



NORTHERN IRELAND
WOMEN'S EUROPEAN
P L A T F O R M

***Submission to the Committee on
the Convention for the Elimination
of all Forms of Discrimination
against Women (CEDAW)***

**Vlth Periodic Report of the United Kingdom
of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

**Shadow Report
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform
March 2008
www.niwep.org.uk**



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Thanks...

The Platform would like to take this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the organisations that took part in consultations and provided information for this report.

- Age Concern Northern Ireland
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- Children's Law Centre
- Committee on the Administration of Justice
- Democratic Dialogue
- Equality Commission Northern Ireland
- Family Planning Association in Northern Ireland
- Foyle Rural Women's Network
- Foyle Women's Network
- Homestart Supporting Families
- Northern Ireland Anti Poverty Network
- Northern Ireland Irish Congress of Trade Unions
- Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission
- NI Women's Aid Federation
- NI Women's Aid - Coleraine
- Save the Children Northern Ireland
- Women's Support Network
- Women's Resource and Development Agency
- Women into Politics
- Women's Support Network
- NI Rural Women's Network
- Women's Forum
- Youth Action Northern Ireland



About NIWEP

The Northern Ireland Women's European Platform is an umbrella body of groups with a primary interest in matters of importance to women.

It has a membership of national and local organisations and generalist and specific bodies. NIWEP aims to facilitate and increase women's contribution to the social, economic and political agendas both domestically and internationally. The organisation was established in 1988. It takes action at a strategic level, ensuring that women in Northern Ireland participate in and contribute to the debate of women's concerns integrating domestic, European and international agendas. NIWEP facilitates participation in networking, information sharing and policy development.

The main aims of the Platform are:

- To ensure that the women in Northern Ireland have a platform through which their concerns can be expressed and through which they can help shape and develop social, economic and political policies at a local, national, European and international level;
- To ensure that women in Northern Ireland understand the work of the United Nations, the European Union and national and local government in formulating gender equality policy and legislation through training and information;
- To consult with women at a local level and to prepare recommendations for debate and discussion with government and other institutions and statutory agencies at local, national, European and international level.

In 1999 as part of the international agenda the Platform applied for, and was awarded, Special United Nations Consultative Status by the Economic Social Council (ECOSOC) which gives the organisation the opportunity to attend and contribute to debates on critical issues at the United Nations. NIWEP is the only NGO in Northern Ireland to hold this status.

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Contents...

Article 1 *Discrimination against Women*

Article 2 - 4 *Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination; Development and Advancement of Women; Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men*

- Impact of devolution in Northern Ireland
- Application of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security
- Implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy
- Sustainability and Support for the Women's Sector in Northern Ireland
- Impact of Northern Ireland Equality legislation Section 75
- Failure to Integrate Equality Strategies
- Delay in Single Equality Act Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland Administrative Structure

Article 5 *Sex Role Stereotyping and Prejudice*

Article 6 *Prevention of trafficking in women and exploitation of women through prostitution*

- Prostitution in Northern Ireland
- Human Trafficking

Article 7 *Elimination of discrimination against women in politics and public life*

- Electoral Politics
- Women and Public Bodies in Northern Ireland

Article 8 *International representation and participation*

- NI Government Officials attending the United Nations
- The Involvement of Northern Ireland Women in International Work on Conflict Prevention and Resolution

Article 10 *Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of education*

- Subject Choice and Careers Guidance

- Tackling Inequality through Education
- School Age and Young Mothers in Northern Ireland
- Sex Education in Northern Ireland
- Education and Employment for Women in a Post Conflict Society
- Restrictions on Student Numbers in Northern Ireland Universities

Article 11 *Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of employment*

- Working Parents
- Lone Parents and Employment
- Work-Life Balance
- Childcare
- Low and Unequal Pay

Article 12 *Elimination of discrimination against women in the field of health¹*

- Reproductive Rights for Women in Northern Ireland
- Teenage Pregnancy in Northern Ireland
- Mental Health

Article 13 *Elimination of discrimination against women in economic, social & cultural life*

- Women and Pensions
- Women and Poverty

Article 14 *Elimination of discrimination against rural women*

- Rural women in Northern Ireland

Article 15 *Equality before the law and civil matters*

- Judicial Appointments in Northern Ireland
- Gender Issues Relating to the Police Service for Northern Ireland
- Women detained in Northern Ireland

General Recommendation 19 of the CEDAW Committee

- Violence against Women
- Rights of girls and young women to be free from violence

This report presents an analysis of women's position in Northern Ireland in relation to specific articles contained in the CEDAW Convention. Specific questions are included at the end of each of the Articles.

It begins by providing a summary update on progress made in relation to a number of the recommendations made by the CEDAW Committee following its last examination of the UK.

The Committee commended the government's commitment to mainstreaming, stressing that this should be monitored and evaluated, and that the legislative provisions for maintaining equality for women in Northern Ireland be extended to the rest of the UK. However there has been no rigorous evaluation of mainstreaming. Furthermore as outlined in the section covering Articles 2 - 4, experience in Northern Ireland suggests that while the mainstreaming measure has much potential, it has not been effectively implemented. Indeed, it has tended to result in the development of gender neutral policies which disadvantage women.

The Committee expressed concern that protection of women's human rights would be uneven across the devolved regions of the United Kingdom, and this has proven to be the case, with a number of examples of women in Northern Ireland not benefiting

Introduction

from a number of equality and social policy measures introduced in other parts of the UK **(Section on Articles 2 - 4 - Pages 5 - 7)**

The Committee made a number of recommendations regarding increasing the number and percentage of women in public and political life, in the judiciary and in the professions. In Northern Ireland there has been little/no progress in this respect, with the number of women in electoral politics and political life remaining virtually unchanged. While targets have existed for many years in respect of public appointments, these have not been met, nor have initiatives been introduced to ensure that they are. **(Section on Article 7 Pages 10 - 11)**

The Committee recommended actions to reduce the pay gap. Little progress has been made. Women also continue to be over represented in the lowest paid occupations. **(Section on Article 11 Page 16)**

The Committee expressed concern about levels of teenage conception and high rates of sexually transmitted diseases. It recommended a range of measures. In Northern Ireland there has been a failure to address these issues with continuing problems around sex education and access to contraception and sexual health advice. **(Section on Articles 10 and Article 12 Pages 12 - 13, 17 - 18)**

The Committee expressed concern at the failure to extend the 1967 Abortion Act to Northern Ireland, and recommended that government initiate a process of reform in Northern Ireland in relation to abortion law. This has not happened. **(Section on Article 12 Pages 17 - 18)**

The Committee expressed concern about the absence of a national strategy on violence against women and made a number of recommendations in this respect. There has been no development in this area. Policy developments in Northern Ireland have been extremely limited and have been largely confined to domestic violence. **(Section on General Recommendation 19 Pages 22 - 23)**

The Committee expressed concern about the treatment of women within the criminal justice system and commented specifically on the treatment of young female offenders in Northern Ireland. These issues continue to cause grave concern and in addition recent research has highlighted serious issues relating to women detained in Northern Ireland. **(Section on Article 15 Page 21)**

The Committee raised issues relating to the situation of older women - including vulnerability to poverty and poorer pension entitlement than men. Women continue to be disadvantaged with respect to pensions. **(Section on Article 13 Page 19)**

The Committee requested that government include in its Sixth Report comprehensive discussion of measures taken to alleviate women's poverty. As highlighted throughout this shadow report, women in Northern Ireland continue to experience poverty, and policy in many respects lags behind that in other parts of the UK **(Section on Articles 11 and Article 13 Pages 14 - 16, 19)**

Dr Ann Marie Gray,
Northern Ireland Women's European Platform,
March 2008

Northern Ireland Issue	<p style="text-align: center;">Article 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination; Development and Advancement of Women; Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men</p>
Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The definition of discrimination in Northern Ireland law covers both direct and indirect discrimination. <p>Recommendation: that Government takes account of the need to address direct and indirect discrimination against women, as well as promoting equality of opportunity for women in the forthcoming single equality legislation</p>
Northern Ireland Issue	<p style="text-align: center;">Articles 2 - 4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination; Development and Advancement of Women; Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men</p>
Impact of Devolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In its last report to the UK the Committee expressed concern that protection of women's human rights would be uneven across the devolved regions of the United Kingdom, and this has proven to be the case. For example, the UK report (paras 184 -188) sets out a number of developments, many of which do not apply to Northern Ireland. There is an increasing gap in relation to a number of aspects of equality between women in Northern Ireland and in the rest of the UK. These include public and political representation, lack of progress on the development of an integrated childcare strategy and anti-poverty measures. <p>Recommendation: Government should take steps to ensure that devolution strengthens women's rights. This requires action across a range of measures identified in this report including: childcare; addressing gender segregation in the labour market; political representation; access to reproductive health services.</p>
Application of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 - Women, Peace and Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As the UK Government has noted in its report to CEDAW, it has worked to promote UN Resolution 1325 internationally. However, the government has not met its obligations in relation to the resolution in Northern Ireland. Women continue to be significantly under-represented in key institutions, including many of those set up directly as a result of the peace negotiations. For example, in relation to the Police Service for Northern Ireland, there has been an increase in the number of women from 13% in 2002 to 20% in 2006, a figure which is still very low. Of the 61 officers working on a part-time basis, 60 are women. Women continue to be very under-represented at senior level. The body which oversees policing in Northern Ireland, the Policing Board for Northern Ireland, is a public body consisting of independent and political members. Of a total of 19 members only 4 are women. In April 2007 the UK government established a panel to carry out a strategic review of parading in Northern Ireland (parades have been a source of tension and conflict over many years). Of a seven member panel 6, including the chair, are men. <p>Recommendation: The UK Government needs to take urgent and appropriate action to ensure that UN1325 is fully implemented in Northern Ireland. This should include consulting with women and adopting measures to ensure that women's representation at all levels in decision making is increased.</p>



Northern Ireland Issue	Articles 2 - 4 Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination; Development and Advancement of Women; Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men
<p>Implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We welcome the publication of a Gender Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland in 2006. Initially the development of the strategy was hindered by a gender neutral approach to policy making. However, the women's sector worked closely with government to address the most serious deficiencies and the strategy published in 2007 acknowledges the historical roots of women's disadvantages and advocates a number of positive action measures. A number of major concerns remain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there has been considerable delay in drafting and implementing the Departmental Action Plans which are to be the key mechanism for achieving the goals set out in the strategy; • the lack of gender awareness and expertise within the government departments is a significant factor in the lack of progress in relation to the Gender Equality Strategy. There is also a lack of resources within the Equality Directorate of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister for this work; • the government must demonstrate a commitment to equality by ensuring that adequate resources are made available for the implementation of the strategy and that there are time set targets for the completion, introduction and monitoring of the Departmental Action Plans; • the need for civil servants who develop policies to receive gender awareness training and to be fully informed as to the UK's international commitments. <p>Recommendation: Appropriate Departmental action plans should be drawn up and implemented as soon as possible; the Equality Directorate should be adequately resourced to ensure that the Strategy is implemented effectively; Officials in government departments should receive targeted training on gender mainstreaming and gender equality;</p>
<p>Support for the Women's Sector</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For many years the women's sector in Northern Ireland has been a vibrant source of support for women, and has assisted in addressing economic and social disadvantage and encouraged the participation of women in public life. As a society emerging from conflict it is vital that there is a thriving women's sector and that within the sector there is the capacity for the development of a vibrant policy community. However, the sector is inadequately funded and there is concern about long term sustainability. While the funding made available under the Direct Rule government in 2006 to the women's sector was welcome, it was targeted at particular areas - essentially service provision to disadvantaged areas - to the exclusion of many groups focusing on policy work. A comprehensive needs analysis of the women's sector and a strategy for the financial support of the sector is urgently required. This is particularly important given major changes in EU funding, including the phasing out of the EU support funding for peace and reconciliation which has provided support for core provision, such as childcare and women's education and training. <p>Recommendation: The government should aim to mainstream a funding programme with an identified budget to ensure continuation those organisations who contribute to developing policy, training and increasing women's participation in economic, social and political life.</p>



Northern Ireland Issue	Articles 2 - 4 Obligations to Eliminate Discrimination; Development and Advancement of Women; Acceleration of Equality between Women and Men
Impact of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Good Friday/Belfast Agreement included a radical proposal which required all public bodies to promote equality of opportunity across a range of constituencies, including explicitly gender. The subsequent Northern Ireland Act (Section 75) requires that detailed arrangements be put in place to ensure that equality of opportunity is given due regard in all statutory policy formulation and delivery. Policies must be subjected to an impact assessment to assure that equality is promoted for women and men, people of differing religious and political affiliations, different racial or ethnic backgrounds, different sexual orientations, different ages, different marital status, whether or not they have dependants, and whether or not they have a disability. The experiences of disadvantage and discrimination for women are compounded if they are disabled, of a different race, sexual orientation or religion, hold different political opinions or have dependents, are young or old, married or not, coupled with the legacy of the conflict. Effective implementation of Section 75 is a means to identify and seek to address these inequalities. However, there has been a tendency for Section 75 to be interpreted by government departments and other statutory bodies as a requirement to treat everyone equally, thus leading to gender neutral policies which continue to disadvantage women. A five year review by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland concluded that Section 75 has the potential to be an effective tool for achieving equality but that the performance of government departments needs to improve² <p>Recommendation: The Government should ensure that Section 75 legislation is not interpreted as being about the promotion of gender neutral policy, and take steps to ensure that the legislation is properly and effectively used to bring about substantive equality for women.</p>
Failure to Integrate Equality Strategies in Northern Ireland	We welcome the drawing up of a number of strategies aimed at tackling discrimination and inequality in Northern Ireland - including an anti-poverty strategy, a gender equality strategy and a sexual orientation strategy. It is disappointing however that these have been developed in isolation and the opportunity has not been taken to effectively integrate them, reducing the potential effectiveness of each.
Delay in Single Equality Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are concerned about the delay in legislating for a Single Equality Act for Northern Ireland
Efficiency of Administrative structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The structure of the NI government is not conducive to promoting gender equality. Gender Equality is one of a substantive set of responsibilities (which also include age, disability, sexual orientation, and EU Affairs) carried by the Committee of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. There needs to be a committee or sub-committee specifically devoted to gender equality to ensure that it does not continue to be neglected.

Number	Questions Relating to Articles 2 - 4
1	What steps will government take to ensure the full implementation of UN Resolution 1325 in Northern Ireland?
2	What steps will government take to ensure that devolution strengthens women's rights?
3	What steps will government take to support the women's sector to achieve long term sustainability?
4	Will officials within government departments receive targeted training on gender mainstreaming and gender equality?
5	Will the government ensure that Section 75 legislation is not interpreted as being about the promotion of gender neutral policy, and take steps to ensure that the legislation is properly and effectively used to bring about substantive equality for women?
6	What steps will the government take to ensure that the Gender Equality Strategy is implemented and what resources will be specifically allocated to this?



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 5 Sex Role Stereotyping and Prejudice
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This report highlights a number of areas where women are subject to discriminatory stereotypes and sex roles. We would refer the Committee in particular to our commentary and recommendations in relation to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Article 10 (pages 12 - 13) - education and career 'choices';• Article 11 (pages 14 - 16) - employment, including part-time work and occupational segregation;• Article 13 (Page 19) - women and poverty;• Article 14 (page 20) - rural women;• Article 15 (page 21) - gender issues and policing.



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 6: The Prevention of Trafficking in Women and Exploitation of Women through Prostitution in Northern Ireland
Prostitution in Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A number of studies and much anecdotal evidence exists to suggest that there is significant women/child prostitution in Northern Ireland.³ A report by the NGO 'Include Youth' and the South and East Belfast Health and Social Services Trust highlighted how <i>"the vacuum created by the end of the conflict and the onset of the peace process in Northern Ireland will encourage/facilitate a growth in the sexual exploitation of children."</i> The report also highlighted the lack of a co-ordinated approach from the statutory agencies to the problem of child prostitution. There is also evidence that paramilitary groups have been involved in organised prostitution for a number of years, usually involving brothels (the Police Service of Northern Ireland is aware of 60-70 brothels in the province) and trafficking of women for sex.⁴ We welcome the recent announcement of new legislation to make kerb crawling an offence in Northern Ireland but much remains to be done to address the exploitation of women in the sex industry and to ensure that services are in place to support women
Human Trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been a sharp increase in the number of women trafficked to Northern Ireland but an accurate measure of this has yet to be established. An added factor in Northern Ireland is the land border with the Irish Republic and women are brought into the Irish Republic and trafficked across the border. In June 2007 the Commissioner for Human Rights in Northern Ireland raised concerns about how Northern Ireland is not only used as a transit country, but is also a country of destination.⁵ There is an urgent need for further additional research and data to provide information on the scale of these activities and for government and agencies to develop appropriate responses. Often women who have been trafficked to Northern Ireland will not testify for fear of reprisal. The UK needs to meet its obligations under the Council of Europe Convention requirements in relation to women and to children, and this includes greater support and protection for women. We welcome the fact that the UK government has signed the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and we would like to know when it will ratify the Convention. <p>Recommendation: The UK government needs to urgently review provisions in Northern Ireland to protect all victims of human trafficking. It should make a clear commitment to grant temporary or permanent residence to victims at risk of further abuse if deported. An anti-trafficking centre similar to that introduced in Sheffield should be established in Northern Ireland; the Government Should ensure that there is a full investigation of child prostitution in Northern Ireland and take steps to protect and support children being exploited</p>

Number	Questions Relating to Articles 6
1	Will the government ensure that there is a full investigation of child prostitution in Northern Ireland and take steps to protect and support children being exploited?
2	What steps will the government take to ensure there is a comprehensive investigation into trafficking in Northern Ireland and ensure that the problem of trafficking in Northern Ireland is addressed?
3	What steps will the government take to ensure victims of trafficking are adequately supported? Will it grant residence to victims who are at further risk by being deported?
4	What steps will government take to ensure that women affected by prostitution have access to services?



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 7: Politics and Public Life in Northern Ireland
Electoral Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women continue to be seriously under-represented in electoral politics. In the latest elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly, women won 18 out of 108 seats - the same number as in the previous election. At local government level 21.5% of councillors are women. This represents a small increase on the 2003 figure. Little has been done by political parties to address this serious under-representation of women. None of the political parties have used provision under the Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002 to take positive action to achieve greater female representation. A welcome development has been the Northern Ireland Local Government Association initiative to appoint gender champions in each local Council area to help promote the advancement of women in local politics. • There is an urgency to address these problems. The reduction in the number of local councils proposed under the ongoing Review of Public Administration could have very negative consequences for the number of women councillors and women holding senior paid positions in local government.⁶ <p>Recommendations: Government should ensure that political parties take measures to address the under-representation of women on candidate lists. This would be assisted through the promotion, monitoring and review of the Sex Discrimination (Election of Parliamentary Candidates Act) 2001. The Review of Public Administration must assess and take measures to address the potential adverse effects on women as representatives and in paid posts.</p>
Women and Public Bodies in Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women continue to be under-represented on public bodies, with women holding 32% of public appointments. This number has remained fairly static since the early 1990s despite government setting target figures. This has even more negative implications in Northern Ireland than elsewhere in the UK as public bodies in Northern Ireland hold responsibility for major services - such as policing, health, social care, housing and education. Analysis of yearly appointments made since 1996 show that the number of women peaked in 2002/03 at 42% but dropped again to 32% in 2003/04. Women are also much less likely to be appointed to the chairs of boards and to posts attracting remuneration⁷. • While the implementation of the Code of Practice for Public Appointments has increased transparency and ensured some scrutiny over appointments, a number of important bodies in Northern Ireland do not fall within the remit of the Commissioner. This includes a number related to the process of peace building and conflict resolution. A Working Party on diversity in public appointments reported in July 2005⁸ but the recommendations have yet to be implemented. • Given the lack of solid progress in this area for many years, government should implement quotas for women's representation on public bodies. • We are concerned that the government response to this problem has too often been about actions to increase the number of women putting themselves forward for selection. While this is important, it does not address the following issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the way in which some criteria for posts disadvantage women and that 'merit' is seen as an objective concept; • analysis of the process beyond the shortlisting stage to determine if women are disadvantaged at this point; • why women are more likely to be appointed to boards which are linked to health, education and social care; • why women are less likely to be appointed to senior positions on boards and to positions attracting greater remuneration. <p>Recommendation: We strongly urge that <u>all</u> public bodies be governed by the Code of Practice and come within the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments; Given the consistent failure to meet the targets set for women's representation on public bodies the government should introduce quotas for public appointments.</p>



Number	Questions Relating to Article 7
1	Will the Code of Practice for Public Bodies be applied to <u>all</u> public bodies in Northern Ireland and therefore bring all appointed bodies under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments?
2	What positive action will government take to ensure equal representation of women on public bodies?
3	Will government introduce quotas for public appointments given the consistent failure to reach previously set targets?
4	What will government do to ensure that political parties take measures to address the under-representation of women on candidate lists?

Northern Ireland Issue	Article 8: Women as International Representatives
Northern Ireland Government Officials attending the United Nations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although Northern Ireland has devolved government, representation on international diplomatic teams tends to be selected from civil servants based at Westminster. The Northern Ireland Women’s European Platform can confirm that at Beijing+5 in New York in 2000 no members of the new Northern Ireland Assembly secretariat, or civil servants from any of the Northern Ireland government departments, female or male, participated in negotiations, nor has there ever been Northern Ireland government officials acting as representatives at CSW. Women’s organisations in Northern Ireland have limited capacity to engage with international work. Organisations have struggled to prepare for and have a presence at CSW and other relevant discussions and events, and to educate on and promote the potential of international treaties and obligations. As noted previously, government financial support for the women’s sector excluded organisations working specifically on policy, including international policy. Yet it is vital that women in Northern Ireland can use the international instruments effectively. When NGO representatives from the UK do attend negotiations such as CSW they are not a part of the official government delegation as is the case for some countries. This would be an important advance. The Committee may like to ask the government if it has plans with respect to this <p>Recommendation: The implementation of international conventions and treaties and the advancement of women’s equality would be enhanced through local officials playing a central role in such negotiations and feeding back to government departments in Northern Ireland; women’s NGOs should be adequately funded by government to conduct policy work and enhance public engagement with the international treaties..</p>
The Involvement of Northern Ireland Women in international work on conflict prevention and resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are few women in senior positions in conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Women in Northern Ireland have contributed much to peace building in the region and have developed models of working which could be usefully applied elsewhere, yet they have been consistently absent from peace building and post conflict initiatives. <p>Recommendation: In addition to the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 as discussed above, Government contribution to peace building and expertise should be recognised in terms of their equal inclusion of women in special initiatives and representation in decision-making bodies.</p>

Number	Questions Relating to Article 8
1	What steps will government take to facilitate the inclusion of NGOs attending as specialists in negotiations at UN/European level? It is important that there should be NGO representation from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and that the NGOs should have an international background.
2	Will government commit to ensuring representation from government officials across the countries of the UK at international negotiations?



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 10: Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the Field of Education
Subject choice and career guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research has identified that young women in Northern Ireland suffer as a result of stereotypical attitudes to gender roles and to careers⁹. Young women's 'choices' and actions are influenced by the persistence of discrimination and gender inequality and the concerning way in which young women in Northern Ireland feel they have to accept this as inevitable. Government statistics show that within vocational training programmes young women and older women on government sponsored training programmes continue to be enrolled on courses in traditionally female dominated areas such as hairdressing, hospitality and caring services. The outcome of this is that women continue to be affected negatively by occupational segregation and the resulting consequences such as lower pay and lack of opportunity to progress. The report of the Women and Work Commission 'Shaping a Fairer Future'¹⁰ made a number of recommendations relating to careers advice, training and the employment of women in non-traditional areas. We are disappointed at the failure to urgently address these issues and implement the recommendations in Northern Ireland, and ask the Committee to note that many of the provisions which the UK government alluded to in Para 245 do not apply to Northern Ireland. <p>Recommendation: The government should ensure that stereotyping in subject choice and training courses is addressed and that the failure of previous initiatives does not go unchecked; the recommendations put forward in <i>Shaping a Fairer Future</i> are fully implemented in Northern Ireland.</p>
Tackling inequality through education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recent research on young women has pointed to the persistence of gender inequalities in Northern Ireland¹¹ yet challenging gender discrimination has not been a substantive feature of education in Northern Ireland. Indeed it is not a strong component of teacher training. The recently developed citizenship curriculum in Northern Ireland focuses mainly on issues relating to political and religious tolerance and understanding and addressing the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland. However, education has a major role to play in addressing discrimination and promoting gender equality.
School Age Mothers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There continues to be a lack of provision and support for school age mothers and for young mothers who are over compulsory school age (16) but whose education and training has been limited. These include lack of affordable and accessible childcare provision; limited access to specialist units and limited support to return to school or further education or training. The Teenage Pregnancy Strategy for N.I set targets to be achieved by 2007. These included that 100% of school age mothers would be in formal education and 50% of 16-18 year olds would be in education. An evaluation is currently being conducted but these targets have not been met. The impact of this is poor qualifications and difficulty in getting and progressing in employment, resulting in a high risk of poverty and social exclusion. The School Age Mother's Project¹² is limited to particular geographical areas and apart from isolated NGO programmes enabling young mothers in the 18-25 age group to access vocational training there are few services targeted at this group of young mothers. A number of pilot programmes run by youth organisations in partnership with statutory bodies have been evaluated as being highly effective in enabling young mothers to gain qualifications and return to education or employment¹³. <p>Recommendation: It is recommended that government should ensure that steps are taken to reach the targets set, including free and adequate childcare for school age mothers; the good practice from NGO training programmes for young mothers post 16 should form the basis of mainstream provision.</p>
Ethnic Minority girls and Women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been a significant increase in the ethnic minority population in Northern Ireland and government needs to investigate the situation of ethnic minority girls and young women with regard to education Research¹⁴ commissioned by the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People clearly show that the present education system is failing children and young people from the Traveller Community. The entrenched stereotype within the education sector was often used as a means to explain away low educational achievement, low attendance and early leavers.



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 10: Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the Field of Education
Sex Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rates of teenage pregnancy in Northern Ireland remain much higher than the EU average and rates of STI infections are growing. Research has identified that young people in Northern Ireland feel they are poorly informed about sex and sexual health and the standard of sex education received in schools is generally perceived to be poor with schools taking a very biologically approach to sex and relationships education¹⁵. While the Department of Education has issues guidelines for sex education these are not uniformly applied and schools have discretion over curriculum and delivery. Good practice has been identified, particularly where schools bring in external organisations with the appropriate expertise to deliver sex education thus ensuring that students receive a broad and inclusive approach to the topic. In recent years there has been a marked increase in HIV diagnosis - an increase of 45% between 2000 and 2005. The increase has been particularly sharp in relation to the transmission of the infection through sex between men and women. <p>Recommendation: It is strongly recommended that a comprehensive sex education curriculum for primary and secondary schools should be mandatory and be delivered by those with appropriate expertise; the Sexual Health Strategy should ensure that measures to reduce the rate of HIV infection and STI are appropriate to women and that these are adequately resourced and monitored.</p>
Education and Employment for Women in a post-conflict Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For many women in Northern Ireland their education and employment has been interrupted by the conflict and this has had a negative economic impact on women. Community education has been shown to be effective in supporting women and equipping them with the skills and confidence to enter further education and employment. Women's community education and training organisations have fulfilled an important role but this work has been threatened by lack of funding and by government policy increasingly focusing on a narrower level of vocational qualifications. <p>Recommendation: The government needs to explicitly acknowledge the adverse impact the conflict has had on women's education and labour market participation and support specific measures to address this disadvantage.</p>
Restrictions on student numbers in Northern Ireland Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Northern Ireland the Department for Employment and Learning places restrictions on full-time student numbers. This creates disadvantage especially for low income and mature students.

Number	Questions Relating to Article 10
1	What plans does government have for enhancing access to education and training provision for school age and young mothers in Northern Ireland?
2	What is the government going to do to ensure more effective teaching of sex and relationship education in Northern Ireland at primary and secondary levels and to ensure that all young people have access to it?
3	What steps will the government take to ensure that there is a strong gender aspect in citizenship education and that schools promote gender equality?
4	What steps will government take to ensure that teachers are equipped through graduate and in-service training to understand discrimination against women and promote gender equality?
5	What steps will the government take to ensure that stereotyping in subject choice and training courses is addressed and that the failure of previous initiatives does not go unchecked through rigorous monitoring?
6	What steps will the government take to ensure that the recommendations put forward in <i>Shaping a Fairer Future</i> are fully implemented in Northern Ireland?



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 11: Employment
<p>Working Parents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since April 2003, under the Employment (Northern Ireland) Order 2002, many working parents and parents-to-be have been able to claim improved maternity pay and leave, paid paternity leave and paid adoption leave. Working parents (and since 2007, carers) also have the right to request to work flexible hours. While the provisions are a welcome step we are concerned that they do not go far enough to be of real practical benefits to working parents, and women in particular. Most provisions are restricted to those who meet the employment definition of employee and specified qualifying service conditions, which means that significant categories and numbers of workers (many of them women) do not enjoy any enhanced protection or benefit. The individual right to request flexible working patterns is a weak policy instrument relative to comparable legislation in many continental European countries¹⁶. <p>Recommendation: The government should extend provisions so that all employees benefit from access to more family friendly working conditions. This requires work with employers to ensure that they understand the benefits to them. This is particularly important in Northern Ireland where small and/or family businesses dominate the private sector.</p>
<p>Childcare Provision</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It should be noted that substantive developments discussed in the UK government report relating to childcare provision refer to England and progress in Northern Ireland has been very much more limited. Northern Ireland continues to have one of the lowest levels of childcare provision within the UK and Europe. The number of registered childminder places in Northern Ireland equates to 1 place for every 6.4 children under four, almost half of provision in England¹⁷. For many mothers, and lone mothers in particular, affordability of childcare is still a major barrier for women entering the labour market. The NI Childcare Strategy, Children First (2000) has not achieved significant improvements. In fact a government review of the strategy in 2005¹⁸ acknowledged major deficiencies in policy and implementation recommended a re-shaping of the childcare vision for Northern Ireland - including the allocation of mainstream funding and recommended that 'more robust leadership structures are required to drive forward an integrated childcare service'. This has not happened. There is no integrated childcare strategy and childcare responsibilities are currently spread across 5 different government departments. • In 2007/08 Extended school pilots were introduced in four areas but schools were given a high level of discretion over time and nature of provision. It is therefore unlikely to have had a significant impact on childcare difficulties and was certainly a poor shadow of extended school programmes being rolled out across local authority areas in England. • It is therefore of grave concern that the Department of Education in NI recently announced that the very limited amount of funding available for extended schools would be reduced¹⁹. • Childcare continues to be one of the most significant obstacles to women staying in and progressing in paid employment. • Labour market trends in Northern Ireland have seen growth in the service and retail sector. Many of these jobs are part-time and targeted at women. Yet, they often require employees to work unsociable and flexible hours and existing childcare simply does not meet these requirements. • The Children and Young Person's strategy for Northern Ireland did allocate additional funding for early years provision and for an expansion of SureStart in Northern Ireland. This is very welcome but this was a temporary measure. There is concern about the failure to actively promote and resource Sure Start in Northern Ireland. • It is also very important to stress that early year's provision is not the same as childcare for working parents. Very often these services are available for very few hours per week when parents require reliable, accessible and affordable childcare. <p>Recommendation: The government should produce and implement a childcare strategy for Northern Ireland and that access to and affordability of childcare provision in Northern Ireland is significantly improved; We recommend urgent measures including the establishment of integrated children's centres across Northern Ireland.</p>



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 11: Employment
<p>Lone Parents and Employment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lone parents, most of whom are women, are particularly vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion²⁰. The government has focused on employment as the primary means of addressing poverty. For lone parents the government has set an employment target of 70% by 2010. In England the main measures introduced to achieve this have been the New Deal for Lone Parents (a government training and employment programme) and expansion of childcare and extended schools. As noted above there has not been similar progress re childcare provision in Northern Ireland. Without detracting from the benefits and support provided by New Deal for Lone Parents key problems identified with this policy are that lone parents often enter insecure, low paid employment resulting in cycling between benefits and work; many struggle to be financially better off, particularly when housing costs are taken into account and training options have been very gendered and pitched at too low a level to ensure entry to better paid work²¹. The Freud Review on reducing welfare dependency and the future of Welfare to Work published in May 2007²² adopts a 'work first' approach. The main proposals outlined in the report have been accepted by government and set out in a Green Paper on Welfare Reform²³. This gives rise to a number of concerns. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a failure to acknowledge and deal with the problem of welfare to work programmes shifting families from workless poverty to in-work poverty; the lack of attention to adequacy of benefits for those unable to work; the feasibility of some of the proposals to contract out welfare to work programmes to private sector organisations with little expertise in this area; the greater conditionality attached to benefits for lone parents As there is evidence that many lone parents would like to work, there seems little reason to increase compulsion. We are extremely concerned that extending conditions on lone parents is a simplistic measure which could increase lone parents' vulnerability to poverty. <p>Recommendation: There should be no compulsion on lone parents to enter the labour market which results in loss of benefit and families being worse off financially. Employment targets could be better addressed through other positive measures to improve the health of lone parents, improve childcare and by improving labour market conditions.</p>
<p>Work Life Balance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Much sex inequality stems from society's failure to recognise and accommodate the fact that women continue to bear the main responsibility for childcare and the care of elderly and other dependents. Also traditional attitudes of employers and some employment practices impact on the opportunities available to women. Measures such as the right to request to flexible working are important, but are restricted to certain groups of parents (limited by age and/or disability of child). It is also dependant on favourable employer attitudes, which cannot be assumed. The enhanced access to parental leave is welcome. However, the provision of unpaid leave will restrict the number of parents who can avail of these measures. <p>Recommendation: Government needs to take additional and effective measures to encourage and support businesses (especially small businesses which predominate in Northern Ireland) to implement family friendly practices.</p>
<p>Working Tax Credit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Working Tax Credit (WTC) has created some incentive for people to a move from non-earner to one-earner households; it is much less an incentive for second earners to enter the labour market. However, this in-work benefit may also act to trap women in low paid employment because of the relationship between earnings and benefit withdrawal. Many lone mothers in minimum wage jobs for example end up cycling between benefits and work and find it extremely difficult to progress in employment²⁴. This raises issues of the adequacy of the minimum wage and unequal pay. <p>Recommendation: Government should take account of the research findings establishing the difficulties facing women trapped in low wage jobs. This includes action on equal pay (see below), addressing the affordability of childcare provision and a review of the adequacy of the minimum wage.</p>



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 11: Employment
Low and Unequal Pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current legislation on equal pay has proven ineffective in tackling the problems of low and unequal pay. Women’s pay still lags behind that of men, perpetuating gender stereotyping by valuing the work that women typically do less than men. While women remain unpaid for work in the home and frequently take part-time paid work, social and cultural patterns that leave women in an inferior or stereotyped role persist. • While we recognise that some progress has been made, nonetheless there remains the question of why, some 32 years after the introduction of the Equal Pay Act and over a quarter of a century since the 1976 Sex Discrimination Order, it is still the case that full-time women employees earn substantially less than men, and this is particularly striking for women in part-time work. The economy will benefit from the removal of the pay gap which is to the ongoing detriment of women. Government should take and promote specific action to remove the gap, including action on job status and occupational segregation, committing to pay audits and follow up action. • The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland raises substantive issues regarding Equal Pay in its report to the Committee. <p>Recommendation: Government to address and remove the pay gap between men and women. This should include action on occupational segregation and the introduction of gender pay audits.</p>

Number	Questions Relating to Article 11
1	What steps will the government take to ensure that all employees benefit from access to more family friendly working conditions?
2	What steps government take to ensure that an integrated childcare strategy is developed for Northern Ireland and that access to and affordability of childcare provision in Northern Ireland is significantly improved?
3	Given the nature of the labour market in Northern Ireland and the growth in service sector, part-time, often minimum wage work, how will the government ensure that women and children are not more vulnerable to poverty by attaching more conditionality to benefit entitlement?
4	What action will be taken by government to address and remove the pay gap between men and women? Will this include action on occupational segregation and pay audits?



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 12: Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the Field of Health Care
<p>Reproductive Rights in Northern Ireland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UK Government report to CEDAW notes considerable investment to improve early access to abortion services in Britain, but there has been no progress on providing women in Northern Ireland with access to this aspect of reproductive health since the CEDAW committee last interviewed the UK government. Nor have the recommendations of the committee relating to abortion in Northern Ireland been implemented, including a recommendation that the government initiate a process of public consultation on reform of the abortion law. <p>There are three key concerns:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) There continues to be highly restrictive access to abortion and aftercare for abortion; 2) Inadequate provision of emergency contraception; 3) Intimidation of providers of family planning and sexual health information and advice. <p>1) The 1967 Abortion Act does not extend to Northern Ireland and therefore women in Northern Ireland are generally denied access to a service which is provided under the National Health Service to women living in other parts of the United Kingdom. Over 2000 women per year travel from Northern Ireland to other parts of the UK to obtain an abortion. Because of the logistical difficulties and expense involved in making this journey, women from Northern Ireland obtain abortions later in pregnancy²⁵.</p> <p>Research by Marie Stopes International highlighted the anxiety and immense difficulty experienced by women in Northern Ireland who had terminations in England and confirmed that most of the women surveyed would have preferred to have been able to access services in Northern Ireland²⁶.</p> <p>Under Northern Ireland law abortion is permitted where it is necessary to save the life of the mother or where continuation of the pregnancy would involve risk of serious injury to her physical or mental health.</p> <p>Foetal abnormality is not grounds for abortion yet research among healthcare professionals has shown that the one situation in which terminations have been readily available is in the case of foetal abnormality²⁷. In 2004 the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal ordered the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety to consider what steps it should take to inquire into the adequacy of pregnancy services in Northern Ireland and, after consultation with concerned organisations, issue appropriate guidance. Draft guidance on Termination on Pregnancy in Northern Ireland was issued in January 2007 to 'interested' parties for comment. Two points should be made in relation to the guidelines: they make no reference to the state's human rights obligations concerning the provision of reproductive health services; the guidelines were not issued for public consultation (although several anti-choice organisations were invited to respond).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) Provision of emergency contraception in Northern Ireland is restricted by cost and availability. Despite DHSSPS guidance that emergency contraception should be available at no cost to users in Accident and Emergency Departments, few observe this guidance. Emergency contraception is available free of charge from family planning clinics, but these have limited opening hours and are confined to larger urban areas. Emergency contraception is available from pharmacies, but this has to be paid for and the cost discriminates against young women and women on low incomes. Nor can it be obtained in this way by young women under 16. 3) Provision of non-directive information and advice on healthcare is integral to Article 12 but there are serious concerns about the availability of such services in Northern Ireland. One NGO, the Brook Advisory Clinic, provides a part-time free confidential contraception and sexual health service for young people. It does not provide information or a referral service for obtaining an abortion elsewhere in the UK. <p>Nevertheless, its office is frequently picketed by anti-abortion campaigners, as are some offices of the Family Planning Association resulting in harassment and intimidation of women staffing and accessing these services.</p> <p>Recommendation: Government should ensure that the legal regulation of abortion in Northern Ireland acknowledges and is compliant with the state's international human rights obligations; women in Northern Ireland should be able to secure early access to abortion services; Consultation on this issue should be widespread and not confined to narrow interest groups (including conservative or religious organisations).</p>



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 12: Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the Field of Health Care
Teenage Pregnancy in Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In its response to the UK report to CEDAW in 1999 the committee expressed concern at the high level of teenage pregnancy in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland continues to have one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancy in Europe. The restrictions discussed in the previous section are major contributing factors to this. Young women have a right to access sexual health services that are appropriate to their needs. The points made in relation to Article 10 about sex education are also pertinent to this point. The Department of Health and Social Services and Public Safety published its <i>Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Strategy and Action Plan</i> which was developed by an inter-sectoral working group. This publication sets out the aims of the Strategy and the actions associated with it. The strategy was taken forward by a Multi-Agency Implementation Group set up at the beginning of 2003. However the resources allocated were extremely limited. The main concerns with respect to the strategy and action plan is the delay in progress, it covers 2002-2007 but only got underway in early March 2003. The Committee could ask the government about progress to date and future policy and resource allocation. <p>Recommendation: the strategy on teenage pregnancy and early parenthood is monitored for effectiveness, adequately resourced and fully implemented. See also recommendations above re sex education.</p>
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an excessively high level of the use of prescription drugs in Northern Ireland. Whilst more research needs to be conducted on the impact of the conflict on mental health, a number of studies have indicated that there are higher levels of poor mental health in Northern Ireland²⁸ Research in 2007²⁹ showed that young women in Northern Ireland experienced high levels of stress, suffered from low self esteem, and that this was not being adequately addressed in terms of mental health promotion or service provision. A recent comprehensive government commissioned review of mental health and learning disability²⁸ provided detailed data on levels of need and emphasised the need for major investment in services. This includes provision for adolescents in Northern Ireland with mental health problems. While the findings of the Bamford Review have been accepted by government there has been little progress in implementing the recommendations. <p>Recommendation: The government should be asked about how and when it intends to implement the findings of the Bamford review and whether the necessary resources will be made available.</p>

Number	Questions Relating to Article 12
1	<p>What is the government planning to do, at both central and regional level, to ensure that women in Northern Ireland can also secure early access to abortion services?</p> <p>Will the government ensure that, at a minimum, the legal regulation of abortion in Northern Ireland acknowledges and is compliant with the state's international human rights obligations?</p>
2	<p>What steps will the government take to ensure that consultation in decision-making around health-care provision for women is widespread and not confined to narrow interest groups (including conservative or religious organisations), and that the human rights of women are respected as a matter of priority?</p>
3	<p>Will the government commit to investigating the specific difficulties faced by teenage girls in Northern Ireland in accessing sexual health and information services? Will it develop a comprehensive inter-departmental strategy to address the difficulties and ensure that young women in Northern Ireland have access to sexual health services, including emergency contraception?</p>
4	<p>What commitment will government make to ensuring that the strategy on teenage pregnancy and early parenthood is adequately resourced, fully implemented and monitored for effectiveness?</p>
5	<p>Will the government commit to and set a clear time scale for the implementation of the recommendations of the Bamford Review on Mental Health and Learning Disability and provide a commitment that this provision will be adequately resourced?</p>



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 13: Economic, Social and Cultural Life
Women and Pensions in Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gender differences in the labour market have an impact on women's economic situation in later life, particularly in relation to their access to pensions. This is significant for women in Northern Ireland as they are less likely to be in paid employment than in any other UK region, less likely to be in occupational pension schemes and have lower average earnings. Pension provision still does not take into consideration that women are the major carers and often give up employment to do this. Government's pension policy has failed to address these substantive gender inequalities. It is estimated that women in Northern Ireland receive just over 75% of the income that men receive from the state pension³¹. We are disappointed that pension policy has not taken into account the particular life patterns and circumstances of women. Nor does it take into account work done in the home. Relying on means-tested benefits rather than increasing the basic state pension will reinforce women's dependency on the state, and further reduce their capacity to secure an independent income in their own right. The increasing reliance on private pension provision in the UK has seriously disadvantaged women. The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland provides substantive discussion on this issue in its submission to the Committee. <p>Recommendation: The government should increase the value of the state pension and take steps to ensure that all women are entitled to a state pension, and that women do not continue to be disadvantaged by absence from the labour market because of caring responsibilities.</p>
Women and Poverty in Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research has consistently shown that women in Northern Ireland are vulnerable to poverty, as lone mothers, as lower earners, as carers and in old age³². A wide range of measures of economic inequality in Northern Ireland concluded that lone mothers were by far the most deprived group³³. This has a detrimental impact on physical and mental health³⁴, and impacts on ability to work and on future health and well-being. Action needs to be taken in a number of areas to address economic and health disadvantages. The Northern Ireland anti-poverty strategy focuses on employment and employability as the main route out of poverty. To do so prevents it from being a comprehensive anti-poverty strategy, and fails to acknowledge the government's own research on the extent and impact of low pay in Northern Ireland³⁵. We are concerned about the lack of progress in implementing the Northern Ireland anti-poverty strategy and the fact that it does not have a resource attached to it. The setting up of the Working Group in 2006 on promoting the social inclusion of lone parents was welcome but no report has been made available. <p>Recommendation: To effectively reduce working poverty and reduce benefit dependence the minimum wage needs to be increased, benefit levels need to be reviewed in line with the real cost of living and with average earnings so that those unable to work have a real opportunity of being lifted out of poverty; the anti-poverty strategy should be resourced, implemented and monitored. Targets should be time set.</p>

Number	Questions Relating to Article 13
1	What steps will be taken to ensure that data on gender and poverty in Northern Ireland is collected and monitored?
2	What steps will government take to ensure that women receive a fair and adequate state pension?
3	What will government do to ensure that policy is more effective through the integration of the various equality strategies?
4	Will the UK government set targets to gender proof and gender budget all policies?
5	Will the government ensure that there is a time frame for reviewing, implementing and monitoring the measures contained in the anti-poverty strategy?



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 14: Rural Women
<p>Rural Women in Northern Ireland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women living in rural areas of Northern Ireland experience double and sometimes multiple discriminations across a range of issues. The isolation perpetuated by the lack of transport infrastructure and the lack for provision of range of services. Research has shown that woman in Northern Ireland do play a vital role in maintaining agriculture through their off-farm work³⁶. However socio-cultural patterns of land transfer and the organisational culture of the agricultural establishment continues to frustrate the greater participation of women in the industry and the recognition of their role in a sustainable agriculture and rural development. • The Department for Agriculture and Rural Development has made a commitment in its Rural Strategy (2007-2013) to deliver on a range of cross departmental initiatives, including the Gender Equality Strategy. This is welcomed. However, there is little indication of what specific actions the Department will take to enhance the representation of women on decision making bodies responsible for delivery of rural policy at regional and local level. • Consultations with young women in the age group of 18-25 confirm the lack of involvement in community development in rural areas. <p>Recommendations: Organisational practices that discriminate against women should be addressed and strategies should be put in place to redress discriminatory practice, including the under-representation of women in decision-making in this area.</p>

Number	Questions Relating to Article 14
1	What can government do to ensure more inclusive and contemporary definitions of farm work are needed in order to make women's farm work visible and provide statistical categories to ensure they do not inadvertently reinforce gender inequalities?
2	Will government ensure that the agricultural establishment reflects on organisational practices that discriminate against women, and put in place strategies to redress discriminatory practice?
3	How will government ensure that women have equal representation on policy making bodies?



Northern Ireland Issue	Article 15: Equality before the Law and Civil Matters
Judicial Appointments in Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Committee should take into account the serious under-representation of women in the judiciary. The UK government report states that “As of January 2007, Northern Ireland had four female county court judges, 2 female district judges and 4 female resident magistrates. Of the lay magistrates there were 150 women out of 276 in 2006. Overall, 47% of the judiciary are female.” As the Committee on the Administration of Justice notes in its submission to the Committee, “... of 4 Appeal Court judges, none are female, and of 12 High Court judges, none are female. It is also worth noting that Law Magistrates are not legally qualified and preside over a very small area of the law”. Of the recent appointments made by the Northern Ireland Judicial Appointments Commission, 62% were male and 38% were female³⁷. <p>Recommendations: The Criminal Justice Review and the 2003 Implementation Plan³⁸ put forward recommendations regarding equality monitoring and the development of an effective workforce strategy. There has been only limited development in both these areas. It is recommended that government ensures a timetable is in place for implementation of these measures.</p>
Gender Issues relating to the Police Service for Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new Police Service for Northern Ireland came into existence in 2001. The Act which constituted the new service allows for 50/50 Catholic/Protestant quotas in recruitment but no such provision was made to increase female representation. The Act did however make provision for a Gender Action Plan which applies to the police, to police support staff and to the staff of the policing board. This has not had an overall positive impact. Data shows that while 36% of selected recruits are women, the percentage of police officers is 20%, only 1% more than in 1999, a situation which the Oversight Commissioner concludes ‘... will require attention in the immediate future’³⁹. At the outset the Gender Action Plan contained ‘no systematic analysis of police culture, of police values and the ways that they might be alienating to women’⁴⁰. There has been little progress in relation to creating a culture more welcoming to women or taking forward the recommendations regarding part-time work, childcare and job share, despite the fact that the lack of progress in these areas was consistently raised by the Oversight Commissioner. The Office of the Oversight Commissioner’s most recent report (2007) noted that ‘while opportunities for part-time working and job sharing have been established they have not been operationally implemented in any significant way. Likewise, childcare arrangements have been tentatively established but not implemented’ <p>Recommendations: The data demonstrates that the failure to retain women police officers is a problem and therefore the above issues need to be addressed with urgency. This should include measures to challenge a culture which disadvantages women and to act on the recommendations regarding part-time work, childcare and job share which it has, to date, failed to do, despite the fact that the lack of progress in these areas has been consistently raised by the Oversight Commissioner.</p>
Women detained in Northern Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The UK government report makes no reference to the specific problems facing women detained in Northern Ireland. These have been identified in research⁴¹ and have been consistently raised by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, which includes substantive discussion of this issue in its submission to the CEDAW Committee. <p>Recommendation: The Government should commit to implementing recommendations made by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the rights for women detained in Northern Ireland</p>

Number	Questions Relating to Article 15
1	Will government commit to establishing the recommendations emerging from research in Northern Ireland and the recommendations made by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on the rights for women detained in Northern Ireland?
2	Will the government impose a timetable for the implementation of the recommendations of the Criminal Justice Review relating to equality monitoring and the development of an effective workforce strategy?
3	What steps will the government take to address gender issues in the Police Service for Northern Ireland, including the need to radically challenge a culture which disadvantages women and to act on the recommendations regarding part-time work, childcare and job share which it has failed to do, despite the fact that the lack of progress in these areas has been consistently raised by the Oversight Commissioner.



Northern Ireland Issue	General Recommendation 19 of the CEDAW Committee
<p>Violence Against Women</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 23,456 PSNI attended domestic violence incidents in 2006-2007 represent an increase of 1.7% on the previous year and one incident every 22 minutes across Northern Ireland. There were 10,115 crimes with a domestic motivation in that year, more than the combined total of a number of crimes including robbery, armed robbery, shoplifting, sexual offences against children and fraud. Also in 2006-2007, 20% of attempted murders had a domestic motivation. • The recent Court Watch report in Northern Ireland highlighted a deep sense of dissatisfaction by many survivors of domestic violence with the way in which they had been treated by many personnel connected with the justice system. • Sentencing is currently inconsistent. The fact that the violence is located within the home is still frequently viewed as a mitigating rather than an aggravating factor. • There are grave concerns over the delay between orders being made and being served and the lack of a consistent approach to serving orders across the jurisdiction. Police are also frequently failing to take alleged breaches of orders seriously or do not do so unless pressed to do so by a solicitor. Women lack the information on the criminal justice system which would keep them up to date and prepared. • Non-eligibility for legal aid is having serious implications on women accessing civil orders. The means test places women in considerable financial hardship or forces them to give up their employment. The protection of women is a public safety issue and should not be the personal responsibility of individual women. Many women are left without access to legal protection. • Perpetrator programmes: In conjunction with strong prosecution and appropriate sentencing of offenders, perpetrator programmes are recognised as contributing to the prevention of re-offending. However, if the safety of women and children is to be ensured while men participate in these programmes, it is essential that parallel support is made available for women partners and their children. • Current contact provision does not offer adequate protection to vulnerable children. The issue of child contact in domestic violence cases is complex and warrants informed consideration. While there are mechanisms in place in public law proceedings re child contact to take account of domestic violence, these are missing in private law proceedings <p>Recommendations: Government should ensure provision of specialist and integrated courts; it should address child contact issues; it should ensure provision of independent advocates.</p>
<p>Rights of girls and young women to be free from violence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People has raised concerns about the fact that within the home and family life there continues to be breaches of children's rights under the UNCRC in terms of abuse and violence. In Northern Ireland children continue to be the members of the population who can be hit because someone wants to punish them. The Commission also argues for the need for comprehensive data on children affected by all forms of violence to be collected on an annual basis, including sectarian, domestic and sexual exploitation. <p>Recommendations: There should be a pro-prosecution policy to ensure justice and protection for women; domestic violence should be prosecuted as an aggravated offence; sentencing should reflect the seriousness of the crime; there should be provision for specialised and integrated courts to quickly and effectively deal with cases of domestic violence; independent advocates should be provided to represent the view and needs of women and children.</p>





Number	Questions Relating to Recommendation 19
1	What is the UK Government doing to ensure access to justice in Northern Ireland for women and children in the judicial system, for instance - provision of specialist and integrated courts - addressing child contact issues - provision of independent advocates?
2	What is the UK Government commitment to work in schools supporting equality in marriage and family law?
3	Will the government legislate to ensure that children have a right to equal treatment under the law and ensure that the law does not continue to legitimise the physical punishment of children?
4	Will the government commit to the resourcing and collection of comprehensive data on all forms of violence and sexual exploitation against children?





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