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RCNI briefing to Government Scoping Group

RCNI recommend three core principals to underline all scoping group recommendations:

1. Sustainability

The scoping group should strive for recommendations that put in place measures and frameworks that are repeatable, embedded and supported into the future.

2. Specialist

The Scoping group recommendations should keep to the fore that sexual violence is a cultural and systemic phenomenon that often resists generic measurements and methodologies¹. Sexual violence data infrastructure must be consciously specialist in order to measure sexual violence accurately.

3. Comprehensiveness

The scoping group recommendations should address sexual violence as a whole and meet the international obligation of making *all* data available for policy formation in the most optimum manner rather than problem solving short term 'as is' matters.

Terms of Reference outputs

ToR 1 consider the data available to the Government in developing policy to address sexual abuse and violence from both qualitative and quantitative perspective.

ToR 2 assess if there are gaps in the available data in a policy development context with particular regard to comparable jurisdictions

ToR 3 draw up a set of data points which it considers to be relevant to the formulation of policy in this area including in assessing the effectiveness of existing policy and legal frameworks

Data to assess the effectiveness of existing policy is critical. Essential data governance requires specific predetermined usage plans, appropriate to the functions and remit of various locations and agencies. But such data is insufficient to address sexual violence.

¹ For example see findings of FRA study

Government also needs to ensure that **all** available data can be utilised towards facilitating knowledge-driven transformation. For example Rape Crisis Centre (RCC) managers use administrative and service user data to understand and manage their service delivery and outputs within their resources. But they need and use wider sets of data to query current practice and shape change. The same is true across government. Sexual violence is an issue that demands change, therefore Government needs to locate and support whole-of-government knowledge infrastructure in addition to its operational and administrative data needs. International instruments recognise that **all** available data should be marshalled towards expanding and challenging our current understanding and policy.

ToR 4 Make recommendations in respect of a national survey methodology

Methodological key points:

1. We recommend that **a national prevalence study** should be repeated every 5 years. Each study should begin with a review which examines the existing data points and reviews the need to repeat them and the inclusion of new categories.
2. We believe it would be beneficial and possible to include **top-line sexual violence statistics** into existing survey instruments such as the CSO Crime and Victimisation Household survey. A recommendation to scope the methodology and extent of such a module would be needed. Statistics should be forthcoming annually thereafter.
3. **Data points and definitions** should be subject to ongoing review as part of international scrutiny of measures and integrating multilevel learning from all data sources available. For example RCNI over 15 years dropped various categories and included others upon review of efficacy and practical consideration, we no longer collect religion, marital status, fgm, formal complaint case outcomes, and alcohol and drug intake, but we do now collect sexualised behaviour, and survivor's perception of level of Garda contact, survivor's perception of Garda response, and survivor's perception of Garda sensitivity of response.
4. **The older child needs to be a separate category of analysis alongside the normal division of 'child' 'adult'**. Given the new queries and variables that need to be explored, developed and tested, we would recommend it not initially form part of a general prevalence study but be a standalone pilot study of the older child, to be integrated into a future whole of population study at a later point. See RCNI, 'Hearing child survivors of sexual violence,' (2013) for the evidence base for creating this third category for analysis.²
5. **'Incident'** must be a fully defined, understood and shared definition, integrated into all quantitative measures in order to facilitate comparability and accuracy. See RCNI statistical report methodology which, developed from SAVI methodology and kept under review,

² We tested all age cohorts for significant variation and this is the only change we would recommend on that basis.

makes this data comparable with international data sets. Any new prevalence study should follow this methodology.

6. **Age categorisation** SAVI is also out of step with current accepted categorisation on age Eg the definition of a child as under 18.
7. **Special categories** should include:
 - a. People with disability - the RCNI report on disability, in collaboration with the NDA, developed methodology in this area.
 - b. People experiencing homelessness
 - c. Prison population
 - d. Travellers
 - e. Refugees and Asylum seekers - see RCNI report
 - f. Ethnicity
 - g. People in prostitution and trafficking – RCNI collaborated with Ruhama to begin to develop the data points on these and we are happy to discuss these with the researchers further.
8. **The question of gender:** Under the EU's FRA and EIGE standards of data categorisation sexual violence falls under Violence Against Women. So too for the UN CEDAW and the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention. On the other hand some international indices are gender-blind, such as the UN Office of Drugs and Crime, which records violent crime, including sexual violence, without reference to gender. This is unhelpful. There is an argument for a third way of mainstreaming gender. The argument is that when we measure violence against women and men simultaneously we not only include male victims but the true gendered nature and extent of such violence becomes evident in the comparison and can be more fully appreciated and understood.
9. Note that missing from the SAVI methodology chapter is discussion of the fact that **men were part of the survey telephone interview team** initially but were found to be failing to get responses. The survey was conducted entirely by female interviewers as a result.
10. Given the significant skill sets and capacity to be developed and without presupposing the scoping group's recommendations, we recommend that should a study go to competitive tender that a preferred provider model should be considered thereafter in the interest of sustainability of capacity and specialism.

ToR 5 make recommendations on a framework that ensures regular updates of available data in a consolidated coherent framework to inform policy formulation.

Outcomes within existing administrative data frameworks:

- **Delay in cases reported into the justice system** should be systematically recorded and released. Many of the data points already exist across different agencies' administrative data but key data points are missing, such as the mean time between notification of CSV and recorded child interview, the mean time between conviction and sentencing etc. Missing data points need to be added and the statistics combined and periodically released to track the whole of system performance in sexual violence cases (please see separate delay in the justice system briefing document).
- **Child Sexual Violence case statistics**, other than Criminal Justice involved cases, are currently not publicly available. Review the **Tusla Data and Information Strategy and the social worker data systems** to ensure that the data points, from notification through to file closed, will be adequately publicly described and available.
- **NGO data**, although supported by a best practice framework in the RCNI Data, Knowledge and Information System (see EIGE independent report), is currently largely unavailable and limited due to the absence of funding since 2015. The system, when funded, supported 93% participation of all survivors attending RCCs. All participation in the system is voluntary as we are non-statutory. Individual services data is of limited application in producing safe and usable statistics due to sample size³. No other means to make available this data, in line with international obligations, is possible given the confidential and voluntary nature of RCC client take up of services.

The RCNI statistics has tracked similarity and variance of the RCC client population from the SAVI prevalence population and described same in each annual and specialised report (all available on www.rcni.ie). One area of significant change was the percentage reporting to the guards which now varies significantly from SAVI which found an 8% reporting rates, while in RCCs in 2015 the rate was 31%.

- **Garda data from CSO** is currently under review and not available publicly as yet. User satisfaction data, which should be available on all practice and policy activity, is largely absent. The limited service user feedback on Garda engagement with survivors within the RCNI system is suspended due to the absence of funding.
- **Court statistics** are reasonably comprehensive as far as type, location and outcome of court proceedings are concerned. However, they contain only minimal information with regard to victim or perpetrator demographics and/or perceptions of courts system generally.

³ For example see latest DRCC statistical report 2016 which is the largest sample of any individual centre. In terms of their N numbers, although not always cited, we can deduce that for the pie chart on disability n=14 and is divided into 6 categories. The category of age 70 – 79 refers to 2 clients. The breakdown of those pregnant after rape n = 11 and there are 6 outcome categories with 4 categories listing one person as having that outcome.

- **SATU statistics** are available and provide detail of numbers, ages, sexual offences, type of examination, feedback and satisfaction qualitative data is unavailable.

Consolidated Coherent Framework

Best outcome is that all available sexual violence data is comparable, coordinated and can be cross referenced and researched. The nature of sexual violence makes gathering, storing, linking and using relevant data a challenge to achieve. The government might best be served by fully comprehensive data gathering structures in the various State agencies and NGOs being complemented by a standalone, trusted, independent third party data storage, sharing, access and linkage entity. Given sensitivity this would have to be a sealed and controlled dataset in the manner of the Census within the CSO for example. Models for such 'warehousing' have already been explored within other areas of research (eg UCD ISSDA and Dassl HRB).

Any prevalence data policy level usability and availability would be greatly enhanced by online access to the data set such as the CSO census portal, if feasible given Data Protection and sample size limitations.

Key Reference studies, surveys and publications:

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