



## **Sustainable Development Goals: Scotland's Progress**

**A Scottish Women's Convention report looking at Sustainable Development Goal 5, *Achieve Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls.***

**The report is prepared in response to the Commission on the Status of Women Priority Theme for 2014:**

*"Women's Empowerment and its link to Sustainable Development"*

**[www.scottishwomensconvention.org](http://www.scottishwomensconvention.org)**

## Background to the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an intergovernmental set of aspiration Goals. In July 2014, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly's Open Working Group on the SDGs forwarded a proposal to the General Assembly, which contained 17 goals with 169 targets covering a broad range of sustainable development issues. These included ending poverty and hunger, improving health and education, making cities more sustainable, combating climate change, and protecting oceans and forests.

The Negotiations on the SDG's, which took place between various governments, began in January 2015 and ended in August 2015. Following the negotiations, a final document was adopted at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015 in New York. The title of the agenda is *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

Goals 1-6 directly address health disparities, primarily in developing countries. These six goals address key issues in global public health and public health:

- Poverty;
- Hunger and food security;
- Health;
- Education;
- Gender equality and women's empowerment; and
- Water and sanitation.



## SCOTLAND

Scotland is part of the United Kingdom, occupying the northern third of the island of Great Britain. It shares a border with England to the south and is bounded by the North Sea to the east and the Atlantic Ocean to the north and west. In addition to the mainland, Scotland constitutes over 790 islands including the Northern Isles and the Hebrides. The land area of Scotland is 78,772 km (30,414 sq miles), roughly 30% of the area of the United Kingdom (UK). The mainland has 9,911 km (6,158 miles) of coastline. Scotland has a population of around 5.2 million people, the majority of whom reside in urban areas.

Scotland has partial self-government within the United Kingdom as well as representation in the UK Parliament. Executive and legislative powers have been devolved to the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood in Edinburgh.

In September 2014, a referendum was held, where the people of Scotland were asked to vote as to whether Scotland should become an independent country. 55% of the population voted for Scotland to remain a part of the UK. As a result of this historic decision and subsequent discussions, more powers will be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. These include the ability to legislate on certain taxes, including Income Tax and Value Added Tax; the ability to change the voting age for Scottish Parliament and Local Government elections; powers over onshore oil and gas licensing; employment programmes and certain aspects of social security.

## TARGET 5: ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

### 5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

There has undoubtedly been advancement in gender equality in Scotland. The Scottish Parliament and Scottish Government have taken positive and pro-active steps in advancing equality, with the introduction of legislation, policies and practices in a number of key areas. These include:

- The UK's first gender balanced Cabinet, brought about by the current First Minister, the first woman to hold this post in Scotland.
- Investment in childcare, providing 600 hours per year of early learning and childcare to all three and four year olds, as well as certain two year olds.
- Protecting women and children from all forms of Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), providing support and services for those who have or are experiencing violence, and preventing violence from occurring in the first place are all national priorities.
- The abolition of university tuition fees, meaning that higher education is based in ability to learn, not ability to pay.
- The introduction of Free Personal and Nursing Care, where people aged 65 or over and those who have been assessed as having personal care, or nursing care needs, are given assistance free of charge.
- The abolition of medical prescription charges.
- The refreshed Framework for Maternity Care in Scotland, which is designed to address all care from conception, through pregnancy and during the postnatal phase.
- The Breastfeeding (Scotland) Act 2005, which makes it an offence to prevent or stop a person in charge of a child feeding that child in a public place.
- All women aged 20-60 across Scotland are invited for a cervical screening test every three years. The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is also given to all girls aged 12/13 years to help protect against cervical cancer.

#### Despite this progress, women in Scotland continue to face barriers and discrimination.

Women continue to be stereotyped in education, the workplace and in society in general. Few young women are steered towards 'non-traditional' roles such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). Too many continue to be clustered in low paid, low skilled part time jobs, which offer little in the way of training and development.

Women, particularly disabled and BME women, are not fully represented in any area of political and public life.

The economic downturn has had a significant impact. Cuts to budgets have seen a wave of redundancies in the public, voluntary sectors, and lower graded roles in the private sector, where women predominate. A lack of accessible, affordable and appropriate childcare and decent public transport severely curtails ability to fully participate in the labour market.

There are significant health inequalities in Scotland. The poorest in society die earlier and have higher rates of disease, including mental illness. Scotland has a higher rate of teenage pregnancy than most other Western European countries.

94% of Scotland's land mass is considered rural. Women who live in these remote and super sparse areas face additional barriers when accessing education, employment and childcare. Public transport is poor and the cost of fuel continues to rise.

Welfare Reform measures introduced by the UK Coalition Government have impacted hardest on women. Individual claimants will have to manage their accounts online and strict sanctions for non-compliance with 'work related requirements' are currently imposed. Women are being forced to increase working hours or seek other forms of employment in order to make ends

## **5.2 Eliminate all forms of VAWG in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation**

The SWC has welcomed the introduction of both current and proposed legislation, such as the Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011 and the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill. This type of policy demonstrates the Scottish Government's commitment to ensuring that instances of VAWG are tackled appropriately. Such a measure sends the message that those who perpetuate such crimes will be adequately punished.

*"This issue is so important. The only way to ensure women have access to justice, support and most importantly safety, is by putting laws in place which punish the men who abuse."*

The work undertaken by the justice system and various agencies in tackling domestic abuse, has been welcomed. Despite this, there are still too many loopholes within the law which means those who perpetrate abuse are not punished in the way they should be. Victims, the majority of whom are women, are denied access to justice as a result. VAWG is both a cause and a consequence of the significant gender inequalities which exist in society.

Recent developments in the law have improved access to justice. The civil protections they offer are, however, still not incentive enough for more women to seek the assistance of the law. Women have told the SWC that there are *"too many loopholes"*, which discourages them from reporting, or encouraging their friends and family to report instances of domestic abuse, rape and sexual assault to the police.

Those who have experienced violence and abuse often drop charges in cases in the mainstream courts as *"financially it's them who have to bear the brunt"*. Case processing times are different (often longer) in smaller, more outlying areas than they are in the main towns.

Many solicitors often do not fully understand the complexities of VAWG and are therefore not best placed to represent victims. Accessing specialists can be very difficult, particularly for those who live outwith main towns and cities. Many women are also unaware that they are free to seek alternative legal representation if they are unhappy with the advice they receive.

*"There just isn't enough information available for women who are looking to get protection from the courts. This discourages too many from even trying."*

The establishment of specialist domestic abuse courts in locations throughout Scotland is welcomed. Women have called for domestic abuse courts, or similar appropriate, community-based justice mechanisms to be set up in more areas throughout Scotland. Many women are afraid to disclose that they have been abused. If specialist mechanisms operated in more parts of the country, awareness of this type of access to justice would increase. This would, hopefully, further increase awareness of domestic abuse and take away the stigma that is too often attached to women in this situation.

More advocacy services are necessary, particularly for women from BME communities, disabled women and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. This should be considered, with particular attention paid to cultural issues and specific needs.

*"Too many vulnerable women are frightened of the legal system and do not know where to turn for help."*

It is extremely important that the services which provide advice and support to victims of revenge porn are provided with adequate funding, especially given the rise in this form of VAWG. It is also vital that the police and the courts are given thorough training in order to be able to properly deal with both victims and perpetrators. Without this full circle approach, women will continue to be limited in access to justice and redress.

While prevention work being carried out at the moment is vital, more needs to be done to tackle the root causes of VAWG. A change in the culture of Scotland is necessary, looking at the way in which women are viewed and how this can both stem from and lead to VAWG.

### **5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)**

Protection is available for victims through the Forced Marriage etc (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011, which came into force in November 2011.

The purpose of the legislation is to protect people from being forced to marry without their free and full consent, as well as protecting those who have already been forced into a marriage without consent. The Act introduces Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPO) to protect those forced to marry. It is a criminal offence to breach such an order. FMPOs protect adults, young people and children at risk of being forced into marriage. An Order will last as long as it is required. There are also a number of services available to support and advise victims, or potential victims, of forced marriage.

The Scottish Government is to be commended for its commitment to tackling and eradicating forced marriage. The protection of young women from this form of VAWG is of vital importance. The support available from organisations is also considered “*invaluable*” and without specialist advice and guidance, many young women would be left in extremely dangerous and vulnerable situations.

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) has been unlawful in Scotland since 1985. The Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005 re-enacted the Prohibition of Female Circumcision Act 1985, as well as extending protection by making it a criminal offence to have FGM carried out either in Scotland or abroad by giving those offences extra-territorial powers. The Act also increased the penalty on conviction on indictment from 5 to 14 years’ imprisonment.

The Scottish Government has worked collaboratively with the UK Government to close a loophole in the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005. This will extend the reach of the extra-territorial offences in that Act to habitual residents of the UK, as well as permanent residents. This extra piece of legislation, designed to safeguard more women against the harmful practice of FGM, is included in the Serious Crime Act 2015.

The Scottish Government remains committed to investment in a range of interventions targeted at preventing FGM. Recent funding allocations have focused on priority areas such as community engagement and development projects, awareness raising, training and support services.

The Rt. Hon. Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Scotland’s First Minister, is clear in her commitment to eradicating this form of VAWG. She has said:

*“Female Genital Mutilation is an unacceptable and illegal practice. It is a form of violence against women and a violation of the human rights of women and girls. It has no place in the Scotland we all want to live in. Raising awareness and promoting understanding is vital in addressing the complex issues of FGM. There is excellent work being done across Scotland to raise awareness and promote understanding of the complex issues of FGM.*

*The Scottish Government recently invested more than £70,000 to develop information awareness raising materials which are now being rolled out across Scotland, and to support a research based baseline report of Scotland-specific data to help inform our approach with community and statutory partners to tackling FGM in Scotland. We have also set up a multi-agency FGM Short Life Working Group which will produce a final report later this year, making recommendations to inform a national action plan for a consistent multi-agency approach to be taken in Scotland towards the elimination of the practice of FGM.*

*I am determined that those who commit FGM abuse will be held to account, and we will work with all our partners and with communities to ensure that we can protect those at risk.”*

#### ***5.4 Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.***

Unpaid caring and the lack of accessible, affordable childcare in Scotland are two of the most significant barriers to women's active participation in education and in the labour market. As well as undertaking the majority of unpaid care, women are also more likely to delay returning to work, or entering the labour market, to look after their children.

According to Carers Scotland, the value of care provided by unpaid carers is over £10 billion per year. Three out of five people in Scotland will become carers at some stage in their lives and 1 in 10 is already fulfilling some sort of caring role. Unpaid carers, the majority of whom are women, provide care and support to family members, other relatives and friends. The people they care for may be affected by disability, physical or mental health issues or a number of other conditions. Carers are not paid for the work they do, nor are they volunteers. Some receive payment through social security benefits, however this depends on the number of hours they care per week, as well as other factors relating to the person they look after.

The amount of unpaid work undertaken by women saves the economy a significant amount of money every year. These roles, such as cleaning, cooking and particularly caring, are seen as *"traditionally women's work"* and as such are not afforded the value they should be. Women who undertake caring roles for family and loved ones are not adequately valued by society, nor do they receive remuneration which reflects the work that they do. They are not afforded access to respite care, which would make a significant difference to the health and wellbeing of many.

*"There needs to be a proper recognition of the work we do – because it is work, it's like a full time job. Being able to get someone to help for a few hours a week would make such a difference. I need a bit of time to myself to feel human again."*

Unpaid carers are not in receipt of a taxable income, which means that the roles they undertake are not valued. As long as women are expected to carry out this type of role and the importance of caring continues to be undervalued, there will always be significant gender inequality. Powers over carers benefits are in the process of being devolved to the Scottish Parliament. It is hoped that the perceived sense of social justice which exists in Scotland is reflected in the design and implementation of any new benefits and services.

The Scottish Government provides 600 hours of funded early learning and childcare for 3-4 year olds and vulnerable two year olds. While this attempt to improve things for families, and women in particular, is a step in the right direction, it is not enough to remove barriers to women's labour market participation. These hours do not take into account children under the age of three, or those over the age of five.

The legislation which provides for additional hours does not take into account the working conditions of those employed in the childcare sector, the overwhelming majority of whom are women. They are vastly underpaid and grossly undervalued by society. Workers in private nurseries are open to more exploitation than their counterparts in Local Authorities. They are often only paid the minimum wage. Younger workers in training are paid even less. Once the young women are fully qualified, they are let go in favour of a younger, cheaper trainee.

*"It's exploitation in it's most obvious form, which causes competition between recently qualified early years practitioners. Many are forced to work as supply or bank staff, which means no guaranteed hours or income."*

Conversely Local Authority childcare workers are in nurseries and pre-five centres which receive better funding, where they are able to join a trade union, and where the payment of the Living Wage is a real possibility. Regardless of the type of childcare provider they use, parents should be assured that the women who are looking after their children are subject to the same working conditions, are well paid, and given the recognition they deserve for the vital work that they do.

## **5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.**

The referendum on Scotland's future engaged more women in politics than ever before. Women are more vocal and are more interested in a variety of issues, as well as being quicker to hold elected representatives to account. Despite this, and despite women representing over 50% of the population, we are not proportionately represented in political and public life.

The First Minister's commitment to ensuring 50/50 representation on public boards by the year 2020 is undoubtedly a welcome measure. It does not, however, extend to political parties and representation, meaning that women will continue to be under-represented at the highest level of policy and decision making.

At present, there is no requirement to publish gender-specific statistics after elections – either with regards to the number of women seeking election or the number of successful candidates. Publication of these statistics would not only show the percentage of women elected into public office, but would help to identify gaps in representation.

*“The Scottish Parliament was intended to be a true representation of our society as a whole. How can that be the case when only 33% of our MSPs are women?”*

Women continue to be grossly underrepresented on the boards of both public and private organisations. Both the Scottish and UK Governments are seeking to put measures in place in order to address the gender imbalance in these important decision making arenas.

While the introduction of quotas as a temporary special measure to get more women into these positions is positive, it must be recognised that quotas alone are not enough. A number of barriers exist that will not be broken down simply by legislating for a mandatory minimum of 40% women on boards, or as political representatives at a local or national level.

*“The whole point of quotas is surely to get us to a level playing field, which doesn't exist at the moment. Once we see more women on public boards, you would hope there will be enough momentum to keep us there without the need for specific measures.”*

There are a range of reasons why women do not apply for these positions. These need to be taken into account in order to challenge the culture which surrounds public appointments. Positions should be advertised where women will be able to see them. Information should be available in, for example, libraries, health centres and supermarkets. Making the adverts more visible and accessible would be extremely beneficial.

*“How can I be expected to apply for a position on a board or get involved in a political party or a local cause if I don't even know where to find the advert? I don't have time to go looking for this type of information – it would be much easier if it was put somewhere I'm actually likely to be.”*

Another aspect of the involvement in political and public life is the confidence that women have in themselves and their abilities. Too many will underestimate their capabilities and only look at the negative aspects of a position, rather than the positives.

*“A man will look at the key skills for a role and say 'I can do three out of five of those so of course I'll go for the position', whereas a woman is more likely to say 'I can only do three out of five so there's no point in going for it'. Confidence is key.”*

The role of mentors must also be considered. Women have spoken about the importance of having the support of other women across political and public life, employment, trade union involvement etc. The value of having someone who has already been there, who can guide others through the process and give advice, cannot be underestimated.

*“It is the duty of women who are currently in these positions to encourage to others to join them.”*

## ***5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health rights as agreed in accordance with the Platform for Action and the Beijing Platform for Action.***

Responsibility over health is under the full competence of the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorate is responsible for delivering the Healthier Strategic Objective, which aims to help people to sustain and improve their health, especially in disadvantaged communities, ensuring better, local and faster access to health care. The Directorate also allocates resources and sets the strategic direction for NHS Scotland (National Health Service) and is responsible for the development and implementation of health and social care policy.

NHS Scotland is overseen by fourteen regional Health Boards. They have responsibility for the protection and improvement of their population's health and for the delivery of frontline healthcare services. There are a number of services delivered through each Health Board which aim to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health rights.

All women aged 20 - 60 across Scotland are invited to have a cervical screening test every three years. Some, but not all, changes found by cervical screening tests may give an early warning sign of the possibility of developing cervical cancer. By dealing with this at an early stage, many cervical cancers can be stopped before they even start. In this way, cervical screening saves around 5,000 lives every year in the UK and prevents 8 out of 10 cervical cancers from developing.

The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine for girls aged 12 to 13 years helps protect against cervical cancer. The HPV vaccine is designed to protect against the two types of HPV that can cause 70% of cervical cancer cases. As it does not protect against all other types, regular cervical screening is important. This combination of immunisation and cervical screening offers the best possible protection against cervical cancer<sup>18</sup>.

Women in Scotland also benefit from healthcare support both during and after their pregnancy. The refreshed Framework for Maternity Care in Scotland, published by the Scottish Government in 2011, is designed to address all care from conception, through pregnancy and during the postnatal phase. The term 'maternity care' refers to any NHS service providing care to women and their babies – including care provided by midwives, obstetricians, GPs, anaesthetists, paediatricians, neonatologists, nurses, pharmacists, optometrists, dentists and allied health professionals. Effective collaboration and communication between all of these disciplines and services is essential for person centred, safe and effective maternity care. The Scottish Government is also currently undertaking a review of neonatal and maternity services overall.

Scans are given to women at approximately 12 weeks and 20 weeks of pregnancy. Those who have complications during current or previous pregnancies tend to be scanned more often. After birth, healthcare professionals visit homes and check on the health and wellbeing of both mothers and their babies. Children are given a series of vaccinations in the first few years of their lives which protect against diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, polio, whooping cough, meningitis, measles, mumps and rubella.

Women throughout Scotland are also afforded access to free contraception through doctor's surgeries, health centres and specialist sexual health clinics. Relationships, sexual health and parenthood education is an integral part of the health and wellbeing area of the curriculum in Scotland's schools. Children and young people need to gain knowledge appropriate to their age and stage of education and this aspect of the curriculum is intended to enable them to build positive relationships as they grow older. Schools should present facts in an objective, balanced and sensitive manner within a framework of sound values and an awareness of the law on sexual behaviour. The aim is to help young people make informed, responsible and healthy choices about their lives.

Despite these aims, there are significant disparities in the content and delivery of sex and relationship education throughout schools. Provision should be much more uniform across the educational spectrum.

## CONCLUSIONS

In July 2015, The First Minister confirmed that Scotland would adopt the SDGs. The SDGs align with the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework, with Scotland's progress in achieving the objectives subject to formal reporting back to the UN.

Scotland's aims and ambitions, enshrined in the National Performance Framework, as well as Scotland's National Action Plan on Human Rights, which include tackling inequality, ensuring access to high quality education and healthcare – are already a key part of the SDGs. This is how Scotland will measure and report on progress in achieving the SDGs.

**The inclusion of a specific goal centred on gender equality is an extremely important step, not only for women and girls in Scotland, but across the world. It is, however, important to note that each of the other goals will also have an impact on women. Women's voices, experiences and ideas must be taken into account and reflected when measuring and reporting on progress in achieving each of the Goals, not just Goal 5.**

## THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S CONVENTION (SWC)

The Scottish Women's Convention (SWC) is funded by the Scottish Government to consult with women in Scotland to influence public policy. The organisation was set up in 2003 to enable grassroots women to discuss issues relevant to them. Since its inception the SWC has engaged with a wide range of women throughout the country.

The SWC undertakes an annual series of 'roadshows' throughout Scotland. These events are unique, giving women the opportunity to express opinions or concerns, in their local area, on issues which directly affect them. Locations from the Shetland Islands to Dumfries have been visited. All information gathered from the women informs SWC responses to Scottish and UK Government consultations. The object is to ensure that women's voices are heard at the heart of the decision making process.

Online surveys and email consultation also provide processes for collating large responses to key discussion areas.

Thematic conferences offer women an opportunity to inform the policy areas under discussion. Listening to inspirational speakers and the prospect of networking with peers motivates individuals attending these events.

Geographical Information Groups (GIGs) throughout Scotland meet on a regular basis to discuss gender specific issues. These groups are facilitated by the organisation and provide vital input into the consultation process.

The Young Women's Network (YWN) was set up following the success of the SWC's Young Women's group. The YWN engages with young women from throughout Scotland, giving them the opportunity to talk about their experiences around issues which are important to them.

Further information regarding the organisation's activities can be found at [www.scottishwomensconvention.org](http://www.scottishwomensconvention.org)

## LINKS TO LEGISLATION, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Scotland's gender balanced Cabinet: <http://www.gov.scot/About/People/Ministers>

Investment in early years education and childcare:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/parenting-early-learning/childcare>

Free Personal Care and Nursing Care:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Health/Support-Social-Care/Support/Older-People/Free-Personal-Nursing-Care>

A Refreshed Framework for Maternity Care in Scotland:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/341632/0113609.pdf>

Breastfeeding (Scotland) Act 2005: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/1/contents>

Cervical Screening: <http://www.healthscotland.com/topics/health-topics/screening/cervical.aspx>

HPV vaccine: <http://www.immunisationscotland.org.uk/vaccines-and-diseases/hpv.aspx>

Domestic Abuse (Scotland) Act 2011: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2011/13/section/1>

Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Bill:

<http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/92672.aspx>

Specialist Domestic Abuse Courts:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/239847/0066159.pdf>

Forced Marriage etc. (Protection and Jurisdiction) (Scotland) Act 2011:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2011/15/contents/enacted>

Forced Marriage Protection Orders (FMPOs):

<https://www.gov.uk/apply-forced-marriage-protection-order/overview>

Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation (Scotland) Act 2005:

[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/8/pdfs/asp\\_20050008\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/8/pdfs/asp_20050008_en.pdf)

First Minister's comments on further investment in FGM services:

<http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Preventing-female-genital-mutilation-1706.aspx>

Carers Scotland: <https://www.carers.org/scotland>

Commitment to 50/50 representation by 2020:

<http://onescotland.org/equality-themes/5050-by-2020/>

Scottish Government Health and Social Care Directorate:

<http://www.gov.scot/About/People/Directorates>

NHS Scotland: <http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/>

Curriculum for Excellence:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/thecurriculumwhatiscurriculumforexcellence/index.asp>

Scotland's National Performance Framework:

<http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms>

Scotland's National Action Plan on Human Rights (SNAP):

<http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/actionplan>