Budget 2014

SUBMISSION BY THE NATIONAL WOMEN’S COUNCIL OF IRELAND
AUGUST 2013
Priority 7 Violence against Women

7.1 Domestic and sexual violence

Domestic and sexual violence is a serious and pervasive issue in Irish society. Addressing domestic and sexual violence in terms of prevention and ensuring an appropriate response for survivors involves many different agencies, statutory and non-statutory, playing their part in a co-ordinated way to ensure effective responses to the complexity of issues involved. NWCI acknowledges that COSC the National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence has been in place since 2007 and a National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence 2010-2014 is being implemented. However progress is very slow.

NGOs providing services to women experiencing domestic and sexual violence continue to witness an unprecedented growth in demand for their services. At the same time, funding for services has been drastically cut. This situation has reached crisis point.

The National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence 2010-2014 describes how the economic cost of domestic violence to the Irish economy is estimated to be in the region of 2.2 billion annually when based on studies in other countries. Cuts to preventative and crisis support programmes, such as domestic violence support services, is a false economy.

NWCI welcomes the recent public awareness campaigns on the issue of sexual and domestic violence. However NWCI notes that the baseline prevalence study on sexual violence, the Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI) Report was published in 2002 and though has since acted as a key informant of Irish policy in relation to sexual violence, it is considerably out of date. In order to develop clear comparative analysis a SAVI II Report is required to evaluate changes over the past decade and provide an evidence base to inform responses to the issue of sexual violence. NWCI calls for this research to be commissioned and resourced.
7.2 Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a harmful practice that violates the human rights of women and girls, in particular the right to the highest attainable standard of health, the right to be free from all forms of gender discrimination, the right to life, the right to bodily integrity and children’s rights to special protections. The practice perpetuates negative gender based stereotypes and has serious social, health and psychological consequences. FGM continues to affect the lives of many women in Ireland. Akidwa estimates that 3,170 women living in Ireland have undergone FGM although actual number may be higher.

NWCI acknowledges and welcomes the passing of the Criminal Justice (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 2012 that explicitly prohibits the practice of FGM in Ireland. NWCI, however, does not consider that legislation by itself is sufficient to prevent FGM. Immediate inter agency action is required in implementing this legislation, to take place as a matter of priority.

NWCI PRIORITIES FOR BUDGET 2014

- Allocate resources for the establishment of an inter-departmental committee on FGM who would be tasked with the role of drawing up a National Action Plan to Combat FGM.
- Provide resources for a nationwide information awareness campaign on the Criminal Justice (Female Genital Mutilation) Act 2012 and to put in place referral mechanisms to ensure victims can access the support they need