

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls



Quarterly Zine
Quarter 3
2025





INTRODUCING OUR QUARTERLY ZINE EVAWG EDITION

By Megan McClure Botha | WRDA

Ending violence against women and girls (EVAWG) is a key area of work for many Consortium partners. In this edition of our quarterly zine we take an in-depth look at this in action.

Our first piece by the Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIRWN) looks at the launch of a Community Led Review on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in Rural Areas. This is followed by information on Women's Tec's new six-part programme to end Violence Against Women and Girls (Hard Hat Thinking) by giving women the knowledge, confidence and community support to build safer lives. The Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) provides a summary of the wide range of their work on this issue before looking at one particular project in detail.

We hope you find the information contained in this edition useful as we continue to ensure a voice for women from disadvantaged and rural areas.

IN THIS EDITION





NIRWN

Community Led Review on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in Rural Areas.



Women's Tec

WOMEN'STEC Empowers Women Through New 'Hard Hat Thinking' Programme to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls



WRDA

WRDA's work on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls



WRDA

WRDA Launches Guide to Challenge Far-Right Cooption of EVAWG Narrative





COMMUNITY LED REVIEW ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RURAL AREAS.

By Louise Coyle | NIRWN

The EVAWG Framework recommendation from rural women is now being actioned with the launch of a Community Led Review on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in Rural Areas. NIRWN is proud to be an instrumental part of this much needed Review-it is crucial that the lived experiences of rural women are at the heart of the research and future delivery. We will be leading in this Review in joint partnership with our colleagues at RCN. NIRWN would like to extend our appreciation to the First Minister Michelle O'Neill MLA and Deputy First Minister Emma Little-Pengelly MLA for their dedicated address to our membership on International Day of Rural Women encouraging their participation in this Review.

Thank you to NI Executive Office Staff who have worked behind the scenes to make this policy recommendation a reality. We would like to acknowledge every single member who has engaged with us on this issue since 2022 when The Executive Office began working on an EVAWG Framework. You have trusted us as custodians of your lived experiences and we do not carry that responsibility lightly.

NIRWNs Co Design engagement ensured this Review was a key recommendation as articulated by rural women when the report was launched in September 2024. Now that the Review is ready to begin we will continue NIRWNs strategically critical role in ensuring the EVAWG Framework and Strategy can deliver for the needs and experiences of rural women into the future by supporting their voices at the heart of policy making and Executive delivery to End Violence Against Women and Girls.

Thank you always to Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) and Minister Andrew Muir MLA for their ongoing support and championing of rural women. The attendance of the Minister at International Day of Rural Women to meet directly with our members and DAERA investment in this Review is testament to this commitment.

Information on how you can engage directly with the review will be available very soon.





WOMEN'STEC EMPOWERS WOMEN THROUGH NEW 'HARD HAT THINKING' PROGRAMME TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

By Amy Nolan | Women's Tec

WOMEN'STEC has launched 'Hard Hat Thinking', a six-part programme to end Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) by giving women the knowledge, confidence and community support to build safer lives. Focusing on self-worth, safety and healthy relationships, the programme provides practical tools to help women recognise abuse, understand their rights and set strong personal boundaries.

Workshops cover the spectrum of VAWG including coercive control, financial abuse and harmful gender norms. Participants learn about legal protections, reporting pathways and how to talk to children about healthy relationships — important knowledge in a world where many women have grown up with normalised or hidden abuse. Confidence & Resilience sessions, led by a qualified life coach, help women rebuild self-worth, develop emotional resilience and assert personal boundaries. Additionally, personal safety and self-defence workshops give participants practical strategies to boost confidence and feel safer in their daily lives. Through partnership with Women's Aid and facilitated group discussions, participants get access to specialist services and peer support. The programme coordinator also provides one-to-one guidance, including referrals and access to an Emergency Fund for support.

This quarter, the Hard Hat Thinking group was visited by the Lord Mayor who met the participants, listened to their stories and shared her own.

Programme Coordinator Patricia Fleming said:

"The Lord Mayor came to our HHT group on Tuesday to mark International Day for EVAWG. She met the students and listened to their thoughts and experiences and shared her own story. It was great to have the council's support and for them to see first hand the impact of violence towards women and girls."

Speaking at WOMEN'STEC, the Lord Mayor of Belfast, Councillor Tracy Kelly, said: "All these projects are great examples of the vital work happening, every day, across Belfast to tackle this issue and make it clear that every woman has a right to feel, and be, safe, wherever they are. The Executive Office has indicated their initial support for this, and I look further to seeing how else council can work with community organisations to shine a spotlight on this important work."

Lynn Carvill, CEO of WOMEN'STEC, said: "We were delighted to receive funding from the Local Change Fund to run our Hard Hat Thinking series of workshops. Regrettably, domestic and sexual violence is presenting as an issue for too many of our students. We welcome the opportunity to increase awareness and challenge this societal scourge within the safe space that WOMEN'STEC provides, and today's visit from the Lord Mayor allowed us to share this work with her as she met our students and team, and saw its importance for women and communities across Belfast."

The visit showed the importance of community and political support in tackling VAWG and the real life impact of programmes like Hard Hat Thinking. Through education, empowerment and community connection WOMEN'STEC is helping women build safer lives — one brick at a time.

If you'd like to hear more about this programme, or have any questions then please contact Communications Officer Amy Nolan by emailing Amy.Nolan@womenstec.org.





WRDA'S WORK ON ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

By Megan McClure Botha | WRDA

Ending violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) is one of the biggest challenges facing our society today. It is an underlying cause of gender inequality and it violates women's human rights. Furthermore, Violence against women and girls is a public health issue that affects women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health. For all these reasons WRDA are working as a force for change in order to tackle VAWG and its many facets through a variety of projects.

WRDA Guide to Challenging the Far-Right Co-option of EVAWG Narrative

The <u>guide</u> was developed by WRDA in consultation with professional and lived experience experts and offers a clear and principled refutation of this dangerous co-option. The guide aims to equip political and civic leaders and organisations with the tools to push back against these narratives and to reaffirm a feminist, inclusive, and anti-racist approach to ending violence against women and girls. You can find out more about this guide in a more detailed article included in this issue.

VAWG and Homelessness Campaign: Shift the Shame

Violence against women is a complex problem, and <u>this campaign</u> highlights how violence is one cause of homelessness for women. Tackling this issue needs political commitment and to look at the specific needs of women who are homeless as a result of trauma and violence.

The Executive Office Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy

In October 2024, The Executive Office launched its first ever Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy following a long co-design and consultation process, of which WRDA was proud to have our Women's Sector Lobbyist, Elaine Crory be a part of the codesign group.

As a recognition of our expertise in the area of prevention, WRDA is proud to be one of the 8 organisations selected to deliver on the Regional Change Fund under the strategy.

As part of this work, WRDA sits on the EVAWG steering committee. With the RCF investment in prevention of VAWG, WRDA is delivering our Raise Your Voice project in partnership with Reclaim the Agenda (Coordinator of Reclaim the Night Belfast rallies), Women's Support Network (host of the Rape Crisis Service) and NI Rural Women's Network. The project is currently staffed by four workers funded part-time at WRDA and RTA.

Tackling Sexual Harassment in the Workplace

Our Tackling Sexual Harassment in the Workplace toolkit is a free resource. It helps employers create workplaces where women are safe to report incidents of sexual harassment and support employers to respond appropriately.

This project was made possible by the TIME'S UP UK Justice and Equality Fund, provided through Rosa. It is a culmination of work from Fawcett and partners, Chwarae Teg, the Women's Resource and Development Agency, and Close the Gap.

Raise Your Voice

Raise Your Voice is a collective of four women's sector organisations led by WRDA working together to collectively tackle sexual harassment and sexual violence across Northern Ireland. Our goal is to create true cultural change to tackle the root causes of these behaviours and empower people to act to change this in their own lives. We know that community safety begins with ending sexual harassment.

We do this through a variety of ways:

- raising awareness through social media campaigns,
- responding to consultations relating to VAWG,
- sitting on the Gillen Review team
- campaigning government, civil service and the police
- delivering workshops on themes of tackling victim-blaming, sexual harassment, digital and online, as well as understanding consent and how to intervene safely as active bystanders,
- hosting the Anti Sexual Harassment
 Forum which brings together trade
 unions, youth organisations, women's
 sector organisations and other
 organisations dedicated to ending
 sexual harassment and sexual
 violence,

To host a workshop or join the ASH Forum, get in touch with Sarah Stack, our RYV coordinator: sarah.stack@wrda.net.

We are pleased to receive support for our Raise Your Voice project from:

- Belfast City Council's Gender Action
 Plan
- The Executive Office's EVAWG Strategy

Women's Policy Group NI

The WRDA led <u>Women's Policy Group</u>
<u>Northern Ireland</u> is a platform for women working in policy and advocacy roles in different organisations to share their work and speak with a collective voice on key issues. It is made up of women from trade unions, grassroots women's organisations, women's networks, feminist campaigning organisations, LGBT+ organisations, support service providers, human rights and equality organisations and individuals.

As part of their remit, the Women's Sector Lobbyist and WPG NI have undertaken research in relation to VAWG. <u>After Violence</u> was our most recent primary research.

This primary research has also shown that:

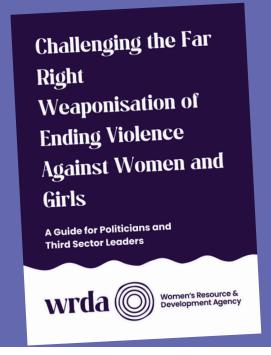
- 87% of women in Northern Ireland have experienced VAWG
- 65% of women in Northern Ireland have experienced domestic abuse
- The 3 most common perpetrators of violence were (1) intimate partner (2) stranger (3) colleague or acquaintance
- Only 22% of women feel comfortable reporting VAWG to the police
- Only 9% of women think that courts in NI take VAWG seriously
- 85% of women think there should be a specific mechanism for reporting VAWG to the police
- 77% of women think convicted offenders of VAWG should take part in a rehabilitation program

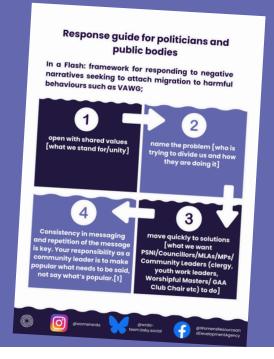
Check out our <u>research hub</u> for more reports.

Representation

WRDA promotes and practices participation, inclusion and collaboration which builds solidarity as a means to effect social change in all the work we undertake. As part of this commitment, WRDA is represented by staff members on the following bodies particularly relevant to tackling VAWG:

- TEO EVAWG Steering Committee
- Gillen Review Implementation Team sub-group on Education and Awareness
- All Party Group on Domestic and Sexual Violence
- NI Assembly Gender Equality
 Strategy Expert Advisory Panel and
 Co-Design Working Group
- The Victim's Commissioners' Sexual Abuse Advisory Panel







WRDA LAUNCHES GUIDE TO CHALLENGE FAR-RIGHT CO-OPTION OF EVAWG NARRATIVE

By Megan McClure Botha | WRDA

The Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA) is proud to announce the upcoming launch of a timely new resource: <u>"Challenging the Far Right Weaponisation of Ending Violence Against Women and Girls"</u>. This guide is designed to support politicians, public bodies, and third sector organisations in recognising and resisting the far-right's manipulation of EVAWG campaigns to promote xenophobic, racist, and Islamophobic agendas.

Why This Guide Matters

Across Northern Ireland and beyond, far-right groups have increasingly sought to hijack the language of campaigns to tackle violence against women and girls to target Black and minority communities, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and Muslim communities. These efforts hinder EVAWG advocacy, and spread racist and Islamophobic misinformation and hate.

The guide was developed by WRDA in consultation with professional and lived experience experts and offers a clear and principled refutation of this dangerous co-option. The guide aims to equip political and civic leaders and organisations with the tools to push back against these narratives and to reaffirm a feminist, inclusive, and anti-racist approach to ending violence against women and girls.

"This guide is a vital tool in safeguarding the integrity of EVAWG advocacy. We cannot allow the language of justice to be twisted into a vehicle for hate. Our elected representatives and community leaders have the power, and the responsibility, to ensure that efforts to end violence against women and girls are rooted in justice, not prejudice. This guide is intended to support them in this mission and as a reminder that racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia have no place in our policies or rhetoric. WRDA stands firmly for a feminist, inclusive, and anti-racist approach, one that centres the voices and safety of all women and gender-diverse people."

Megan McClure Botha, Public Relations and Membership Coordinator, Women's Resource and Development Agency

What's Inside

- A framework for consistent and values-based messaging
- Practical advice for engaging on social media, issuing press releases, and speaking to the media
- Key facts that counter misinformation linking migration to VAWG
- Recommendations for further reading and advocacy

The guide does not address sectarianism or antisemitism, as the co-option of ending VAWG by the far right is not a feature of these forms of hate in the Northern Irish context.

In addition to the guide aimed at politicians and third sector leaders WRDA have also published a new guide designed to empower individuals to take meaningful action against racism and Islamophobia.

This resource offers practical advice for responding to harmful language and behaviour, as well as strategies for how to safely intervene. The intention of the guide for individuals is to provide clear, actionable steps to help people challenge racism and Islamophobia safely and constructively, fostering dialogue rather than confrontation.

Key Features of the Guide for Individuals:

- Responding to Racist Comments:
 Learn how to focus on behaviour
 rather than labels, use gentle
 questioning to encourage reflection,
 and rephrase problematic terms to
 promote understanding.
- Bystander Intervention Techniques:
 Discover the "Five Ds"—Direct,
 Distract, Delegate, Delay, and
 Document—to safely intervene when
 witnessing harassment.
- Community and Workplace Actions:
 From advocating for anti-racism
 policies in your workplace to raising
 concerns about educational materials,
 the guide outlines ways to influence
 positive change.
- Further Learning: Explore
 recommended books such as Natives
 by Akala and Why I'm No Longer
 Talking to White People About Race
 by Reni Eddo-Lodge to deepen your
 understanding of systemic racism.

Take Action Today

Whether it's challenging harmful ideas calmly, supporting practical initiatives, or simply starting conversations about inclusion, every step counts. Together, we can build a society where dignity and equality are non-negotiable.

WRDA's Commitment

Founded in 1983, WRDA been a stalwart champion for women's equality and participation in society. Operating from a feminist perspective and informed by lived experiences, WRDA continues to tackle structural inequalities through advocacy, campaigning, health promotion, and training. This new resource is a continuation of WRDA's work to ensure that EVAWG efforts remain focused on justice, safety, and equality for all women and gender-diverse people—free from hate and manipulation.

"They use the language of 'violence against women and girls' as a smokescreen to cover for the racism. It's an effort to turn all these conversations about violence into conversations about migration, It's very much punching down and using women and girls as the boxing gloves to do the punching. And we don't appreciate that in the slightest."

Women's Sector Lobbyist Elaine Crory (quoted in The Detail)

Get Involved

The new guide will be launched at an event in Shankill Shared Women's Centre on the 9th of December. We are proud to have a lived experience and expert practitioner panel for the launch. The panel consists of contributors to the guide and there will be an opportunity for questions from the audience. The launch will start at 11am with lunch served at 12.15pm. Please <u>RSVP</u> for catering purposes.

After this event we will also be launching a new research report at 1pm. This research examines the role of firearms in domestic abuse in Northern Ireland. Specifically, the work was carried out to give voices to those with direct experience of this rare but extremely dangerous phenomenon and to make recommendations to curb this danger. Please RSVP for catering purposes.

Membership of WRDA is free and open to all women and gender-diverse individuals and groups. <u>Join us</u> in standing against the weaponisation of EVAWG and in building a more inclusive and equitable society.

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WRC is funded by the RISP programme

EVAWG



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