IRC Women's Protection and Empowerment (WPE) Learning Brief

Irish Aid Strategic Partnership 2019

Contents

INTRODUCTION

This learning brief was created through the Women's Protection and Empowerment (WPE) Irish Aid-IRC Strategic Partnership.[1] The purpose of the brief is to share learning from a global WPE forum which explored three themes of **inclusion, accountability** and **adaptability** in relation to Gender Based Violence (GBV) prevention and response programming in acute and protracted emergencies.

The Irish Aid and International Rescue Committee (IRC) Strategic Partnership is a responsive, transformative GBV standard-setting approach that supports Ireland's commitments to protect women and girls in acute emergencies and protracted, forgotten crises. This strategic partnership brings together multi-level, mutually reinforcing, transformative action across five pillars:

• GBV Emergency Response

• GBV Response, Preparedness and Recovery

• GBV Policy & Advocacy

• GBV Learning; and a final crosscutting support pillar

• Coordination, Management and Quality Assurance

From 2014 to 2018, the Irish Aid IRC Strategic Partnership has funded GBV interventions in 18 emergency responses across six regions[2]; sustained IRC and local partners GBV response in underfunded and forgotten crisis in the Horn and East Africa; leveraged Ireland's and IRC's leadership in global and regional fora to champion attention to women and girls protection and empowerment; and created opportunities for frontline practitioners to share learning on Women and Girls' Protection and Empowerment.

Each year from 2014, the Strategic Partnership has promoted technical excellence through south-to-south learning. Initially the learning forum was focused in East Africa, but more countries have attended each year, until in 2019 **the learning forum brought together 50 WPE staff from across 27 country program, global and regional hubs.**
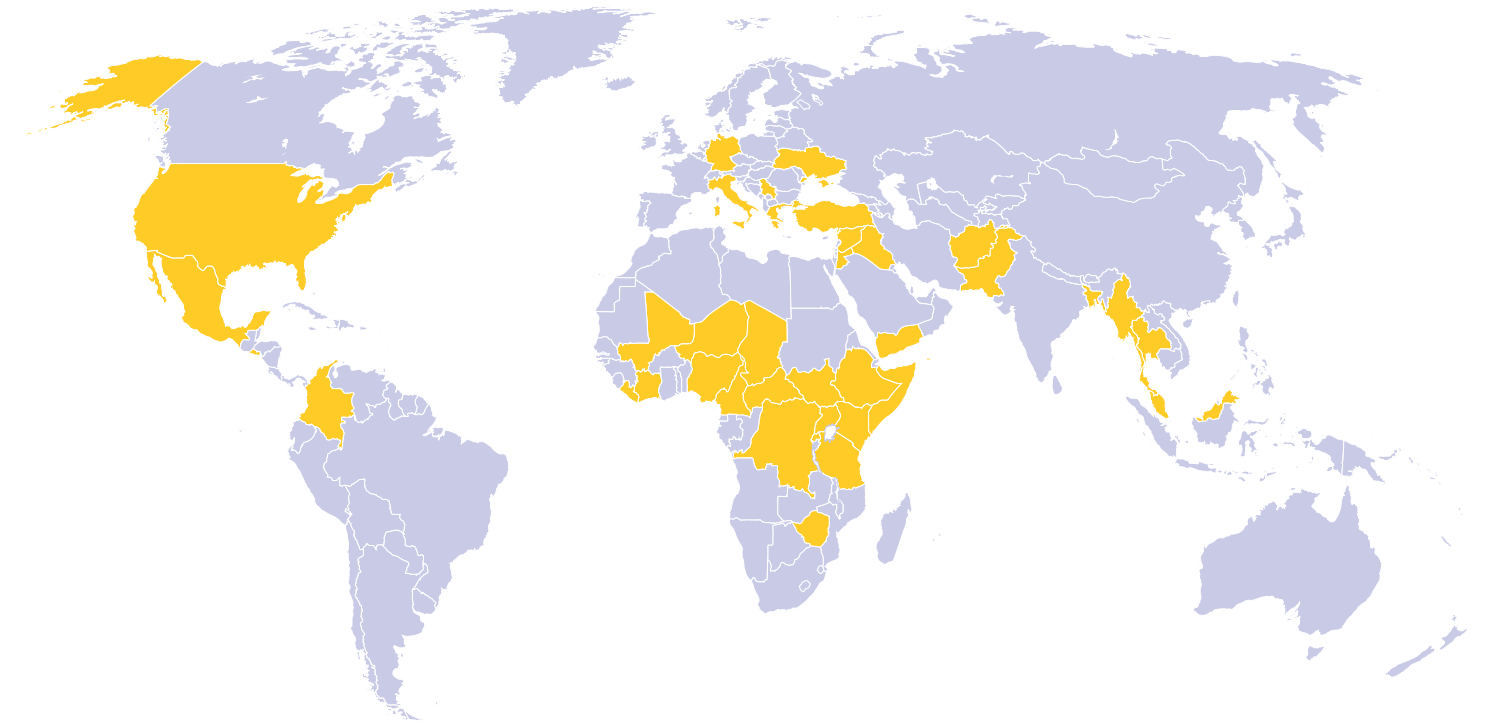
The IRC's WPE team has a global presence responding to violence against women and girls in over 30 acute, protracted and recovery humanitarian crisis across the world.[3]

Each year, new evidence-based, field tested guidance and approaches addressing GBV in emergencies and innovative solutions to programming challenges are created by IRC across the world. The Irish Aid WPE Annual Learning Forum provides a space for WPE program staff from across the world to share new initiatives, evidence, and good practice and exchange learning based on innovation and adaptation on the front lines of humanitarian response.

This learning brief documents insights shared and generated at the Learning Forum from IRC's global WPE team around the themes of **inclusion of diverse women and girls; accountability to women and girls; and adaptive, context driven programming.** We introduce this learning brief by sharing insights on the successes and challenges encountered when creating a collective space for feminist exchange and learning.

PROCESS: Creating a global learning space

We opened the workshop with everyone sharing what kept them fuelled in their work. Solidar-ity, hope for change, passion and support from each other were key themes. We kept the tri-angles up as bunting for the week to remind us to refuel and build each other up.

The Learning Forum brought together a diverse group of women and men engaged in leadership of WPE programming from across the world. Participation in this global learning space was funded by country program donors, and the Irish Aid Strategic Partnership funded the development, translation, supplies and co-facilitation of the event.

"The Forum created a space where women of color felt comfortable to connect and discuss issues together."

- Participant feedback

Nicole Behnam, Senior Director Violence Prevention and Response Technical Unit at the IRC opened the workshop sharing her vision for WPE feminist movement building, innovation and technical excellence, and appreciation for the hard work of WPE teams worldwide

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Building psychological safety

The Violence Prevention and Response Unit[4] is home to WPE technical advisors, specialists, advocates and emergency response coordinators, and promotes the values of trust, collaboration, vision, commitment, integrity, creativity and respect. These values underpinned the WPE Learning Forum and continue to be promoted as critical components of women's movement building in our personal and professional lives. Creating psychological safety[5] and building trust and solidarity allows us to work authentically and reach the potential of our movement together.

"Being with the other WPE team members, learning from them and knowing we are all facing the same struggle and not alone."

- Participant feedback

Creating an inclusive environment

We created a shared learning space by taking into consideration the accessibility of the venue and different language needs. After an initial assessment, we provided simultaneous translation in French to support everyone's meaningful participation. We also named - and committed to proactively address throughout the workshop - the entrenched and harmful power dynamics often replicated between global south and north, female and male, national and international, and junior and senior staff. We committed through community agreements to create a safe space, promote each other's voices, and create space by stepping back and stepping up.

We also encouraged one another to have courageous conversations so we could address challenging topics and make best use of our collective power to problem solve. The workshop aimed to consciously promote local expertise and leadership and address racism, sexism, and other intersecting inequalities in our discussion of program learning.

Community Agreements supported the creation of a safe space through mutual support, collective ownership, active listening, fun, making new friends, and respect.

"The Learning Forum was a safe space to discuss about challenges, lessons learned and best practices. Most importantly, it was a platform to connect with WPE colleagues worldwide ."

- Participant feedback

Shared priority setting, shared learning

The collective learning space was first created by engaging over 30 WPE country program teams in advance of the workshop to prioritise learning forum topics. We also asked participants to share guidance on the kind of learning space they wanted. WPE team members voted to prioritise the following topics:

WPE global strategic priorities (15), Mobile and Remote GBV Service Delivery (10), PSEA and the role of GBV actors (10), Women Rise GBV Psychosocial Support Toolkit (9), Women's Economic Empowerment (9), Women and Girl Safe Spaces (8), Girl Shine (8), GBV Blended Curriculum (8), GBV Emergency Response Inclusion of Diverse W&Gs Guidance (7), Feminist approaches to partnership and women's movement building (7), Primero GBVIMS+ (6) and the IRC's Outcome Evidence Framework (5).

Participants shared they wished the learning space to be feminist, mutually supportive, impactful, creative, fun, informative, a space to share successes as well as challenges, and visionary.

A group of WPE technical advisors then prepared an agenda which included these topics and goals, and invited global and country program-based WPE colleagues to co-facilitate each session to bring local and global learning together.

Listening to feedback

Feedback was actively solicited from participants in multiple ways throughout the Forum. Each day country program focal points were available to share feedback in-person, and online anonymous feedback and suggestion boxes were available throughout. An evaluation was completed by participants, and the feedback analysed and shared to inform future forums. Evenings were unstructured, and we closed early on Wednesday to allow for some Bangkok fun!

Participant feedback from the workshop highlighted as valuable the solidarity and joint learning amongst WPE country programs and global team members; and time to strategize together, share challenges, and learn about global resources. Participants also requested that in future forums we dive more deeply into feminist leadership approaches; have fewer topics to allow for deeper discussion; and provide more space for sharing from country programs. There was also concern that leadership of the learning forum had been dominated by headquarters staff (who are largely white and from the global north).

Participants valued applying an intersectional lens in WPE programming to learn how to effectively reach diverse women and girls. They also suggested increased attention to race and inequality not only in programs, but also in our own organizations and systems. The planning of future learning forums will take into consideration all of this feedback and improve the participation of country program teams in planning and taking the lead in the forum.

"I loved meeting with our colleagues - the vast majority for the first time - and putting faces and stories to our work."

- Participant feedback

LEARNING THEMES

The Irish Aid WPE Strategic Partnership learning themes include: **inclusion** of diverse women and girls, **adaptable** WPE programming, and **accountability** to women and girls within GBV prevention and response programming. These themes were addressed within multiple sessions across the 5 days of the learning forum. Here we gather some reflections from the forum on each theme. The material collected here was selected based on participant feedback on the workshop, which documented learning that participants said resonated and felt useful for their WPE programming moving forward.

INCLUSION of Diverse Women and Girls

The inclusion of diverse women and girls in Women's Protection and Empowerment programming has a long history within the IRC. Over the last five years the IRC developed guidance and invested in program innovation, learning and research to advance **the inclusion of younger and older adolescent girls** within WPE programming. This initiative adapted women and girl safe space activities, GBV case management and response services to be accessible and responsive to the unique needs of adolescent girls.

The Girl Shine Program Model and Resource Package captures this learning and has been extensively rolled out as a WPE global priority from 2017. This effort

was welcomed enthusiastically by country program teams and communities and has resulted in increased numbers of adolescent girls accessing GBV response services and improved outcomes for adolescent girls in humanitarian crisis across the world.

"Intersectionality is a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power"

- Kimberlé Crenshaw, Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color (1994)

Mehreen Jaswal, Marian Rogers, Anita Monger and Rosemary Ogunjobi share program learning and research from 5 years of WPE adolescent girl programming.

Harriet Kezaabu, WPE Uganda and Stefania Chirizzi, WPE Lebanon share learning from the Girl Shine Early Marriage in Crisis formative research.

The IRC is currently strengthening the proactive engagement of diverse adolescent girls through an ongoing project which addresses early marriage in crisis[6]. The project will be informed by qualitative formative studies in Uganda and Lebanon which actively sought out diverse girls to ensure their experiences and ideas were visible and recognised. Girls from refugee populations at risk of marriage, recently married, and divorced girls are a priority for inclusion given the intersecting forms of oppression they face due to socio-economic class, legal status, and gender and age inequality. Additionally the project will provide an opportunity to strengthen inclusion of other diverse girls, such as girls with disabilities, and diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. The project will develop training tools for facilitators and staff overseeing Girl Shine as well as service providers that will unpack attitudes, beliefs, positionality, power and privilege and how this impacts diverse girls' safety and participation. The project will also aim to strengthen representation of diverse girls in the Girl Shine life skills curricula.

In addition, the IRC's Women Rise Psychosocial Support Toolkit[7],currently under development, has actively sought to encourage thinking on the needs of diverse women in psychosocial support programming. The Women Rise toolkit names and uses a feminist, intersectional lens to guide how we recognize and

address the barriers diverse women face when accessing psychosocial support. This frame will support the project to create safe spaces where solidarity and emotional well-being can occur for diverse women. The Women Rise project recognizes the role psychosocial support activities take in building solidarity among women and developing empowerment of both individual women and groups of women.

Ensuring the inclusion of diverse women in psychosocial activities is not only imperative for their ability to access support, but also for their voices to be incorporated into larger feminist movements focused on addressing liberation and dismantling patriarchy. The project has actively sought learning from other projects within IRC, particularly the Women and Girls Safe Spaces Toolkit and Building Local, Thinking Global to build on the learning that has taken place in these projects. The Women Rise Toolkit seeks to allow teams to contextualize psychosocial support groups and activities in a manner that best creates group cohesion and psychological safety in a particular context. Women Rise also recognizes that dedicated action needs to take place to ensure both cohesion and psychological safety are possible for diverse women in these spaces to support their full participation.

During the WPE learning forum, many WPE country programs shared details of their ongoing investment to proactively engage **women and girls with disabilities or women who are older** in WPE program activities. Other WPE country programs shared how different languages are utilised in women and girls' safe spaces and community activism to ensure access by diverse women and girls and the wider community, and how different cultural and religious events are celebrated in safe spaces to **promote religious tolerance and inclusion**.

WPE teams shared their cross-movement-building work with **disability and LGBTQI movements** to learn how to improve accessibility and shift staff attitudes and awareness on homophobia and transphobia. WPE teams reflected on how important it is to hire WPE staff, community volunteers and activists that are as reflective as possible of diversity in age, race, ethnicity, social-economic background, and disability. Other teams shared thoughtful efforts to establish and sustain a diverse makeup of Women Action Groups and WGSS leadership committees who advise and guide WPE programs.
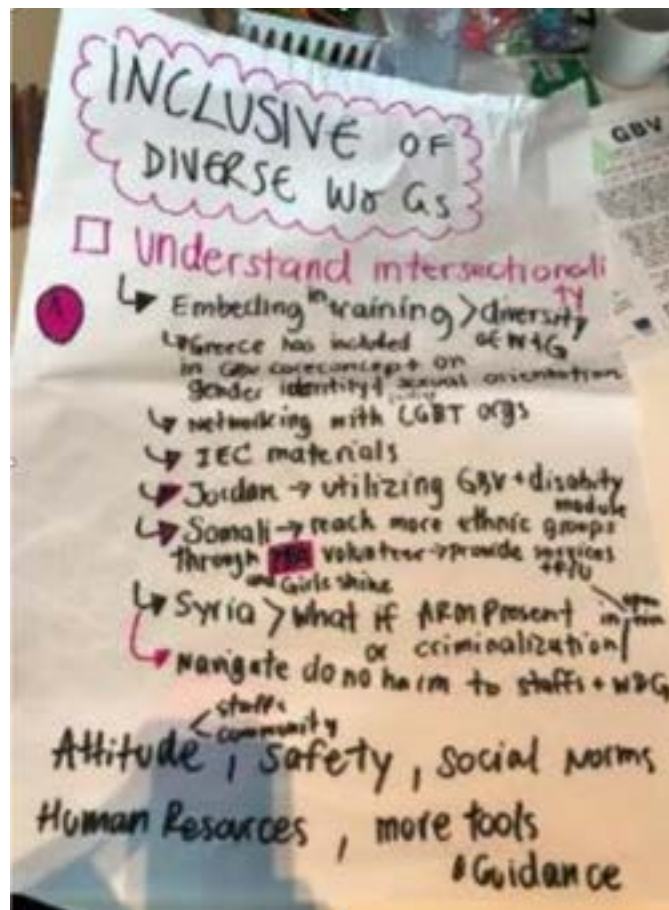
Jennate Eoomkham, Emergency Preparedness Specialist speaks about the intersections of age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, and religion.

"Diverse women and girls are present in every humanitarian context. GBV actors should always seek to understand women and girls in all of their diversity, and take action to ensure that GBV programming is inclusive and addresses the needs, barriers and risks that diverse women and girls are facing. Diverse women and girls face multiple forms of oppression which further reduce their power, choice and protection from GBV, and increase their barriers to accessing services. Some displaced and host community women will also be advantaged and protected by their social status, and GBV actors need to ensure they are not only serving privileged adult women in the community who come from higher class/socio-economic status; are educated, heterosexual, able bodied, cisgender, or HIV-; or are affiliated with the majority ethnicities or religions."

- IRC GBV Emergency Response and Preparedness Inclusion Guidance Note 2019 https://gbvresponders.org/emergency-response-preparedness/emergency-response/

In the Learning Forum discussions, it was also recognised that discussing with WPE teams how inclusive we are being in our GBV prevention and response programming requires **adopting an attitude of learning and self-reflection.** Some participants reflected concern that intersectionality can be misinterpreted to mean only a focus on engaging women and girls with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities. It was recognised that further collective work is needed to ensure WPE promotes attention to all types of inequality, which increases risks and barriers experienced by diverse, marginalised women and girls, including barriers and risks caused by homophobia and transphobia.

"I was so impressed when colleagues stepped out of their comfort zones to speak out as allies in support of work to include all of us. "

- Participant feedback

How to safely engage diverse women and girls in an inclusive and supportive way without placing marginalised women and girls at further risk, requires thoughtful reflection, as well as collaboration with marginalised groups of women and girls in each context. In this way, WPE programs can learn how in each context risk factors, legal rights and cultural constraints are different and adapt inclusion strategies accordingly. This journey of inclusion changes over time as diverse women and girls participate in and take up leadership roles in WPE programming.

As women and girls transform internalised harmful attitudes towards marginalised groups **a stronger, more diverse women's movement is created** and sustained. It further requires continuous self-reflection among WPE team members and orientation of new staff to enhance values clarification and transforming attitudes that are supportive of inclusive women's movement building. The forum discussion acknowledged that we all come to this work with the best of intentions and strong training and skills as well as our own unconscious biases and unrecognized

"GBV-specialized programming focuses on women and girls due to structural and systemic gender inequality and discrimination that lead to their documented higher risk of GBV, and their lack of safe and equitable access to humanitarian assistance. Women and girls experience multiple forms of GBV and face many additional barriers to accessing services and recovering from GBV due to systemic gender inequality and other forms of intersectional discrimination."

Centring women and girls in GBV prevention and response, page vii, Interagency GBV Minimum Standards, GBVAOR 2019

privilege, the latter of which need to be systematically addressed and recognized both on the individual and team levels.

Participants also expressed concern about how "inclusion" has often been framed as or focused on the inclusion of adult men or boys within women and girls' safe spaces and WPE programming, instead of on overcoming barriers to proactively include marginalised women and girls. During the Learning Forum, a session was held which promoted the importance of partnering with child protection, protection, and health actors to meet the needs of child survivors, adolescent and adult male survivors of sexual violence and support their recovery. WPE teams were reassured that being centred on women and girls in GBV programming remains the approach of the IRC and wider GBV sector (as outlined in the new Interagency GBV Minimum Standards[8]).

Guidance was shared from the Building Local Thinking Global (BLTG) Initiative[9] on how women's rights movements across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia have applied an intersectional lens to their VAWG work[10]. Inclusion guidance for GBV actors based on the **expertise of global south women's movements** was shared to encourage WPE colleagues to connect with local women's movements who may already be promoting inclusion and have valuable insights and approaches informed by a deep understanding of the local context. Learning was shared about how to **avoid using gender neutral language** to explore intersectionality, such as "people with disabilities", "older people", or "LGBTQI populations" which makes women and girls invisible.

"Effective and accountable GBV programming must pay attention to diverse and intersecting forms of structural oppression, discrimination and inequality that women and girls experience in a given context. Although all women and girls face discrimination in the context of global patriarchy, not all women and girls experience oppression and inequality in the same ways. Multiple inequalities may shape their risks and experiences of GBV. . . In practical terms, applying an intersectional lens means engaging community members and, in particular, diverse women and girls, from the onset of a crisis, to identify, analyse and determine strategies to address intersecting forms of structural oppression that exacerbate the risk of GBV, and create barriers to accessing GBV response services, and meaningful and safe inclusion and participation."

Applying an intersectional approach to GBV programming, page vii, Interagency GBV Minimum Standards, GBVAOR 2019

We also discussed how male dominance can easily be replicated within these movements making it essential that WGSS and wider GBV programming is accessible to diverse women and girls. Learning was shared about how WPE can **champion other social justice movements** and specialised services and spaces for women and girls with disabilities, women and girls with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities (SOGI) and women who are older, and also embrace inclusion of diverse women and girls within our own programming.

The newly released Interagency GBV Minimum Standards reflect the concern that **GBV programs must be proactive in removing barriers or fail to fulfil the GBV Guiding Principle of Non-Discrimination**, as well as broader humanitarian values and principles, which require targeted action to support the inclusion of all women and girls in GBV programming. The BLTG Inclusion guidance note supports GBV actors to consider key actions

to promote the inclusion of diverse women and girls. With support from the IRC VPRU's Risk Mitigation and Inclusion Advisor, Ricardo Pla Cordero, the BLTG guidance outlines **a rights-based approach to inclusion** and has adapted learning from disability approaches to strengthen barrier analysis and risk mitigation within WPE programming.

> *"Our own personal work on recognizing our privilege and bias because of our own identity and experience is critical to our success. "*
>
> - Participant feedback

In another session on feminist leadership and intersectionality, we created a safe space for authentic discussion through an individual **personal reflection** activity from Raising Voices which supported participants to reflect on how different parts of their identity may privilege or disadvantage them[11]. Then in small groups participants explored **how intersectionality can inform feminist leadership**. Some women within the WPE Learning Forum felt comfortable enough to share personal experiences of discrimination. Groups discussed how feminist leaders and allies who experience privilege based on race, class, sexual orientation, gender identity and so on, can create safety and solidarity by breaking the silence on racism, classism, religious intolerance, homophobia, transphobia and ageism, and by committing to ongoing learning to ensure we all promote inclusion of diverse women and girls within our programming and teams.

Small group discussion of how intersectional inequality can be promoted by inclusive, reflective feminist leadership

> *"I enjoyed the emphasis on solidarity which was modelled and practiced throughout the week. "*
>
> - Participant feedback

ACCOUNTABILITY to Women and Girls

Accountability to women and girls was a strong theme across many sessions at the WPE learning forum. The IRC's wider commitments to advancing client responsiveness and gender equality are at the heart of WPE program approaches.

Promoting displaced women and girls' programmatic leadership, decision making, feedback and voice within WPE programming was explored in the forum as a critical element of: women and girl safe spaces; feminist approaches to prevention of Violence against Women and Girls, and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse; research; and women's movement building.

Women and Girl Safe Spaces have been newly recognised as one of the core standards of GBV programming in the GBV Minimum Standards. This will reinforce the critical importance and transformative purpose of these spaces which act as a counter-cultural space where women's and adolescent girls' physical and emotional safety is respected within a larger, unequal humanitarian system.

In WGSS, women and adolescent girls are supported to recognize their own agency and power for change (power within), their power to organize themselves to articulate the changes they want to make (power to), and collectively transform the systems that oppress them (power with). Compounded by the absence of global guidance and with each new generation of GBV practitioners, the feminist origin, processes and transformational purpose of WGSS has been reduced. The space for women and girls in humanitarian settings continues to shrink and frontline staff feel increasingly disempowered. This is one of many examples which GBV practitioners, feminist scholars and women's movements identify as trends which undermine the transformative agenda of GBV and women's rights work[12].

Melanie Megevand provides an overview of the development of the WGSS toolkit

Highly anticipated by country program teams, the global resource Women and Girls Safe Spaces: A Toolkit for Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Humanitarian Settings co-created by IRC and the International Medical Corps (IMC) was still being drafted during the planning stages of the learning forum when WPE teams ranked Women and Girls Safe Spaces among the most prioritized topics to be discussed. Due to demand, the Women and Girls Safe Spaces session led by Melanie Megevand, VPRU specialist and co-author of the WGSS toolkit, was facilitated in plenary. The session provided an opportunity to share how the **feminist informed principles, approaches and strategies are necessary** to cultivate empowering safe spaces for women and girls, and how these same feminist principles were applied to develop the toolkit in partnership with women, girls and program teams.

The ability of WGSS to empower women and girls and transform unequal power in humanitarian settings depends on WGSS staff **fostering an environment for women and adolescent girls where they can question power imbalances**, so that WGSS offer opportunities for women and adolescent girls to explore, express and celebrate their own power. This requires that:

WGSS staff recognise the power they hold in humanitarian settings as service providers; their power to influence the design, implementation and monitoring of WGSS programming; and the potential power their role holds over women and girls who attend WGSS (power within)

WGSS staff consider women and girls as co-creators of the space, based on the belief that their power as service providers can be used to create positive change. WGSS provide opportunities for women and adolescent girls to develop their leadership skills, socio-civic engagement, and consistently create opportunities for women and girls to play an active role in the design, implementation and monitoring of WGSS programming (power to)

Based on solidarity, trust, mutual respect and cohesion, WGSS staff strategically leverage their power with others to expand the space in humanitarian settings for women and girls to directly negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable individuals and institutions that affect their lives (power with). By empowering women's and girls' participation in humanitarian settings, WGSS staff counter the most unequal use of power over women and girls creating a transformational shift.

During development of the WGSS toolkit, the design team genuinely considered the staff, women, adolescent girls and community members across 18 WGSS as **co-producers of the toolkit**, rather than simply pilot countries validating it. WGSS were engaged in collaborative design in Cameroon and Ethiopia by IMC and in Lebanon and Thailand by IRC. In this way, IRC and IMC co-authors were able to retrace how WGSS had been de-linked from their original purpose, as well as pinpoint the challenges and triggers which disempower frontline, supervisory and support staff. To authentically support women's and girls' sense of self and empowerment the global blueprint for WGSS programming supports staff to connect or re-connect with their own power, and encourages them to use it positively. The WGSS toolkit aims to provide adaptive tools which can support the setup, implementation and monitoring of WGSS, without undermining existing approaches and methodologies. The WGSS toolkit offers a choice of 38 tools and 9 databases with step-by-step instructions and guidance on how to apply feminist principles, approaches and strategies in practice, within an accountable, women and girl-led process.

The **Building Local, Thinking Global**[13] (BLTG) session on **Women's Movement Building** was led by Jennate Eoomkham, IRC Emergency Preparedness Specialist. This session shared learning from the BLTG Initiative which aims to **promote women's transformative leadership** in GBV emergency preparedness and response by supporting Women's Rights Networks of local and national organizations to become local technical resources. The initiative fosters a powerful coalition that brings together feminist, women's rights organizations, activists, academics, community-based organisations, non-governmental organisations, and regional civil society networks from across Asia, East Africa and the Middle East. It is led by <u>Akina Mama Wa Afrika</u>, <u>GBV Prevention Network</u>, <u>Gender Equality Network</u>, <u>Women's International Peace Centre</u>, <u>International Rescue Committee</u>, El-Karama and the <u>Strategic Initiative For Women In The Horn Of Africa</u>. The approach of BLTG is grounded in the following principles which were collectively developed by all partners.

> **Common foundation:** We are driven by feminism and activism, and hold those central to our work together.
>
> **Transformation:** We work together to shift power and resources to local women and girls' organizations to lead action in emergencies.
>
> **Independence:** We respect the autonomy and perspective of each member.
>
> **Transparency:** We are honest and open in our communication 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, with voice and a role to play in determining our direction and priorities.
>
> **Curiosity:** We seek to learn, capture best practice, and adapt our approaches, and evolve our work.
>
> **Solidarity:** We are fuelled by our commitment to end injustice and violence against women and girls.
>
> **Influence:** We demand that women and girls powerfully participate in humanitarian funding, strategies and policies.
>
> *Building Local Thinking Global Principles. https://gbvresponders.org/building-local-thinking-global/*

Jennate shared the initiative's goal to harness **women's movements' collective strength, access, and power** within the humanitarian community to ensure women and girls are protected from GBV in emergencies. The IRC has successfully worked with partners since 2012 to strengthen technical and operational capacity at the grassroots level to prepare and respond to GBV in emergencies.

From 2018, the BLTG Initiative has supported women's rights organizations and network to actively contribute and influence global humanitarian policies, strategies and funding decisions. This women's movement building approach aims to foster connections between national/local and displaced women's movements. Working to strengthen connection and shared action to address violence against women and girls and promote women's rights across the nexus of development and humanitarian action.

Participants in the WPE Learning Forum shared their appreciation of how **feminist principles for partnership** with local GBV and women's rights organisations can strengthen IRC's partnership work. Participants also shared how **WPE needs to pay more attention in our ways of working with local actors to building equal partnerships which recognise the strengths of existing women's movements.**

Feminist approaches to prevention of VAWG and SEA

Sophia Ngugi, WPE Technical Advisor for East Africa, and Mercy Lwambi, WPE Coordinator Bangladesh, began the session on feminist approaches to VAWG prevention by reviewing the core tenets of feminist movements. Women and girls worldwide have been, and continue to be, oppressed by men in a patriarchal culture and this domination results in perpetration of violence against women and girls. Feminism aims to establish and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality between the sexes to end patriarchal domination, and increase women's rights, voices, access, and opportunities, while recognizing women and girls are not a homogenous group but are further impacted by different intersectionalities.

A feminist perspective is essential for understanding and dismantling the patriarchy. Women and girls are at greater risk of violence and discrimination due to their subordinate status to men and boys globally. Feminist movements aim to transform systems of gender inequality and create a more equitable world for women, girls, boys and men. <u>Engaging Men in Accountable Practice</u> (EMAP) and <u>SASA!</u> are extensively used GBV prevention approaches by WPE programs to address unequal gender power dynamics and patriarchal attitudes. The session explored understanding on how EMAP and SASA! approaches use a feminist perspective

EMAP is available in English and French

Sophia Ngugi, WPE Technical Advisor for East Africa, and Mercy Lwambi, WPE Coordinator Bangladesh discuss how to strengthen accountability to women and girls in WPE programming

The Listen Up Advisory Group is made up of Feminist and Women's Rights Networks and Organisations mostly from the global south who come together each year to guide the project.

to address the unequal gender power dynamics that reinforce and perpetuate GBV. Addressing gender inequality as the root cause of GBV is essential for effective GBV programming. This conversation was important and timely given IRC's commitment to become a feminist humanitarian organization as announced earlier in the summer. This organisational commitment is in line with the IRC Way's new Equality Value and global commitments under the IRC2020 strategy to narrow the gender gap for women and girls across our health, safety, power, education and economic wellbeing outcomes.

During this session, Sophia and Mercy shared learning from the 2018 Irish Aid WPE Learning Forum in Nairobi which focused on accountability to women and girls. Learning generated in the 2018 Forum promoted the **use of the accountability mechanism within EMAP across WPE programming more broadly.**

EMAP defines accountability as an active process of identifying and challenging harmful ideas and norms in order to bring about social change. This promotes self-reflection among EMAP facilitators/ staff and accountability to women and girls by EMAP male

participants. The women's groups established within EMAP create a feedback loop on program activities at the community level.

Following the example of the development and implementation of the EMAP approach, women groups should be engaged in the design of prevention programming more broadly and should continue to play an ongoing monitoring and guidance role. This promotes women's ownership and leadership within WPE prevention programing and increasing overall accountability in program implementation beyond EMAP. As well as EMAP women's groups, other community mechanisms can play this accountability role.

These may include Women's Action Groups, Women and Girl Safe Space groups, or women VSLA groups. It's important to consider how diverse the accountability group is to ensure we're hearing back from all voices. Listening sessions with women and adolescent girls (in separate groups) can also help ensure our programming is accountable to women and girls. This is in line with IRC global commitment on client responsiveness. Staff attitude checks, as modelled in the EMAP accountable checklists, can

also play a useful role in strengthening accountability to women and girls and promoting positive interactions among female and male staff. During the session, staff reflected on how they were modelling a feminist approach and accountability to women and girls in GBV prevention and throughout the program cycle.

The **Listen Up** project[14] aims to amplify the voices and power of refugee and host community women and girls to catalyse institutional reform, interagency action, and increased resources to reduce Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse of women and girls in humanitarian settings. Listen Up is a feminist movement building approach which **aims to connect local and national women's movements in host communities with refugee women's movements.**

In Uganda, this has led to grassroots women's organisations in rural Uganda working in partnership with South Sudanese refugee women's leaders and groups to speak out on sexual exploitation and abuse. Also in Uganda, national actors with expertise in women's leadership and policy and advocacy are mentoring and coaching local and refugee women's groups to build their confidence and skills to address PSEA. In 2018, the Listen Up Advisory Group developed a theory of change for the outcome: Women and girls affected by crisis and women at work in emergencies pursue their potential, free from violence and inequality. The ToC is based on the expertise of global south women's rights actors and their feminist analysis of what needs to change in humanitarian action to achieve this outcome.

The ToC is built on four pathways: Women and girls trust and access safe, confidential, accountable support services when they experience GBV, including sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (GBV response); Women and girls have equal access and control over humanitarian services and resources (women and girls empowerment, participation and prevention of GBV); The humanitarian system prioritises, resources and values efforts to address sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (system reform); and, Humanitarian organisations hold staff accountable to address sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse (organizational culture reform).

Sophia Ngugi, WPE TA, Harriet Kezaabu, WPE Uganda, Kristy Crabtree, IMS Specialist, Lena Minchew, WPE Advocate, and Sarah Cornish-Spencer, WPE Senior Technical Advisor led a session on feminist approaches to PSEA and participants discussed opportunities for engaging local women's movements in their locations.

ADAPTABLE WPE programming

Humanitarian crises across the world occur in a multitude of contexts and cultures, from geographically remote to urban settings, and humanitarian response continues throughout the arc of crisis from acute emergency, to protracted and recovery environments. WPE program approaches are built to be adaptive and responsive to different contexts. Participant feedback prioritised three approaches which provide a particularly adaptive response to humanitarian action: Girl Shine, EA$E and Mobile and Remote GBV Service Delivery. More information on these resources can be accessed on GBV responders.

Girl Shine is available in English, French and Arabic

GIRL SHINE aims to advance the field in designing girl-driven GBV programming in humanitarian settings. Girl Shine includes:

Part One - Designing Girl-Driven Programming for Adolescent Girls in Humanitarian Settings. This provides a detailed overview of how to design effective adolescent girl programming in a variety of humanitarian settings.

Part Two – Girl Shine Life Skills Curriculum. This is the core curriculum for working with adolescent girls. It focuses on six topic areas and up to 51 sessions for life skill group meetings.

Part Three - Girl Shine Caregiver Curriculum. This is a curriculum that can be used when working with female and male parents and caregivers of unmarried adolescent girls to address harmful gender norms that impact adolescent girls' lives.

Part Four - Girl Shine Mentor and Facilitator Training Manual. This is a resource that can be used with young female mentors and facilitators of the adolescent girl core curriculum to help strengthen the capacity of those working directly with girls.

The Girl Shine Program Model & Resource Package can be used in multiple humanitarian settings, including conflict and natural disasters, as well as within all the various phases of emergency response. It is based on the experience and knowledge gathered through years of the IRC's efforts to reach, protect and empower adolescent girls in humanitarian settings. It has been adapted to reflect the latest research findings on the experiences of adolescent girls in humanitarian settings, and the nature of GBV against adolescent girls. Girl Shine represents the culmination of IRC's learning, shaped by research findings, our technical expertise in working with adolescent girls and feedback from adolescent girls we work with and their caregivers

Girl Shine can be used throughout all stages of humanitarian response, including:

- In anticipation of conflict or violence in vulnerable communities

- At the onset of an emergency

- As girls an and their families arrive and register at a refugee camp or settlement

- As girls are identified in urban areas or within host populations

- Together with girls from the host population

- As part of recovery in a post-conflict setting or natural disaster

In order to support the adaptation of Girl Shine to the stage of the emergency, local culture, language and other contextual factors, the initial phase of Girl Shine includes several steps to learn about the local context risk factors for adolescent girls and barriers and opportunities for their participation. This phase includes learning from girls themselves, female and male caregivers, community leaders and service providers using ranking, mapping, focus group discussions and safety mapping tools. Throughout the assessment and adaptation phase, Girl Shine guidance supports GBV actors to consider the risks and barriers facing diverse adolescent girls: younger and older girls, girls with disabilities, girls from diverse ethnic groups and so on.

"In Somalia we engage the whole family in WPE programming through EA$E, EMAP and now Girl Shine. "

- Participant feedback

Trust

Social & Emotional Skills

Health & Hygiene

Safety

Solidarity

Visioning

Anita Monger, WPE Coordinator Liberia, Mehreen Megevand, Adolescent Girl Specialist, and Marian Rogers, WPE TA share learning which fed into Girl Shine's development

Adapting the full cycle of Girl Shine for emergency settings:

Safety Issue
- Trust Activity
- Safety Mapping/Planning
- Closing Activity

Early Marriage
- Trust Activity
- Decision-Making
- Healthy/Hygiene
- Safety Network
- Closing Activity

Health and Hygiene
- Trust Activity
- Health and Hygiene
- Health and Hygiene
- Closing Activity

Basic PSS
- Trust Activity
- Trust Activity
- Social & Emotional Skills
- Closing Activity

Although Girl Shine is flexible and adaptable, there is an important criteria which must be addressed before implementation can begin: **Girl Shine is only to be implemented after GBV response services have been established.** GBV response services at a minimum must include GBV case management and clinical care for GBV survivors. These services will be essential to provide care to adolescent girls who disclose GBV during Girl Shine sessions or to their mentor or caregiver.

During the WPE learning forum, this adaptable WPE model for adolescent girls was introduced by WPE experts in Girl Shine from Nigeria, Liberia and East Africa, where previous iterations of Girl Shine were developed, piloted and evaluated, and the author of Girl Shine, Adolescent Girl Specialist Mehreen Jaswal. Research which fed into Girl Shine includes: Novo funded, Girl Empower and DFID funded, COMPASS[15].

The **Economic and Social Empowerment (EA$E)** WPE approach was launched as a toolkit in 2012 and since then a great deal of adaptation and contextualisation has taken place led by country program teams. While some WPE interventions may be harder to gain initial community buy-in for, this is rarely the case for the EA$E model. WPE Learning Forum participants shared their experience adapting EA$E to emergency and urban contexts as well as the increasing partnership with colleagues from IRC's Economic Recovery and Development teams to collectively deliver on IRC's Outcome and Evidence Framework promoting cross sector collaboration.

EA$E is available in English and French.

Key learning during the session focused on the challenge in successfully forming women's VSLA groups in humanitarian settings which requires trust and stability for members to be able to take and repay loans appropriately.

"EA$E is one of the approaches that contributes the most to women. Through EA$E women access and control resources and are able to develop an activity to meet her needs."

- Participant feedback

The session also explored the importance of VSLA groups which recognize women's existing social empowerment and promote women to leverage their existing social networks through the creation of VSLA groups. Really effective women's groups engaged in village savings and loans are supported with the necessary skills, resources and knowledge which strengthen solidarity, mutual support, trust and decision making among members. These groups increase the collective power to act and influence change through incentives to contribute individual savings and collectively allocate loans ultimately supporting their economic empowerment.

The EA$E model consists of a three-pronged intervention:

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) for adult women

Discussion Group Series for EA$E members (women) and their spouses

Business Skills Training for EA$E members

Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
Access to financial services through VSLA	**Gender Dialogues**	**Business Training**
Intensive Phase, Training VSLA Groups	**Development Phase**	**Maturity Phase**
Module 1: Groups, Leadership and Elections	**Session 1**: Introduction of EA$E Discussion Sessions	**Module 1**: Opening Session
Module 2: Development of Policies and Rules	**Session 2** : Household Economy	**Module 2**: Business Skills
Module 3: Development of Association Constitution	**Session 3** : Household Cash Flow	**Module 3**. Project Development
Module 4: First Share Purchase/Savings Meeting	**Session 4**: Setting Financial Goals	**Module 4** : Marketing
Module 5: First Loan Disbursement and Record-keeping	**Session 5**: Dealing with Financial Stress	**Module 5**: Finance
Module 6: First Loan Repayment Meeting	**Session 6**: Dealing with Financial Stress Part 2)	**Module 6** : Ending Session
Module 7: Share out	**Section 7** : Budgeting and Planning	
	Session 8: Review and Reflection	

As part of the preparatory phase, the stability of the population is assessed to decide on the feasibility of EA$E in the local context. This is necessary because participation in the VSLA is self-selected by group members. Therefore, the preconditions for implementation include communities where women's support networks are sufficiently developed to ensure trust among participants. The self-section approach also supports collective decision-making processes which underpins women's social empowerment.

The session also explored the challenges faced implementing EA$E in the acute emergency phase of humanitarian response and in protracted settings where populations continue to be on the move or have unpredictable displacement patterns. An adaptation $E was shared from DRC's EA$E implementation experience. In DRC an emergency occurred in a community considered stable and implementing EA$E. The program lacked adequate contingency plans to mitigate the shock of the emergency for the EA$E program.

Rocky Kabeya, WPE Technical Advisor and Melanie Megevand, VPRU Specialist create space to share lessons learned from the last seven years of EA$E implementation and adaptation

EA$E was then adapted to include a risk assessment during the preparatory phase. This consists of identifying with community members through focus groups and key informant interviews, any potential risks which may create instability in the participation of VSLA members and risk mitigation solutions. The risk mitigation plan is then incorporated into VSLA Module 4 (First Share Purchase/Savings Meeting). In this session the group facilitator reviews the results of the preparatory phase risk assessment with group members. The VSLA group then agrees on actions to be taken if any of the identified risks would occur and how members can secure the fund's savings. Once the risk mitigation plan is established, it will be memorized by the group members and the facilitator will remind them of this plan at each group meeting.

Other adaptations shared by the group included utilising newer business skills training curricula such as Learn to Earn when IRC is already utilising this approach in the local context. Other IRC teams have adapted facilitation strategies for gender discussion groups when strict sex segregated norms do not allow for women and men to participate in the same activity together publicly. Another adaptation was shared by the Jordan country program team which had adapted EA$E to include cash transfers after the large-scale urban displacement of Syrian refugees posed a challenge to existing emergency response models. The team used EA$E to safely address women's economic and social empowerment while reducing risks of violence.

Mobile and Remote GBV Service Delivery was designed to complement existing models for GBV service delivery geared towards large refugee and internally displaced person (IDP) camp populations, in which centralized GBV case management services are attached to static women and girl safe spaces, and/or health facilities. Given the changing nature of displacement, in which affected populations are more likely to be out-of-camp, urban/peri-urban, multiple and dispersed, this means that static, centralized services are not always feasible to implement. In 2019, conflict and natural disasters led to more than 70.8 million people displaced globally, and more than 41.3 million are people displaced within their own country[16]. Increasingly, these displaced persons are living in host communities, urban settings or informal settlements, with more than half of the world's displaced people living in urban areas.
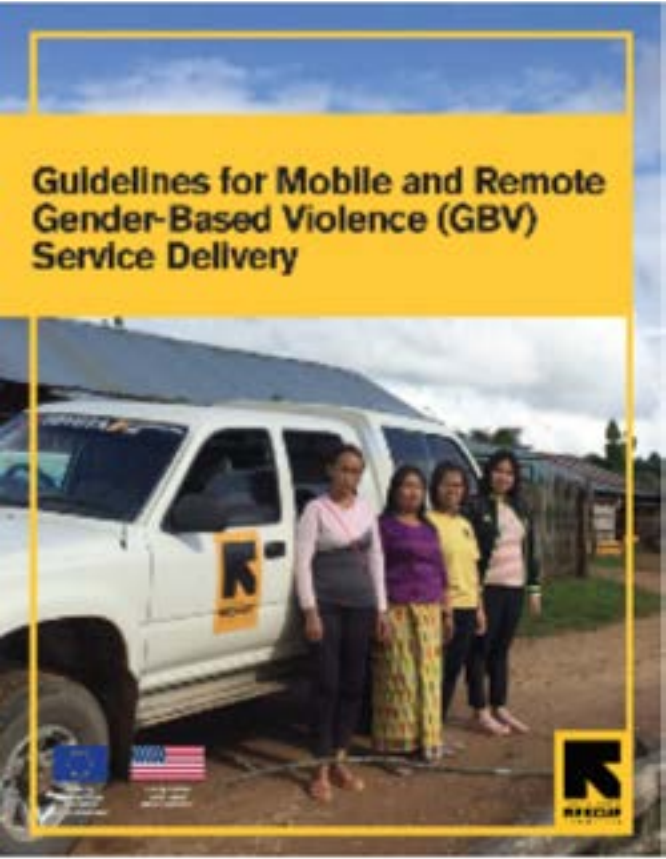
Mobile and Remote GBV Service Delivery guidance is available in English, French and Arabic

During the WPE learning forum, this adaptable model of mobile and remote GBV service delivery was introduced to multiple new country program teams by the teams from Myanmar and Burundi where the approach was developed, piloted and evaluated.

In response to the changing nature of displacement, **mobile services**, in which services are provided to women and girls where they are displaced, residing, or in transit and not easily reached with traditional (static) services, and **remote services**, in which staff connect with beneficiaries from a distance using technology, have begun to be used.

This Mobile and Remote GBV Service Delivery model has been designed to meet the needs of GBV survivors from at risk, displaced, out-of-camp populations, dispersed in urban and rural settings, who are often hidden, difficult to reach, isolated, and at heightened risk of violence. The Mobile and Remote GBV Service Delivery Guidelinmmes are designed to provide guidance to support the development of GBV mobile and remote service delivery in acute and protracted crises. A research brief on the Feasibility and Acceptability of Mobile and Remote GBV Service Delivery is available in English, French, and Arabic.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2020 and 2021, the IRC will host global annual WPE Learning Forums for country program and global technical unit staff to continue to share and learn together. Feedback from the 2019 learning forum will be addressed to ensure strengthened leadership of the forum by WPE country program teams and additional space for sharing country program case studies, innovations, strategies and challenges. The three themes of inclusion, accountability and adaptability resonated well with participants and will be further addressed in the strategic partnership moving forward.

In 2020, the IRC plan to equip participants with techniques to use the Most Significant Change[17], a technique which involves the collection of stories of change that are most significant to stakeholders or clients of a particular intervention. This proven qualitative research method will capture evidence of the most important learnings or outcomes for diverse women and girls participating in WPE programming and strengthen accountability to their priorities.

By using this proven learning method, we will also further strengthen how the learning pillar of this strategic partnership is informed by the voices and recommendations of diverse women and girls.

SUMMARY of WPE Learning Brief Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on feedback, conversations and learning from the 2019 WPE Learning Forum. These recommendations are shared through this learning brief and ongoing conversations with the global WPE team across the world.

We hope they will also be considered by other organisations and networks who are on a similar journey to create inclusive, accountable and adaptable GBV prevention and wresponse programming led by diverse women and girls.

INCLUSIVE

To create a WPE learning space that is inclusive and galvanize programming that is similarly inclusive of diverse women and girls, we should aim to:

1. Create psychological safety and pay attention to power dynamics and appreciation of diverse strengths and perspectives across WPE programming worldwide.

2. Promote, encourage and create space for WPE colleagues to engage in individual, personal work on understanding power, privilege, identities and biases that we all bring to the work, ensuring that we are promoting the safest and most inclusive space by first doing the work ourselves.

3. Maximize WPE country program participation and facilitation of learning spaces so that learning is multi-directional and unequal power dynamics between global and country program based staff are not reinforced.

4. Limit the number of topics covered in the learning forum, to create time for in depth sharing and conversation between experts; topics to be covered should be weighted based on urgency of need, interest of participants, and need for in-person conversation.

5. Build solidarity across the WPE movement and keep fuelling ourselves as illustrated in our WPE tree with mutual support, feminist leadership and opportunities for growth.

6. Avoid using gender neutral language to explore intersectionality in GBV programming, such as "people with disabilities", "older people", or "LGBTQI populations" which makes women and girls invisible.

7. Proactively and thoughtfully include diverse, marginalised women and girls in WPE programming and practice non-discrimination by proactively removing barriers to support the safe participation of diverse women and girls.

8. Prioritise context analysis that explores how complex intersecting inequalities are present in the local environment and works to address the increased risks facing diverse women and girls based on age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, religion and other local factors.

9. While local environments must be taken into account in the implementation of programming, WPE must be clear about the key principles and core tenets of our work (such as non-discrimination and centring women and girls in WPE programming) to ensure that conversations and sharing between colleagues share a common starting point. This requires continuing to invest in understanding questions and concerns from WPE colleagues and giving time and space to discussion and guidance.

ACCOUNTABLE

From the WPE Learning Forum, it is clear that to be accountable to women and girls, we must:

10. From the start of an emergency, promote women and girls' leadership of GBV emergency response programming as essential to achieve effective, sustainable WPE programming.

11. Ensure displaced women and girls' ownership of Women and Girl Safe Spaces is at the core of what WPE does and needs to be even more front and centre in our thinking.

12. Ensure that practicing accountability to women and girls cuts across all WPE programming, not only EMAP or prevention programming.

13. Promote diverse leadership in our Women Action Groups, Women and Girl Safe Space steering committees, and among SASA! activists.

14. Apply a feminist partnership approach to connect with women's movements in the communities where we work, and to shift power and resources to grassroots women's groups and GBV actors.

ADAPTABLE

Inclusion and accountability are the building blocks of designing adaptable WPE programming. In addition to the above considerations, to be truly adaptable, we must also:

15. Engage diverse women and girls in program design and accountability feedback loops and partner with women's movements in communities where we work to ensure we build WPE programs which fit the context.

16. Build context adaptation phases and guidance into WPE resources and toolkits as essential to ensure our approaches are effective in a multitude of humanitarian contexts.

17. Engage in thoughtful consultation with girls, girls' trusted female and male caregivers, service providers and community leaders to ensure Girl Shine is context driven and adaptable to acute emergency, protracted and recovery settings.

18. Adjust and update existing WPE interventions to better meet the needs of changing humanitarian contexts. For instance, EA$E can be adapted by country program teams to adapt EA$E to more unstable contexts.

19. Actively seek out women and girls who are often hidden, difficult to reach, isolated, and at heightened risk of violence. For these populations, we should consider Mobile and Remote GBV Service Delivery, which is designed for use with women and girls from displaced, out-of-camp populations, dispersed in urban and rural settings.

20. Promote minimum standards that must be kept even after adaptation to ensure efficacy of programs. For instance, even with adaptation to different contexts, Girl Shine can only be implemented when core GBV services have been fully established.

References

1. https://www.irishaid.ie/news-publications/news/newsarchive/2019/may/irish-aid-strategic-partnership-with-the-international-rescue-committee.html https://www.rescue-uk.org/press-release/strengthening-prevention-and-response-gender-based-violence-emergencies-and-protracted

2. Ethiopia, Ukraine, Tanzania, Yemen, Serbia, Cameroon, Nigeria, South Sudan, Kenya, Iraq, Colombia, DRC, Zimbabwe and Mexico. South Sudan, Ukraine, Kenya, and Yemen have been supported twice with the emergency response fund in response to new crises.

3. The IRC currently has WPE programming in the following countries (ordered by Irish Aid 2018 index) Category 1: Somalia, South Sudan, Chad, Central African Republic, Yemen, Niger, Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, Iraq, Myanmar; Category 2: Pakistan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Libya, Mali, Uganda, Kenya, Bangladesh, Burundi, Lebanon, Jordan: Category 3: Tanzania, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire; Category 4: Sierra Leone, Liberia, Zimbabwe; as well as supporting response in Thailand, Europe, the US, South and Central America for refugees in Germany, Greece, Serbia, El Salvador, Mexico, and the United States.

4. https://www.rescue.org/resource/violence-prevention-and-response-international-rescue-committee

5. https://rework.withgoogle.com/guides/understanding-team-effectiveness/steps/foster-psychological-safety/

6. Funded by the US Government Bureau for Population Refugees and Migration (BPRM)

7. Funded by the US Government Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)

8. Interagency GBV Minimum Standards, Introduction "Centring women and girls in GBV prevention and response" page vii https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2019-11/19-200%20Minimun%20Standards%20Report%20ENGLISH-Nov%201.FINAL_.pdf

9. Funded by the US Government Bureau for Population Refugees and Migration (BPRM)

10. Raising Voices Feminist Zines were developed in collaboration with Just Associates and Furia based on a convening with feminist activists from around the world. http://preventgbvafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Intersectionality.pdf

11. Raising Voices Get Moving approach includes useful self and group reflections and analysis to support a work place which proactively addresses intersecting inequalities http://raisingvoices.org/innovation/creating-methodologies/get-moving/. This approach is being adapted by Raising Voices and the IRC to transform organisational cultures which enable sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse by humanitarian actors.

12. Coalition of Feminists for Social Change (COFEM), 2018. Why does GBV programming focus on women and girls? Feminist Pocketbook Tip Sheet 2. https://cofemsocialchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/TS2-Why-does-GBVprogramming-focus-on-women-and-girls.pdf.

13. Funded by the US Government Bureau for Population Refugees and Migration (BPRM)

14. Funded by the US Government Bureau for Population Refugees and Migration (BPRM)

15. Research Brief: DRC, Ethiopia, Pakistan; COMPASS Global Report and Executive Summary; and more research can be accessed here: https://gbvresponders.org/research-learning/completed-research/

16. https://www.unhcr.org/uk/figures-at-a-glance.html

17. The Most Significant Change technique involves the collection of stories of change that are significant to a variety of stakeholders (program participants, program staff, etc.). These are stories of change that are, according to program stakeholders, caused by a particular intervention, or set of interventions. Through an iterative consultative process, most significant stories of change are selected and discussed in order to bring their attention to the impact of the program. For more information on this technique, please refer to Jess Dart and Rick Davies (2005) The Most Significant Change (MSC) Technique: A Guide to Its Use. https://www.mande.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2005/MSCGuide.pdf

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC offers life-saving care and life-changing assistance to refugees forced to flee from war, persecution or natural disaster. At work today in over 40 countries and 29 cities in the United States, we restore safety, dignity and hope to millions who are uprooted and struggling to endure. The IRC leads the way from harm to home.

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