

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FRAMEWORK

STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2022 | FOR A JUST AND SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Goal 3, Outcome 1: Women, particularly young women, are participating in formal and informal decision-making at all levels. Women will be empowered and participating in decision-making bodies at all levels, from informal village development committees to formal structures of the state at local and national levels. This will be supported by interventions that address both the gender norms and power dynamics that constrain women's participation, underpinned by existing research and good practice.

Members of a women's savings and loans group in southern Malawi conduct their weekly meeting under a tree to record their savings.
(Photo: Bazar Productions)



1. PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

This framework helps guide the design and implementation of activities related to Outcome 1 of Goal 3 of Trócaire's 2016–2020 strategic plan.

The document identifies and defines the key principles and concepts underpinning Trócaire's women's empowerment programme work, identifies who we work with, and provides an overview of key intervention strategies at each level – individual, family/household, community, civil society and institutional.

To support Trócaire's integration approach, guidance and tips on how to address citizen monitoring and advocacy and cross-outcome integration in a programme are included, drawing on experiences from country programmes and based on head office advice. This guidance is identified by icons (see box). The primary audience for this framework is Trócaire staff working on women's empowerment as the lead programme outcome. This document also provides a link to all the relevant tools and resources to support the implementation of the framework. For those integrating women's empowerment across all other outcome areas, separate guidance is being developed.

Trócaire's Integration Approach



Protection and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV)

Gender equality, women's empowerment and SGBV are interrelated areas of work. SGBV is rooted in gender based discrimination and the disempowerment of women and girls through their oppression at all levels of society. Trócaire women's empowerment programmes must support women and girls to increase their social and human capital and understanding of the unequal power relations that they are situated within and the risks that these present for them, while simultaneously working to challenge the status quo of women's oppression at family/household, community, civil society and institutional levels. The empowerment of women is essential in order to end the risk of SGBV for women and girls, and also to support survivors to heal, recover and reduce risk of ongoing or repeat experiences of SGBV.



Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy

Women's (political) empowerment and citizen monitoring and advocacy are inextricably linked. When women and girls are supported to participate in informal and formal decision-making in the public sphere, they will often be participating in different stages of citizen monitoring and advocacy. Participation in informal decision-making e.g. in a local development committee, will often relate to setting recommendations that will subsequently be advocated for with institutional duty-bearers (decision-makers). Participation in formal decision-making, outside of holding a political or government position, e.g. as a citizen in a government-convened consultation or accountability mechanism, will also relate to trying to influence government agendas and/or hold governments to account for existing commitments or standards. Therefore, a lot of the strategies used towards achieving Outcome 3.1. will overlap with strategies used to enable and support citizen monitoring & advocacy.

2. TRÓCAIRE'S WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PATHWAYS TO CHANGE

Trócaire believes that country programmes supporting women's empowerment need to be designed to follow a number of key pathways to change at multiple levels:¹

Individual Level:

If women and girls have increased self-esteem, self-confidence, know and claim their rights and critically reflect on the unequal power relations they are situated within, then they will more likely seek opportunities to challenge the relations that act to disempower them.

Family/Household Level:

If family and household members reflect on and take action to address the power imbalances within their relationships, then women will have increased family/household support to play an active role in their communities and to achieve their individual goals.

Community Level:

If women, girls, men and boys are mobilised to confidently challenge existing gender power imbalances within their community and promote the wider adoption of norms that support women's empowerment, then women and girls will be in a better position to negotiate power with others and influence decision-making that affects their lives.

Civil Society Level:

If women-centred organisations at local, national and international levels have the knowledge, skills and capacity to address gender power imbalances within society and join forces with women's rights movements and other civil society allies, then societal norms which perpetuate gender inequality are more likely to be challenged.

Institutional Level:

If key decision-making positions within government institutions include a critical mass of women that is representative of the different strata of society, and decision-makers have the capability, opportunity and motivation to take action on gender equality, then an enabling environment that supports women's empowerment will be secured.

Trócaire has developed three organisational indicators to help us to understand and describe important changes within Women Empowerment programmes. The indicators are:²

3.1.2: Proportion of positions held by women in formal and informal decision-making structures

and

3.1.1: Average level of self-reported impact of women in formal and informal decision making structures

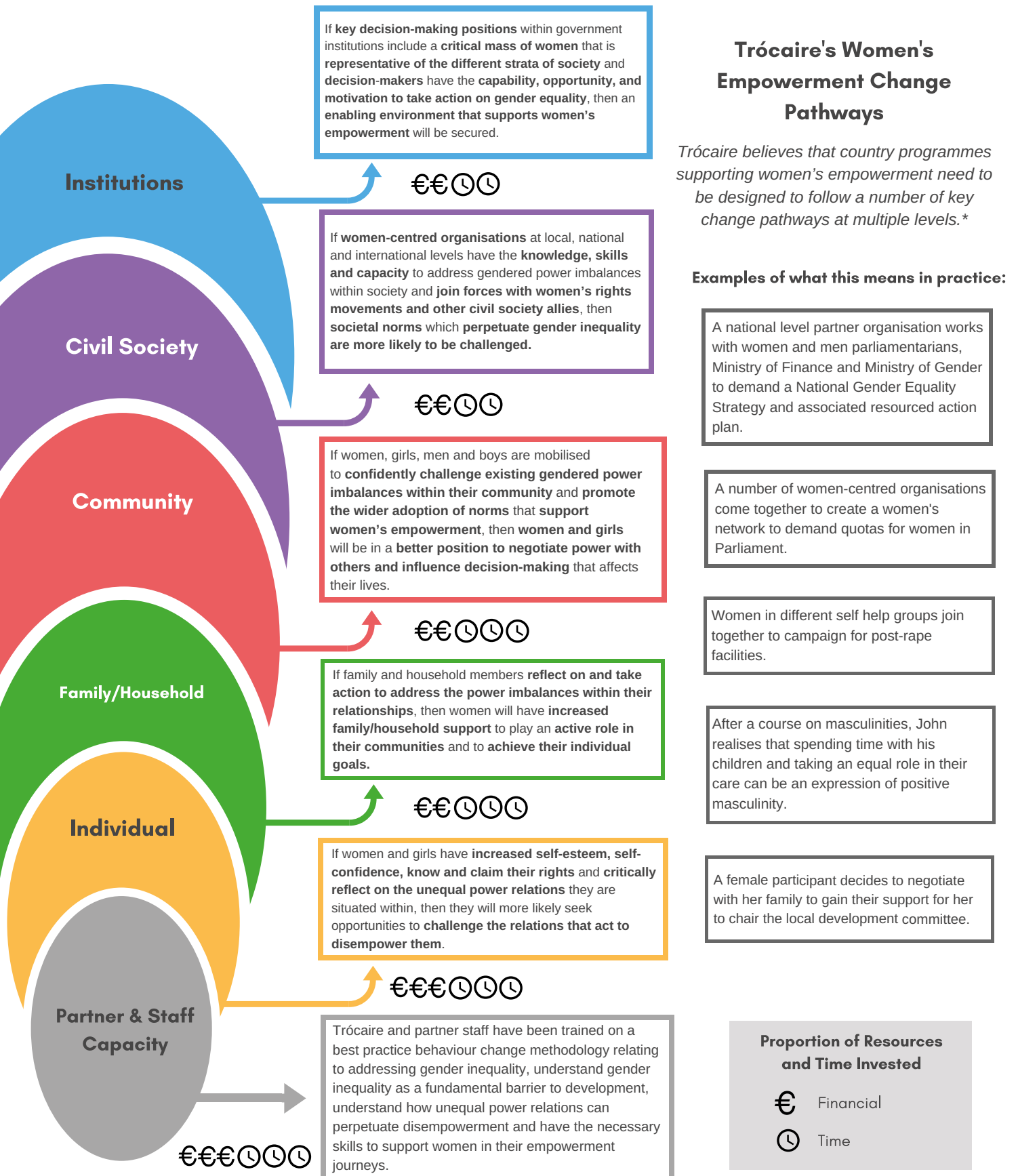
Together, these indicators help us to understand whether women are accessing and participating in decision-making spaces. Through Women's Empowerment strategies we would hope to see an increase in the proportion of membership positions held by women in formal and informal decision making structures. The second indicator helps us to understand the quality of that participation - and whether women feel they can meaningfully contribute to and influence decisions, and why this is the case.

3.1.3: Average Level of Women's 'Power Within'

This indicator is focussed on understanding women's own internal journey and capacities. It supports us to explore with women their perceptions of their self-acceptance, self-worth, and realisation of their own role in making decisions about one's own life. Trócaire's understanding is that effective work on empowerment requires starting with power within. Therefore this indicator also helps us to understand the readiness of the programme to move to other levels of the empowerment framework.

¹ These pathways do not cover all of the changes that might need to happen in order to ultimately achieve this long term outcome. However, they represent some of the core changes Trócaire believes are needed in order to progress and which Trócaire helps to enable.

² Contact the Global 'Women's Empowerment Advisor' or the Strategy and Impact Unit for support and guidance in using these mandatory indicators.



**These pathways do not cover all of the changes that might need to happen in order to ultimately achieve this long term outcome. However, they represent some of the core changes Trócaire believes are needed in order to progress and which Trócaire can contribute to enabling.*

3. KEY CONCEPTS AND PRINCIPLES

Empowerment = Power

While there are numerous definitions of empowerment, and it is a contested term, for Trócaire at the core of it is an understanding of power. As with the term 'empowerment', there is also a vast literature on the meaning of 'power'. Trócaire's understanding of empowerment draws on Rowlands' (1997) four categories of power: power within, power to, power with and power over. These are explained in the following table and illustration:

Trócaire understands empowerment as an increase in transformative types of power and the reduction of oppressive power relations, between men and women and between citizens and state. Working on supporting empowerment journeys requires working at multiple levels, starting with the individual, and then working at the family/household, the community to broader societal, institutional and political levels. Programmes that do not focus on all of these areas will not support empowering processes in a meaningful way. The below diagram provides a pictorial outline of Trócaire's understanding of empowerment. Starting at the level of the individual, empowerment is linked to an understanding of 'power within': the ability of individuals to be aware of their situation and desire for change. This has to be the starting point on any work on supporting empowerment.

The link between individual empowerment journeys and community empowerment is the 'family/household' level, which relates to the broader family unit, those who we live most closely with, and whose support is crucial for wider empowerment. This stage moves beyond power within the individual to power to: the ability to change existing hierarchies within the family/household and negotiate power with others. Focusing on supporting empowerment journeys at the individual and family/household levels is crucial for women in particular to be involved in community and societal level processes. Empowerment at the community, civil society and institutional levels are all interlinked with the concepts of power to and power with. They all involve actively participating in decision-making structures in order to demand rights, set agendas, influence laws and policies and challenge ideologies, political and economic structures, social norms and behaviours.

Overlaying the intersecting empowerment processes in the diagram is the concept of power over. Unequal power relationships result in this form of coercive power which needs to be transformed. For a process to truly be empowering, the boundaries with this coercive and domineering form of power need to be challenged – at all levels from the family/household to the institutional. This is necessary to avoid limiting individual empowerment journeys within ultimately disempowering frameworks.

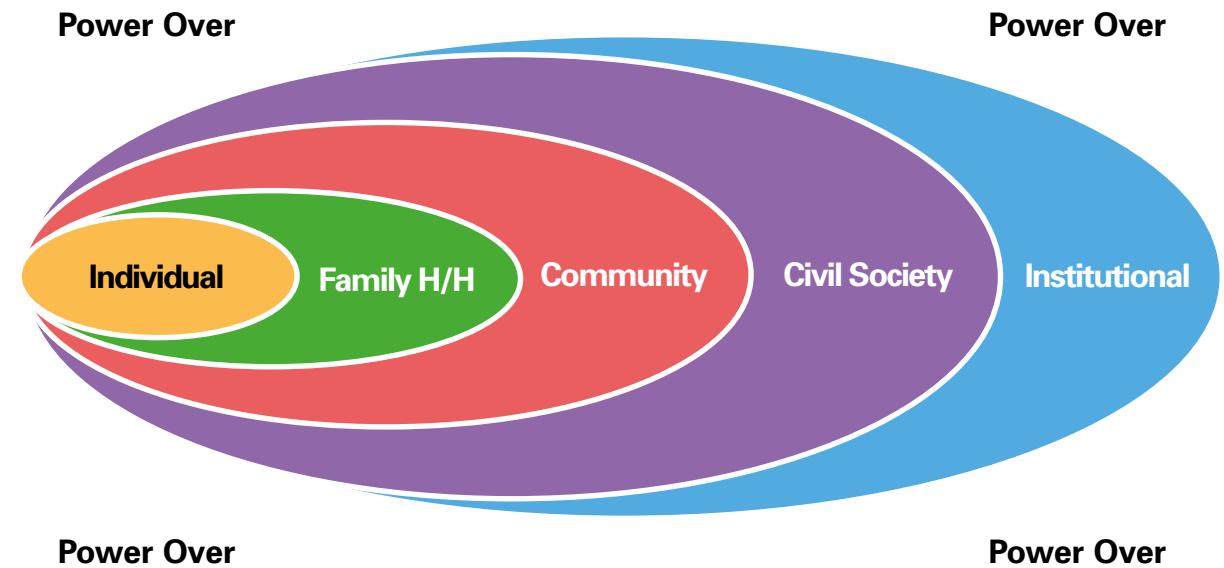
TYPES OF POWER RELATIONS

Power within: Internal capacity that all humans possess; without this all other types of power are not possible. Self-confidence and self-worth are regarded as measure of power within.

Power to: Refers to the unique potential of every person to be able to take action to influence their world. It refers to the capacity to organise and change existing hierarchies.

Power with: Increased power from collective action. Based on mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, 'power with' multiplies individual talents and knowledge.

Power over: Ability to influence and coerce. Refers to domination, control and repression to varying degrees. This form of power is seen as a negative force that controls the oppressed person's ability to take action.



	Power within (Individual)	Power to (Family/HH)	Power to and with (Community)	Power to and with (Civil Society)	Power to and with (Institutional)
S T R A T E G I E S	Increasing self esteem	Shared decision making at the Household	Challenging ideologies, social norms and behaviours		Challenging political and economic structures
	Increasing confidence	Equal access and control over resources			Influencing laws and policies
	Increasing knowledge	Family Support	Mobility in public spaces		
	Increasing consciousness of self and others		Mobility in public spaces		
			Mobilisation: alliance and coalition building		
			Providing safe spaces to mitigate fear of reprisal		

Note of caution: working on Goal 3, Outcome 1 is only appropriate in contexts where fundamental basic needs have already been met. Expecting women to be involved in decision making structures in contexts where they do not have access to safe water, or where there are high rates of malnutrition, fundamentally results in overburdening women who already have a very heavy work burden. Using programme resources to address basic needs in this context and using that work as an entry point to build in a focus on broader socio-political empowerment is more appropriate.

4. WHO WE WORK WITH

It is essential that programming addresses the multiple levels of Trócaire's Theory of Change, including individuals, family/household, community, civil society and institutional.

At **individual** level, we work with marginalised women and girls. Key target groups include vulnerable or marginalised women (including single-headed households), women wishing to run for public office, teenage mothers, sexual minorities, SGBV high-risk groups: internally displaced, refugees, migrants, homeless, sex workers, women living with HIV/AIDS, women living with disabilities, former combatants and widows.

At **family/household** level, we work to mobilise family/household members in support of marginalised women and girls. This can include spouses, in-laws, elders within the household, and should specifically focus on family/household members who wield most power and authority over women and girls' mobility and rights.

At **community** level, we work to mobilise all community members in support of marginalised women and girls. These individuals include men, women, girls and boys living in the community, community leaders, religious leaders, local representatives of informal groups and other key community actors who are critical to challenging social norms, ideologies and behaviours that disempower women.

At **civil society level**, we work with women-centred organisations and other civil society organisations to build alliances and coalitions that support women and girls' rights and a wider gender equality agenda in society. Finally, recognising the context of the countries we work in, programmes engage **institutional** actors – both customary and statutory bodies and actors – from village to national levels.

Engaging men

Trócaire's approach to engaging men in Goal 3 programmes (both Women's Empowerment and SGBV) is based on their relational status to our key target group – women and girls. Although gender inequality and SGBV can affect both women and men, women and girls are disproportionately affected by the gender based power differentials present in our societies. Our approach to engaging men should therefore be women-centred, and men should only be involved in programmes, particularly at the family/household level, at the request of women already involved in the programme.

Selecting spaces

The empowerment journey requires actively engaging women in existing social, political and economic structures and processes, which previously they have been excluded from. It may also require a transformation of the power structures and areas of influence that are the cause of women's marginalisation and inequality, which may necessitate the creation of new structures. In practical terms, this means that practitioners will select from three options when selecting spaces within which to work, on the basis of an analysis of the target community:

- I. Targeting spaces that have power but women are not included.
- II. Challenging 'formal' spaces that are disempowering in their structure and format. This will involve a much deeper level of engagement, not only supporting men and women to participate equally in these spaces but also challenge the structure in and of itself so it is not disempowering (this involves long term work and a deep understanding of the power structures). For example, a government mandated water committee that has no autonomy in funding or functions, but ensures the implementation and/or validation of centralised decisions rather than involving proactive engagement of communities in identifying their own needs and solutions. This is effectively an implementing body with no decision making power.
- III. Creating new spaces/structures to fill a gap in decision-making spaces within which women can operate.

Programmes may choose to work with formal or informal spaces. Formal spaces are those established as part of the governance system including elected bodies, parliaments, citizen-state forums and mandated committees. Informal spaces are non-institutionalised spaces and can include women's groups, farmer's associations and social movements. In line with Trócaire's Theory of Change, the spaces and structures that individual women and practitioners might choose to work with might include a combination of informal safe-spaces for women, informal or formal community-based structures for decision-making, and formal governance and rule of law structures. Selecting these spaces requires a thorough understanding of the local governance context, structures and a clear understanding of how you believe the desired change

can best be brought about. When selecting spaces to work with in the programme it is essential to understand how women are marginalised or excluded. Even if women are present in formal decision-making spaces the real decisions may be made in other arenas which are generally closed to women. When selecting spaces to engage with it is therefore important to ask: Who created the space and the rules governing entry? Who accesses the space? What are the barriers to access? What is the purpose and nature of the space? Who makes the decisions? Does participating in this space merit women's time and energy?

Laying the groundwork: Building our capacity to do women's empowerment work

Selecting partners

It is essential that all partners have the commitment and skills to be able to support an empowerment programme. Trócaire sees empowerment not as a top down process but a spiral which 'affects everyone involved: the individual, the activist agent, the collective and the community' (Batliwala: 1994, p. 132)³. Empowerment cannot 'be done' to others; it is a journey that differs for each person. Therefore, partners must themselves be part of the journey, acting as role models for others to follow.

Empowerment is not just another word for gender equality. A thorough understanding of different power frameworks and methodologies designed to support empowerment journeys is required. Some partners may already have experience in implementing such programmes, while others may have the commitment but lack the experience. A strong programme will address gaps by choosing a diversified portfolio of partners consisting of:

- ✓ Women centred organisations
- ✓ Dedicated women's rights organisations
- ✓ Grassroots women's networks
- ✓ Generalist NGOs committed to women's empowerment

Building our capacity

Trócaire and partner staff need to share both an awareness of how power relations shape disempowerment and a desire to support the transformation of power relations. To ensure that the appropriate level of knowledge and commitment is met, programmes must primarily invest in staff and partners' capacity before beginning programme implementation. Ensuring a strong focus on staff and partner capacity can help to ensure quality and consistency of messaging within communities.

Trócaire staff who are working on women's empowerment need to:

- ✓ Understand Trócaire's empowerment framework
- ✓ Believe in gender equality
- ✓ Have skills in gender and power analyses
- ✓ Have experience in gender programming

Trócaire and partner staff should be trained on a best practice social norms change methodology relating to addressing gender inequality, understand gender inequality as a fundamental barrier to development, understand how unequal power relations can perpetuate disempowerment and have the necessary skills to support women on their empowerment journeys.

TIP: supporting women-only spaces

Participation within women-only spaces (in their own communities or elsewhere) for women that have had similar life experiences provides reassurance; it allows women to see that the disempowerment they face in their lives is not a result of their own actions or inactions, but rather is part of a wider set of social norms dictating women's subordinate position within

family and community. Peer support from fellow participants can help women to overcome male resistance, problems within their families and a lack of self-confidence. Supporting women-only spaces is a supportive strategy –alongside mixed spaces. However, women-only spaces are necessary in and of themselves (especially in the initial phase of a programme).

³ Batliwala, S., 1994. The Meaning of Women's Empowerment: New Concepts from Action. In: G. Sen, A. Germain & L. C. Chen, eds. Population Policies Reconsidered. Health, Empowerment and Rights. New York: Harvard University Press, pp. 127-138.

KEY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES UNDER OUTCOME 3.1.

Trócaire believes that programmes must be designed and delivered to support change processes at multiple levels: individual, community, civil society and institutional.

Not all partners need to work at every level, but within the overall programme, all levels should ideally be addressed. While each level should be addressed in the planning stages of a programme, the bulk of the work may be focussed at the individual or community level as these are often the main entry-points. However, all levels should be addressed by a variety of partner organisations to some extent unless this is not possible, for example in contexts that are too politically restrictive. The following section of the framework outlines key strategies at each level that can be adopted by programmes to support women to be empowered in formal and informal decision-making spaces and processes. Strategies that can be used at more than one level (e.g. individual and community) appear in both levels of the framework. Finally, to support Trócaire's integration approach, icons are used throughout to identify when a strategy encompasses citizen monitoring and advocacy and/or relates to sexual and gender based violence (Outcome 3.2.).

5.1 Individual Level

Strategies at the individual level are primarily focused on supporting women to have **increased awareness of their power within** and their **ability to take action to claim their rights**. Programme strategies should also support women to gain **knowledge, skills and confidence** so they are better able to **negotiate with power brokers in the family/household and community**. The process of empowerment is fundamentally about supporting a shift in power relations. The first step in empowerment is building 'power within'. Without this power it is impossible for people to even begin their empowerment journeys. By supporting women to have sufficient belief in their own strength and abilities, they can start to see themselves as rights-holders who are entitled to live free from discrimination and violence. To achieve this, a critical awareness of the way that oppressive power constrains choices and shapes beliefs is needed.



Rehema, a member of the Widows Support Group in Jinja, Uganda. When she was diagnosed with HIV, she was ignored by her community and felt very lonely. The widows group has been a huge support to her. She now gives advice to others and advises people to get tested. (Photo: Alan Whelan)

- 5.1.1 Conducting rights awareness grounded in a rights based approach** is central to Trócaire's work which ensures people's human rights are at the centre of all our programmes. At the individual level of women's empowerment, an awareness of rights is an important component; it provides women with a foundation of legal entitlements and often gives them a feeling of support and self-worth. This approach shows women they are entitled to be equal with men and they have the right to live a violence-free life. Depending on the overall programme objective, this should focus on general rights for women, as outlined in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), but then specifically focus on rights related to the programme objectives and goal. In Sierra Leone, Trócaire's partners have trained women on their right to participate in public life and given specific trainings related to running for public office as well as broader trainings on gender equality and equitable household decision-making. However, this is only one element of the individual level as many other components are necessary if women are to be able to claim their rights.

5.1.2 Facilitating self-reflection and exploration: Any process of change must begin with individual reflection. Gender norms are often so powerful that women themselves have accepted situations of inequality or violence as normal. Self-reflection involves exploring how different experiences have influenced the course of one's life and affected both one's relationships and beliefs about oneself. Low self-esteem is also a common result of disempowerment and only through building up a sense of self-worth can a new type of power be cultivated. In Nicaragua, women-only spaces made use of role plays, reflection discussions and participatory tools which focus on women's self-worth and confidence to support women's empowerment. This has helped women to question their husband's dominance in the home and further negotiate their ability to participate in different community spaces.



5.1.3 Literacy training: For women who are illiterate, accessing information about their rights can be very difficult. Numerous country programmes provide literacy training to women's groups. Ethiopia has initiated a child to mother literacy training, where school-going children are teaching their mothers to read and write. Group literacy training can be an important entry point for teaching women about their rights and increasing their self-esteem. In DRC, women participants in literacy activities reported having increased confidence as a result of being able to send a text message for the first time.

5.1.4 Leadership training courses: Specific leadership modules could be provided for programme participants. The training must promote reflection of power differences and the construction of gender roles to allow participants to gain critical consciousness about the social norms which constrain their leadership. Training courses can be tailored to specific programmes e.g. if a programme is working with cooperatives then women's leadership could be incorporated into training on cooperative management and functioning. If there is a women's caucus in the country, and if the programme is specifically looking at supporting women to be involved in formal decision-making structures, then working with the women's caucus or national women's council to provide training may be an appropriate strategy for supporting this work.



5.1.5 Mentoring schemes: During the implementation phase, practitioners can consider engaging women who were previously involved in decision-making roles to reach out to other women and support them. For example, in Rwanda, previously elected women are encouraged to talk with women who are interested in being more involved in community decision-making structures or running for political office.

5.1.6 SGBV referral measures: If a woman engaged in the programme discloses experiences of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), then Trócaire staff and partners should adopt the appropriate referral measures (see strategy 5.3.1. of Trócaire's Protection and SGBV Framework). Women's empowerment programmes should not attempt to respond. In order to support a referral, staff and partner staff should receive training in supporting a disclosure in line with our SGBV principles (i.e. to listen to the disclosure in a non-judgemental, non-shaming or blaming manner). A guidance note on handling disclosures is available on Box (Goal 3, How To Resources).



5.1.7 Economic support: Financial independence can help to increase women's self-esteem and can serve to reinforce the internal empowerment journey, can provide them with the means to leave an oppressive relationship, as well as help contribute to the overall household's financial security. However, supporting economic empowerment may also overburden women with an additional heavy work load, create tension within the household if men in the household feel undermined by women's success, and may place women in further debt if their enterprises fail. Therefore, activities which support economic empowerment need to be managed carefully so that they result in more equitable control over household resources and do not reinforce gender norms (i.e. women engaging in small scale enterprise and also still doing most of the farm work while men continue to reap all the profits). Working with both women and men in the household on issues relating to access and control over resources and work burden within the household must be done alongside close accompaniment for training and development relating to women's specific needs in relation to economic support. This should not be limited to small scale entrepreneurial work in the informal sector, but consideration should also be given to supporting women's involvement in the formal sector.

5.2 Family/Household Level

Strategies at this level should be designed and delivered to facilitate **awareness amongst women and men of power imbalances**, how they affect their relationships and support them to plan and take **positive actions to address these**. Women should be **enabled to play an active role in decision-making** structures through **increased family support** as a result of effective strategies at this level. Women are at the centre of Trócaire's programming on women's empowerment. However, engaging men and boys within programmes to positively use their power to become agents of change, pushing for greater equality and women's rights is a key component of women's empowerment. Men and women must recognise the role that power and patriarchy play in shaping relationships and how this can negatively impact on the family relationships in order to be able to take action.

5.2.1 Addressing issues of masculinity:



The construction of masculinity affects the way that men think they can be men, and how they must act in their lives and relationships with others. This identity is often narrowly defined in a way that emphasises the use of dominance and violence as an expression of power, excluding women rather than fostering positive partnerships based on trust and cooperation. Men, women and children are often hurt by the narrow expression of male identity. However, there are many expressions of masculinity and the aim of this work is to recast masculinity as the positive use of power. Positive masculinity is not about working to create 'good men' but about supporting reflection of the way that masculinity is constructed and how it can be both negative and positive. Countries have used different methodologies to address issues of masculinity, based on different ongoing participation and reflection activities. A core element of addressing masculinities is to ensure that it is consistently women-centred. In women's empowerment programmes this means that men are brought together for sessions only if the women in the community want this to happen, and that there are regular check-ins with the women on the impact in the community as a result of these sessions. If there are disclosures of violence or if there is known perpetration, programmes should take appropriate referral

measures (see strategy 5.1.6.). Working directly with perpetrators of violence with the aim of reducing offending is tertiary prevention and this is not a recommended strategy (see strategy 5.2.2. of Trócaire Protection and SGBV Framework).



Edrina Kenamu is chief of Kandusiwa Village, in Salima District, Malawi. Edrina's husband is also part of Trócaire's programme. Since joining the couple of seen huge improvements in their relationship. Photo by: Chipiliro Khonje.

5.2.2 Addressing gender norms and division of labour:

The division of labour within the home is often one of the main barriers to women's empowerment journeys, as they are unable to dedicate enough time to community activities. Working with couples and wider family members to address the way that labour is divided in the home can enable women the necessary freedom to move along the empowerment journey. Programmes adopt a number of different strategies to address these issues: encouraging men to be more involved in household chores and child care (Nicaragua), promoting labour saving technologies (Malawi) and providing childcare and other supports (i.e. meals) during community meetings. Finally, programmes should conduct a proper gender analysis prior to starting activities to identify and address additional potential barriers to women's engagement in programmes.

5.2.3 Improving communication between couples:



Encouraging trust and open communication between partners is an important part of preventing violence. Through understanding how power affects relationships, couples can have a more informed understanding of the others' perspective, which aims to facilitate more open communication. It is important to note that women's safety is the most important aspect of any strategy working with couples, therefore activities supporting better

communication would need to do so from a women centred approach, which ensures women are not actively encouraged to stay in relationships that are known to be abusive. Working directly with perpetrators of violence with the aim of reducing offending is tertiary prevention and this is not a recommended strategy (see strategy 5.2.2. of Trócaire Protection and SGBV Framework).

5.3 Community Level

Strategies at the community level should seek to support **women, girls, men and boys to confidently challenge existing gender power imbalances** within their community, and promote the **wider adoption of norms that support women's empowerment. Women and girls** should be in a **better position to negotiate power with others and influence decision-making** that affects their lives as a result of effective strategies at this level. As many of the barriers to women's empowerment are perpetuated by wider society, it is essential that programmes support communities to join women's empowerment journeys. Collective power is an essential component of the empowerment framework. Collective mobilisation has been shown to enhance the likelihood of women achieving change. Supporting isolated groups is unlikely to result in profound structural change. When women work collectively across communities they can more effectively push the boundaries of power.

5.3.1 Community mobilisation on issues of gender equality:



Trócaire research Pushing the Boundaries (2015), found that when programmes had not specifically tried to address gender norms and unequal power relations between men and women at the community level there were still high levels of resistance to women's participation in public life. Women had themselves gained positions of power but wider changes were difficult without support from the community. Mobilising communities to support gender equality is an important strategy to ensure a broad base of support for women in positions of power. Trócaire research⁴ demonstrates that community mobilisation is effective at changing attitudes and behaviours and leading to a reduction in violence against women. However, working

directly with perpetrators of violence is not a recommended (see strategy 5.2.3.). Community mobilisation involves engaging all levels of a community over an extended period of time. Social norms change strategies are currently being developed by Trócaire. It requires a systematic approach which works to inspire and support different community members, groups and institutions. This approach must recognise that social norms are embedded and difficult to shift and therefore require a sustained effort to change. According to DFID's review of evidence to prevent violence against women: 'Currently there is insufficient evidence to recommend single component communications campaigns' (DFID 2014, 6)⁵. Although mass media campaigns play an important role they are not sufficient as a standalone component. Strategies to enable mass mobilisation that supports women's empowerment include:

- Supporting grassroots movements or networks
- Leadership development
- Facilitating exchanges between groups
- Identifying common issues across communities and providing logistical support for movement building
- Creating specific women's committees within wider movements
- Addressing gender norms in decision-making structures

5.3.2 Finding changemakers: Changemakers are role models who can encourage others to change their behaviour or attitudes. Working with men and women who support women's participation can help support wider acceptance of women's empowerment. Engaging leaders who are in positions of authority and are respected within the community can also be part of this strategy. These leaders can become role models with the social power to change established norms.



Fenias Mazembe, a member of the Emergency Response Association of Gavrun Machange District, Mozambique. Photo: Hu O'Reilly.

⁴. Robinson, Sarah (2017), "A Review of SGBV prevention methodologies employed in development and humanitarian contexts" (Trócaire commissioned).

⁵. DFID. A Summary of the Evidence and Research Agenda for What Works: A Global Programme to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls. DFID, 2014.

5.3.3 Supporting women to participate in formal and informal structures:

Participating in decisions is an important component of empowerment, as it is the exercise of the new forms of power that have been fostered. As disempowerment is also caused by unequal power between citizens and the state, part of the empowerment journey requires engaging with state power structures. Women as individuals and a collective must be able to access power structures and have voice and influence within these structures. Programmes must strive to support women to access different structures, have influence within those structures and use that influence to advance the goals of gender equality. Each of these components requires different strategies but one without the other could lead to either women in disempowering structures or the perpetuation of existing unequal power relations. Often, supporting women to be involved in informal structures can be an entry point to their involvement in formal structures – for example, women's involvement in self help groups, and holding leadership positions within those groups can be an avenue for entering into more formal decision-making spaces. Support should be given to these women, so that they can continue their empowerment journey beyond informal spaces and beyond their community. The type of support that might meet their needs includes:

- Provision of advocacy and public speaking training (using role play or debates, for example)
- Ongoing mentoring and accompaniment to the new space
- Provision of leadership training for those that express an interest in continuing their empowerment journey and/or that exhibit natural leadership qualities
- Facilitating citizen and elected representative meetings
- Network creation/strengthening
- Connecting elected female leaders to women's movements

5.3.4 Creating new spaces: In the absence of real power in existing spaces and structures, the programme should work with women to create new, more inclusive and equitable, power structures. Completing a participatory power analysis of community decision-making spaces with women's groups may be an opportunity for discussing alternative spaces which could be created to


address the specific needs of women in the community. This is particularly important if the existing key decision-making spaces are dominated by men and from which women are excluded or have limited influence. Trócaire's programme in Colombia supported communities to engage in peace dialogues to facilitate peace-building at the local level. The programme specifically aimed to introduce new and diverse stakeholders to the peace process, and to pro-actively seek and include the voices of women.

5.4 Civil Society Level

At this level, Trócaire programmes work primarily through women-centred organisations and other civil society actors (organisations, networks, etc.) targeted as allies that have a focus on addressing gendered power imbalances within society (see Who we work with on pages 5–7). Strategies should support civil society to be more effective in this mission and, in particular, to support women and men (as allies) to actively participate in well-resourced women's rights movements.

5.4.1 Political system analysis: Before engaging at this level, Trócaire and partner staff should have a very deep understanding of their political system and the extent to which that system lends itself to increased women's participation and influence. For example, evidence shows that 'first past the post' systems, based on the principle of winner-takes-all, are much harder to increase women's involvement than proportional representation systems. Similar, multi-party democracies show better results in terms of women's participation than two-party democracies. If a quota system is in place, the type of system (e.g. voluntary at party political level versus reserved seat quota system) will also influence the design of our strategies.

5.4.2 Support women's participation in grassroots advocacy: Advocacy is important at all levels of society. The laws and policies that affect women are not restricted to acts of parliament and decisions made by parliamentarians. Supporting women to influence decisions affecting their lives in community level structures is also an important element of changing the political system.

5.4.3 Supporting women's movements and networking:  For change to happen in higher power structures, women's collectives must become a political force through networks and mass movements combining to ensure that structural change in society and power relations can occur. Women's movements play a vital role in pushing for policy change and law reform (see section 5.5.) and changing widely held social norms. Different actors play different roles in movement building. Trócaire programmes should support community-based women centred organisations that are often engaged in deep social change processes and innovative grassroots work, to join forces with local, national and international partners and allies. Finding the balance between supporting but not controlling movements is important. INGOs can play an important role in supporting and networking women from the grassroots into national level movements, allowing the women themselves to foster 'power with' others.


5.4.4 Action research: Supporting action research on testing/documenting/adapting best practice models to support women's empowerment helps to ensure responsive programming that understands and responds to the barriers women face in influencing decisions. This should be specific to the context and it is important to ensure that key recommendations from the research result in adapted programme implementation. For example, research on power dynamics within polygamous unions in Sierra Leone and DRC has resulted in a rethinking of how we target and conduct our programming in those countries.


5.4.5 Monitoring policies and laws and advocating:  A key role of civil society in supporting women's empowerment is to monitor the implementation of laws and policies that support gender equality and advocate for laws and policies that are not already in place, improvements in existing laws and policies, or better institutional practice. For example, during the 2018 elections in Sierra Leone, Trócaire's partner organisations advocated for an election fee that female candidates could afford to pay.


5.5 Institutional Level

At this level, strategies should be designed to target key decision-making positions where real power lies within institutions

at all levels – from village to international. Programmes should focus on the most strategic entry-points to contribute to an institutional environment – laws, policies, budgets, strategies and services – that proactively support women's empowerment. Programmes also should seek to support 'critical actors' (i.e. those who act individually or collectively to bring about women-friendly policy change) and the inclusion of a critical mass of women in these key decision-making positions. Targeted women should be representative of the different strata of society, specific to each country context. Supporting women's empowerment requires wider society to change. Inequality that is embedded in laws, policies and institutional practice must be addressed for power to fully shift. New laws, policies, structures and institutional practice that support women's empowerment must be fought for through a coordinated movement that connects women across the empowerment journey.

5.5.1 Strengthening customary governance and accountability systems  at local levels to address women's concerns and support women's empowerment. Programmes can support interventions involving the participatory drafting, debating and adopting of rules – or customary 'bylaws' – for supporting women's empowerment.

5.5.2 Influencing local and national laws, policies, budgets, strategies, services:  Programmes should include strategies that support partners to engage in processes to influence the design of key policies and laws that support women's rights. This could involve using evidence-based advocacy that mobilises communities to demand their rights. Other options could be working with 'critical actors' (reformers, champions) – those elected representatives who want to push through a more gender equal agenda.

5.5.3 Holding duty-bearers to account:  To uphold and implement existing laws that support women's rights. Examples include lobbying to ensure sufficient budgets are allocated for the implementation of laws that are already in place (for example the Sexual Offences Act in Kenya) and monitoring to ensure that laws relating to the proper implementation of gender quotas are upheld during elections.



Catalina Sanchez testifies during the trial of former Guatemalan military dictator Rios Montt in May 2013. Trócaire's partners fought for almost 30 years to prosecute Montt. Photo: Elena Hermosa.

5.5.4 Using international laws and frameworks:

Using international laws and frameworks can be an important lobbying tool for working with government structures on women's rights, particularly if the country in question has ratified the international laws, or is coming up to a key moment such as a review of progress against international laws such as CEDAW. Civil society often produces 'shadow reports', which are submitted alongside official government reports, and often provide key evidence to demonstrate government failure to fully adhere to international conventions. Outlined below are the key international laws and frameworks in relation to women's rights. Programmes may also support women's groups to engage in social accountability work, e.g. monitoring service delivery through community scorecards (see Trócaire Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy Framework).

5.5.5 Supporting elected female leaders to demand gender equitable policies and laws:

It is important that as women emerge as leaders and enter formal political arenas they are still supported to challenge disempowerment of all women. Leaders can become an unelected vanguard believing they represent the population but actually only voicing elite concerns. Women can also become constrained by new power relations for example, within their political party or the wider community. Research conducted in Latin America found that there was a perception that once women had entered formal politics they had abandoned the grassroots movement. Laura Romeo from the Colectiva Feminista in El Salvador found that the women they supported to enter political spaces then become 'totally

absorbed by the political [and]....comply with blind obedience to the party' (Pedwell 2008, 31)⁶.

5.5.6 Quota systems for women guarantee that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a decision-making body. Quotas in and of themselves can only deliver numeric representation. It is necessary to understand how gender inequality functions in each political context, and how elites maintain control of political power, in order to develop strategies to truly increase women's political participation. Quotas can certainly make a positive contribution to such strategies, but on their own they can't be expected to transform gender relations. Even at the grassroots level, women who emerge as leaders may not support more enabling forms of power and in fact, may use their power over other women. The power they gain can enable them greater social status which they may not want to share with others. Supporting ongoing leadership development is necessary for women to be able to utilise transformative forms of power. Strategies to support ongoing leadership development could include: capacity-building, mentoring and coaching, facilitating citizen and elected representative meetings, accompaniment and network creation.

⁶ Pedwell, Carolyn. Just Politics Women Transforming Political Spaces. London: One World Action, 2008.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	<p>CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.</p> <p>www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/</p>
The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)	<p>Developed in 1995 during the Fourth World Conference on Women, this defining framework for change made comprehensive commitments under 12 critical areas of concern including women's involvement in decision-making, violence against women and women and armed conflict.</p> <p>www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm</p>
Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG5)	<p>Goal 5 of the SDGs relates to achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. It includes nine target areas including issues such as ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.</p>
UNSCR 1325	<p>The Security Council adopted resolution (S/RES/1325) on women and peace and security on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace-building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction. It also stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for maintaining and promoting peace and security. Resolution 1325 urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. The resolution provides a number of important operational mandates, with implications for Member States and the entities of the United Nations system. Further related resolutions include UNSCR 1820 (condemning sexual violence as a weapon of war) and UNSCR 1888 (mandates peacekeeping missions to protect women and girls from sexual violence in armed conflict).</p> <p>www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/#resolution</p>
Agreed Conclusions of the Commission of the Status of Women	<p>The principal output of the Commission on the Status of Women is the agreed conclusions on priority themes set for each year. Agreed conclusions contain an analysis of the priority theme and a set of concrete recommendations for governments, intergovernmental bodies and other institutions, civil society actors and other relevant stakeholders, to be implemented at the international, national, regional and local level.</p> <p>www.unwomen.org/en/csw</p>

CASE STUDY: STRENGTHENING FEMALE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES' LEADERSHIP

Trócaire worked with its partner organisation the National Alliance of Women (NAWO) and its member organisations in Khorda, Kalhandi, Deogarh, Rayagada and Keonjhar districts in Odisha, India from 2009 to 2015. NAWO used a number of strategies to support ongoing leadership of elected women Panchayat (village level government body) representatives including:

- Building capacity of the elected women Panchayat representatives to assert their rights and entitlements
- Federation building of elected women Panchayat representatives at different levels
- Campaigning on different issues (50% quota for women at Panchayat level and 33% quota for women at Assembly and Parliament level)

NAWO have supported the development of the first elected women Panchayat representatives' association in Odisha, the State Women Panchayat Representatives' Association (SWORA). NAWO recognised the need for this, as a forum where women's needs could be discussed. This association addresses issues such as increasing critical participation, addressing violence faced by women Panchayat representatives at Panchayat level and family and societal pressure. Over the past two years, SWORA has been working on addressing policy issues such as repealing the Two Child Norm, addressing election conditionality at Panchayat level and building restroom facilities for the women representatives in Panchayat buildings.



Women working in their rice paddy fields in Odisha, India. Photo by Justin Kernaghan.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Action Research: Studies or research carried out in the course of an activity or programme to improve the methods and approach.

Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy: Trócaire is committed to a rights-based approach to development. Citizen monitoring and advocacy puts the principles of a rights-based approach into practice as it empowers citizens (rights-holders) to know, claim and realise their rights by a. participating in setting the agenda of and influencing policy-making and institutional practice of government and other duty-bearers and, b. monitoring and holding the relevant duty-bearers to account.

Community Mobilisation: Community mobilisation, or the organisation of collective groups of individuals for action at community level, takes numerous forms and there is no standard approach. Community mobilisation aims to support social transformation, where citizens, especially poor and marginalised women and men, participate in decisions that affect them. Community participation is a right.

Critical Mass: Critical mass theory in politics and collective political action is defined as the critical number of actors needed in a body in order to affect policy and make a change. This figure has been set at 30%. In gender politics, this means that at least 30% of members of decision-making bodies should be women in order to make a significant difference in politics.

Empowerment: An increase in transformative types power and the reduction of oppressive power relations, between men and women and between state and citizens.

Integration: An integrated country programme aims to increase impact through addressing multiple and often intersecting vulnerabilities faced by women and men and includes four key components:

- i. A country team approach to analysis and planning leading to greater geographical coherence within and between outcomes
- ii. Greater integration between initiatives at individual, community, society and institutional levels as outlined in Trócaire's Theory of Change

- iii. Within each outcome there is a commitment to consider how the Country Programme will contribute to the creation of an enabling environment and incorporate the following integrated strategies: Citizen Monitoring and Advocacy, Women's Empowerment, and Resilience.
- iv. Where suitable, a highly integrated country programme will consider addressing more than one outcome in a community.

Masculinity: Constructed male identity that affects the way that men think they can be men, and how they must act in their lives and relationships with others.

Power To: Refers to the unique potential of every person to be able to take action to influence their world. It refers to the capacity to organise and change existing hierarchies.

Power Over: Ability to influence and coerce. Refers to domination, control and repression to varying degrees. This form of power is seen as a negative force that controls the oppressed person's ability to take action.

Power Within: Internal capacity that all humans possess; without this all other types of power are not possible. Self-confidence and self-worth are regarded as measures of power within.

Power With: Increased power from collective action. Based on mutual support, solidarity and collaboration, 'power with' multiplies individual talents and knowledge.

Rights Awareness: A variety of methods that aim to educate and inform people and groups about their rights and responsibilities linked to local, national and international laws. Trócaire is committed to ensuring that rights awareness is conducted in a way that is empowering to participants and leads to action to claim and/or defend rights.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SBGV):

An umbrella term for any harmful act or threat of harm inflicted on a person because of the socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. It is a life-threatening global health and human rights issue, which is rooted in gender inequality and primarily affects women and girls globally, although it also affects boys and men in some contexts. Gender based violence refers to an act that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It encompasses sexual violence, physical violence, emotional and psychological violence, harmful traditional practices and socio-economic violence.

Women-Centred Organisation (WCO): WCOs, also known as women-driven organisations, women-led organisations or women's rights organisations are civil society organisations with an overt women's and girls' rights, women's empowerment, gender equality and/or feminist purpose.

Trócaire, Maynooth,
Co. Kildare, Ireland
T: +353 (0)1 629 3333
F: +353 (0)1 629 0661
E: info@trocaire.org
www.trocaire.org

Trócaire, 50 King Street, Belfast,
BT1 6AD, Northern Ireland
T: +44 (0) 2890 808030
F: +44 (0) 2890 808031
E: infoni@trocaire.org
www.trocaire.org

ROI Revenue Number: CHY 5883
NI Revenue Number: XR10431