

## Submission to the Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality 2020

### About ActionAid

ActionAid is a global federation working to achieve gender equality, social justice and poverty eradication. ActionAid supports women and children through education and training, as well as helping them realise their rights to healthcare and decent work.

ActionAid welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Citizens' Assembly on gender equality, particularly in relation to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Care Work.

### Gender Based Violence (GBV)

*"Violence against women is both a cause and a consequence of women's inequality and an obstacle to gender equality"<sup>1</sup>*

GBV has physical, mental and social implications for survivors, as well as for their families and communities. In some cases, it can even lead to death. GBV can hinder one's ability to earn a living, access education and participate in social and political life. GBV takes many forms, for instance domestic violence, harassment, forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

ActionAid works with migrant women, girls and their communities in Ireland to support them to reject Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). CSO (2016) statistics estimate that 5,790 women and girls in Ireland have survived genital mutilation and there are 1,632 at high risk of being cut.

ActionAid is a member of the National Steering Committee on FGM and works with allied organisations to lobby for a preventative approach to FGM. The committee are calling on the incoming government to prioritise a National Action Plan which would work with front line service providers – from healthcare practitioners to teachers – to work together to eradicate FGM in Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://news.un.org/en/story/2015/11/516382-orange-world-campaign-kicks-efforts-end-violence-against-women-and-girls-un>

### Recommendation:

- **Develop and resource a National Action Plan to end Female Genital Mutilation**

## Violence and Harassment at Work

Violence and harassment in the workplace deprive people of their dignity, is incompatible with decent work, and is a threat to equal opportunities and to a safe, healthy, and productive working environment. It remains a widespread phenomenon, present in all countries and disregarding sectors, occupations and work arrangements.

While both women and men experience violence and harassment at work, unequal status and power relations in society and at work often result in women being far more exposed to violence and harassment.

GBV remains one of the most tolerated violations of workers' human rights. Sexual harassment experienced by women workers is the most reported form of GBV<sup>2</sup>. A survey<sup>3</sup> of 42,000 women across EU member states highlighted the extent of this abuse. The report shows that 55% of women have experienced some form of sexual harassment, of these 32% of all victims of sexual harassment said the perpetrator was a boss, colleague or customer.

Until recently, there was no international labour standard to address GBV and harassment in the workplace. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention 190 seeks to address this. The Convention is now open for ratification and some countries, such as Uruguay, Argentina, Finland and recently Spain are seeking approval to ratify the convention from their parliament. Uruguay, last December, was able to do so.

<sup>2</sup> International Labour Organisation (2017), Ending violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms\\_553577.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_553577.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2014), Violence against Women: an EU-wide survey [https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14\\_en.pdf](https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/fra-2014-vaw-survey-main-results-apr14_en.pdf)

ActionAid is calling on the ILO Convention 109 to be ratified in Ireland and become law. By ratifying the convention, Ireland will lead the way for other countries to adopt the convention fast and create an opportunity to change the law in low-income countries.

ActionAid's research into Irish law shows that while our laws are already largely compliant with the convention, the time and expertise necessary to understand it could make it inaccessible to the most vulnerable in society. Laws that protect workers from violence and harassment appear within five different pieces of legislation. It is likely that marginalised, migrant, and low-income workers could be unaware of their rights under Irish law.

Recommendation (R206) for the Convention includes strategies to ensure all workers are aware of their rights which could improve the lives of our most vulnerable workers.

#### Recommendation:

- ActionAid recommends ratifying the ILO Convention 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in work and following recommendation (R206) which includes strategies to ensure all workers are aware of their rights

#### Care Work

*"...investing in care narrows the gender pay gap, reduces overall inequality and helps redress the exclusion of women from decent jobs".<sup>4</sup>*

Care work, both paid and unpaid, is at the heart of our society. Economies depend on care to survive and thrive. Globally, women and girls are performing more than three-quarters of the total amount of unpaid care work and two thirds of care workers are women<sup>5</sup>. While there is great value in unpaid care and domestic work, the time spent away from the labour market, education, training and civic engagement can create a cumulative disadvantage for women.

<sup>4</sup> ITUC (2017), Investing in the Care Economy, <https://www.ituc-csi.org/investing-in-the-care-economy>

<sup>5</sup> International Labour Organisation (2018), Care Work and Care Jobs

2019 research<sup>6</sup> indicates that 45% of women and 29% of men provide care for others daily. On average, women carry out 43 hours per week of care work and men carry out 25. Furthermore, women still carry out more care work even when the hours spent on paid employment are accounted for.

Ireland has the seventh highest gender gap in the European Union when it comes to care work<sup>7</sup>. This reflects the lack of affordable and accessible childcare in Ireland. In contrast, the gender gap is narrowest in Scandinavian countries where effective policy measures have been implemented to promote a dual earner/dual caregiver model.

To move closer to this model, there is a need for policies that facilitate the combination of care and employment at the same time and encourage greater male participation in care. Accessible and affordable care must be supported by the state if we are to achieve women's equality.

We all lose from the unequal distribution of care - society often misses out from women's valuable participation in the labour market and men miss out from the rewards of providing care.

### **Recommendations:**

*Please note: these recommendations were proposed by National Women's Council Ireland and are supported by ActionAid.*

- Develop a legislative underpinning for the funding of a comprehensive, affordable and accessible care infrastructure to support people at all stages of the lifecycle
- Incrementally increase investment in early years to bring overall expenditure in line with the UNICEF recommendation of 1% of GDP over the next decade
- Develop a model of funding the care sector that ensures proper wages for the workforce, at minimum a living wage, a quality service for children and affordable fees for families
- Provide a statutory right for a broad spectrum of paid maternity, paternity, parental leave and carers leave, to include a minimum of 4 paid months of parental leave and 6 paid days of carers leave
- Acknowledge the vital contribution of women's unpaid work throughout their lives by legislating for a full and retrospective Homecare credit to support women to access a full pension
- Provide a statutory right to home care to support older persons to remain independent Provide a statutory right to a Personal Assistance Service for disabled people

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The logo for ActionAid, featuring the word "actionaid" in a bold, lowercase, red sans-serif font.

## Conclusion

Gender equality will only be achieved when we recognise the systemic disadvantage placed upon women in Irish society. This can be addressed by listening to the diversity of women's voices in Ireland and investing in social and economic policies that tackle gender inequality. We must view this as an investment in our society and the common good. The Citizens' Assembly is an opportunity to radically restructure our society for the better and create transformational change that improves the lives of women and girls and men and boys.

## Contact

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