmatic costs.
Strengthen relationships with women-led and women’s rights organizations as well as their access to pooled funding and the wider donor community – and support them in independent fundraising.

Step back from funding opportunities to create space for women-led and women’s rights organizations to apply directly and to prime.

Redefine capacity strengthening as capacity sharing to promote a two-way exchange of knowledge and expertise.

Implement due diligence assessments and requirements that are two-way, mutually executed and that promote the long-term growth and autonomy of women-led and women’s rights organizations.

Use inclusion resources to partner with women-led and women’s rights organizations who specialize in disability, older age, LGBTQI rights, and child protection sectors to improve the inclusion of diverse women and girls in GBV programming.

Ensure visibility for partners and promote shared ownership of resources and products with all partner logos included equally.
The International Rescue Committee (IRC) helps people affected by humanitarian crises—including the climate crisis—to survive, recover and rebuild their lives. Founded at the call of Albert Einstein in 1933, the IRC is now at work in over 40 crisis-affected countries as well as communities throughout Europe and the Americas. We deliver lasting impact by providing health care, helping children learn, and empowering individuals and communities to become self-reliant, always seeking to address the inequalities facing women and girls.

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