

Aspirations of Women collected in the course of the Consultation Process on the National Plan for Women 2002: Towards a National Women's Strategy

September 2002

Compiled by:

Genesis Europe

Allihies

Beara

Co. Cork

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH
ARNA FHOILSIÚ AG OIFIG AN tSOLÁTHAIR
Le ceannach díreach ón
OIFIG DHÍOLTA FOILSEACHÁN RIALTAIS,
TEACH SUN ALLIANCE, SRÁID THEACH LAIGHEAN, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2,
nó tríd an bpost ó
FOILSEACHÁIN RIALTAIS, AN RANNÓG POST-TRÁCHTA,
51 FAICHE STIABHNA, BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2,
(Teil: 01 - 6476834/35/36/37; Fax: 01 - 6476843)
nó trí aon díoltóir leabhar.

DUBLIN
PUBLISHED BY THE STATIONERY OFFICE
To be purchased directly from the
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS SALE OFFICE,
SUN ALLIANCE HOUSE, MOLESWORTH STREET, DUBLIN 2,
or by mail order from
GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS, POSTAL TRADE SECTION,
51 ST. STEPHEN'S GREEN, DUBLIN 2,
(Tel: 01 - 6476834/35/36/37; Fax: 01 - 6476843)
or through any bookseller.

€10

ISBN 0-7557-1267-6

This Report records the aspirations made in written submissions by women and women's organisations to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform during the consultation process leading to the Report to the United Nations on the National Plan for Women 2002 on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The views of women who participated in ten public meetings held around the country in March, 2002 are also included. The aspirations are listed under each of the Twelve Critical Areas of Concern outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (PFA).

It may seem that some aspirations are duplicated, as aspirations which differ in emphasis, are included. A range of views is expressed on a number of issues, which are not attributed to any one organisation. In some instances contradictory and opposite views are recorded. Also, it would appear that communication between Government and the public is imperfect at times. For example, some aspirations are expressed for Government action which has already taken place. For the most part, specific geographical areas and local and regional organisations are not named.

The Report gives a valuable and unique insight into the views and aspirations of the women of Ireland at the beginning of the new millennium. This will serve to guide and influence Government policy into the future.

The written submissions and reports of the 40 workshops held at the 10 public meetings can be accessed on the website of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform at [*www.justice.ie*](http://www.justice.ie).

Patricia Kelleher, PhD
Carmel Kelleher, M. Soc. Sc.

Table of Contents

		<i>Page</i>
Chapter 1	Women and Poverty	7
Chapter 2	Education and Training of Women	31
Chapter 3	Women and Health	61
Chapter 4	Violence against Women	105
Chapter 5	Women and Armed Conflict	127
Chapter 6	Women and the Economy	135
Chapter 7	Women in Power and Decision Making	157
Chapter 8	Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women	169
Chapter 9	Human Rights of Women	183
Chapter 10	Women and the Media	193
Chapter 11	Women and the Environment	205
Chapter 12	The Girl Child	221

Women and Poverty

Poverty and Inequality

- Poverty should be reduced and inequality in the distribution of income and wealth should be narrowed. Women are at a higher risk of poverty than men, with poverty significantly increasing for lone parents, households headed by a person working full-time in the home, households headed by low paid employees and households headed by older persons. Women from minority groups such as Traveller women, asylum seekers, lesbian and bisexual women are particularly vulnerable.
- The needs of the new poor, such as young homeowners on low incomes also need to be recognised.
- The impact of material poverty on the self esteem of women and the disempowerment of women needs to be recognised and addressed in policies and programmes. This can be exacerbated by the isolation experienced by women in rural areas.
- The recommendations of the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (PPF) Benchmarking and Indexation Group should be implemented.

National Anti Poverty Strategy

- National Anti Poverty Strategy (NAPS) should recognise the diversity of measures required to address women's poverty. Poverty in households headed by women, namely lone parents, older women and women working in the home should be eliminated so that no female-headed household is below the 50 per cent poverty line. By 2006, consistent poverty for women headed households should be eliminated.
- There is a need to include women from minority ethnic groups, Traveller women, older women, lone parents, disabled women and lesbian and bisexual women in the review of the NAPS.
- New NAPS targets regarding women's poverty should be established and should include targets on women's health and housing.
- NAPS should establish a target that by 2007 all children of low income parents who are in education, training and employment will have access to affordable quality childcare.
- NAPS targets should be extended to local Government and to local development.
- NAPS should be gender proofed as well as poverty and equality proofed.

Money Lending and Money Management

- There should be greater restrictions placed on money lenders because of the exorbitant repayments people caught in the poverty trap have to make.
- There is need to allocate greater resources to the Money Advice Budgeting Service (MABS) programmes. This service should be available within all communities.

- There is need to provide organisations such as MABS, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and other voluntary organisations with resources to help families in debt.
- There is need for money management training for women.

Social Welfare

- Article 41 of the Constitution acknowledges the special role of the woman in the home. She is entitled to live in the family home and to reasonable maintenance. She has however no other entitlements to family resources unless by the goodwill of her spouse. There is no community of property or a right to share in the family income. Taxation and social welfare legislation treat women by and large as dependants, with the rights of women derived from the rights and entitlements of men. These issues need to be addressed.

Inclusive Model of Social Insurance

- The dependent position of women in the social welfare system has meant that many women have been left without a pension in later life and are vulnerable to poverty. The recent individualisation of the personal income tax code, a radical social policy departure, does not extend to the social welfare code. Women should be treated as individuals in their own right, with a clear recognition of the caring work undertaken predominantly by women. Any reform of the tax and welfare system should not disadvantage women in the home.
- A fully inclusive social insurance model should be developed and welfare payments should be increased.
- An adult social welfare payment should be paid to each spouse to replace the present system where there is a main adult rate and a qualifying adult rate. The “qualifying adult rate” should be raised to the single adult payment and the qualified adult allowance should be paid directly to the spouse.
- Consideration should be given to paying the social welfare payment to women as women are generally the house managers and main carers.
- The earnings of a woman’s partner should not be taken into account in means testing a woman’s entitlement to social welfare payments.
- The eligibility for split payments should not rely on the signature of the claimant, who is usually the husband.
- People engaged in full time caring responsibilities and participating in second chance education and training should be eligible for full social insurance credits.
- A Working Group to plan for the implementation of an individualised social welfare system based on a fully inclusive social insurance model should be established.

Social Welfare Benefits

- There is need to increase social welfare payments to a basic income level. Suggestions for the single adult rate range from €150 to €185 . The rate for a lone parent with one or two children should be €254.¹
- Social welfare payments should be bench-marked against payments in EU member states.

¹ This recommendation draws on Parkers (1998), *Low Cost But Acceptable Budget Standards* which mark the threshold below which good health, social integration and satisfactory child development are at risk.

- Social welfare benefits should be withdrawn on a phased basis, should a woman choose to return to full-time employment.
- Information on unclaimed benefits should be made available.

Women in the Home

- Women who are working full time in the home and caring for young children should receive a payment.

Child Benefit

- Child Benefit should be increased. There should be an option of having Child Benefit paid weekly or monthly.
- Child Benefit should be increased continually so that it reaches the three-year target set by the Government of €48 per week in 2001. A parallel parenting allowance should be introduced. This would be taxed so that those on the lowest incomes get maximum benefit from the allowance.
- Families should receive Child Benefit for children until they finish formal education.

Supplementary Welfare and Extra Benefits

- Guidelines for discretionary payments need to be examined as entitlements differ from region to region.
- User-friendly guidelines should be developed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Children, in relation to the Rent/Mortgage Interest Supplement and Exceptional Needs Payments.
- Additional grants should be paid to low income families to cover the extra costs incurred in having children at school, for example costs of extra curricula school activities.
- The back to school clothing allowance and the allowance for school books should be increased.
- The ceiling on earnings (€318 a week) for the back to school clothing allowance should be raised for women who have large numbers of school going children.
- People on unemployment benefit and short-term benefit should be entitled to all extra benefits.
- Local authority rents should not be increased immediately when people take up employment, as people need to be supported while they move out of the poverty trap.
- The fuel allowance is inadequate and should be linked to inflation.

Pensions

- Pensions are insufficient and unrealistic. The Old Age Contributory Pension and the Widows Pension should be increased.
- Large numbers of women who are carers have no contributory pension in their own right. Pension credits should be extended to all women including women of pension age who are at present ineligible for full contributory old-age pensions because of their caring responsibilities for children, disabled people or older people.
- The pension from the Farmers Early Retirement Scheme should automatically transfer to the spouse in the event of death.

- There is need to monitor the operation of the Pensions (Amendment) Bill, 2001, to ensure the efficient introduction of personal retirement saving accounts (PRSA).

Information

- Television, radio and the print media should be used to advertise information on women's social welfare rights and entitlements.
- There is need for locally based, adequately funded citizen's community information centres. These centres should not be dependent on volunteers.
- Current entitlements relating to specific benefits should be noted on Old Age Pension and Child Benefit books.

Basic Income for All

- A basic income should be provided to every woman, man and child on an individual basis. This income is paid to the individual irrespective of any income from other sources and paid without conditions, tax-free and guaranteed. For a person who is employed the basic income payment replaces the tax-free allowance or tax credit in the income tax system. For a person who is unemployed the basic income payment replaces income from social welfare. It provides an incentive for people to seek additional income and move out of the poverty trap. It also avoids many of the negative side effects inherent in means-tested social welfare assistance schemes.
- By guaranteeing the income it would relieve stress and anxiety of poor people and free them to develop themselves, their families and their communities. It is work and employment friendly and is an incentive to improve one's economic status by facilitating access to employment, further education and training. In all, it enables people to live life with dignity, improve the quality of life for Irish society and leads to a more stable and equitable society. A basic income is especially significant for women in that women have an income in their own right and men and women are treated equally. It eliminates conflict around issues such as tax individualisation, tax bands and the lack of recognition of the work of women in the home. The model proposed by the Conference of Religious of Ireland (CORI) Justice Commission, such as a full basic income for all, can be implemented and financed without resorting to a high level of taxation.

Refundable Tax Credits

- Tax credits should be increased and taxed at the standard rate of tax relief. For low paid employees, whose tax bills are less than the credit, a payment should be made equal to the difference of the credit and the tax bill. This would also help to address the disincentive for people to take up low paid employment. If refundable tax credits were introduced, subsequent increases in the level of the tax credit would then be of equal value to all employees.

Childcare

- There is need for affordable, culturally appropriate, wheelchair accessible and good quality childcare for all parents, whether or not they are in the home, in education, in employment or engaged in voluntary work.
- Childcare in its many forms (community-based, State-run, private and home-based) should be subsidised by the State.
- Free childcare and crèche facilities should be provided for women on low income.

- Childcare models in other countries, for example Sweden, should be examined and models of best practice incorporated into childcare programmes.

Community Based Childcare

- There is a need for a long term strategy for community childcare and to build the capacity of community organisations so that they can provide full-time childcare in the form of nursery, crèche and community play groups.
- Groups applying for funding for capital costs for childcare have no guarantee of reimbursement of professional fees incurred in making the grant application. This discourages many groups from making an application. Also, funding does not cover administration/office costs and finding alternative sources of funding for this element is difficult.

The Early Start Programme and After School

- The Early Start model should be extended to all disadvantaged areas.
- Provision of after school childcare needs to be supported and extended, and all new schools should have after school childcare.

Childcare for Women Attending Training and Education Programmes

- There is need to provide increased State supported affordable and good quality childcare for women on low incomes attending education and training.
- The FÁS childcare allowance should be increased. The allowance should be applicable to family members who take care of children, not just registered childcare workers.

Training for Childcare Workers

- All childcare personnel should have specific training in the area of childcare.
- All childcare/crèche workers should complete training courses.
- Child minders without qualifications should not be permitted to advertise their services.

State Assistance Towards Childcare Expenses

- There should be tax relief on childcare expenses.
- Child Benefit should be increased to assist with childcare expenses.

Role and Contribution of Family Members/Relatives

- There is need to measure grandparent's contribution to the provision of childcare.
- There is need to recognise family members and relatives who offer non-registered childcare. Subsidies should be paid to these family members.
- There is need for men and women to take equal responsibility for childcare.

National Anti-Poverty Strategy

- The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) should establish a target that by 2007 all parents will have access to an affordable quality childcare place(s).

Childcare by Mothers

- It is widely recognised and acknowledged that children are best looked after in the home. The funding which the Government plans to spend on the provision of “childcare” should be allocated to families where one parent works full-time in the home.
- It is widely recognised and acknowledged that children are best looked after in the home through the love and protection of their mother and father. The money which the Government plans to spend on the provision of “childcare” should instead be allocated to families providing, where necessary, parenting, education and instilling a sense of worth in women for the awesome vocation of rearing their family. This is not, of course, intended to militate in any way against those women who want or prefer to work outside the home. To the detriment of society, very many women in Ireland today are forced to work outside the home, either through financial necessity or through agenda-driven pressure.

Counselling

- Women need access to counsellors who understand the gendered position of women in society and the diversity of women’s situations. The needs of specific groups for counselling are referred in the specific sections below.
- Counselling needs to be available free of charge to women who are experiencing poverty.
- Counselling aimed at strengthening families such as that outlined under “Strengthening Families for Life” should be available locally.
- Non-relationship counselling in a community setting should be available.
- A community based drop-in service which provides a “listening ear” or counselling service to those experiencing difficulties such as debt, domestic violence, bereavement or separation should be provided locally.
- Life crisis counselling should be available to support women and families.

Awareness Training

- All professionals working in the area of poverty should receive awareness training in gender, inequality, disability and anti-racism.

Children in Care

- The procedures by which children who use drugs are taken into care need to be reviewed.
- Women who are at risk of having their children taken into care need to be supported.
- There is need for a support group and forum for women who are separated from their children, as a result of their children having been taken into care.

Childminding Agency

- A Childminding Agency should be established with a full-time organiser. The aim of the Agency would be to care for children who do not have a parent to care for them or whose parent is incapable of caring for them. The organiser would establish a panel of childminders and match childminders with children who need care. Childminders would be paid a basic weekly income.

Role of Professionals in Working Class Communities

- Many women in working class communities feel powerless when dealing with professionals. They often lack knowledge about how their case is being assessed by professionals. They can feel very vulnerable and judged if they or their children are ill or their children are at risk of being taken into care. There is need to provide an advocacy service for women in such circumstances to assist them to make their case to professionals.

Rapid Programmes

- All RAPID and CLAR programmes should ensure that there is participation of local women in the planning, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of the programmes. The participation of the specific target groups in the programmes should be gender proofed in terms of access, participation and outcomes.

Families

- Advocacy should be provided for women when attending family courts for example, for maintenance and separation agreements.
- There is need for a mediation and counselling service which is available locally for those affected by marriage break-up.
- There is need for emergency funding for women on low incomes who are in the initial stages of separation.
- There should be a national strategy to manage the post divorce environment. There is need to assess:
 - The impact of divorce.
 - The underlying reasons for marriage breakdown.
 - The costs involved.
 - Models of best practice of early intervention and support for people during the legal process.
- There is need to review legislation in regard to joint ownership of family homes.
- Legislation relating to family separation needs to be strengthened so as to protect women.
- Men should contribute to unpaid work in the home.

There are different views regarding the definition of “family”:

- An inclusive definition of family includes the various family forms, in existence in society today, such as cohabiting couples and lesbian and gay couples and the rights of these family forms should be protected by legislation.
- The nuclear heterosexual family should be protected by legislation and not equated with other forms of families such as co-habiting couples and homosexual couples. All legislation should be proofed to protect this form of family.
- The family based on marriage (see Bunreacht na hEireann, Art. 41.1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1) should be protected by all relevant legislation and not equated with other forms of families such as cohabiting couples and homosexual couples. All legislation should be proofed to comply with the Constitution.

Diversity of Women's Experience

- There is need to recognise how gender and other forms of social stratification intersect. Diverse groups of women experience different levels of poverty and multiple forms of discrimination.

Widows

- Many widows, because of the requirement to be on the Live Register, are excluded from FÁS training courses.
- Front line personnel should be trained to sensitively help and support widows.
- There is need for counselling to empower widows and to help them to make life changes.
- There is need for special supports for children who have lost parents.
- Traditional images of widows needing a man should be challenged and an equal place in society given to families headed by women.
- Widows under 66 years should be entitled to extra benefits such as the free travel pass, free electricity allowance, a free television licence and free telephone rental.

Women in the Home

- Women should be supported in their choice to enter paid employment or do caring work in the home.
- All policies should be proofed to ensure that they do not negatively effect women in the home.
- The home maker residing with a partner, should be entitled to a percentage of the weekly household income by law.
- The State should recognise the choice by all those married couples, who wish to do so, to have their children cared for by one of their parents (normally by the mother) in the home and this choice should be supported and encouraged.
- The work of grandparents and extended family members who care for grandchildren, often free of charge should be valued and rewarded financially

Different views were expressed regarding the Constitutional position of women in the home:

- **There should be a recognition and acknowledgement of the Constitutional position of the woman in the home.**
- **The Irish Constitution, which enforces the notion that a woman's place is in the home, is outdated and needs to be changed.**

Carers

- Carers often experience stress and undertake caring at a personal and financial cost to themselves. The majority of people who are ill, older people and people with a physical, mental or intellectual disability and who are in need of care continue to be cared for at home rather than in institutions. The Carer's Association of Ireland estimates that there are approximately 300,000 carers in Ireland. For instance, 62 per cent of people (16,563 out of 26,760) with an intellectual disability are cared for at home.

- It is important that carers are well supported. Women continue to be the primary carers in our society, with 80 per cent of carers being women. Many people cared for remain highly dependent throughout their lifetime and many people cared for have multiple handicaps, such as being unable to walk, are incontinent, have epilepsy or other health conditions and immune deficiencies. Many have behavioural and/or psychiatric difficulties. The reality for parents with children with an intellectual disability is that they have to care for them for 50 to 60 years.
- Carers experience significant levels of poverty due to the fact that they are not available to take up paid employment, thus forfeiting the right to a wage and a pension. The contribution of carers should be recognised.

Income Support

- The principle of individualisation should apply to the Carer's Allowance.² The carer's own income should be taken into account and not that of her spouse/partner who may not be related to the person being cared for. Less than 10 per cent of carers are in receipt of the Carer's Allowance, which is indicative of the stringent means testing for this allowance. Another view is that the means test for the Carer's Allowance should be abolished or that the Carer's Allowance should be reviewed to ensure that families in receipt of, or below, the average industrial wage qualify for the allowance.
- People in receipt of a Carer's Allowance should not be excluded from claiming a second allowance, such as a Widow's Pension.
- There is need to introduce full social insurance credits for women engaged in full-time caring. These should be backdated for older women and sufficient to ensure a decent quality of life.
- A Cost of Providing Care payment should be introduced to cover the costs of heating, food and other expenses incurred as a result of providing full-time care.
- Carers should be eligible for the Medical Card.
- The Carer's Allowance should be increased.

Other Supports

- There is need to have an infrastructure of care, on which carers can call when needed.
- There is need for information on available services and benefits for carers and an advocacy service to ensure receipt of entitlements.
- There is need to provide planned, regular respite care for both carers and their dependants.
- There is need to increase the number of home-helps and community supports such as public health nurses and day centres to assist carers.
- There is need to provide adequate home adaptation, aids and appliances (e.g. incontinence aids and applications) and help with transport.
- There is need for regular assessments and reviews of the needs of carers and the people they care for and there is need to have a plan for how services are to be provided.
- Carers need to have counselling available to them at different stages of caring, including bereavement counselling.
- Long-term care should be adequately funded.

² A Carers Allowance is paid to a carer who is caring for a person who is so incapacitated as to require full time care and attention.

Training

- There is need to provide accredited skills training for carers so that they can meet the needs of their dependants, while at the same time having their experience recognised. Conferences and seminars are usually aimed at professionals in the caring field and high fees exclude carers on low incomes.
- Carers need access to free part-time third level diploma and degree courses.
- The adoption of the Caring for Carers Irish Red Cross Training Programme — Caring in the Home should be offered to carers.

Policy Development

- There is need for carers to be involved in policy development and formulation in order that an integrated, co-ordinated service is in place. Many carers are not involved in organisations and so their voices are not being heard.
- There is need for a plan to support carers, taking into account the demographic trends up to and beyond 2010.
- Government policies should be proofed so that policies do not impact negatively on women who are full-time carers in the home.

Women who are Homeless

- The Government should make local authority and affordable housing an urgent priority as homelessness cannot be eliminated without the provision of housing.
- Single homeless women should be given access to social housing and local authorities need to take responsibility for their accommodation needs.
- There is an urgent need to review the accommodation provided for homeless women and to review the safety of women in Bed and Breakfast and emergency hostels.
- Bed and Breakfast accommodation for women and children who are homeless is unacceptable. There is need to include measurable targets and timetables to end the practice of homeless children being accommodated in Bed and Breakfast and refuges.
- There is a need for half way houses for women who are being discharged from prison.
- Subsidies should be provided for low-income families who need to extend their house to accommodate a second family unit. This would reduce overcrowding and homelessness.
- Homeless people should be involved in decision making in relation to emergency hostels. Ways of consulting which encourage meaningful participation of homeless people should be developed.
- Voluntary organisations working with homeless people should be included as equal partners in the policy making process.
- Women who are homeless should be facilitated to sign on the Live Register without an address.

Women Prisoners

- The criminal record for non violent crime should be removed after a prescribed number of years in cases where no subsequent crime is committed.

- The Employment Equality Act should be amended to include protection against discrimination on the grounds of a criminal record. Also, the exclusion from employment of people with a criminal record in the civil and public services should be lifted.
- There is need for immediate action to address the lack of education, sports and recreational facilities provided for women in custody.
- There is need for support for women while in prison and after they leave prison. On leaving prison women need access to accommodation. Skills and qualifications learned in prison should be linked to education and employment opportunities.
- There is need to establish an open prison for women.

Irish Language Speakers

- Information and documentation should be accessible in the Irish language.
- There is need to “language and cultural proof” policies and services.
- The language Bill should be implemented.
- There is need to develop a tourist strategy for Gaeltacht areas.
- There is need for third level courses, linked to employment opportunities, to be held in Gaeltacht areas.
- There is need for special recruitment and training to provide personnel for crèches in Gaeltacht areas.
- The Language Assistance Scheme in the Dingle Peninsula, Co. Kerry should be recognised and developed throughout Gaeltacht regions and extended to areas where there are all-Irish schools.
- There is need for positive support to strengthen what survives of the Irish language in borderline Gaeltacht regions.
- Information Technology (IT) should be available through the medium of Irish.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) should address the social exclusion and disadvantages experienced by lesbian and bisexual women. Lesbian and bisexual women are an invisible minority who experience prejudice and discrimination. They are at risk of poverty as the stress and strain they experience as a result of homophobia, can mean that they are less likely to complete education and training courses and consequently their actual earning power is reduced.
- Lesbian and bisexual couples should have equal access, as married heterosexual couples to State benefits administered by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.
- Lesbian and bisexual couples should have the same rights as married heterosexual couples to be included on public housing lists. Lesbian and bisexual women can experience widespread discrimination when accessing both public and private housing.
- Lesbian and bisexual women who have been made homeless because of homophobia should be given priority on Public Housing Lists.
- Hostels should accommodate the particular needs of lesbian and bisexual women.

- Employers and educators should implement anti-homophobia policies to ensure that lesbian and bisexual women do not experience discrimination or harassment in work and education settings.
- Lesbian and bisexual women should have the right to transfer property, benefits and pensions to partners.
- There is need to resource support groups, centres and information lines for lesbian and bisexual women.

Cohabiting Couples

- Cohabiting couples who have a partnership agreement, and who have taken care of their responsibilities to ex-partners and families, should have the same rights as married heterosexual couples.

Lone Parents

Income Support

- The One-Parent Family Payment (OPFP) should be bench-marked and updated taking into account the findings of the Working Group on Index Adequacy under the *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness*. There are approximately 128,000 lone parents in the State. Approximately 75,000 depend on the One-Parent Family Payment, the vast majority (97.3 per cent) of which are women.
- A minimum social welfare payment of €200.00 per week per adult should be paid by the end of 2002.
- Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowances should be paid automatically to recipients of means-tested payments. Lone parents on Community Employment (CE) should be eligible for these allowances.
- User-friendly guidelines should be developed for the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and in particular in relation to Rent/Mortgage Interest Supplements and Exceptional Needs Payments.
- Lone parents should be eligible for free telephone rental allowance, a free television licence and free electricity allowance.
- The issues in regard to maintenance should be reviewed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs on a regular basis. The level of maintenance payments available from the district court has not risen in the last ten years and remains at a maximum of €77 (IR£60). This needs to be increased.
- Information on how cohabitation is assessed should be issued by the Department of Social and Family Affairs when a lone parent is initially awarded the One-Parent Family Payment.
- Fathers who abandon their children should be held responsible for their maintenance.
- The Department of Social and Family Affairs should monitor the operation of the cohabitation guidelines to ensure that they are applied in a consistent manner across all regions. Training and regular updates should be given to Inspectors on difficulties encountered. Where appropriate, the Department should consult with lone parent groups as part of this process. Ideally, the cohabitation rule should be abolished as it assumes that men should and do financially support women.

- Measures to encourage lone parents into the labour market should support lone parents to access high paid work. There is also need for post-employment support.
- There is need to reduce the delays in the procedure to get the One-Parent Family Allowance.
- There is need to adjust the amount lone parents can earn while retaining the One-Parent Family Payment. This has not been adjusted since 1997.
- Lone parents on low incomes need to be subsidised to support their children's involvement in sport.
- Sufficient support and assistance should be given to single mothers to ensure that they can care for, and be present for, their children themselves, and that they are not, because of economic necessity, forced to place their children in childcare in order to seek employment to meet their own and their children's needs.
- A Helpline to assist teenage mothers access benefits should be established by the Department of Social and Family Affairs.

Community Based Supports

- The Family Services Project should be extended and Family Services Workers should be located in Family Services Projects and Family Resource Centres.
- Family Service Workers should be appointed by the Department of Social and Family Affairs to work with families, especially lone parent households, at particular periods of crisis. They could assist families to liaise with different statutory agencies.
- A budget line should be provided by the Department of Social and Family Affairs for the development of peer support networks for lone parents.
- A flexible community based response team needs to be put in place to work with one-parent families. This team should include a social worker and counsellor and workers should be trained to provide information and support.
- Community Development Projects providing support to mothers parenting alone should receive increased funding.
- The RAPID and CLAR programmes should consult with lone parents as a matter of urgency.

Counselling

- Lone parents should have access to counselling free of charge in a choice of community settings.

Accommodation

- Lone parents have difficulty finding suitable, affordable accommodation. There is no legal protection for people living in the private rented sector and no consistency of standards for landlords to adhere to. There is need for a review of rent levels and of the standards of accommodation in the private rented sector.
- Discrimination by landlords against lone parents on rent supplement should be examined under the Equal Status legislation.

Women from Minority Ethnic Groups

Accommodation and Integration Policy

- There is need to end Direct Provision so that all asylum seekers are treated in the same way as Irish citizens in relation to their access to accommodation and social welfare entitlements. Since April 2000, mandatory dispersal programmes have been enforced to alleviate accommodation shortages in Dublin. There is a system of Direct Provision whereby accommodation, meals and laundry services is provided and “comfort” money of €19 a week is provided and €9.50 per child is given. The money provided does not cover the cost of basic necessities. This is isolating and disempowering for asylum women and their families.
- There is need to establish a forum to oversee the integration of ethnic minorities into Irish society.
- Staff from ethnic minorities should be employed to address the needs of ethnic minorities in areas, such as social welfare and health services.
- Each Government Department should employ women from ethnic minorities.

Training and Employment

- There is a need to give asylum seekers who are in the country for more than six months an opportunity to access employment and education. Asylum seekers are not allowed to study or seek employment or do not qualify for local authority housing. This creates major barriers for the social integration into Irish society and results in social exclusion.
- Employers need to be trained in anti-racism and non-discriminatory practices.
- Employers need to be knowledgeable about foreign qualifications and to recognise previous qualifications. Refugees experience discrimination in that their previous qualifications or work experience are often not recognised by the State or other employers. This includes professional qualifications in nursing, teaching and law. The results are that they tend to work in low status, low paid employment. There is also lack of affordable and culturally appropriate childcare.
- Women need training in job seeking skills as many refugee women come from cultures where the process of applying and interviewing for a job is very different to Irish practices.
- Women from minority ethnic groups need accessible English classes with crèche facilities.
- There is need to provide cultural education programmes on the Irish way of life for all immigrants.

Childcare

- There is need to provide childcare where a proportion of trained staff is non-national and where training for Irish staff includes intercultural and anti-racism policy and practice.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should be targeted by the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.

Banking

- Many refugees and asylum seekers have difficulty opening a bank account if they no longer possess a valid passport. There is need to provide training in refugee documentation and in anti-discriminatory practice for bank officials and other workers in credit services.

Social Welfare

- Social welfare policies should be reviewed in the light of their impact on women from ethnic minorities.
- Many refugees are caught in the poverty trap when moving from being dependent on the State to low-paid employment because of the loss of the Medical Card and rent allowance. This should be addressed.
- Some ethnic minority women may need assistance when filling out official forms due to language or literacy problems and unfamiliarity with the format of the forms. Many women come from a background with an oral culture.

Training for Service Providers

- Social welfare officials should receive training in multi-culturalism and anti-discriminatory practices.
- An anti-racism training programme should be delivered to all public service workers, for example, teachers, nurses, Gardaí and health professionals.

Capacity Building

- Groups and organisations working with women from minority ethnic communities should be targeted by the Community Development Support Programmes, the National Anti-Poverty Networks and the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme and a separate budget should be developed to support community development work with women from minority ethnic groups.

Traveller Women

Policy Developments and Implementation

- The Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion should recognise Traveller women as a specific target group.
- The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) should specifically include Traveller women.
- Structured interdepartmental co-operation is needed to address the issues facing Traveller women.
- The Education Equality Initiative should recognise the particular educational disadvantages which Traveller women experience.
- There is need to implement the Traveller Health Strategy.
- There is need to implement the Local Authorities' Traveller Five Year Accommodation Programme. Approximately one-quarter or 1,207 Traveller families are living on the roadside in appalling conditions without water, toilet facilities, electricity or regular rubbish disposal and are subject to the constant threat of eviction. Many live close to motorways, railway tracks and rubbish tips.
- No evictions should take place until all accommodation targets are met by local authorities.
- A rights based approach should be adopted by agencies to ensure that all Traveller women live in safe and clean environments.
- There is need to review the Caravan Loans and Grants Scheme in terms of prices of caravans, repayment options and assessment criteria.
- The safety of Traveller women should be taken into consideration when planning accommodation for Travellers.

- Traveller women should be involved and supported to participate in the planning, design and implementation of accommodation programmes. Resources should be provided to cover childcare and transport costs.
- The particular needs of Traveller women who have a disability need to be acknowledged and addressed.
- Crèche facilities and childcare facilities should be provided in any scheme of accommodation for Travellers.
- Travellers living in Dublin, not living in the settled community and who are claiming social welfare, must travel to a specific social welfare office on the south side of Dublin City in order to claim social welfare entitlements. This is a discriminatory practice and should be discontinued. The situation is compounded by the fact that waiting facilities are inadequate and Travellers are forced to queue on the pathway outside. There is also a lack of privacy in the office.
- All services providers should be trained in, and adopt, anti-racist codes of practice.

Gender Proofing

- There is need to include gender impact statements in outlining implementation plans of the accommodation section of the Report of the Task Force of the Traveller Community.
- Gender-mainstreaming guidelines should be circulated to all local authorities.
- NAPS should be equality and gender proofed in order to take account of the interconnected issues of sexism and racism.

Capacity Building

- Initiatives to support the development of participatory projects for Traveller women's groups at local level should be resourced.
- Traveller women's groups should be resourced to participate on the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees.
- Traveller women should be included in any measures designed to improve the overall status of Irish women.
- The particular needs of Traveller women as carers should be identified and supported in the development of a national support system for carers.
- Traveller women should be employed to provide culturally appropriate childcare for Traveller children.
- Organisations working with Traveller women should be resourced to participate in the development, implementation and monitoring of policy initiatives to combat poverty among Traveller families.

Older Women

- Older people need more information on their entitlements. Information should be sent out to them with the Medical Card.
- It should not be compulsory to retire at 65 years.
- Older women should be supported to have their views, particularly in relation to poverty, heard in policy fora.

- Older people need to be consulted in the running of day centres, nursing homes and services for older people.

Income Support

- Age is highly related to the risk of poverty for women. Forty-four per cent of older women are poor and the risk of poverty has increased fivefold for older women between 1994 and 1998. The poverty of older people needs to be addressed.
- There is a need to increase the Old Age Pension.
- There is a need to increase the heating allowance.
- Older women who emigrated in the 1940s and 1950s should be entitled to the full range of benefits and social welfare assistance.
- Older women who have been in low paid employment have insufficient finance to cover emergencies.

Supports

- There is need for more day centres which are properly resourced and staffed and nursing homes which are more responsive to the needs of older women. In the absence of these, the burden of care falls on the family. Day centres should be free of charge.
- Active retirement clubs should be established in each county.
- Services such as local health services and post office services are important to older people. It is important that they are available locally as many older people do not have the finance or transport to travel.
- A range of housing options for older women is needed. This should include supported housing.
- Older people should be provided with tokens to hire hackneys or taxis to access essential services.
- There is need to provide personal assistants for older people.

HIV Positive Women

- Many women and their families living with HIV/AIDS have inadequate resources to meet their needs and many are dependent on charitable organisations to provide them with basic necessities. As a result of lack of finance, many cannot buy the food they need for their dietary requirements and fuel necessary to keep warm. This leads to increased levels of anxiety. This needs to be addressed.
- There is need for training of personnel at local health board level, including Community Welfare Officers responsible for HIV clients, regional AIDS Co-ordinators, nurses, doctors, social workers, counsellors, drug workers, outreach workers and other appropriate personnel.
- Condoms should be available on the Medical Card.
- Additional home based supports are needed for HIV positive women who are experiencing ill health.
- Carers of HIV positive women need support.

- Additional supports are needed for HIV positive women who are also mothers of HIV positive children.
- HIV statutory support services should ensure that HIV positive women have access to quality housing and adequate financial resources.

Disabled Women

Disability Access

- Disabled women comprise women who have a physical, sensory, learning, hidden disability or a mental health difficulty. The definition of disability access needs to be broadened from wheelchair access to include access for people with hearing, sight and speech difficulties.

Income Supports

- The risk of poverty for households headed by a person, who is ill or disabled is 28 per cent compared to a risk for all households, which is eight per cent.³ There is need to increase the Disability Allowance to enable women to eat well and maintain their health. The allowance should be bench-marked at 27 per cent of the average industrial wage.
- There should be no penalties for recipients, particularly female lone parents, who have young adults dependants living with them at home.
- Women with disabilities in residential care who meet the eligibility criteria should receive income support as a right.
- All people who are on a long-term disability payment should be eligible for a Medical Card.
- A Cost of Disability payment based on individual assessment of need should be introduced. This payment would cover the extra costs associated with a disability regardless of the income status of the claimant. Costs of equipment, house adaptation, travel and telephone, fuel, food, clothing and medical care and assistance, caring for children and other dependants should be taken into account. The Department of Finance should undertake a large-scale study to estimate the prevalence of disability in order to estimate the future costs of disability for future budgets.
- All women with a disability should have a pension in their own right equal to the Non-Contributory Old Age Pension. There should be flexibility in the setting of pensionable age so as to enable older disabled women to continue to work if they choose to do so.
- Individualisation of benefits would reduce the dependency of disabled women.

Information, Supports and Capacity Building

- Women with disabilities need to be resourced to build the capacity of their organisations, to network and to develop their own political agendas so that their voices can be heard.
- There is need for information on social entitlements to be made available in a multi-media format.
- More personal assistants should be provided for women with disabilities.
- There is need for advocates for people with disability.

³ *Living in Ireland Survey*, 1998.

Women Living on Island Communities

- All policies relating to social welfare, education and training should be “island proofed”.
- There is need for transport and maintenance subsidies for islanders accessing services. Geographically, islands are on the periphery of the periphery and many islands are cut-off from the mainland during bad weather conditions.
- The LEADER programme needs to be reviewed to ensure that they are responding to the needs of women on islands.

Overseas Development Aid and Exchange Programmes

- There is need to ensure that the aid allocation to Overseas Development Aid reaches the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) by 2007 and that aid is used in developing countries to promote human rights issues. It should be directed towards self sufficiency of local populations.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs should allocate a percentage of its budget to positive interventions aimed at women’s empowerment.
- The Government should examine its support to the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) in the light of criticisms and the lack of consultation with women’s organisation.
- All development programmes should be disability proofed and programmes within a gender perspective should target disabled people. Disabled people should be employed at all levels in development organisations. There is need to ensure that future global conferences place the concern of disabled women on their agenda and that programmes target disabled women and mainstream initiatives.
- The Government, in consultation with teachers unions, should fund exchange student programmes with third world countries to foster better appreciation of global inequalities and consumerism in a world of deprivation, and discriminatory practices against women.
- The Irish Government should ensure that finance provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank does not impact negatively on low paid women workers.
- Developing countries have to cutback on essential services in order to repay loans. This particularly effects women.
- International aid organisations often give contraception and promote abortion along with food aid. This is often against the tradition and religion of countries.
- Irish aid should not be given to countries like China that have policies which enforce population control.
- Irish foreign policy on international conflict should be based on an independent analysis. It is important to protect the rights of small nations and poor nations and not to be unduly influenced by the powerful, richer nations. Policies should be fully discussed in Ireland.

Research and Monitoring

Poverty

- There is need for research on the experiences of poverty of marginalised groups, such as women living in Bed and Breakfast, in homeless hostels and on the streets. These women are excluded from national random sample research.
- There is need for research and debate on the meaning of poverty and its impact on women and their quality of life.
- There is need to research the causes of debt among low-income families.
- There is need to conduct ongoing research using the Budget Standards Approach Model to ensure that decision-makers are informed about the basic costs of food, clothing, rent, household expenses so that people have the means to participate in society and that social welfare payments and minimum wages are set at adequate levels.
- There is need to monitor the different effects of poverty on the lives of men and women.
- Small-scale participatory research studies should be carried out on women's poverty. This is necessary in order to understand the complex nature of poverty.
- There is need for research on poverty in rural Ireland which takes account of rural peoples' access to facilities, compared with other sectors of society.
- There is need to measure the impact of the reform of the tax and social welfare system on women.
- There is need to measure the relativity of the rural/urban dimension for women in poverty.
- There is need to compare patterns of income distribution of women and men.
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should undertake research to develop a gender perspective for programmes and policies for girls and young women. There is need to mainstream a gender perspective on policies relating to young women.

Children in Care

- There is need to compare the costs of taking children into care with the costs of providing community based supports for families.
- There is need for an independent evaluation of the procedures used by professional agencies who are involved in taking children into care.

Social Welfare Payments

- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should undertake an evaluation of current arrangements for payment of maintenance to women, including the effectiveness of the attachment of earnings provision and its extension to other employee situations.
- Provision should be made under the National Development Plan for research on reasons why there are more women than men on short-term benefits.

Family

- There is need to monitor and undertake research on:
 - The impact of divorce on the health, social role and income of women.
 - The underlying reasons for marriage breakdown.

- The costs involved. There is a need to ensure that all necessary supports — financial, emotional etc. — are provided in order to minimise unnecessary stress in families.
- Models of best practice of early intervention and support for people during the legal process.
- There is need for research on the distribution of income within households. This is particularly important where the woman is the main carer and does not have an independent income.

Childcare

- There is need to measure grandparent's contribution to the provision of childcare.

Research on the Diverse Needs of Women

Disabled Women

- Research should be undertaken on the link between disability and poverty.
- Research should be undertaken on the number of women on the various disability related payments, the length of time on such payments and reasons why there are more women on short-term allowances than men.

Homeless Women

- There is need for research into the number of women who are homeless and the number of women with children who are homeless.
- There is an urgent need to review the accommodation provided for homeless women and to review the safety of women in Bed and Breakfast and emergency hostels.
- An audit of hostel and Bed and Breakfast accommodation to assess their suitability for HIV positive women should be undertaken and an assessment made of the impact of living in hostel and emergency accommodation on women and children's health and safety.

Traveller Women

- Research should be undertaken to identify the nature and extent of poverty experienced by Traveller women.

Women who are HIV Positive

- Research needs to be undertaken which incorporates a gender perspective with regard to HIV/AIDS and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). The research should be designed and implemented in partnership with affected women and their support organisations. The specific needs of refugee and asylum-seeking women should be taken into account.

Asylum Seekers

- There is need to conduct an assessment of the impact of the dispersal policy on the impact of women's access to health services and the consequent impact on women's health.
- There is need for research on the extent of poverty among minority ethnic groups.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- There is need to undertake research on the extent of poverty among lesbian and bisexual women with children.

Debt Relief

- The Department of Foreign Affairs should commission research into alternative gender sensitive debt relief mechanisms.

Statistical Data

- In order to monitor whether or not progress is being achieved on issues, relating to women's poverty, raised in the National Plan for Women, there is need to ensure that there are gender statistics and statistics compiled on the diverse experiences of women across the nine grounds under the equality legislation and where appropriate by class, homelessness, women in agriculture, women in institutions, women experiencing violence and women using drugs.
- It is important to have accurate statistics on how income is distributed within families as well as between families.
- Data should be disaggregated by gender and age and diversity of women.
- Service providers should compile data on women's economic and social disadvantage. These statistics should be reviewed regularly in consultation with women's groups.
- An annual statistics booklet on women should be produced covering all aspects of women's lives.
- Data on household income does not reflect the poverty of many women who are dependent on spouses and who do not have access to the household income.
- Gender disaggregated data should be collected at regional level.
- Data on key indicators should be disaggregated by gender i.e.
 - Distribution of income.
 - Relative income poverty.
 - Persistent poverty.
 - Jobless households.
 - Unemployment rate.
 - Early school leaving.
 - Long-term unemployment.
- There is need to collect and analyse data through the National Disease Surveillance Centre to highlight the relationship between poverty, gender, sexuality and race as factors in vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.
- Data on poverty should be disaggregated to identify Traveller women and Traveller women should be targeted in any measure developed.
- There is need for statistics on the sentences delivered by the courts disaggregated by gender.
- The poverty indicators development Trutz Haase should be reviewed as it is felt that they discriminate against rural areas.

- For the most part, lesbian and bisexual women have not been counted in statistics. They should be counted in statistics.
- Statistics on disability should be disaggregated by gender and used for the development of policy.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

Poverty

- Numbers of women living on incomes below the minimum wage.
- Number of women living below the poverty line.
- Number of men and women living below the poverty line taking into consideration age, educational background and employment situation.
- Risk of financial poverty as measured by the 50 per cent and 60 per cent of national median income using the OECD modified equivalence scale.
- The extent to which, by 2010, income poverty for households headed by women, namely lone parents, older women and women working in the home is eliminated so that no female-headed household is living below the 50 per cent poverty line.
- The extent to which, by 2006, consistent poverty for women headed households is eliminated.
- The extent to which, by 2007, the relative income poverty among women is halved.
- The extent to which, by 2007, the rate of unemployment among women relative to the national norm is reduced.
- The extent to which, by 2007, the percentage of women on low pay is reduced.
- The degree to which the core recommendations made in the Report of the Partnership 2000 Working Group on Women's Access to Labour Market Opportunities have been implemented.
- Percentage of men and women with or without dependants living in substandard housing.
- Percentage of personal income which women spend on themselves compared to the percentage spent on dependants and spouse and compare with similar statistics on men's spending patterns.

Proofing

- The extent to which gender and access proofing are an integral part of Government activities.

Women's Access to Resources

- Percentage of women who have joint ownership of the family home.
- Percentage of women and men who have received an inheritance and the amounts received.
- Percentage of women compared to men who own houses and cars.
- Relative incomes/assets of women and men.
- Extent to which women are financially independent.
- Percentage of women who have a full driving licence.
- Percentage of women who have access to/were refused credit:
 - credit cards.

- personal loans.
- home loans.
- car loans.

Diversity of Women

- The number of women with a mental health problem who are at risk of poverty.
- The degree to which specific groups of women live below the poverty line, for example, unemployed women, lone parents, women with disabilities, Travellers, asylum seekers and immigrants.
- The degree to which the recommendations of the National Economic and Social Forum Report, Number 20 on Lone Parents, have been implemented.
- Percentage of women and men carers who are paid and unpaid.
- Number of refugees/asylum seekers who become financially independent of the social welfare system.
- The extent to which women carers feel they have a choice to undertake the caring role.
- Increase or decrease in the number of women who are homeless.
- Change in legislation so that asylum seekers are free to work if the asylum process extends beyond six months.
- Change in legislation so that a social welfare payment rather than a direct payment is paid to asylum seekers.

Live Register

- Increase or decrease of the number of women on the Live Register.
- Percentage of women signing for credits who are not on the Live Register.

Social Welfare Payments

- The degree to which social welfare payments are bench marked and indexed at 30 per cent of Gross Average Industrial Earnings.
- Increase or decrease in the knowledge of women of their welfare entitlements.

Childcare

- The extent to which a childcare place is available for all women on low incomes.

Overseas Aid

- Change in the social expectation of gender roles in the home, work and in society of countries in receipt of Overseas Development Aid.

Education and Training of Women

Women's Community Education

The Right to Life Long Learning

- The recommendations of the White Paper, Adult Education: Learning for Life should be implemented; the concept of life long learning should be promoted and made accessible. In particular, the recommendations relating to literacy and marginalised groups should be implemented.
- There should be a fundamental right to life long education for all adults. Adult education for disadvantaged adults should be free.
- Women from low income families should have free access to second chance education and training.
- HIV positive women need access to education opportunities which suits their needs and should include childcare provision, take account of the timing of hospital appointments and the side effects of medication.
- The allowance to return to education courses, such as VTOS, should be increased.
- A personal funding allowance for young people and adults from low income families should be established to support them to participate in further education.
- Fees for all women's community education courses should be abolished in line with criteria for non-payment of fees for people entering full-time on-site courses. Expenses in respect of childcare, elder care, books and travel should be provided for women on low incomes.
- The media should be used to promote life long education.
- Women involved in the arts should receive increased support.
- There is need to provide training in leadership and negotiation skills for women to enable women to voice their needs and concerns.
- There is need to increase access for mature women to accredited education and training especially in the area of Information Technology (IT).
- The number of educational programmes and courses available to women to develop their spirituality and the resources available to develop similar initiatives.
- The extent to which the participation of women in courses are resourced.
- Numbers interested in and numbers participating in courses and programmes.

Models of Good Practice

- Models of good practice in women's community education should be appropriately supported and mainstreamed. Models should include the Women's Education Initiative (WEI) and the Education

Equality Initiative (EEI), initiatives in third level women's education centres, New Opportunities for Women (NOW), INTEGRA, the POWER Partnership.

Education Equality Initiative

- There is need to review on an annual basis the Education Equality Initiative which promotes opportunities for educationally disadvantaged women.

Funding

- There is need for secure, core funding for women's community education projects. This would allow projects to deliver on a continuous basis core programmes on women's community education.
- The Department of Education and Science should take a lead-role in co-ordinating a budget-line with multi-annual funding for community education. This would involve bringing together the relevant Government Departments with responsibility for funding community education, such as the Departments of Health and Children, Education and Science, Social and Family Affairs and Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- New women's groups starting up should receive grant aid for start-up costs.
- Formal evaluation should be a requirement for all funded projects.
- There is need for Vocation Education Committees (VECs) to specify their budgets for women's community education and to ring-fence these budgets.
- The recommendation of Aontas for an increase in funding for community education from €25 million to €125 million should be supported. Ten per cent of the budget should be ring-fenced to address practical barriers to participation such as childcare and elder care, and transport.
- Community development work at local neighbourhood level is important in encouraging women to participate in adult education. This work needs to be recognised and funded.

Resourcing Life Long Learning

- An education/family centre properly equipped should be available in all disadvantaged and marginalised rural areas. This should have childcare facilities, computer technology, library facilities, training rooms, conference rooms, and kitchen and eating areas.
- Women centres should be woman-focused and comfortable and not have a religious ethos.
- A "woman-only space" is important to encourage women to engage in adult education.
- Many small communities lack the basic facilities to enable women to participate in education and training schemes e.g. no local community centres.
- All education materials should be gender proofed.
- Primary and secondary school facilities should be available for adult and community education.
- There is need to provide group insurance schemes for local adult education classes.
- Crèche, childcare and elder care supports should be provided for participants of community education.
- Transport costs to adult education classes particularly in rural areas should be subsidised.
- The timing of all adult education courses should be family friendly.

- A mentoring system should be provided for women who have been out of the education system and are returning to third level education.
- There is need to provide an adult career guidance service which includes curriculum vitae (CV) preparation, job preparation, mentoring and information for women who wish to return to education and/or employment.
- Preventative/complementary health programmes/training should be funded as part of women's community education.
- There is need to provide courses in home management and budgeting, parenting, personal development/self-esteem and coping with change.
- There is need to provide a community craft/art workshop space for women and training in arts and crafts.
- There is need to facilitate distance learning and home based financially supported on-line learning.
- The minimum number of participants required for rural adult education classes should be lowered.
- There is a lack of women's community education in rural areas. Rural proofing should be applied. Transport needs to be available. Innovative distance learning technologies need to be piloted.
- For socially marginalised women there is a need for education and training programmes which emphasise literacy training and personnel development.
- There is need for self development programmes for women who have been engaged in child rearing or have been long-term unemployed.
- All centres should have disability access and appropriate supports for people with disabilities. Educators should be aware and knowledgeable about the issues affecting women with visual impairment and other disabilities.
- Education institutions should work in partnership with women's community education projects to deliver outreach programmes. There is need for more outreach courses which are accredited at diploma and degree level.
- State agencies and third level institutions should work with women's community education projects to support them in providing programmes identified by the community.
- There is need for an education co-ordinator in each county to assist women who were themselves early school leavers.
- An Grianan, the adult education college of the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) set up in 1954 should be resourced and developed to become a major place of holistic development for women.

Accreditation and Progression

- There is need for a comprehensive system of accreditation of women's community education in order to facilitate realistic progression and access routes. An accessible and realistic Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) system should be developed as a means of entry to degree courses at third level. This should be carried out by the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI) in partnership with other accrediting bodies, third level colleges and representatives of women's community education. Research undertaken by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 1997) shows that mature students in Ireland have low participation rates in diploma and degree courses compared to other OECD countries.

- There is need to develop clear progression routes in co-operation with all relevant actors, including women, to facilitate the return of women to education.
- There is need to develop a national accredited training programme for tutors and facilitators in women's community education.

Information

- Leaflets advertising adult education courses should be available in post offices, health clinics and other public places.
- The Government should develop a national network of one-stop shops for adults wanting information on education and training. By 2006, every area should have a one-stop shop.
- There is need to disseminate information widely on education courses available and to provide guidance and counselling as to the best options and progression routes available.

The National Adult Learning Council

- A Technical Unit for Community Education should be established in the National Adult Learning Council. There is need to clarify how the women's community education sector will be represented on the National Adult Learning Council and on Local Adult Learning Boards.

Policy Development and Implementation

- Groups and networks involved in women's community education should be represented on local and regional organisations addressing adult education and nominations procedures should facilitate this representation.
- Innovative strategies should be put in place to enable women with literacy difficulties, women with disabilities and women from minority ethnic groups to have their views heard.

Vocational Education and Training

Pre-Development/Vocational Courses and Return to Work Courses

- Programmes targeting disadvantaged women, many of whom have left school early and have been out of school for a long period, need to be highly resourced and funded to provide pre-development programmes.
- Resources need to be available where necessary, for pre-vocational training courses which would involve personal development and taster courses.
- There is need to establish a mainstream initiative for women returning to training which would involve the development and expansion of the current FÁS Return to Work Programme. This should be developed in conjunction with the relevant Social Partners. The initiative would help to build the capacity of community organisations engaged in community based training to assist women to develop the necessary skills to access employment.
- There is need to develop campaigns which target women on low incomes to attract them back to education and training.

Information Strategy

- There is need for an information strategy formulated by State agencies in partnership with community organisations to highlight eligibility requirements for training and what benefits people are entitled to.

- There is need for a promotion campaign which shows that skills training and vocational education is of equal value to academic education.

Flexible Structure

- Training agencies need to offer courses, which are flexible in structure and timing to facilitate women who have family responsibilities. Courses starting as early as 8.30 a.m. are not family friendly. Women should be targeted through effective outreach programmes where appropriate. Where necessary, transport should be provided and subsidised.

Childcare

- Appropriate quality childcare should be a basic element of all training schemes and education programmes.
- The FÁS training allowance should also be increased. Current childcare allowances for FÁS training programmes are inadequate and do not reflect the cost of quality childcare or the rates of registered childminders. The allowance should be available with other weekly payment schedules.
- The FÁS childcare training allowance should be available to apprentices.
- There is need for parental leave payment for parents on FÁS courses.
- Young mothers should be provided with on-site childcare at or near to the education centre.
- Mothers and fathers should be supported in caring for their own children in their own homes.

Affordable Training

- The Government should consider introducing an Education Supplement similar to the Community Employment (CE) payment or a Family Income Supplement.
- Married women who are full-time in the home and whose husbands are in full-time employment should have access to training courses.

Rural Areas

- Rural proofing should be applied to all education and training programmes. There is need to ensure that transport is available to access courses.
- Innovative distance-learning courses in rural areas should be mainstreamed.
- There should be more localised CERT courses in rural areas.
- FÁS training courses are mainly concentrated in larger towns and cities. This creates major obstacles for women living in rural areas, particularly if they lack public transport. FÁS training and Community Employment (CE) schemes need to be dispersed in isolated rural areas and target all socially marginalised groups. Follow-up courses and employment need to be provided.
- There is need for specific strategies to address the training needs of women in farming. Guidance on the most cost effective and the most appropriate Information Technology (IT) packages for farming needs should be made available.
- Women over 35 years should not be considered too old for agricultural courses.

Traditional Skills and Information Technology (IT) Skills

- Specific measures should be introduced to encourage more women to take up traditional apprenticeship training, such as carpentry and plumbing.

- There is need for more Information Technology (IT) training for women.
- There is need for greater choice of employment related training and greater opportunities for up-skilling and training for career change.

VTOS Courses

- The age for VTOS courses should be lowered and the waiting time for courses reduced.
- The allowance for VTOS needs to be increased in line with Community Employment (CE).

Mainstreaming

- Within each Government Department, an official should be designated with responsibility for identifying pilot initiatives which should be mainstreamed. In particular the newly established National Employment Services Advisory Committee should play a role in mainstreaming lessons from pilot labour market initiatives.

Local Action Plan

- There is need to undertake an audit of skills and of employment opportunities at local level and to develop a local training action plan that matches skills to employment opportunities.

Third Level Education

- Despite girls' high performance at second level, boys outperform girls at third level. This issue needs to be addressed.
- Given the low number of women students studying maths and science related degrees, specific initiatives are required to increase women's participation in all areas of science.
- There is need for scholarships, mentoring schemes and targets aimed at increasing female participation at PhD level.
- There is a lack of acceptance of some types of methodologies, for example, feminist qualitative methodology in postgraduate work. Non-traditional methodologies must be assessed in an open and impartial way by people experienced in their application. There is need to develop a database of women trained in feminist methodologies in order that they can be easily located. This would serve to improve the outcome for researchers using these methodologies.
- Pastoral care services should be attuned to the needs of female students.

Access

- The income threshold for grants is too low and should be increased.
- Applicants for third level education should not be allocated places solely on the basis of the points system. Suitability, in terms of aptitude and emotional intelligence should be given equal weight.
- Women who wish to study at international colleges and the Open University should have their fees paid.
- Single subject degrees should be taught in all universities.
- Third level colleges should have more flexible modular degree programmes.

- The majority of those attending part-time third level courses are women. All third level courses should be free and delivery should be flexible to suit women's needs.
- All third level colleges should have childcare facilities.

Live Register

- Women who are not on the Live Register should have free access to third level education.
- The regulation which stipulates that one must be on the Live Register for six months before one is eligible for a grant to third level should be changed to one month.

Mature Students and Means Testing

- Students should be eligible for mature student status at 23 years. Mature students should be means-tested on their own income and not that of the parents.
- Educational institutions should promote the participation of mature students, especially women.
- Mature students applying for grants should have the option of having their income averaged over a number of years as an alternative to using the income of the year prior to the college application.

Supports

- Women need access to information on third level opportunities, including entry requirements. They also need information on bursaries, grants and childcare supports.
- There is need to provide crèche and childcare facilities in all third level institutions.

Part-time Courses

- Equality of access to education should be supported by providing free third level education to part-time students.
- Fees should be abolished for part-time courses and women whose spouses are working should have access to part-time courses.
- There is need to increase the number of part-time third level degree courses.
- A pilot programme should be developed for women in the home with children to allow them to access free part-time third level education. Crèche facilities should be provided for children up to five years of age. Courses should be held in the mornings.
- It should be possible to study for the Higher Diploma in Education on a part-time or block release basis.

Outreach Courses

- There is need for outreach courses from third level institutions for women in rural areas and disadvantaged communities.
- There is need for an outreach degree course in Women's Studies to be available to rural women.

Disadvantaged Rural and Urban Areas

- There is need to subsidise third level courses in rural areas under the Education Equality Initiative (EEI) in order to give people from rural areas more access to education.
- Students from disadvantaged areas should have great access to third level education.
- There needs to be a greater availability of third level education along the western seaboard and in peripheral rural areas. There is a high dropout rate of women who have to travel long distances to access third level education.
- There is need to fund students from disadvantaged communities to sample a range of courses available at third level.
- Links should be created between third level colleges and local communities. This would help to create an awareness among the local community of opportunities at third level.

Lone Parents

- Lone parents should be assessed on their own means for a third-level grant from the age of 18 as is the case for the One-Parent Family Payment. Currently lone parents wishing to attend third level education are assessed in terms of the income of their family of origin if they are residing with them. Childcare should be provided in all third level colleges for lone parents.

Older Women

- Older women should be encouraged to participate in third level education. There is a perception that there is an age barrier and this militates against older women returning to education after care responsibilities are over.

Women's Studies Department

- Women's studies centres at third level institutions should be adequately resourced.

The Employment of Women in Third Level Institutions

Gender Proofing

- The Higher Education Equality Authority should:
 - actively encourage third level colleges to address issues of equal opportunities and to implement the 1996 recommendations of the Higher Education Authority Unit.
 - earmark specific funding to support and reward colleges which actively address inequalities.
 - examine and modify as necessary its own policies, in order to ensure that they are not creating or perpetuating inequalities.
- The Equality Unit in the Department of Education and Science needs to clearly define its role in relation to third level education.
- Third level institutions should make their promotional policy transparent and accountable.
- An independent equality officer should be appointed in all third level colleges to implement an equality policy and action plan.
- An equality committee should be established in all third level education institutions.

- There is need to actively encourage 40:60 gender balance on all college boards and committees and on all selection and interview panels. Training should be provided for all members of boards.
- Support and networking are fundamental in promoting equality for women in third level institutions. These networks must be seen to be actively supported and encouraged from the highest level.
- There is need to offer scholarships and other incentives to females who wish to enter predominately male careers in third level institutions.
- Management, which is seen traditionally in terms of competition and control, is often in conflict with the more co-operative approach fostered by females. Innovative models of management and training in gender proofing for managers would help to address this problem.
- There is need to adopt a policy to address harassment with specific preventative measures and clear procedures for dealing with harassment cases.

Promotion

- Although women make up the majority of administrative staff, men are in the majority of management positions. Information should be provided to all staff on the requirements for promotion to management positions. Stereotypes of administrative work being equivalent to typing skills has led to the exploitation of those in junior roles and to lack of promotion.
- Types of managerial work undertaken by low scale employees often goes unnoticed, unnamed and unrewarded. The naming of positions should reflect the work involved in the position.
- Information on bursaries and grants must be openly advertised and promoted in order to promote equal access to promotional opportunities.
- Greater transparency and monitoring is needed to ensure that women receive equal treatment to men in the area of in-service training and are given opportunities to attend relevant courses and conferences.
- Promotion policies need to be clear. The issue of support for women in positions traditionally occupied by men needs to be part of college policy.
- Career counselling should be provided for all staff.
- Mentoring schemes needs to be supported at an institutional level to make women more aware of promotional opportunities.
- Targeted initiatives to ensure that women enter statutory lecturer positions need to be developed.

Family Friendly Policies

- There is need for the Department of Education and Science to provide on-campus crèche facilities and after school care.
- There is need to promote parental leave.
- There is need for a campaign targeted at both sexes on the reconciliation of childcare and care responsibilities with work.
- The nature of college jobs needs to be re-evaluated in order to ensure that the job requirements do not necessarily prevent people with significant family responsibilities from applying for them.

- The issue of the replacement of lecturing staff on maternity leave needs to be addressed by college authorities. Women who avail of maternity leave are either not replaced at all or are replaced on an *ad hoc* basis. Women returning to work after their maternity leave are often faced with an enormous backlog of work which has accumulated due to inadequate coverage during their absence.

Minority Groups

- Minority groups have difficulty accessing employment in higher educational institutions. Women from minority groups experience multiple obstacles which must be seen in a gendered context and women from minority groups must be included in targeted initiatives.

Primary and Second Level Education

Increasing the Capacity of Schools

- There is need for more equitable distribution of resources between primary, secondary and third-level colleges.
- Resources and staffing of schools catering for the most disadvantaged communities should be increased to overcome the cultural and gender barriers affecting the educational expectations of young girls and women. Participation in education is a key determinant of women's subsequent economic status. The more formal education a girl receives the greater likelihood she has of achieving financial independence and participating in the labour market. Although girls are less likely than boys to leave school early, the economic consequences are more severe for those that do. They usually earn less money than men and are likely to work in low level or part-time jobs.
- There is need to increase the funding for the primary schools sector.
- All schools should have good quality premises.
- There is need to continue to reduce class sizes in primary and secondary schools.
- Streaming and the points system should be abolished.
- There is need for a book rental scheme in all primary and second level schools.
- There is need for more homework clubs and there is need to mainstream homework clubs.
- School breakfast and hot meals should be properly funded to help break the cycle of deprivation and poverty.
- There is need to increase the hours of home-school liaison personnel and to extend the home-school liaison scheme to all schools so that parents encourage their children to stay at school.
- Rural schools should be kept open even if only small numbers are attending.
- The school leaving age should be raised to 17 years.

Gender Equality

- All education material should be gender and equality proofed.
- There is need to eradicate stereotyping of women in education materials.
- There is need for gender training for primary and secondary level pupils. By 2006, all Twelve Areas of the National Plan for Women should be included in the curriculum.
- Gender studies should be taught in the transition year.

- There is need to provide more resources for the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI). There is need to specify what training and gender equality issues it will address.
- Leadership skills should be taught to girls and practised at primary school level.
- The career guidance service needs to be gender proofed.
- There is need for awareness training in gender equality, equality, disability, ageism, domestic violence and anti-racism for teachers and pupils at all levels.
- Teachers and tutors need practical support and guidelines to enable them to mainstream gender equality, to carry out gender impact assessments and to promote gender equality.
- Teachers need to have an appreciation of “emotional intelligence”.

Curricula and Subject Choice

- All female schools should provide the full range of science and technology subjects. Girls often experience difficulty accessing science and engineering type subjects.
- Girls should be encouraged to take mathematics and science subjects in the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate Courses.
- Specific measures should be introduced to encourage more girls to opt for subjects, which will lead to traditional apprenticeship programmes and engineering and science courses. Subject choices in second level are made too early.
- There is need to review the career guidance service and to extend the provision of career guidance to all schools. Girls need to be made more aware of all options.
- Boys should be given the options to study subjects like domestic science.
- Girls should explore a range of non traditional subjects and occupations in the transition year.
- The number of subjects taken in the first two years of school both in national and post-primary schools should be halved and school hours should be shorter.
- All male and females should take driving instruction and their driving test in their final year of second level education.
- All second level males and females should be computer literate and also have typing skills. Courses should be widely available at subsidised cost.
- Internet access in libraries should be expanded.
- Young people should be given budgeting skills to support them to manage finance in a climate of high cost accommodation, easy access to credit and high media and advertising pressures.
- There is need for more promotion of non-academic courses, for example, horticulture and beauty therapy.
- There is need for more practical programmes on children’s safety and bullying. The health boards and the Department of Education and Science should liaise closely to streamline and mainstream education towards the prevention of violence within the primary, junior and senior cycles.
- Irish dancing, swimming, needlework and crafts should be given a greater emphasis in primary schools.

- There needs to be more funding invested in drama, music and art.
- All schools should have civic classes which should include citizenship and the responsibilities of citizens.

Relationships and Sexuality

Different views were expressed in relation to programmes on relationships and sexuality in schools. The following recommendations positively support current programmes.

- The Department of Education and Science should ensure that the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme is formalised within the education sector and that it becomes a core subject in the curriculum.
- The Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme should have more information for girls on how to recognise their own fertility signals and to know their own bodies. The Department should continue to support this programme.
- The Exploring Masculinities Programme should be extended.
- All young people should receive education on how to create healthy relationships.
- There is need to provide programmes to enable young people to develop life skills to manage the pressures of modern living.
- Sex education programmes need to be prioritised and adequately resourced and given by trained personnel.
- There is need for schools to provide life preparation programmes in schools in partnership with parents.
- There is need for training of teachers and parents in relationship sexuality and funding should be ring-fenced for this purpose.
- A campaign is needed to educate young women about preventative health and issues relating to sexual health and contraception. Supports and services are needed within the school environment.
- A nurse should visit schools one or two days a week to support girls in accessing health services in relation to sexual health and other issues.
- The school curriculum should include basic psychology to enable children to understand human behaviour and emotions, especially in the context of sexual behaviour, relationships and family life.

Violence and Bullying

- The Department of Education and Science should provide funding for improved information and an education campaign on violence against young women. It should develop age-appropriate safe and confidential programmes and services to assist girls who are subjected to violence.
- Education programmes for boys are needed to create awareness of the issues of violence against women, to challenge attitudes which see violence against women as acceptable or normal and promote the equality of women in all spheres of life.
- Education programmes should use creative methods such as drama, role-play and art to explore issues of violence against women.

- Teachers should be trained, resourced and supported to use current educational programmes in schools to address the issue of violence against women and to provide education for young people to address the issue of violence in relationships.
- Teachers should receive training and support to deal with disclosure by students of either witnessing and/or experiencing violence and abuse.

Health Boards

- Health boards should provide programmes for parents on relationships and sexuality to complement programmes taking place in schools.
- There is need to pilot a programme for second level pupils on sexual and reproductive health care, including contraception, reproductive system, sexually transmitted infections, menopause, importance of cervical and breast screening. The delivery of this programme should be undertaken by an existing service provider, such as the health board.

An alternative view was expressed in relation to relationship and sexuality programmes in schools.

- Parents who wish to impart a celibacy option to their children find that their preference is not being affirmed in schools. This issue could be the basis of a future constitutional challenge in the courts.
- Programmes on relationship and sexuality should be implemented outside of school hours as children and young people feel stigmatised when removed from classrooms during such programmes.
- Groups that promote moral and traditional value based education should be funded to promote programmes of education that encourage modesty and chastity, and traditional marriage and gender roles.
- Parents who wish to rear their children in chastity, and to encourage them to appreciate the fulfilment (and advantages) of chastity, find that their ideals are not being affirmed in schools. There is need for education that supports traditional values. Education should stress the value of chastity before marriage and fidelity in marriage. This would lead to a reduction in the incidence of teenage pregnancies. Groups that promote moral and traditional value-based education should be funded to promote programmes of sexual education that encourage modesty and chastity.

Women and Sports

- Boys sporting activities are often treated more seriously than girls sporting activities are. The involvement in sporting activities should have accredited points. There should also be as wide a choice of activity subjects as there are academic options.
- Both participative and competitive sports should be included in the curricula for girls in all schools.
- Sports should be introduced in primary schools so that teenagers and young mothers are in a better position to develop this interest later in life.

Resourcing Remedial and Special Education

- There is need to adopt a rights based approach for all children who need special education.
- There is need for more remedial support for children in schools.
- There is need for early interventions for children with learning problems or with special needs.

- There is need to reduce waiting lists for children who need intellectual, linguistic and psychological assessment.
- There is need for additional facilities, such as assessment facilities.
- Family support workers should be provided to families with children with severe social and emotional difficulties or intellectual or psychological difficulties.
- There is need for family support workers to support families who have children with learning or behavioural difficulties, such as dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).
- The number of school psychologists should be increased.
- There is need for training for teachers to identify students who need remedial help.
- Teachers need to be better resourced to assist children with learning difficulties.

Early School Leavers

- A national tracking system should be put in place to monitor and track young people who are at risk of early school leaving.
- The recommendations of the evaluation of the Breaking the Cycle Scheme should be implemented.
- A Task Force to investigate early school leaving should be established. There is need for an integrated partnership approach involving school boards, health boards and social welfare services, Probation and Welfare Service and local community groups.
- The *Programme for Prosperity and Fairness* (PPF) should be implemented in full and in particular the commitment “to enable young parents, including teenage mothers, to remain in education, particularly at school level and to return to education and training through the provision of specific supports”.
- There is need to include schools with retention rates in excess of 60 per cent, but less than the target of 90 per cent in the pilot projects aimed at dissuading post-primary school students from leaving school prior to the completion of the Leaving Certificate. Every effort should be made to ensure that girls are the beneficiaries of these initiatives.
- There is need for more resource teachers to identify children who are at risk of dropping out of school at an early age.
- Teachers need to monitor the attendance of girls in school, particularly the attendance of girls who may be absent because of family responsibilities.
- Young girls who leave school early should be targeted and needs-based interventions and programmes should be developed.
- There is need for more part-time courses for young people who drop out of the education system.

Teenage Mothers

- Balancing the needs of being a student, a parent and a teenager can be demanding on a young woman. These demands need to be acknowledged and recognised. There is need for the Department of Education and Science to develop a policy in regard to teenage pregnancies and school age mothers. The Department should ensure that every support is on offer in schools to enable school-going mothers to continue their education and should provide a specific budget to support specific measures for young mothers.

- The Waterford Student Mother's project, which provides a model of good practice of how student mothers can be supported in education, should be mainstreamed.
- An allowance should be paid to all teenage mothers to remain in schools.
- All student parents should be provided with adequate childcare facilities and where necessary, crèches should be provided in schools.
- There is need for one to one tuition for young girls in late pregnancy preparing for the Leaving Certificate.
- There is need for a dedicated support worker for young pregnant teenage girls to support them to finish school.
- A data base should be established to track the link between teen pregnancy and early school leaving.
- The present rule, which stipulates that the Leaving Certificate must be taken in one year, should be changed to take account of the mothering role of young mothers. The one year rule also poses unnecessary obstacles to women with a physical or mental disability.
- Teenage fathers should be encouraged to take on their responsibility as fathers.
- The role that alcohol plays in the incidence of teenage pregnancy must be stressed.
- Young people — boys and girls — should be encouraged to have respect for both themselves and for others.

Gender Balance in School Personnel

- While most teachers are female, men are disproportionately represented as principal teachers. The message to children is particularly negative in gender equality terms.
- There is need to appoint more female teachers as principals and to senior positions.
- Positive action programmes are required and the Department of Education and Science should promote gender balance in education and develop a pool of female principals and deputy principals.
- Religious trustees and school management boards should promote a workplace where females are encouraged to seek promotion.
- Gender balance should be promoted within the Department of Education and Science.
- There should be training in gender equality for all members of Selection Boards for teachers.
- There is need to address the pay issue of teachers in order to encourage a better gender balance in the teaching profession and provide male and female role models for young people.
- There is need for gender awareness in undergraduate training and awareness of the need to balance family and work life in order that they can promote gender awareness among students.
- Financial incentives should be paid to teachers of excellence to work in areas of social exclusion.
- Teacher training should be provided by the secular state, and that National School curricula, though they may include the study of comparative religions, should not include doctrinal dogmatic training in any particular denomination or creed.

IT Schools Road Show

- Female students need to be encouraged to consider careers in Information Technology (IT), engineering and traditional male areas of study. A road show aimed at primary and secondary schools and designed to highlight the value of studying science subjects should be undertaken. The road show could be supported by IT companies, the Department of Education and Science and the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment.

Early Education

Early Start Programme

- There is need to raise the awareness of the importance of early childhood education and childcare and to give opportunities for early childhood development for all children.
- There should be an Early Start Programme in all disadvantaged areas.
- There is need to introduce play therapy for vulnerable children.

Pre-School Play Groups

- Every child in the State should be guaranteed a pre-school place from the age of three years. The beneficial effects of pre-school play and early education in giving children a head start in life are well established.

Community Play Groups

- There is need to mainstream and subsidise community play groups.
- Core funding should be provided to voluntary and community groups providing childcare and early childhood education. Childcare needs to be available at a local level for young children to enable mothers to continue their education.
- There is need for more parent and toddler groups.

After-School Care

- There is need for after-school care and full day care facilities for children whose parents are at work or in education.

Childcare Workers

- Incentives should be provided to encourage people into employment in the childcare sector, thus increasing the number of trained childcare staff.
- Training in childcare should be provided for both boys and girls at second level.
- There is need to review the Childcare and Early Education Courses available from the NCEA and NCVA and to develop progression routes to higher education. There is need to develop a national programme of adult guidance in relation to career development in child care.
- A register of childminders should be available in each county to facilitate women who are attending evening courses.
- There is need to develop a career path and improve the salary and working conditions of childcare workers and early year educators.

Literacy

- The Government should adopt the issue of literacy as a matter of central social and economic concern and adult literacy should be identified as a key challenge for national development. This will require greater levels of investment in literacy and in basic education. A recent report prepared by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on literacy indicates that 57 per cent of the population of working age in Ireland is functionally illiterate.
- There is need to develop and implement a proactive national strategy on literacy with a focus on literacy, numeracy, low self-esteem and building the confidence of women. Women should be facilitated to participate in literacy programmes at their own pace. Access to literacy programmes should be widely available to all women.
- By 2006 all women in Ireland should have an acceptable level of literacy.

Schools

- There is need for assessment and support at primary level for students with literacy difficulties.
- Increased funding should be available for the early detection of children with reading and writing difficulties.
- The number of remedial teachers in schools should be increased.

Adult Literacy

- The Early Start program for children should link mothers with literacy difficulties to literacy classes.
- Literacy and basic education should be adequately resourced within pre-vocational, vocational training programmes and women's community education.
- The needs of workers who have literacy difficulties must be given greater priority in the targeting, design and delivery of adult literacy programmes.
- Specific supports should be available to employers who wish to take action in the area of literacy for members of their own workforce.
- Supports should be provided to part-time workers, such as contract cleaners, to avail of literacy classes.

Promoting Literacy Programmes

- Local radio should be used to promote literacy classes.
- There is need for a more intensive advertising campaign to target people with literacy problems. There is need to continue the successful literacy programmes on RTÉ television.
- There is need to provide a Help line for people with literacy problems.

Delivering Literacy Programmes

- Opportunities should be explored for joint action between the Government and the voluntary sector in relation to literacy provision.

- It is important to recognise and support the role of the voluntary sector in tackling illiteracy. There is need to increase the number of adult literacy tutors and greater support should be available to professionally develop and support tutors.
- There is need to develop guidance and counselling services for people with literacy difficulties.

Parenting

- Parenting courses should be available to all parents on an ongoing basis. Courses should cover all aspects and stages of parenting from pregnancy to adult children.
- NGOs providing Help lines for parents should receive core funding to promote their service and to offer a free phone service.
- There is need for a service to be established to help parents to deal with difficult teenagers.
- There is need for a pilot programme to enable parents to assist children with their homework.
- There is need for short courses to up-skill parents to support their children in education.
- There is need to clarify the role of the Inspectorate of the Department of Education and Science and the rights of parents to access the Inspectorate.
- Information centres should have information, and provide support, on a wide variety of parenting needs.
- Schools should synchronise holidays and breaks to facilitate parents in making arrangements for childcare.
- Home School Liaison Officers should be supported and resourced to run awareness raising courses on domestic violence for parents and to respond to individual women or students who may disclose that they are experiencing domestic violence.
- There is need to extend the Home School Liaison Scheme to all schools so that parents are part of the school's drive to retain young people in schools.

Women in the Home

- Women in the home with caring responsibilities and who are not on the Live Register should have access to all education and training, including VTOS, FÁS courses and third level education.
- Free part-time third level courses held in the morning, with crèche facilities for children up to five years, should be piloted.
- Women in the home should be entitled to free childcare so that they can avail of education and training courses.
- The skills gained through managing a home and family should be recognised.
- There is need to provide an adequate system of funding for parents who choose to educate their children at home.
- There is need to put the Home Education Network (HEN) on official mailing lists.

Women Exiting Prison

- Women exiting prison need support in accessing training and education facilities and programmes need to be made available to women on leaving prison.

Disabled Women

Policy on Access to Appropriate Education and Training

- Access to appropriate education should be provided as of right to all children and adults with disabilities.
- Decisions on maintaining or dismantling special education facilities for children and the transfer of resources from special to mainstream education institutions must be based solely on the needs of disabled children.
- The Department of Education and Science and all educational/training institutions should develop and implement an equal access and participation policy for disabled people. All venues should be accessible and personal assistants should be provided where appropriate. Education material should be accessible to women with sensory disabilities and provided in different formats.
- The Department of Education and Science should carry out a preliminary access audit of all premises and action plans should be developed to make all premises accessible.
- There should be service agreements between the Government and all educational institutions, which stipulate that public funding for education is dependent on institutions being accessible.
- The current practice of placing a star on the examination paper of a disabled woman is unacceptable and should be changed.

Awareness and Equality Training

- Personnel involved in education need to be more knowledgeable of issues affecting disabled women. There should be ongoing equality training and disability awareness training for teachers, tutors and personnel in education institutions.
- There is need for more awareness and training on less obvious disabilities, for example, dyslexia and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).
- Interviewers in education institutions need to overcome their prejudice against disabled women. Disability awareness and equality training should be provided.
- There is need for disability awareness training for non-disabled women's groups.

Promoting Education and Training

- Information on courses should be widely distributed and disabled women should be proactively targeted. There should be more incentives for women with disabilities to return to education.
- Disabled women should be encouraged to take up apprenticeships such as carpentry and plumbing.
- The educational needs of older disabled women and disabled women living in institutional settings have been neglected. These groups need to be targeted by education institutions as a matter of urgency.

Supports and Technical Aids

- Equality of participation for disabled women with a sensory or physical impairment needs to be created across all levels of education. This requires a commitment to fund essential supports. There is a particular need to provide opportunities for disabled women to remain in second level education.
- There is need for more disability technology such as computers, Braille, Dictaphones and large print education materials. Readers should be provided for visually impaired students.
- Accessible transport should be provided.
- Personal assistants should be provided.
- Disabled women who wish to study at international colleges such as the Open University should have their fees paid.
- Crèche and childcare facilities are needed for disabled women who have childcare responsibilities. Crèches must be fully accessible.
- A “cost of disability” allowance should be provided to provide disabled people with a real choice. The anomaly whereby such an allowance is available for disabled children and not for adults must end.

Content and Structure of Programmes

- There is need for more accessible courses on a part-time basis. It is difficult for many women with disabilities to commit themselves to full-time education particularly parents of young families.
- Education on reproductive health programmes should be available to disabled women through the education system.
- Programmes for students with learning disabilities need to be restructured in order to provide stimulation and challenges for each student to attain the best possible performance within their ability range.
- The syllabus should include education programmes on mental health.
- There is need for more educational facilities in rural areas for people with disabilities.
- There is need for more programmes to build the self-esteem of children with disabilities, particularly in sport.

Disabled Women as Role Models

- Proactive targeting should take place to recruit teachers with disabilities at all levels to act as role models for students. Disability lifestyles should be reflected in the syllabus and there should be description and images of disabled adults and children carrying out normal everyday activities in educational materials and textbooks.
- Role models of disabled women as mothers and workers should be reflected in all educational material.

Older Women

- There is need to promote education for older women and to customise education courses for older women. Special provision needs to be made for literacy training for disadvantaged older women.
- Older women should be not be discriminated against in returning to education and/or training.

- There is need to provide free access to computers and the Internet on the same basis as free telephone for Old Age Pensioners.
- Computer classes for over fifties and over sixties should be offered locally.
- A computer bus service should be provided in rural areas.
- Training and education should be provided to give women over 55 years of age every opportunity to rejoin the workforce.
- Adult education classes for women over fifty should be held during the day in local venues.
- Training should be provided to older women to enable them to become involved in their communities.
- Older women should be encouraged to act as tutors in adult and community education.
- There is need for awareness programmes for older women to adapt from a monocultural to a multi-racial society.
- There is need to reintroduce the rural library bus with the inclusion of a video service in areas where it is no longer available.
- Discrimination against older women and, in particular, grandparents, must be removed from all school textbooks.

Island Women

- Every girl child living on islands should have the opportunity to access pre-school and primary school education on the island on which they live.
- Two teacher primary schools should be retained on all islands.
- Ideally secondary education should be available on an increased number of islands. In addition, the Remote Area Grant offered by the Department of Education and Science should be paid directly to parents. Island and mainland transport should be free for island children travelling back and forth to school. Supports for children with special needs should be improved.
- Distance learning needs to be available to island women. It should provide both accredited and non-accredited adult education and training.
- Adult education should be supported with pre-development courses, proper childcare facilities, transport and mentoring services. Vocational Education Committees (VECs) should have a policy for islands. They should provide information on what funds are available for courses and allocate a certain percentage of their funding for training on islands.

Education Institutions

- There is need to establish an independent public institute on the study and development of religions, particularly, the impact of their spiritualities on women and on issues of justice.
- All appointments made to theological and religious institutions receiving public funding should be open to competition using academic rather than denominational criteria. Funding should not be made to institutions whose appointment processes are not transparent and in compliance with the criteria laid down by the Equality Authority.

Women's Spiritual Education

- The traditional religious assumption of women as the “second sex” makes it easier for women to see themselves, and to be seen by men, as objects. Women must be enabled to develop their moral authority as adult human beings and strengthen their ability to actively resist, rather than collude with, misogynistic ideas and practices.
- There is need to support feminist spiritual projects engaged in forging a woman-centred spirituality which empowers women's sense of self and by extension, their relationships with others, the wider world and the cosmos. Resources should be made available to help women to explore spirituality in the context of their everyday lives.
- Feminist spirituality seeks to critically explore traditional theology from a feminist perspective, and to develop empowering women-centred rituals. Funding should be provided to projects which link women's spirituality through ritual, with roots in Celtic spirituality.
- Recognition should be given to spiritual projects which help women in areas of poverty and conflict to bond together in solidarity and to build a future where the value of peace, compassion, love and collaboration are paramount.

Minority Ethnic Groups

Access to Appropriate Education and Training

- There should be the specific targeting of minority ethnic groups in the Equality Education Initiative.
- The educational concerns of women from minority ethnic groups should be included in the White Paper on Adult Education.
- There is need to ensure a focus on the advancement of women from minority ethnic groups in the new Education Welfare Bill.
- There is need for accessible information on education and training opportunities in understandable English and different languages.
- There is need to develop progression routes for women from minority ethnic groups in training and education.
- There is need to put in place specific resources for young women from minority ethnic groups to support them to remain in education.
- There is need to resource schools which have children from minority ethnic groups as pupils to provide language classes for parents, with childcare provided by the school. This would help to integrate minority ethnic groups into the community.
- Mature students from ethnic minorities should be provided with resources to access courses run by FÁS and the Vocational Education Committees (VECs).
- There is need to give siblings of Irish born children free access to Post Leaving Certificate courses. At present they have to pay a Non-EU fee.
- FÁS courses are mainly concentrated in larger towns. Women from ethnic minorities need access to FÁS courses.
- There is need for adequate and appropriate childcare in order to give women access to education programmes.

- Asylum seekers should be given the right and opportunity to participate in State funded education and training opportunities at all levels.
- There is need to give young people, who are separated from their families, and asylum seekers the right to access third level education.
- There is little training available to refugee and asylum-seeking HIV positive women. They need access to training and education opportunities which suits their needs, includes childcare provision, and takes account of the timing of hospital appointments and the side effects of medication.

Community Based Involvement

- There is need to recognise and support community based education and training programmes designed and delivered by community groups and targeted at women from minority ethnic groups.
- There is need to promote links between organisations for minority ethnic women and local community organisations.

Qualifications

- There is need to develop a specialised Training and Education Unit for refugees to review their skills and qualifications. The Unit could be modelled on the FÁS Asylum Seekers Unit, which closed in April 2002. It has developed innovative models of skills evaluation and good inter-cultural practices. The proposed Unit could determine the Irish educational equivalent of qualifications obtained outside the Irish Republic.
- Many women from ethnic minorities have had to flee their country and often they have no certificates to prove their qualification. An assessment examination should be given to allow them the opportunity to prove their level of expertise and skill.
- There is need to establish a National Qualifications Authority system of accreditation which would recognise and provide for the upgrading of professional qualifications from non-EU countries.

Role Models

- Education materials need to include women from ethnic minority communities as role models.

Progression Routes

- There is need to develop progression routes for women from minority ethnic groups in training and education systems.

Awareness Training

- There is need for an anti-racism, anti-discrimination training policy in all educational institutions. Principles of interculturalism should inform education policy and programmes.

Decision Making Structures

- There is a lack of representation of women from minority groups in decision making within the education and training institutions and adult education organisations.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- An Equality Officer or teacher with special responsibility for equality should be appointed in every school.

- The scope of the Employment Equality Act, 1998, should be extended to end discrimination against lesbian and bisexual teachers. The Employment Equality Act, 1998, does not apply to organisations with a religious ethos, which includes most primary and secondary schools. The result of this exception is that “out” lesbian and bisexual women teachers may not be employed, or may lose their posts if they “come out”. While lesbian and bisexual women teachers remain “closeted”, lesbian or bisexual pupils are deprived of positive role models. Schools and other educational institutions must foster a safe and accepting environment for lesbian and bisexual women students and teachers.
- The Equality Authority should monitor the Department of Education and Science progress on equality and the implementation of its current policies and its progress in adopting and implementing the recommendations listed above. Equality monitoring should be performed either by expanding the remit of the Equality Authority or by establishing an independent monitoring body.
- Primary and secondary schools should be obliged to include sexual orientation in the sex education programmes.
- Lesbians should be more visible in school material.
- Every school should put in place a programme for dealing with bullying and violence arising from homophobia. Lesbian and bisexual women can experience isolation, bullying, discrimination and even violence, in education institutions because of homophobia and lack of social acceptability of their sexual orientation.
- Greater social acceptance should be promoted and training courses should be provided for teachers which include material to increase awareness of the problems experienced by lesbian and bisexual students.
- Lesbians should be used as role models in school materials.
- Lesbian and bisexual women should be included on the boards of management of schools.
- All service providers within the public and private sector should receive equality training which should include an anti-homophobia module.
- There should be more supports for lesbians in third level education.

Traveller Women

- Travellers experience difficulties at all levels of the education system from pre-school to adult education. These difficulties need to be addressed. Traveller women are poorly educated with low levels of literacy. Difficulties include:
 - Gaining access to education.⁴
 - The fact that Travellers’ culture is seldom reflected in the curriculum.
 - Low expectations of teachers of Travellers.
 - The practice of withdrawing Traveller children from class for remedial education which is often not based on need, but on the fact that they are Traveller children.
- All forms of education provision should be based on the principles of interculturalism and anti-racism and anti-sexism.

⁴ See *Galway case of Michelle McDonagh*, *Irish Times*, September 11th 2001.

- Adequate and culturally appropriate childcare should be available for Traveller women participating in training and education programmes and accessing employment.
- Education materials should present positive role models of Traveller women and their life style.
- Community based education programmes designed and delivered by community groups and targeted at Traveller women should be recognised and supported.
- There is need to develop progression routes for Traveller women in training and education.
- There is need to put in place specific resources and supports to cater for young Traveller women to remain in education.
- There is need to put in place additional resources to support Traveller women to avail of second chance education.
- There is need to develop a system of research and data collection which includes ethnic and gender monitoring in order to track the take-up of training opportunities by Traveller women and develop a response to low take up.
- There is need to ensure that there is a focus on the advancement of Traveller women in the new Education and Welfare Bill.
- The Equality Authority should be given increased resources to challenge racism.
- The Traveller Education Service as envisaged by the Task Force of the Travelling Community 1995, should be established. Part of its remit should be the education of women and girls.
- Traveller women should be specifically targeted by the Equality Education Initiative (EEI).
- The educational concerns of Traveller women should be addressed in the White Paper on Adult Education.
- Organisations representing Traveller women should be represented on the National Adult Learning Board and on Local Adult Learning Boards.
- The religious beliefs, folk traditions and healing traditions in the Traveller culture should be recognised. Research into these traditions should be supported.

Women in Drug Treatment

- The SAOL rehabilitative programme for women recovering from drug use in the north inner city of Dublin is based on a community education model of rehabilitation. This programme should be expanded and resourced and extended to other communities.
- All programmes need to have access to childcare facilities.
- Programmes addressing the needs of women who are in drug treatment need to be highly resourced.
- Pre-development programmes are needed for women recovering from drugs to build their self-esteem and to help them to progress to the next level.
- An effective interagency approach is important. Women recovering from drug use and attending day time education courses need access to warm and comfortable accommodation and access to appropriate health services and income maintenance services.

Developing Countries

- The Irish Government in its role on the executive board of UNICEF should seek to have compulsory education introduced in developing countries. It has been illustrated that it is only when education is compulsory that girls gain equal access to education.

Research and Monitoring

Women's Community Education

- There is need to initiate research on the education needs of women using a “participatory action learning” methodology.
- There is need for research on the educational needs of women from disadvantaged areas.

Training

- There is need to undertake research on the accessibility and availability of training opportunities for women in rural areas.
- There is need to research, monitor and collect gender disaggregated data on the take-up of training opportunities by Traveller women.
- There is need to track the take-up of training opportunities of women from minority ethnic groups.

Literacy

- There is need to research the level of adult literacy and to disaggregate the results by gender.
- Research should be conducted on the role of new technologies in combating literacy.

Women's History

- There is need to establish and fund a resource centre with a library, which would research and investigate women's history.
- A gender perspective needs to be introduced into the teaching of history in schools.

Third Level

- The Department of Education and Science should commission research on the reasons for the gap between male and female achievement in third level education. This should include an examination of the reasons for the lack of interest displayed by girls in technical and engineering courses.
- There is need to identify the barriers encountered by women in entering science and technology courses.
- Confidential research should be undertaken on promotion for women in third level institutions.
- Research should be undertaken on the processes whereby women are included on boards of colleges.
- The participation in third level education by social class and gender should be monitored.
- There is need to analyse the destination of women SET graduates post graduation from third level to further education colleges. This tracking would help identify trends, which may need to be addressed in order to encourage re-engagement in SET when individuals return to the workforce.

Second Level

- Research should be undertaken to assess why even though girls tend to perform better than boys at second level, the trend is reversed at third level.
- Even though teaching is becoming a feminised profession there is still huge inequality in relation to the percentage of women in middle management and senior management posts in second level schools and third level institutions. Research should be undertaken on male and female imbalance in promotional opportunities.
- There is need to research the reasons for the low numbers of women principals.
- There is need to research the impact of the feminisation of the teaching profession on the educational system.
- There is need to monitor and analyse the cases relating to women and education taken to date under the Employment Equality Act and the Equal Status Act.
- There is need to undertake research on the reasons for the under-representation of men in the teaching professions.
- There is need to examine the role of the churches in education and the implications of their possible removal.
- The Back to Education Initiative should be monitored and the barriers to participation should be clearly identified and addressed.
- There is need to research the reasons why young people leave school early.
- There is need for an analysis of the availability of technical subjects in co-educational and single sex schools.

Data

- There is need for data to be made available on the numbers of disabled people taking up education and training opportunities, and this should be disaggregated by gender.
- Meaningful qualitative and quantitative indicators should be developed to record progress on participation of women with disabilities across the various education and training sectors. Factors which encourage women to participate and factors which influence the dropout rate should be identified.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

Adult Education

- Increase in female participation in adult education programmes by 2007.
- Comparisons of outcomes in adult education for women and men.
- Percentage of Traveller men and women participating in adult education courses, graduate diplomas, master degrees, doctorate degrees.
- Percentage of older women attending classes.
- Whether or not the Government acknowledges that the informal education sector is central to the return of second chance learners into formal education institutions.
- Whether or not all Government sponsored education courses have on-site crèche facilities available.

Literacy

- Percentage of women and men participating in adult literacy programmes.
- Percentage of women who have literacy difficulties by local area and county.
- Trends in literacy and numeracy skills.
- The increase/decrease in illiteracy in women on a global basis.

Participation in Second and Third Level Education

- Percentage of males and females participating in the Back to Education Initiative.
- Percentage of males and females completing Back to Education courses.
- Percentage of teen mothers in full-time education by socio-economic status and by rural and urban location.
- Percentage of males and females completing second level education.
- Percentage of boys and girls completing third level with a primary degree.
- The percentage of girls and boys schools providing science subjects.
- The percentage of women and men early school leavers who return to training/adult education by socio-economic status.
- Numbers of early school leavers who leave without qualifications.
- Percentage of women who are computer literate.
- Level of women's and men's educational attainment across the life cycle disaggregated by urban and rural.
- Numbers of women attending third level by type of course.
- Participation rates of women in third level training courses.
- Number of women from minority ethnic groups accessing higher education.
- Percentage of male and female mature students who participate in third level education.
- Percentage of male and female mature students who complete third level education.
- Percentage of males and females with third level education i.e. diploma, degree, post graduate qualifications.
- The percentage of females participating in the SET sector is an indicator of the success of the Government of attracting women to non-traditional areas in the economy.

General

- Access to education by different groups of women, for example women with disabilities and women from minority ethnic groups.
- Education opportunities for women by county and urban and rural location.
- Courses in place throughout the country to up skill non-national women in order that they may seek employment.
- An improvement in the English language ability of non-nationals through the provision of classes.

Participation in Training

- Percentage of women and men in non-traditional apprenticeships.
- Number of women participating in training programmes: in Government Departments; multi-national companies and Small to Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs).
- Number of employers who have a policy on training and development for women.
- Percentage of women and men who complete apprenticeships.
- Increase in female participation on education and training programmes by 2007.

Workplace Training

- Percentage of women and men offered training within the workplace.
- Uptake rate of in-house training by people who work full-time, part-time and on casual work arrangements.
- Amount spent on training programmes for people who work full-time, part-time and on casual work arrangements.
- Amount spent on Government training programmes for men and women.

Teaching Profession

- The percentage of women in higher, technical and managerial posts in teaching.
- Percentage of male and female teachers at primary level.
- Percentage of women and men in promoted posts in primary schools: Principal Teacher, Deputy Principal Teacher, Assistant Principal Teacher, Special Duties Teacher.
- Percentage of male and female teachers who teach infant classes at primary level.
- Percentage of male and female teachers who teach fifth and sixth class at primary level.
- Average annual income of male and female teachers.
- Percentage of women and men who are in the Inspectorate in the Department of Education and Science.
- Percentage of women and men who are Home School Liaison Co-ordinators at primary school level.
- Percentage of male and female teachers who job-share.
- Percentage of women and men who are Special Need Resource Teachers at primary school level.
- Percentage of women and men who are Learning Support Teachers at primary schools level.
- Increase or decrease in the number of special needs teachers.

Gender Bias and Childcare

- Absence of sexist bias from schoolbooks and subject choices.
- Levels of access to and the provision of childcare services and older care.
- Monitoring by relevant institutions of the integration of a gender perspective in all policies, such as education and the media.

Women and Health

Woman-Friendly Service

- A major concern of women in relation to the health area is that a woman-friendly health service should be in place.
- There is need to provide a holistic approach to health and to treat the “whole woman”. This involves recognising the interrelationship between the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs of women.
- There is need to recognise the impact of social and environmental factors such as poverty, stress, bereavement and lack of transport on health.
- There is need to provide a choice of female General Practitioner (GP).
- All medical staff should be trained to be gender sensitive.
- Complementary health therapies should be recognised and available to people eligible for the Medical Card.
- Counselling should be available to women eligible for the Medical Card.
- Counselling and support should be available to people when they are diagnosed with a serious illness.
- The pilot programme on primary health care centres proposed in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) should be implemented.
- Key Government commitments made in the Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness need to be progressed.
- There is need to provide and resource Link Persons for the Primary Care Programme for minority groups.
- There should be a family support worker to support families when a mother is hospitalised due to her own health needs or her children’s health needs.
- There should be a genuine and accessible complaints procedures, which involves accountability on the part of senior staff.
- Women must be involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of Government health programmes.
- All health boards should have a basic core of standardised services and assessment criteria.
- People should have direct access to specialist care.

Medical Records and Patients Rights

- All patients should have access to information on their files and patients should be supported to access this information.
- There should be clear information provided to a woman on the treatment she is receiving.
- Results from health tests should be available more quickly.
- Each health board should have an individual data chip on each person's health so that comprehensive information can be available on the person's health.
- A centralised computer system should be in place so that medical personnel can have up to date information on each individual.

Inequalities in Health System/Access

- The two-tier health system is inequitable and this needs to be addressed. Public funds should not be used to subsidise private patients in hospitals.
- Public patients should have the same access to health care as private patients.
- There is need to ensure that all areas have access to General Practitioners and hospitals within a reasonable distance.
- Transport costs for people in isolated rural areas and island communities to access medical care should be subsidised.
- There is need for free transport for cancer patients, many of whom have to travel long distances to services.
- The Government should provide a social insurance scheme to entitle women to health and dental care. Where women have no personal income and are not entitled to a Medical Card, they are often reluctant to look after their own health or to spend money on dental care.
- Additional measures should be introduced to address the higher incidence of dental disease in women. Funding should be targeted to prioritise women with severe dental problems.
- Women should be covered for health care treatment under their husband's PRSI and PRSI contributions should cover the full costs of all medical services, such as the cost of bifocal lenses.
- Voluntary Health Insurance (VHI) should cover specialist appointments.
- There is need to combat the persistent barriers experienced by Traveller women, women from minority ethnic groups, disabled women and lesbian women in accessing health services.
- European models of free primary health care should be examined.
- Tackling health inequality requires action to reduce poverty. There is need to develop an integrated planning framework that links policies and strategies addressing women, health and poverty. There is need to integrate the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), the Health Strategy, the Health Promotion Strategy, the Traveller's Health Strategy and the existing and future Plans for Women's Health.
- All Government policies should be health proofed in order to examine the health implications for different strata of society.

Health Promotion, Information and Prevention

- Information on women's health services should be available in user friendly language, and be disseminated in ways that take into consideration literacy barriers, cultural language barriers and the needs of people with a disability. Information should be made available in Braille and in multi-media format.
- Information should be more readily available on the right to tax relief on medical expenses.

Healthy Lifestyle

- There should be funding for a campaign to promote healthy lifestyles. Information should be widely available on all aspects of women's health such as diet, nutrition, and a healthy lifestyle including the benefit of folic acid and of not smoking.
- To address the high rates of cardiovascular disease of women in Ireland there is need to promote a programme of healthy living.
- There is need to develop a positive mental health programmes for teenagers which would include the promotion of healthy living, such as diet and physical activity.
- International models of active living programmes should be examined.
- There is need to mainstream educational programmes aimed at health promotion in schools.

Sports and Leisure Facilities

- There is need for investment in active sports with an awareness of gender issues particularly in relation to young girls who, at a critical age, withdraw from sport.
- Programmes should be introduced to ensure that girls between eleven and thirteen years and boys between thirteen and fifteen years are undertaking sufficient exercise, as exercise during these periods is crucial for developing a healthy bone base to help reduce the risk of osteoporosis in later life.
- Physical education (PE) classes should be used to introduce children to various sports.
- The absence of sufficient childcare facilities attached to sports and recreational facilities prevents women from participating more extensively in sporting activities.
- The lack of access to leisure facilities has a negative impact on women's health and well-being.

Women and Sports

- Girls find it more difficult to secure local sponsorship for sports activities. Also, economic pressure within families and the high status attributed to male activities often means that women's sports interests are not prioritised. Greater priority needs to be given to women's sports, both within the family, within national governing sporting bodies and within Government agencies.
- There is need to develop a "re-entry route" for women who have had to disengage from sports for family reasons. Re-entry requires opportunity, training, support and facilities.
- There is need for a health focused media campaign or Comeback Week, encouraging women to re-enter sporting activities in which they had previously invested a lot of time. This would require active support from the national governing bodies of sports in providing coaching and other supports.

Alcohol and Tobacco Use

- There is need for a national strategy on alcoholism, tobacco and gambling. This should include the impact of substance abuse on children.
- There is need for health education aimed at reducing the use of alcohol and tobacco. Alcopops and other drinks aimed at young people should be banned.
- There is need for an intensive campaign to curb the high levels of underage drinking and there is need for everyone to carry a national identity card.
- A special anti-smoking campaign should target second and third level female students.
- There is need for practical and age relevant education programmes regarding the benefits of good diet and exercise and the gender specific dangers of activities such as smoking or drinking.
- The problem of alcohol abuse in women needs to be recognised as a different pattern to alcohol abuse in men and this needs to be reflected in information campaigns and services.
- All advertising promoting the use of alcohol should be banned.
- There is need for a continued public awareness on the dangers of cigarette smoking and the price of cigarettes should be increased.

Sexual Health

- There is need for a national awareness campaign on HIV/AIDS and Sexual Transmitted Infections (STIs) in schools, youth clubs and women's organisations.
- There is need for programmes to build the self-esteem of young girls to make choices regarding having sex and a preventative measure for involvement in prostitution.
- The fact that underage sex is widely practice needs to be recognised and addressed at a policy level.
- The 'myth' of safe sex must be addressed.
- The huge increase in STDs must be acknowledged and addressed and full information as to the inability of condoms to protect against sexually transmitted diseases and infections should be more widely disseminated. Is there an agenda behind 'safe sex'?

Screening

- There is need for an intensive public awareness campaign to inform women on the importance of preventative screening.
- Information on screening should be distributed through postal drops.
- Women need more information on the MMR vaccine to enable them to make more informed decisions.
- Vaccination programmes should include information on the adverse effects of vaccinations and parents should be able to make informed choices on options.
- A comprehensive health promotion strategy needs to be developed and implemented for third level colleges. Free breast and smear checks should be available to all female students.
- Women should be encouraged to request full information with regard to what they are signing up to when confronted with 'consent' forms e.g. Breastcheck. (This particular form does not specify certain areas to which personal information on women may be supplied).

Specific Campaigns

- There is need for a campaign to recruit blood donors.
- There is need for programmes to raise awareness of the effects of the menopause on women's physical and emotional health.
- Financial resources should be made available to support World Action on AIDS/HIV.
- There is need for health awareness programmes for young girls, including information and education programmes on bulimia and anorexia.
- There is need for greater education on incontinence and free incontinence products should be available.
- There is need for more health and relationships education for boys at second level.
- Health promotion should be on the second level curriculum, covering a wide range of information which has practical application, for example, dealing with body changes, the importance of good nutrition throughout life, the negative effects of drugs and smoking, reproductive and sexual health information.
- There is need for a campaign to raise awareness of skin cancer and the foods associated with skin cancer.
- Women should be empowered to question their GPs, etc., and to receive full and truthful information from them, with regard to the short and long-term dangers to their bodies from the chemicals that are contained in contraceptive and Morning After Pills.

Promotion Strategies

- A diverse range of venues and ways of communicating information should be used to promote good health.
- There should be seminars on women's health at regional level with health care specialists providing information on specific topics relating to women's health.
- Health promotion strategies should be developed in partnership between statutory, community and voluntary agencies.
- Health personnel such as public health nurses should be more actively involved in disseminating information on health.
- Mobile health promotion units should disseminate information in rural villages, towns and urban communities.
- Television, radio and newspapers should be used to provide health education.
- Information on health services should be provided in local shops, post offices, libraries and health centres.
- Innovative health promotion strategies, such as information on the back of milk cartons, need to be developed.
- Health awareness should be promoted through blood pressure and cholesterol check-ups in supermarkets and shopping malls.

Medical Card

- The current low cut-off point for the Medical Card is causing serious difficulties for many families, with women in particular being forced to choose between their own health and that of their children. There is need to reassess eligibility for the Medical Card and to introduce a sliding scale of subsidies to alleviate the burden for families on borderline incomes and for large families.
- Entitlement to the Medical Card should be extended to all low-income families. A family of two adults and two children with a weekly income of €240 exceeds the threshold for a Medical Card.
- Entitlement to the Medical Card should be extended to all school going children and to young people in low-income families engaged in third level education, all women working full-time in the home, everyone over 60 years of age, children/adults with asthma, islanders, people suffering from long term illnesses and all members of the household not in receipt of income (i.e. carers, older people and children/youth).
- Medical cards should be available to all people who have cancer regardless of means.
- By the year 2010 everyone should be eligible for a Medical Card.
- Guidelines on the retention of the Medical Card on taking up employment, developed by the Department of Health and Children in conjunction with the health boards should be published and disseminated.
- Medical Card holders should receive more respect from medical personnel and not be discriminated against.
- The range of services provided under the Medical Card, such as counselling, should be extended.
- The Morning After Pill should be available on the Medical Card.
- All specialist services should be covered by the Medical Card.
- Complementary medicine should be available on the Medical Card.
- The Medical Card only provides for a B12 injection on a three monthly basis. It should be extended to cover people who require a monthly B12 injection.
- People attending a GP prior to getting a Medical Card need some financial assistance to continue to attend a GP of their choice.
- The list of long-term illnesses provided for under the Medical Card should be reviewed, for example, Chron's disease and asthma should be included.
- The dangers of the Morning After Pill to the life and health of women and girls must be emphasised.

The Women's Health Council and Review of the Plan for Women's Health

- The Review of the Plan for Women's Health currently being undertaken by the Women's Health Council should be published and the recommendations of the review should be implemented.
- There should be a Women's Health Plan for each Community Care Area.
- The Plan for Women's Health should be updated in the light of the Health Strategy: Quality and Fairness.

- There is need to promote a wider understanding of the role and benefits for women of the Women's Health Council and Plan for Women's Health.
- The Women's Health Council should monitor the health section of the National Plan for Women.

Complementary Health and Preventative Health

- There is need for Government agencies to recognise complementary therapies and make them available within the health service. Many women who use complementary therapies do not disclose their use of these therapies to some professionals for fear of disapproval.
- Medical Card holders should be entitled to access recognised complementary therapies.
- There is need to promote a holistic model of health which takes account of women's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health and promotes a healthy life style relating to diet, exercise and relaxation.
- There is need for a national awareness campaign to inform people of therapies which are an alternative to prescription drugs.
- There is need for women's holistic centres at a local level and need to support women's groups to provide holistic programmes of women's health, including holistic approaches to reproductive health and the menopause.
- There is need for more support and encouragement for women to take charge of their own health through the provision of local classes on stress management and other preventative health measures.
- Herbal medicine and other alternative medicines should be promoted to complement the medical model.
- Regular preventative health care programmes should be offered at local level, for example, stress management, Lifewise, Go For Life Course.
- There is need to provide preventative health programmes which include information on diet and nutrition, food allergies, ways of detoxifying and food combining.
- The use of Soya products should be promoted.
- Complementary/alternative medicine and natural therapy should be put on a equal basis with conventional medical practice.
- Complementary/alternative medical practitioners should conform to recognised standards of qualification.
- The Irish Medicines Board should not be responsible for complementary/alternative medicine. An alternative regulatory system should be established.
- Tax relief and other financial incentives should be implemented to promote and support non medical treatments of mental illness.
- There should be tax relief on money spent on complementary medical care similar to tax relief given for conventional medical care.
- Practitioners practising complementary medicine should be regulated and service guidelines should be developed. This should ensure that medical card holders and people covered by private insurance have access to these services.

Counselling and Mediation

- Counselling should be available in all GP clinics and women's centres.
- There is need for more localised counselling services.
- There is need for user friendly counselling services to be made available in non-medical settings.
- There is need for greater availability of bereavement counselling which should be available free of charge. This is needed in fishing communities where there is loss of life at sea and for other families who are bereaved through death and illness.
- The issue of teenage suicide needs to be addressed and counselling made available in second level schools.
- Teenagers need counselling in relation to alcohol, drugs and sexual relationships.
- There is need for family therapists to assist young people with health problems, for example, ME, depression, alcohol and drug use.
- There is need for more support and counselling to reduce the use of antidepressant drugs, which many women consider are over-prescribed.
- After care counselling should be available to all women who have undergone cancer surgery, other major surgery or who have experienced the death of a baby.
- Genetic counselling should be available outside of Dublin.
- There is need for a life crisis counsellor/support person to support women at difficult stages in life.
- There is need for counselling to be available to women from minority ethnic groups and disabled women.
- Given the high level of depression in rural areas there is need for counselling to be available.
- Mediation services should be available at County level.
- There is need for specialised counsellors for children and adults with facial disfigurement.

General Practitioners

- There is need to ensure that all rural areas have access to a General Practitioner (GP). Some areas have no access to a GP at weekends and it can be difficult to access a GP after 6 p.m. Due to the lack of GPs in isolated rural areas, it is difficult to get GPs to undertake house calls and a person with no access to private transport has to hire a taxi to get to a GP. One submission made the point that there is no GP on call in their area and to get a GP it is necessary to phone a nurse in a neighbouring county, who phones back and informs the person which GP is on call. To access the GP they may have to travel up to fifty miles. The point was made that not having access to a GP was particularly serious given that a GP is required to authorise admission to hospital. There was particular concern for older patients.
- Some areas in the suburbs of Dublin City do not have access to a GP service. This needs to be addressed.
- There is a need to increase the number of female General Practitioner's (GP) in rural areas.
- All GPs should employ practice nurses to help in the health education of women.
- There is a need for GPs and counsellors to work as a team.

- GPs need to be informed of the range of complementary therapies which are available.
- A ceiling should be placed on GPs fees.
- Fifteen minutes per patient should be the standard minimum time given by GPs.
- All patients should have a two-year check-up to prevent long-term illness.
- There should be compulsory ongoing training for GPs on how to treat a woman as a patient.
- Attitudes of male doctors to women patients should be gender sensitive.
- Prescribed drugs should be monitored more vigorously with regard to efficacy and toxicity for women and men.
- A clear description of the side effects of prescribed drugs should accompany the drugs.
- There is need for direct access to specialists without having to get permission from a General Practitioner (GP).

Public Health Nurses

- There is need for more public health nurses.
- First time mothers need more support and contact with public health nurses or personnel specifically trained to address their issues.
- A public health nurse should call weekly where a mother is suffering from postnatal depression.
- There is need to strengthen community-based services, including providing more public health nurses for people leaving hospital and people who have had difficult operations.
- There should be public health nurses who are specifically assigned to work with older people.
- Public health nurses should play a greater role in women's health, for example providing information and programmes on the menopause.
- Local facilities such as community halls and community centres should be made available to local public health nurse where needed.

Hospitals and Clinics

Rights of Patients

- There is need to ensure the application of the patient's charter and that the rights of patients are respected.
- People attending Accident and Emergency Departments (A&E) should have access to an advocacy service.
- Cubicles in Accident and Emergency Departments should be wheelchair accessible.
- Hospitals should have focus groups or other mechanism where patients or relatives, service users are consulted on the services being offered. These have been established in some hospitals.

Rural Areas

- There is concern about the lack of hospital services in some counties. There is need to ensure that all rural areas have access to hospitals within a reasonable distance.

- County hospitals, which have not the full surgical facilities, should have access to a helicopter.
- Appointments in outpatient clinics do not take into consideration the distance which people have to travel. In many areas, all women are given the same appointment time, which often does not coincide with public transport schedules. It is important that women be given specific appointments for outpatient clinics, taking into consideration the schedules of public transport.
- There is a need to increase respite and hospice care in rural areas.
- There is a need to increase people's access to Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) clinics.
- There is a need for better access for dialysis treatment for people in rural areas.
- Increased availability of aftercare for recovering alcoholics is needed in rural areas. In some areas, people travelled more than 160 miles round trip to attend an after care meeting.

Transport

- It is important that people living in isolated rural areas and islands are eligible for transport subsidies to hospitals.
- There should be subsidies for transport and accommodation for oncology patients and families travelling long distances to Dublin for treatment.
- There should be a local ambulance or minibus service provided for older people who live long distances from hospitals.

Consumer Friendly Hospitals

- All hospitals should have facilities for mothers to stay with their children overnight. In many hospitals, facilities for parents with children in paediatric wards are inadequate, with no place to wash or sleep. This needs to be addressed.
- All out-patient areas and health board buildings should have nursing and baby changing facilities.
- Childcare facilities should be available in all outpatient clinics.
- Parking in hospitals is costly and needs to be reduced.
- There is need to improve the standards of food in hospitals and provide patients with healthy nutritional food.
- There is need to maintain high levels of hygiene and high cleaning standards.

Waiting Lists

- There is a need to eliminate waiting lists, and to provide more beds.
- There are unacceptable waiting times in Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments. There is a need for separate A&E Departments for children and older people.
- There are long delays in getting back test results from hospitals. The delay can be up to six months. This needs to be addressed.
- There is a need to reduce the waiting list for hip replacements.
- There is a waiting list for orthodontic treatment for up to five years. Only school children under fourteen years are entitled to free dental care. All students should have free dental care.

Increasing the Capacity of Hospitals and Clinics

- There is need for more resources for small local hospitals, including additional convalescent beds.
- Patients should not be discharged too early from hospitals.
- There is a need for more respite places.
- There is a need for more aftercare and convalescent care.
- There is a need for more radiographers in hospitals.
- There is a need to increase the number of radiotherapy units throughout the country.
- There is a need for more arthritis clinics in rural areas.
- All people over fifty years should be health screened as early detection saves money.
- Women should be given the option of being in an all female ward in hospitals.

Women's Health Centres, Information and Support Groups

- Women's health centres should be developed and provide a range of services including General Practitioner (GP) service, counselling, addiction services, bereavement counselling, information on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), support groups and support for women who experience violence.
- There is need for local primary access health care centres where multi-disciplines are easily accessible by women and children.
- There should be a Well Woman Centre in each county.
- There is need for locally based women's health centres which offer women-focused information, advice and education. They should provide a comfortable safe environment, free from religious overtones.
- There is need to develop local support groups in relation to health issues, such as postnatal depression, menopause, suicide and bereavement.
- By 2006, every area should have a one-stop shop on women's health.
- There is need for a walk-in medical bureau for young people staffed by health professionals to deal with drugs, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), general care and contraception.
- The role of Citizen's Information Centres in providing information on women's health needs to be developed and publicised.
- Every Health Centre etc., should provide full and accurate information on all the implications for health and life with regard to contraceptives and the Morning After Pill.

Maternity Care and Midwifery Services

- Women need to be able to access maternity hospital services within a reasonable distance of their homes. The nearest hospital to some areas is 100 miles.
- Every county should have a maternity hospital.
- In some areas the maternity unit in the nearest hospital has been closed. These should be reopened.

- A number of beds should be set aside in cottage hospitals for women who are at low risk and for emergencies. There should be the back-up of a helicopter service.
- There is need for more female gynaecologists and obstetricians.
- A home help service should be provided for first time mothers for six weeks after birth, if needed.
- There is need for more support for women suffering from postnatal depression.
- Service users were traditionally excluded from policy making and services have traditionally reflected male medical provider needs. There is need for service users to be represented on all relevant policy making bodies.
- The good practice model piloted in University College Hospital, Galway which provides woman-friendly maternity services should be mainstreamed.

Midwifery

- The national maternity policy is based on three women per delivery bed per 24 hours. This requires medical acceleration of labour for its implementation. It discriminates against women whose preference is for non-interventionist care. It also means that women are often discharged too early from hospital.
- The practice of forced labour, meaning acceleration of labour by means of physically invasive procedures, without the woman's full consent, is a violation of women's rights and constitutes violence against women. Women's right to say 'no' to routine medical procedures must be accepted. Securing women's fully informed and freely given consent to all medical interventions in labour must become a requirement in all maternity hospitals. The medical concept of tacit consent should be disregarded as it has led to abuses in maternity care.
- Midwifery should be recognised as a separate profession from nursing, the status of midwifery should be raised and maternity care should be midwifery based and not obstetrics based. Midwives must be enabled to govern themselves in whatever new structures are devised. They should have equality of representation with nurses on such agencies as the National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing and Midwifery.
- The principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value should be applied to hospital midwives. Job evaluation schemes should be undertaken to assess whether existing pay or other differentials between midwives and doctors are justified.
- All women should have access to maternity services framed within the midwifery model of care.
- Maternity care services should be midwife based not obstetrics-based.
- Primary health care should form the basis of the health services and midwifery should be one of its core services. Midwives should be recognised as equal providers with doctors of services in maternity care.
- A choice of midwife both in hospital and in the community is essential to the development of woman-centred care. National systems promote choice of doctor. Gender equity demands that choice of midwife be introduced.
- Midwives should be given the same powers and responsibilities as General Practitioners in maternity care. They should be given prescribing powers and these powers should be included in the forthcoming nursing legislation.

- Self-employed midwives should be given equal access, free of charge, to resources such as home-birth packs, which are given to General Practitioners. The medical monopoly of services in maternity care should be dismantled. It discriminates against midwives and their clients. At present only General Practitioners are recognised as providers under the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme.
- Self-employed midwives must be able to participate in all policy making levels in maternity care.
- It is a precondition for the development of a woman-centred maternity care that women both as users and as providers of maternity care should participate in decision-making regarding maternity services. The new nursing legislation should reflect both midwives and consumers' perspectives. It should incorporate recent international advances in midwifery legislation.
- A woman should have a choice of midwife and continuity of care.
- Women should have access to midwifery ante-natal and postnatal care in the community. The Department of Health and Children should mandate the relevant agencies to pursue and implement the recommendations of the Commission on Nursing with regard to the training and development of midwifery.

Home Birthing

- Access to home births is a legal entitlement deriving from the 1970 Health Act. Women on low incomes have less access to home birthing as midwives fees have risen significantly over the years. There is need to re-institute the local authority grant scheme towards the cost of a midwife attending a home birth.
- All hospitals should be obliged to provide home-birth mothers with routine hospital ante-natal facilities, such as ultra sound and blood tests free of charge, as are available to all pregnant mothers.
- Home births should be an integral part of maternity care policies, services and practices.

Breast Feeding

- There is need to resource and implement the recommendations of the National Breast Feeding Committee which reported in 1994.
- The Government should support the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative and the voluntary sector should be given resources to participate in the initiative.
- There is need for a cross-departmental approach to developing a strategy on breast feeding. There is need to involve the Departments of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Environment and Local Government and Health and Children.
- A National Steering Committee on Breast Feeding should be established. This Committee should facilitate an integrated approach to training and education programmes which would be incorporated into all relevant undergraduate and postgraduate education and which would be evaluated within a national framework using identified tools and criteria.
- There is need to promote breast feeding and support breast feeding mothers. Irish breast feeding rates are the lowest in Europe at 34 per cent on discharge from hospital and 5 per cent at three months.⁵
- Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) which promote breast feeding should be supported and a breast feeding network established.

⁵ Euro Growth Study, 1992-1996.

- Breast feeding clinics should be more widely available.
- NGOs should be funded to train local volunteers to provide information and support directly to breast feeding mothers and to represent the needs of breast feeding mothers on hospital and health board breast feeding committees.
- Appropriate breast feeding materials need to be developed to meet the specific needs of women, for example, women on low incomes, Traveller women and women with low literacy levels. Specific strategies need to be developed to make it easier for diverse groups of women to initiate breast feeding in hospital and to continue to breast feed at home.
- There is need to improve the understanding of the health benefits of breast feeding especially in reducing the risk of chronic childhood diseases among disadvantaged infants and young children.
- Midwives and other relevant professionals should be trained in the benefits of breast feeding.
- There is need to proof policies and services that discourage women from breastfeeding.
- A national database on regional supports available for breast feeding should be developed. This would support regional networks, prevent duplication and develop linkages.
- Extended maternity leave, lactation breaks and breast feeding facilities for mothers at work should be introduced.
- Promotional materials should be developed at national level to ensure standardisation of approach, consistency of message with the capacity of individual health boards to individualise materials within this framework.
- There is need for a public awareness campaign on basic breast feeding information for all women across socio-economic class, ethnic origin, education and employment status.
- The beneficial effects of breast feeding for the mother should be promoted, including reducing a woman's risk of breast and ovarian cancer, iron deficiency anaemia and osteoporosis, thereby promoting health and reducing the long-term costs to the health services.
- A Government commitment should be given to improve professional education in lactation management so that women have access to services provided by trained doctors, midwives, nurses, lactation consultants and nutritionists.

Pre-natal and Post-natal Care

- Greater resources need to be provided for pre-natal and post-natal maternity care. Current ante-natal care is delivered in an *ad hoc* manner. There is evidence that women from lower socio-economic groups are least likely to attend.
- Ante-natal services should be more customer focused, acknowledging and respecting women's need for an environment of respect and dignity.
- Pregnant women should have access to a free dental service.
- There is need to promote the role of Community Mothers in providing support to mothers during pre-natal and post-natal periods. There is need for supports for a year after the birth.
- There is need for respite and childcare support for mothers with babies with chronic colic.
- Ante-natal courses should include parenting skills.

Reproductive/Sexual Health

National Strategy

- A national strategy on sexual health should be developed and implemented.
- The advantages (medically and financially) of natural Family Planning should be emphasised and widespread promotion of natural Family Planning should be undertaken.

Gynaecological Services

- There is need to reduce the waiting time for gynaecological services.
- There is need to ensure privacy for women in clinics.

Education, Information and Availability of Contraception

A range of views were expressed on contraception:

- There is need for a comprehensive education programmes to enable women to make informed choices regarding pregnancy.
- Information on all forms of contraception should be available to all women in appropriate format.
- Information on abortion should also be available.
- The Contraceptive Pill and Morning After Pill should be available without prescription. This should be accompanied by increased sex education in schools.
- The Morning After Pill should be available free of charge to victims of rape.
- The legal ambiguity regarding teen reproductive health should be clarified so that both teenagers and medical personnel can operate in an environment that is free of legal obstacles.
- There needs to be an effective relationship and sex education programme to prevent unwanted pregnancies. The programme should cover sexuality, gender stereotyping, fertility, contraception, safe sex practices and awareness of violence against women. Programmes should be delivered in a variety of appropriate settings such as health and social service centres, training and informal educational centres. These programmes should also be provided for youth workers and teachers.
- There is need to prevent unwanted pregnancies and every attempt should be made to eliminate the need for abortion. Women who have unwanted pregnancies should have ready access to reliable information and compassionate counselling.
- Post-abortion counselling, education and family planning services should be offered promptly. This will also help to avoid repeat abortions.
- There is need to consider reviewing law containing punitive measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions.
- Women-friendly family planning clinics should be located in all major centres of population or be accessible within a reasonable distance to all families.
- Services should be available free of charge and confidential.
- A Well Woman Centre should be provided in every county with localised outreach clinics.
- Family resource centres which provide family planning information should have additional funding made available.
- Men need to take responsibility for their own fertility.

- Natural methods of birth control, including the Billings/Ovulation Method should be promoted.
- Information relating to the health risks of chemical contraceptives and, in particular, the Morning After Pill, must be made known to women. Of special concern is the risk of breast cancer, cervical cancer, thrombosis and strokes, blood clots, heart attack, ectopic pregnancy and infertility. Contraception has increased the incidence of unplanned pregnancy and also of abortion.
- The “safe sex” initiatives that promote condom usage or use of other so-called “safe-sex” methods not only fail to reduce the incidence of AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) but seem to lead to their increasing incidence. The increase in the presence of STDs appears to have a direct link with the increasing problem of infertility. ‘Safe-sex’ type programmes and initiatives should be withdrawn from use. In their place, programmes which promote chastity and abstinence before marriage and fidelity within marriage must be funded and implemented.
- As an alternative to the ‘safe sex’ programme in schools, there should be an emphasis on programmes, which promote abstinence, such as the Abstinence Education Movement in Canada.

General Practitioners

- There is need to identify General Practitioners (GPs) who provide a comprehensive service in relation to contraception and abortion advice.

Reproductive Health

- The use of the term “reproductive rights” should be discontinued in international and domestic legal documents, as it has caused much division.

Menopause

- The social and psychological needs of women at the time of the menopause need to be recognised and there is need for information and support groups for women.
- Health boards should host classes on the menopause to assist women positively through this transition.
- Women at the time of the menopause should receive free medical treatment.
- General Practitioners (GPs) and other health care professionals need training on the menopause.
- Many GPs do not understand the emotional aspects of the menopause and routinely prescribe HRT. They have little knowledge of alternative or complementary approaches to addressing the menopause.
- There is need for a menopause clinic in each county staffed by medical professionals.

Crisis Pregnancy

- There is need to support the role of the Crisis Pregnancy Agency in bringing about a radical rethink of how contraceptive services are provided in Ireland. There is need for a ten year strategy to reduce abortion rates. Research points to the fact that 45 per cent of Irish women having UK termination’s had used no form of contraception at the time they became pregnant.⁶
- There is need to disseminate information on the Morning After Pill and for it to be accessible to all women. There is need for the Irish Medicine’s Board to licence Levonell for use as a Morning After Pill.

⁶ Research undertaken by the Well Woman Centre which is based on a sample of 850 who had terminations at a UK Clinic between January 2000 and January 2001.

- As part of the sex education programme in schools, the Morning After Pill should be available on a pilot basis.
- Concern was expressed about the ability of some non-directive pregnancy counselling services to meet the needs of pregnant women who face a crisis pregnancy. Women need a caring, non-threatening environment and all options should be discussed, including adoption, abortion and single parenting.
- There is need for the Department of Health and Children to review guidelines for pregnancy counselling to ensure that counselling is non-directive and that all options are discussed with woman.
- Assistance, advice and resources should be allocated to ensure the no woman or girl child is pressured or forced to seek abortion due to economic anxieties and lack of support during pregnancy and birth.
- There is need for more support services for women in crisis pregnancy and health boards should advertise counselling and Helpline services in the region.
- There is need for independent low cost accommodation during pregnancy and after the birth of the baby and supported and supervised accommodation for teenage mothers.
- There is a need to disseminate full and accurate information on the Morning After Pill in relation to its adverse medical effects on women and girls, and its abortifacient nature.

Abortion

- A range of views on abortion were expressed.

1. Women need access to safe legal abortion as a fundamental right.

- The ability to obtain an abortion is limited to women who can afford to travel abroad, pay for the accommodation and the expense of the procedure itself. Poor women do not have equal access to abortions. This issue needs to be addressed.
- Quality services and supports, including information and low-cost counselling should be put in place to protect the health and social well being for women who choose to travel for abortion. Non-judgmental post-abortion check-ups and counselling should be easily available to women who have chosen to have an abortion. The State should support voluntary organisations currently providing post-abortion counselling.

2. Women who are raped should have access to pregnancy termination in Ireland.

3. Abortion should not be part of the treatment of threatened suicide in pregnancy.

4. The foetus/unborn child is a human being and must not be aborted.

- Abortion should not be permitted under any circumstances and the term “safe abortion” must be deleted from all international and domestic legal or policy documents. The Irish Government should do all in its power to encourage the governments of the nations of the world to reject abortion, anti-family and other anti-life policies as a matter of urgency. Abortion has devastatingly harmful effects (not ignoring the destruction of an unborn human being) on the physical and emotional health of women and young girls, — including the well-documented link between abortion and breast cancer.

Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)

- There is a need to increase the resources to hospitals-based STI clinics in order to enable them to offer quicker appointments and better access. The publication of the Department of Health and Children, *Health Statistics* in 1999 shows a dramatic increase in the number of sexually transmitted diseases notified between 1987 and 1997.
- There is a need to screen abnormal cervical tests for Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) which causes genital warts. The risk of HPV should be publicised. To do this effectively would require some investment in laboratory facilities which could form part of the national roll-out of the Cervical Screening Programme.
- There is a need to fund quantitative research into the prevalence of chlamydia, a bacterial infection in women which can cause chronic pelvic pain, ectopic pregnancies and infertility.
- Services of Well Women Centres and family planning services and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) clinics should be available in all areas of the country. More incentives are needed for local General Practitioner (GP) surgeries to offer these services.
- STI clinics should have designated days for men and women. STI services could be made available through GP clinics.
- Information on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) should be available.
- Information on the ineffectiveness of condoms in the control of STIs should be widely available.

Reproductive Technologies

A range of views were expressed in relation to reproductive technologies

- “Assisted human reproduction” and the use of techniques such as In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), Egg Donation and Surrogacy should not be permitted. Opposition was also expressed to human embryos being used for experimental purposes to find a cure for diseases. These techniques are considered “unnatural”.
- There is need for fertility clinics to be available throughout the country. All clinics and treatment in fertility centres should be subject to licensing. Legislation should be brought forward to ensure that In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) with donor sperm/eggs be available in Ireland. All donated semen samples should be kept for a period for six months before use to allow time for the identification of transmissible diseases such as HIV. Access to IVF should be open and transparent and take account of the individual needs of all women.
- The donation of gametes and embryos should be available in Ireland and it should be up to the individual couple to decide what is ethically right or wrong for them. There is need for appropriate counselling and proper tests to be undertaken by recognised infertility clinics. A discussion is needed as to whether or not donors should be kept anonymous.
- Freezing of pre-embryos should be introduced in Ireland, with a statutory freezing period of five years after which the clinician should discuss with the couple what they wish to do with the remaining embryos.
- There is need for a debate on the issue of surrogacy.
- “Assisted human reproduction” and the use of techniques such as In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF), Egg Donation and Surrogacy are unnatural and should be opposed. Human embryos are human beings and must not be used for experiments or research of any kind whatsoever.

Medical Personnel

- There is concern about the low status of women in the medical profession, particularly about the low pay and status of nurses and the barriers to the advancement of women in all areas of the medical profession and in senior management positions.
- There is need to increase the salaries of paramedics such as speech therapists and radiographers. Women predominate in these professions and their salaries were initially based on an estimate of 80 per cent of male type jobs at a time when public service jobs were rated as “female” or “male”.
- There is a need for more women in senior positions in hospital management. Ninety five percent of clerical grades are female and only five percent of management positions are occupied by females.
- There is need for a female Minister of Health.
- There is need for more women in senior posts in the Department of Health and Children and in the Health Boards.
- Specific measures should be in place to encourage more women to take up specialist posts and senior management post in the health sector, as the health services are currently significantly gender segregated.

Nurses

- The current shortage of nurses needs to be addressed.
- There is need for better pay and working conditions for nurses.
- There is need for more women in senior nursing posts. Men currently hold fifteen percent of senior nursing positions even though only nine percent of nurses are male. In psychiatric nursing 60 percent of nurses are female. However 29 of the 33 most senior nursing posts in psychiatric nursing (Chief Nursing Officer) are held by men.
- There is need for a national programme to encourage nurses and midwives to seek promotion in general health management.
- There is need to monitor and benchmark the number of nurses in senior management positions.
- The gender pay gap should be eliminated and nurses must be paid a comparable salary to other health professionals.
- The status of nursing should be upgraded which would involve a review of salary levels; promote nursing as a career for men and provide continuous career development opportunities for women.
- The role of nurses should be extended. There should be nurse-led clinics which would help to reduce waiting times and waiting lists.
- Flexible work practices should be introduced.
- The 24-hour nature of nursing should be recognised when developing childcare support.
- The role of the public health nurse should be divided to cater for the different care groups, for example older people and young mothers. The service should be well resourced and should be advertised and promoted nationally.
- Nurses and other health care workers are often exposed to violent behaviour in the workplace. There is need for a nurse/midwife claim fund.

- There is need to develop an education programme in all work places with appropriate counselling and advice to promote the development of a harassment free workplace.
- There is need to recognise the work of Irish nurses in overseas countries for pension purposes.

Barriers to the Promotion of Women as Consultants

- The training infrastructure is poor for the postgraduate medical education of General Practitioners (GP) or Hospital Consultants. Both categories must work as Senior House Officer where they work on average 77 hours per week. The pass rate of exams is only 30 per cent. There is no part-time training option. The EU directive on working hours means that non-consultant doctors hours must be reduced to 48 hours by 2010. There are no structures in place to allow women to continue with their training and rear their families. Research suggests that mothers tend not to apply for posts in training schemes and spend more time in non-approved posts than single women or men. This needs to be addressed.
- There is an urgent need for part-time medical training posts to be set up and supported, as the present situation discriminates against all mothers and in particular single parents and separated parents.
- Female non-consultant hospital doctors or inactive female doctors should be represented on the training committee of the 'Task Force on Medical Staffing' which is due to commence work.
- Barriers to the advancement of women within all areas of medical practice must be explored and tackled.

Training of Health Professionals

- All health service providers receive awareness training on the needs of women, inequality, disability, interculturalism and anti-racism. They should be aware of tropical diseases and knowledgeable in all skin types so that they can undertake plastic surgery on ethnic minority women. They should also be aware of the impact of male violence on women and on the needs of women engaged in prostitution.
- Training for health professionals is required on the particular needs of women.
- Gender issues must be seen as a core aspect of all medical education.
- Gender awareness courses should be provided in regional health boards.
- Gender issues should be properly integrated into core planning and delivery of services.
- Health professionals should be trained to encourage patients to give feedback on their experiences of the health care services, particularly hospitals as women often experience a lack of respect as patients.
- The curriculum of training doctors and nurses and other medical personnel should be broadened to include the study of gender and the study of complementary medicine. Medical training should be re-orientated to enable health workers to meet the needs of a health system based on prevention and primary health care. Peer-led primary health care programmes should be developed.

Female Medical Personnel

- All women should have access to a female General Practitioner (GP). In many rural areas women have to travel in excess of fifty miles to access a clinic with a female doctor.
- All women should have access to a female gynaecologist and a female obstetrician.

- Older women should have access to female geriatricians.
- Nurses should be up-skilled to administer smear tests and other gynaecological examinations.
- There is need to ensure that women travelling long distances in ambulances are accompanied by female personnel.

Hepatitis

- There is need for a non-judgmental attitude to people with Hepatitis.

Breast Cancer

- The National Cancer Strategy should be fully implemented and the report of the Radiotherapy Expert Group should be completed and its recommendations implemented.
- There is an urgent need to have a realistic, target date for the roll-out of the National Breast Screening Programme and for it to be available in all health board regions. This is important as the incidence of breast cancer is amongst the highest in Europe with over 1,200 new cases diagnosed each year. In 2002, it is estimated that over 600 Irish women will die of breast cancer.
- The service for breast screening should be free, accessible and user friendly and all information about the services and who will have access to the patient's medical information should be explained to the patient.
- The National Breast Screening Programme at present is only being implemented in three health board regions. In some areas there is a two-year waiting period for a person on the Medical Card. This roll-out of the National Breast Screening Programme needs to be addressed urgently.
- There is a need to develop an accurate population register of the target group for the National Breast Screening Programme.
- The breast screening programme should be extended to include women over 64 years.
- There should be age appropriate, free cancer screening programmes for all women and there should be no upper age limit for breast screening.
- There is need to prioritise the development of specific outreach programmes to access women from the Traveller community and other minority groups, including refugees and asylum-seeking women.
- There is need to reorganise the breast clinic system to include: the provision of counsellors; of financial assistance for costs incurred for medical card patients; time for clinic nurses to focus on patient care; and for the service to be available seven days a week.
- All women should have access to free medical breast screening.
- There should be a diagnostic cancer unit in all regional hospitals.
- All women should have access to expert cancer centres.
- There is need for two further radium treatment centres for breast cancer.
- There should be a rapid response to cytology (smear) tests.
- There should be no delays for women suffering from terminal illness at the diagnostic or treatment stages.
- There should be "walk-in" self-referral clinics developed.

- Access for rural women should be improved.
- There should be a media campaign which addresses the fear that people can be harmed from screening.
- In order to disseminate information more widely, local community groups should be contacted when mobile screening units visit the area.
- When attending Breastcheck centres, women should not be obliged to sign a consent form which includes a consent to have their personal details passed on to unknown/unspecified groups.

Cervical Cancer

- There is need to accelerate the national roll out of the Cervical Screening Programme.
- Cervical screening should be available to all women free of charge at two yearly intervals.
- There is need to develop an accurate population register of the target group for the National Cervical Screening Programme.
- The National Cervical Screening Programme should use best practice technology, such as liquid-based (Thin-Prep) testing.
- The National Cervical Screening Programme should test cervical smears for Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). In other countries testing for particular types of HPV has been shown to be an accurate indicator of whether or not a woman is at a high risk of developing cervical cancer.
- Adequate resources need to be put into the promotion of the importance of cervical screening as part of any cancer prevention measure.
- There is need for a high profile awareness campaign to raise awareness on cervical screening.
- Access for rural women should be improved.
- Consideration should be given to providing cervical screening in health centres and administered by nurses.
- It takes ten weeks to get the results of cervical screening tests. This period needs to be shortened.
- There should be more information made available on the cancer link with Depo-Provera and other chemical contraceptives.

Ovarian Cancer

- Experience of other countries suggests that a combination of genetic testing and family history can quantify the risk of ovarian cancer. High-risk women can be monitored by means of pelvic ultra sound scanning and blood testing for specific cancer markers. Although ovarian cancer may kill as many Irish women each year as cervical cancer, neither the Department of Health and Children's *Plan for Women's Health (1997-1999)* nor the 2001 Health Strategy: *Quality and Fairness: A Health System for You* refers to it. Attention needs to be given to ovarian cancer.
- There is need to ensure the continued funding and support for the multi-discipline HRB Programme on Predictive Testing in Familial Breast Cancer currently being carried out in a number of Dublin hospitals.
- There is need for the Department of Health and Children to identify current international best practice in treating women with ovarian cancer.

- There is need to provide screening for ovarian cancer free of charge.

Osteoporosis

- There is need for an awareness programme for osteoporosis.
- There is need for information for all women on preventative measures such as diet, and exercise and the importance of adequate levels of calcium.
- Bone density checks should be free of charge.
- Osteoporosis screening should be made available as locally as possible.

Screening Programmes for Men

- There is need for a National Screening Cancer Programme for men.

Support for the Voluntary and Community Sector

- The Department of Health and Children should develop a framework for funding the voluntary and community sector. This framework should be adopted by all health boards. Voluntary organisations with extensive membership and providing support services receive as little as €1,200 a year.

Young Women

- The health issues of young women as identified in the report *'Best Health for Children (2000) — Get Connected — Developing an Adolescent Friendly Health Service'* should be implemented.
- The Department of Health and Children should:
 - Develop a National Youth Health Programme.
 - Provide young women with free and accessible medical services to include services on reproductive choices and sexual health, free breast and cervical screening.
 - Resource good practice models of health promotion such as the National Youth Council of Ireland's *Health Promotion Youth Service Initiative* and the *Health Promotion Youthreach Initiative*.
 - Ensure that the Adolescent Health Strategy Policy is implemented in full. There is need to reactivate and update *Think Twice Every Time* campaign.
- In the interests of young women and girls, the advantages of sexual abstinence should be emphasised.
- The harmful short and long-term effects of chemical contraceptives and the inadequate effectiveness of condoms (particularly with regard to STIs) should be made more widely known.

Teenage Mothers

- There is need to build the self esteem of young girls to enable them to make choices regarding sexual relations and as a preventative measure to becoming involved in prostitution.
- The recommendations of the report, *Teenage Parenting Contemporary Issues* 2001 which was published by the Joint Committee on the Family, established by the Department of Social and Family Affairs should be resourced and implemented.

- The report *‘Investing in Parenthood — to achieve best health for children’* 2002 should be resourced and implemented.

Carers

- Carers should be involved in the planning of the health services which affect them.
- Patients should not be discharged from hospital until services are in place and co-ordinated locally.
- There is need for more carers to support women in post-operational recovery and people suffering from long-term illnesses.

Training and Career Structure

- Carers contribution to the health services should be formally recognised in policies through finance, training, support and provision made for time-off for carers.
- Carers need manual handling training and disability awareness training.
- There is need for a career structure for carers.
- Students in secondary schools should be encouraged to consider caring as a career.
- Men should be encouraged to work as carers.

Supports

- Regional networks of carers should be established and supported.
- Carers’ organisations should develop a Register of Carers so that they can negotiate adequate support.
- Increased levels of support and information should be provided so that carers feel less isolated and are informed of their entitlements.
- Carers should be able to access counselling free of charge.
- General Practitioners (GPs) should address the health needs of carers when attending patients.
- There is need for additional supports for carers who care for people with HIV.
- There is need for additional supports for carers in rural Ireland.
- There is need to provide innovative forms of respite care to allow carers to participate more fully in society and respite care should be offered in the patient’s own home.
- Payments made by the Community Welfare Service should be standardised across districts and counties.

Island Women

- The Government should develop an Island Health Care Provision Plan, which ensures that all island dwellers have access to a medical person, regardless of the population or size of individual islands. The plan should include:
 - A maternity plan for islands which improves the level of service to islanders and reduces the costs of travel to the mainland. Travel to the mainland should be subsidised.

- Provision on a regular basis of a broad range of services to the islands such as dental care, optician services, counselling services, social services.
 - Provision to upgrade current health clinics and provide health clinics for islands that are without clinics. Clinics would accommodate visiting health care practitioners, for example, chiropodist, optician, dentist, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, community welfare officer and counsellors.
 - Provision for back-up facilities for resident nurses.
- Health visits to health clinics and hospitals on the mainland should be fully subsidised. This should include costs of ferries and mainland transport.
 - A maintenance subsidy should be made available to women who must spend time on the mainland before giving birth.
 - Improvements and exceptions should be made to the Rural Practice Scheme for islands thereby providing a resident doctor and receptionist/nurse for islands with a population of more than fifty people as is the case in the Scottish Islands. A resident nurse should be provided for smaller islands.
 - There is need to provide a suitable vehicle to provide a transport and ambulance service for older people, children and people who are injured.
 - There is need to provide emergency cover for all islands. This includes the provision of a helicopter/special ferry.
 - There is need to provide better community nurse services for the smaller islands.
 - There is need to provide broadband/ISDN link for all the islands to make remote diagnosis possible and to provide a link with the local hospital/clinic.
 - There is need for sheltered social housing for older people.
 - There is need for respite care for carers on islands.
 - There is need for insurance for nurses who often carry out many procedures which the doctor would normally carry out.
 - All islanders should be entitled to a Medical Card.
 - Hospital appointments of islanders who attend mainland hospitals should be given priority, so that they can return home the same day.
 - All islands should have access to services for people suffering from depression or contemplating suicide.
 - All islands should have access to a Well Women Clinic.
 - All Health Boards should streamline services so that there is equality and standard provision, not only between the Health Boards but also between different islands within the same Health Board region.
 - There is need to provide outreach services for women who are exposed to domestic violence.

HIV Positive Women

- A National Sexual Health Strategy should be developed and adopted in each region.
- The AIDS Strategy 2000 should take into consideration the specific needs of HIV positive women.

- There is need for informed public education regarding HIV/AIDS and the Irish Government's responsibility to prevent the development of racist views regarding the health status of women from minority ethnic communities, refugees and asylum seekers.
- Ireland should have a Standard of Care and Treatment for persons with HIV.
- The fact that HIV positive women present at clinics at much later stages of their illness than men, needs to be addressed.
- Mothers with HIV/AIDS and drug addicts should be treated locally.
- All regions should have a Sexually Transmitted Infection Clinic, including AIDS/HIV. Information needs to be available in user-friendly formats.
- Information should be made available on the range of health services available, including the structure of the health services, HIV testing clinics and HIV treatment services. Language and cultural barriers experienced by refugees and asylum seekers in accessing information and services need to be taken into account.
- HIV positive women who are experiencing ill health need supports to facilitate them to live independently.
- HIV positive women need support to cope with the multiple bereavements many experience as a result of AIDS-related deaths.
- HIV positive women may be caring for a HIV positive partner and HIV positive children. They have difficulties accessing health care for both themselves and their children, as these services are located in different hospitals. Family responsibilities and transport make it difficult for these women to organise their time to suit appointment and clinic times. HIV positive women present at hospital at a much later stage in their illness than men, which has significant impact on their health status and the success of treatments available. They need to be supported to access services at an earlier stage of their illness.
- A married woman should not have to have the written permission of her husband to avail of a tubal ligation. A married man does not have to have the permission of his wife to seek a vasectomy.
- Routine HIV testing of pregnant women should only be carried out with the woman's consent and with appropriate counselling facilities in place. Due to inadequate staffing, some discrepancies exist throughout the country in the provision of counselling for ante-natal HIV testing. There is need for a standardised approach and best practice in this area.

Homeless Women

- Women who are homeless should be targeted for medical services. Every effort should be made to ensure that homeless women are fully informed of their entitlements.
- Outreach services should be put in place for women who are homeless and who have experienced violence or misused drugs.

Lesbian And Bisexual Women

- Many lesbian and bisexual women experience fear and feel intimidated by the hospital environment where homophobia can be deep-rooted. This needs to be addressed.

- The specific needs of lesbian and bisexual women with a disability need to be addressed by the health services.
- In relation to mental health, lesbian and bisexual women experience increased levels of stress, anxiety and depression as a result of homophobia. Hospitals and other health services give no official recognition of the partnerships of lesbian and bisexual women. This can cause enormous grief when a lesbian or bisexual woman is ill. This needs to be addressed.
- Clinics and health care centres need to cater for the needs of lesbian and bisexual women in the following areas:
 - Cervical smear tests, breast checks and gynaecological examinations.
 - Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and safer sex education.
 - Drug /alcohol addictions and related issues.
- There is over-prescribing of medication by General Practitioners (GPs), for example sedatives.
- Lesbian and bisexual women need access to counselling services that address their specific needs in relation to fertility services which are at present only available to “stable” couples.
- There is need for long and short-stay institutional care including hospital care and care homes for older people should provide for the needs of lesbian and bisexual women.
- There is need for adequate general counselling services that address the specific needs of lesbian and bisexual women.
- There is need to actively combat the misconception that homosexuality is a problem of personal abnormality.
- There is need for peer support groups.
- There is need for health care publications for women to address the needs of lesbian and bisexual women.
- Each Health Board should have a Lesbian and Gay Health care Officer with the following remit:
 - Plan and co-ordinate appropriate services for all lesbian and bisexual women including the following categories: women living with disabilities, older women, women with children, young women, women with mental health needs, women of colour, Traveller women, women of religious belief, transgendered people, women of different racial/ethnic origin.
 - Plan and co-ordinate education and training of health care professionals including outreach workers.
 - Ensure long-stay institutional care including hospital care and care homes for older people that provide for the needs of lesbian and bisexual women.
 - Plan and co-ordinate appropriate services for lesbian and bisexual women with a disability.
 - Plan and co-ordinate education and training of other health care professionals including outreach workers for women with disabilities.
 - Ensure that all health care publications that address the needs of people living with disabilities also address the needs of lesbian and bisexual women living with disabilities.
- The following partner rights should be implemented:
 - Right to be assigned as partner’s next-of-kin.

- Legal recognition of a partner's right in decision making in the context of critical clinical treatments.
- Legal recognition of partner's right to be present at the time of diagnosis and subsequent treatment.
- Right of partner to be present during resuscitation procedures.
- Right of partner to uphold the wishes of their partner regarding organ donation.
- Right to care for partner in illness.
- Right to compassionate leave for illness or death of partner or member of partner's family.

Older Women

Community Supports

- There is need to further enhance existing day care facilities and respite care to alleviate isolation and increase social contact. Transport should be provided.
- Local exercise and fitness programmes for older women should be developed.
- There is need for more programmes to build the self-confidence and self-esteem of older women.
- Inter-generational activities should be promoted.
- There is need to involve older people in kindergarten/nursery education and crèches.
- Mobile phones should be provided free for women over 60 years.
- There is need for more mobile clinics for older people.
- There is need to increase the number of paid carers to visit older women in their homes.
- There is need for increased support for people with Alzheimer's disease and their carers.
- Counselling needs to be available to older people.
- There is need to increase the levels of community supports, such as nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and rheumatology services. There is also need to develop community based nursing care using the hospice care model for older people and to extend the home help service.
- There should be home nursing care for older people.

Awareness and Information

- There is need for more health education for older women. This should include awareness of disease prevention, particularly for arthritis and osteoporosis. All women over fifty years should be entitled to a free DEXA Scan for osteoporosis. There is need for a campaign to promote good nutritional practice and exercise.
- Information on entitlements.

Medical Services

- Older women feel that their risk of developing breast cancer has not been adequately recognised and consider the current programmes to be ageist. There is a need to review the policy of not screening women over 64 years for breast and cervical cancer.

- Musculo-skeletal disorders including various forms of arthritis and osteoporosis are common in older people and are leading to conditions causing disability. It is estimated that 50 per cent of people aged 55 years in Ireland have some form of arthritis, with women being two to three times more likely to be effected.
- There should be routine health screening, including breast screening and cervical screening for all women over 40 years, free of charge.
- There is need for a reduction in waiting lists for hip replacements.
- Older women need to have regular blood checks and cholesterol measurement.
- Doctors need to be encouraged to spend more time with patients, particularly older patients.
- There should be free dental care for older people.
- Chiropody services should be free for all those over 65 years.
- Special public health nurses should be assigned to older people.
- There is need to monitor whether or not older people are taking their medicine as prescribed.
- Female patients in a hospital should have the right to object to having a male care worker assisting her in her toiletry needs.
- The costs of travel for medical care should be covered for older people.
- An advocacy service should be available to older people to negotiate with health services.

Residential Care

- There is need for a more flexible service for women in care homes, for example, there is a need for more accommodation for couples.
- There is need to increase the availability of nursing home care for older people.
- Nursing home costs should be subsidised for older people on low incomes.
- Nursing home care and standards should be reviewed to ensure that patients are protected.
- There is need to ensure that there are appropriate supports for residents in nursing homes. Government health services should be more proactive in protecting the lives of older people in institutions to ensure that no one dies because of the withdrawal of medical treatment or of intravenous fluids and nutrition.
- There is need for more supported group housing with carers on-site.
- There is need for geriatric consultants to visit residential homes for older people and these homes should be put under the direction of the Health Boards.

Policy Development and Implementation

- There is need to establish a Working Group on Older People to examine the issues of finance, quality of standards, supports and care plans. The composition of this group should include representatives of the statutory and voluntary service providers and organisations representing older women.
- There is need to establish branches of the Older Women's Network throughout all health board regions.
- Older women need to find a voice and to be involved in policy development and implementation.

- There is need to change cultural attitudes to older women and to challenge the stereo-typical perceptions of older women.
- There is need for a health strategy for older women.
- There is need for mechanisms to ensure improved co-ordination of services between Government Departments, health authorities and voluntary service providers and the local community.
- There is need for retirement planning.
- There is need to develop a case management approach for older people who are identified as being “at risk”.
- The North Western Health Board’s Choice programme should be extended to all older people who wish to avail of it in urban and rural areas.
- Many agencies discriminate against older women and there is need for training to combat ageism and sexism.
- The Department of Education and Science should be instructed to implement the immediate withdrawal of school textbooks which openly discriminate against grandparents and older people generally.

Traveller Women

- There is need for the immediate implementation and adequate resourcing of the Traveller Health Strategy which was launched in February 2002.
- Traveller women should be specifically targeted by the Health Promotion Strategy as Travellers die younger and have poorer health than the population in general.
- Traveller women should be specifically targeted by the Women’s Health Plan and their experiences taken into consideration in the review of the Women’s Health Plan.
- A Traveller Health Unit should be established in each health board region with Traveller women advising on the operation of the Unit.
- Traveller women should be named as a target group in all policy development and research.
- Traveller women’s organisations should be consulted in regard to health promotion material to ensure that it is culturally appropriate. Literacy levels need to be taken into account.
- Traveller women need better access to preventative health care and screening as well as sexual health care.
- Health boards should carry out bi-annual environmental inspections of Traveller halting sites and make the findings publicly available.
- The primary health care initiative being run by Pavee Point in the Eastern Regional Health Authority should be extended nationwide.
- Traveller women trained in primary health care should be provided with clear progression routes to employment and health boards should employ Traveller women as health service providers.
- Travellers do not feel respected by many health professionals. General Practitioners (GPs) should be prohibited from refusing to take Travellers as patients solely because they are Travellers. Travellers also need to be facilitated in hospitals and mortuaries to see and pay respects to family members who are dying or are dead.

- Appointment systems in hospitals and General Practitioners should take account of levels of literacy and the nomadic nature of Traveller culture.
- The importance of the Medical Card to Travellers should be recognised, given the poor health status of Travellers and the large families of Travellers. When Travellers access work and training, it is important that concessions are made which allows them to retain the Medical Card. The Medical Card should be valid in all health board regions recognising the nomadic nature of Travellers' lifestyle.
- There is need to promote awareness about entitlements to health services among Traveller women.
- Traveller women need access to counselling services.
- Health professionals need awareness training regarding Traveller lifestyles and literacy difficulties among some Travellers.
- There is need for mobile clinics for health screening advice and education.
- The instance of where a Traveller mother's children are taken from her and made Wards of Court if she refuses to submit to the 'Buchler' test should be investigated.
- Traveller mothers should not be discriminated against in any way while in hospital — whether maternity or general.
- The religious beliefs, folk traditions and healing traditions in the Traveller culture should be recognised. Research into these traditions should be supported.

Women from Minority Ethnic Groups

Services

- Women from minority ethnic groups should have equal access to GPs as the rest of the population.
- There is need to review the services available to women from minority ethnic groups and resources need to be allocated to establish services to meet the specific health needs of women from minority ethnic groups.
- There is need to develop a data base which details the age of people from minority ethnic groups, so that age appropriate services can be developed.
- Many ethnic minority women experience physical deterioration, depression and stress from the trauma of abuse experienced before coming to Ireland. Specific measures should be put in place to promote their physical and psychological recovery. Counselling needs to be available to women from minority ethnic groups.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should be entitled to a full health care assessment on arrival.
- There is need for increased services for women from minority ethnic groups who are living in reception centres and hostels.
- There is need for personal development programmes for women from minority ethnic groups to promote self-confidence and self-worth.
- Childcare needs to be available so that women can access health services.
- In accessing health services women from minority ethnic groups need access to female interpreters.

- There is need to build confidence among women from minority ethnic groups so that they will access rape crisis counselling and services responding to domestic violence.
- Fears which asylum seekers have, of the impact of their health status on their application for asylum, needs to be addressed.

Staff Training and the Employment of Ethnic Minority Women

- Staff throughout the health services need training on the health practices of ethnic minority cultures and they need knowledge of tropical diseases. They need to be aware of the different eating habits of ethnic minorities and the special nutritional needs of ethnic minority women.
- Health professionals, including midwives and gynaecologists need awareness training with regard to Female Genital Mutilation.
- Staff at all levels of the health services need training on ethnic minority issues and refugees issues, anti-racism and interculturalism.
- Health services should employ women from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Health Promotion, Information and Advocacy

- A health promotion strategy that directly targets women from minority ethnic groups including refugee and asylum seeking women should be developed. This should be based on a human rights approach.
- The National Health Strategy should have a particular focus on women from ethnic minority groups. They should also be involved in the monitoring of the strategy.
- In establishing services for women from ethnic minority groups, attention should be paid to the need for maternity care.
- Legislation should be introduced to outlaw Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Ireland.
- Many women from minority ethnic backgrounds are unaware of the range of health services available to them. The health board should fund specially trained peer education workers. These workers would inform women of health services such as breast screening, cervical smear testing, testing for sexually transmitted infections, the availability of contraception and the Medical Card system.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should be targeted by health promotion programmes in the area of ante-natal and post-natal care.
- Mothers should be given written information on their entitlements to, for example, adequate clothing during pregnancy, toiletries, baby clothes.
- Outreach services which are culturally sensitive should be developed.
- Culturally sensitive interpretation and translation facilities need to be in place.
- There is need for peer-led advocacy workers to assist people to understand and negotiate the health care and income maintenance systems.
- Women from ethnic minority groups should be represented on the Women's Health Council.
- The cultural traditions of ethnic minority women with regard to contraception and family planning should be respected.

Women Who Use Drugs/Withdrawing from Drugs

Woman-Friendly Service

- Women who use drugs are often seen as “junkies” or “drug users”. They should be seen as women in their own right, as women, mothers and people with everyday health concerns. They would like to be accepted without value judgements and not simply as people looking for medication or drugs.
- Women using/recovering from drugs should be treated with respect.
- Women using drugs or withdrawing from drugs should be treated with respect. Services should be “woman friendly” with female staff available and women should feel safe attending treatment services. This would reduce stigma and encourage more drug misusers to attend for treatment.
- Women drug users often experience a lack of privacy in drug treatment clinics and hospitals. Medical personnel often comment on a woman’s progress in public. This is particularly the case in maternity hospitals because of attitudes of staff about a woman’s capacity to mother.
- Women using drugs experience many medical practices such as urinal analysis as invasive. This needs to be addressed.
- Effective quality health care should require that patients be treated as people and not as the condition with which they present.
- Women using drugs need access to General Practitioners (GPs) and other medical personnel who are woman friendly and who understand the process of recovery.
- As a matter of right, women drug users, women stabilising and women recovering from drug misuse should be consulted and their permission sought as to who should have access to information about their histories, treatments and circumstances.
- There is need for family friendly detox facilities where childcare is provided.

Services

- There is need for women using/recovering from drugs to have access to adequate and appropriate integrated drug treatment programmes which take into consideration the specific needs of women.
- There is need for drug treatment facilities in local areas.
- The number of detox units should be increased.
- Methadone clinics should be resourced to improve their delivery to women by developing more women-centred approaches to staffing and procedures.
- The provision of counselling services within drug treatment programmes should be reviewed with a view to increasing the choice of counsellors available, and identifying the most appropriate methods of service delivery.
- Counselling should be made available that is not linked to methadone maintenance or drug treatment.
- Childcare facilities in drug treatment services should be increased.
- Additional resources should be made available to provide appropriate and sensitive support to mothers of new babies who are drug users, women who are stabilising their lives and those recovering from drug misuse.
- Priority should be given to increasing the number of women-centred aftercare programmes and the necessary resources assigned to their development and delivery.

- A range of sexual and reproductive health services should be developed which are appropriate and user-friendly and are part of a multidisciplinary approach to treatment and supports for drug users, women stabilising and recovering women.

Education Awareness, Advocacy and Consultation

- There is need for outreach services which target women who use drugs.
- Awareness should be promoted of drug treatment services among women using drugs.
- Awareness of safe sex practices should be promoted among women drug users, as should the risks involved in sharing needles.
- Projects and programmes for women drug users should be resourced to provide ongoing education and information to promote women's health among their client group and to provide information and advice on preventative health care.
- Priority should be given to devising and implementing preventative programmes on prescribed drug use and misuse among women.
- Resources should be made available to develop peer education initiatives in promoting health information and advice to women drug users.
- Abortion information, non-directive counselling and access to abortion should be made available to women as a matter of right.
- Women recovering from drug use should be consulted on the operation of drug treatment clinics. Resources should be allocated for this purpose.

Hepatitis

- Women drug users who have Hepatitis and/or HIV should be treated similarly to other individuals by dentists.
- Universal precautions should be applied in dental care to provide equality of protection and equality of treatment to all patients and not solely on the basis of disclosure.
- Dental services should be integrated into drug treatment programmes.
- Awareness programmes among drug users should be provided on how Hepatitis is transmitted and its effects on individuals. Peer health education, individual counselling and family counselling is needed.
- Accessible information and counselling supports should be increased for women infected with Hepatitis, encompassing the needs of those infected and family members.
- There is need for more clarity on rights and entitlements on Hepatitis C sufferers.

Training

- Appropriate training utilising the expertise of former drug-users and those who work in aftercare should be delivered as an integral part of training provided by all schools, colleges and institutions for health care professionals and practitioners.
- The procedures whereby children of women using/recovering from drug use, are taken into care should be reviewed.

Research Findings on Depo-Provera

- Research findings and all information related to Depo-Provera should be made publicly available in both medical and non-medical language to ensure women make informed choices on contraception.
- The harmful medical effects arising from the use of Depo-Provera should be made known.

Disabled Women

- All health policies should address the specific needs of women with disabilities.
- There is inadequate provision of basic disability related core services in every Community Care Area. There is need to provide services of sufficient quality to enable women with disabilities (physical, mental, intellectual and sensory) to live and participate effectively in their communities of choice.
- There are inadequate rehabilitation services outside of Dublin.
- There is need to decrease waiting times for aids and appliance assessment and occupational assessment.
- There is need for more regular psychological assessments for children with an intellectual disability.
- Assessment facilities should be available for all women with a physical disability and services should be available to respond to their needs.
- There are inadequate therapeutic services, for example, physiotherapy and speech therapy, throughout the country. These services need to be available to disabled adults nationwide.
- All equipment used in treatment needs to be properly maintained and monitored.
- Grants for disability refitting need to be made available more quickly.
- There is a predominant emphasis on medical care/secondary care rather than on primary health care and preventative health. This should be addressed.
- Older disabled women need to be targeted by programmes such as Breastcheck and programmes on the menopause.
- Within women's health programmes, such as Breastcheck, there is need to target disabled women.
- Women with an intellectual disability should have their dental needs addressed.
- Speech therapy for children with special needs should be available at a local level.
- There is need to provide additional services for parents of children with special needs.
- There is need to make specialist counselling available for children and adults with facial disfigurements.
- Disabled women should not be obliged to sign a 'consent' form, the full implications of which are not made known to them.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

- The practice whereby some disabled women, particularly women from low income groups, are pressurised to be sterilised should cease.
- Cervical screening, breast-check, family planning, relationship development and sexual education needs to be enhanced and appropriately tailored for women with an intellectual disability.

- All disabled women should be given information on their reproductive health on the same basis as non-disabled women and their right to bodily integrity must be recognised.

Disabled Women in Institutions

- The practice whereby disabled women, particularly in institutions, are pressurised to receive corrective surgery should cease immediately. Parents as opposed to institutional authorities should make these decisions.
- Medication and drugs should be prescribed and provided to residents of institutions on the basis of their individual needs.

Mental Health

- There is need to develop a mental health strategy for women.
- A strategy on mental health should include counselling and the promotion of herbal methods as an alternative to conventional medicines. Tax relief and other incentives should be provided.
- More localised services in the areas of mental health and counselling should be provided.
- Counselling should be offered as an alternative to prescribed drugs.
- There is need for information on medication that causes depressions.
- There is need for more community psychiatric nurses.
- There is need to provide advocacy and support for people with a mental health problem.
- There is need for increased investment in women's community led projects addressing women's mental health issues.
- Employers need to be educated on mental health issues.
- The dignity and privacy of vulnerable patients in psychiatric hospitals should be respected.
- There is need for more counselling to help men, women and teenagers cope with problems leading to depression.
- There is need for more Alzheimer's Centres throughout the country.
- Models of good practice relating to community based mental health should be mainstreamed.
- Women experiencing postnatal depression should be moved out of mental health wards to general wards. This would allow them to keep their babies.
- There is need for more child guidance clinics. There is a waiting time of three years in some areas.
- There is need to develop a preventative programme on suicide.
- A preventative mental health strategy should be developed and implemented which includes counselling and the promotion of herbal methods as an alternative to conventional medicine.
- There is need to ensure that women with mental health difficulties who are at a high risk of unprotected sexual activity receive preventative counselling.

Disability Allowance and Medical Card

- There is need for the Disability Allowance to be increased to enable women to eat well and maintain their good health.

- All people who have a long-term disability should be eligible for a medical card.
- A Cost of Disability payment based on individual assessment of need should be introduced. This payment would cover the extra costs associated with a disability regardless of the income status of the claimant. Costs of caring for children and other dependants should be taken into account.

Access

- There needs to be full access to health services, surgeries of General Practitioners (GPs) and women's health/ reproductive clinics.
- There is need to broaden the definition of disability access from wheelchair accessibility to other types of accessibility including hearing, sight and speech. There is need for Sign Language Interpreters and for documents to be available in Braille.
- Disabled women should be entitled to access services without the presence of personal assistance/carers and their rights to confidentiality should be respected.

Disability Awareness and Proofing

- There is poor understanding by the medical profession generally of the emotional needs of women with a disability. All health care staff should receive disability awareness training. Health personnel should be trained to distinguish between a general health issue and a health issue related to a particular impairment.
- All health policy should be "equality proofed" taking account of equality legislation.

Supports

- There are inadequate support/information services for women diagnosed with a disability and for family members.
- There is need to increase the provision of respite care services nationally.
- There is need to increase personal/home care services for a woman with a disability. Without these services the family must take on the care, often for 24 hours per day, which results in undue stress.
- There is need for more support for mothers and families with special needs babies and children.
- There is need for a nationwide system of peer counselling to be set up to enable disabled women to overcome their low self-esteem.
- Health advocacy workers should be available to disabled women at all levels of the health system to assist them in expressing their needs and accessing services.
- There is need to increase health and personal social assistance to enable disabled women to live and participate effectively in their communities of choice.
- There is need for regional rehabilitation centres, to provide people with disabilities with more localised services.

Information

- Health information packs with detailed information on women's health should be developed and presented in a lively readable format, be available in Braille and sent to every house.
- Health information should be in a multimedia format.

- Clear information should be provided to a woman with a disability on the health treatment she is receiving.
- It can be difficult for women with disabilities to communicate with doctors, for instance, deaf women or women with a literacy difficulty. There may be a need for designated information officers to speak with individuals or groups on specific health concerns.

Medical Records

- All disabled people should have access to medical records which should be available in different formats and written in a manner that is easily understandable.
- The procedure for accessing medical records under the Freedom of Information Act should be widely disseminated.

Women Exiting Prison

- There is need to ensure that there is continuity of treatment programmes for women exiting prison. Many women entering and leaving prison have health problems. HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C infection is prevalent among the Irish prison population. Many are also engaged in substance misuse and are on methadone maintenance programmes in prison.

Women Engaged in Prostitution

- There is need for special supports for women making the transition from prostitution.
- There is need to pilot a holistic, primary health project for women engaged in prostitution in a rural and an urban area. The project should include midwifery services, counselling, complementary medicine, services of a General Practitioner (GP), nurse-led services, casualty services, social welfare and recreational services.
- The Department of Health and Children should address the situation of young women who are homeless and/or are in prostitution. Organisations working with this particular group of women should be adequately funded.

Developing World

- Ireland should use its influence at the UN and EU to advocate for more education and awareness of HIV/AIDS, which is growing at a rapid rate among children in the developing world.
- Ireland should use its influence to ensure research is undertaken into the causes of AIDS and to ensure that the cost of drugs to treat the disease are priced at a level affordable to those infected.
- The example of Uganda, where the incidence of AIDS has decreased as a result of the promotion of sexual abstinence, should be carefully examined.

Research and Monitoring

- A comprehensive national health survey on women's health status should be undertaken.
- There is need for research on the link between poverty and the ill health of women.
- There is need for a commitment to preventative health care. The growing body of evidence linking health problems with environmental problems needs to be examined. There should be research into

baseline levels of PCBs and fluorides, as well as levels and effects of dioxin pollution, traffic pollution and air quality.

- The health services should be audited and gendered-proofed.
- There is need for research into inter-hospital provision of services as this appears to vary from hospital to hospital.
- There is need for research to determine the optimum care for patients with non-curable disease.
- There is need for research into the health and safety issues in health care settings.
- The effectiveness of health promotion programmes of health boards should be assessed.
- There is need for research into the menopause and the effectiveness of different treatments.
- There is need for research on postnatal depression.
- Research should be undertaken on anorexia nervosa and bulimia.
- There is need for more research on Alzheimer's disease.
- There is need to undertake research on the effectiveness of complementary medicine.

Cancer

- The National Breast Screening Programme should be evaluated. The evaluation should take into account the views and experiences of users.
- There is need to develop an accurate population register of the target group for the Breast Screening Programme.
- There is need for research for biological markers of hormonally based cancers (breast, cervical, ovarian).

Breast Feeding

- There is need to examine the factors which make it difficult for women to breast feed, for example, vested interests in business.
- There is need to fund research on breast feeding. There is need to establish and research the cost to the health system of not promoting breast feeding.

Osteoporosis

- There is need for an expanded programme of research into osteoporosis.

Sexual and Reproductive Health

- There is need to fund research on male contraception.
- There is need for more research into HRT.
- There is need for research and monitoring, as a matter of urgency, of Depo-Provera prescribing, its use and its effects.
- There is need for research on the physical and psycho-social needs of menopausal women.
- There is need for research on the extent of mental distress related to pregnancy.

- The Department of Health and Children should initiate research into the incidence of post-abortion trauma in Irish women.
- The all-round advantages of natural Family Planning and of sexual abstinence should be promoted.

Research on Diverse Groups of Women

- There is need for research on the health needs of disabled women.
- There is need for research on the extent of prostitution in Ireland and the health needs of women engaged in prostitution.
- Research should be carried out on the health needs of women living in institutions, particularly older women and disabled women.
- There is need for research into the causes and rehabilitation of women suffering from mental health problems.
- Research should be carried out on the health needs of women with a disability. This should explore the issues of social exclusion, and include employment status and access to public areas. It should examine the extent of violence against women with a disability.
- There is need to conduct an assessment of the impact of the dispersal policy on women's access to health services and the consequent impact on women's health.

Women and Sport

- There is need to research health barriers to women participating in sporting activities, such as osteoporosis. With this information women could maximise their participation in sports rather than withdrawing completely for fear of further injury.
- There is need for a survey on the extent to which students in primary and secondary levels participate in sports.

Research on Health Personnel

- There is need for the Department of Health and Children in association with the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) to monitor the downward mobility of nurses following career breaks and to recommend appropriate action to reverse this trend.
- There is need for research on the impact of family responsibilities on the career progress of female nurses.
- There is need to undertake research on the reasons why senior nurse managers are not seen to be equal to other managers in the medical profession.

Research Methodologies

- There is need to include women in biomedical research. There should be an increase in the number of women heading research projects and more women included in clinical trials to offset bias and to ensure that treatments and curative regimes have been tested on women.
- There is need to undertake a national study on women's health including women's perception of the health services, using a participatory methodology and qualitative as well as quantitative methods.
- The scope of health research must be broadened to include interdisciplinary approaches to health.

- All medical research in Ireland should be gender specific.
- There is need for research into the effects of homophobia on lesbian women's mental, emotional and physical health.

Statistical Data

- Data on services should be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and disability.
- Each national census should include a section on gender and health in order to continually improve the collection of relevant health statistics.
- Each health board should have a data base on all women in their region.
- All health data should be disaggregated by ethnic group to facilitate health planning for ethnic minorities, including Traveller women.
- Diversity among women must be recognised in the measurement of gender and health issues and statistics should be compiled on the diversity of women's situations.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

- Life expectancy of men and women.
- Comparison of standard life expectancy with that of previous years.
- Health status by income level.
- Percentage of women and men who are home helps.
- Percentage of women suffering from postnatal depression.
- Increase/decrease in the uptake of counselling services.
- Increase/decrease in the number of women suffering from eating disorders.
- Whether or not community groups providing health related services are able to access funding directly from the Department of Health and Children, where health boards are not able to support such programmes adequately.

Hospitals

- Numbers of men and women on hospital waiting lists.
- Number of hospital beds available.
- Percentage of public patient beds occupied by private patients.
- Percentage of women and men with private health insurance cover.

Nursing Homes

- Percentage of women and men in nursing homes.

Medical Card and Long-Term Illness Card

- Number of women and men who have a Medical Card.
- Number of women and men who have a long-term illness card.

Drugs and Alcohol

- Increase or decrease in the number of women who are alcohol or drug dependant.
- Percentage of women misusing drugs.
- Age at time of first drink of alcohol.
- Availability of and access to drug rehabilitation programme.

Cancer

- Percentage of women availing of Breastcheck.
- Percentage of women to whom Breastcheck has been offered.
- Increase/decrease in the numbers of women with cervical cancer and breast cancer.
- Whether or not women have free access to breast screening services in their immediate locality and have access to counselling and support.
- Whether or not women have free access to cervical smear screening in their own locality and access to a woman medical practitioner for this purpose.

Sexual/Reproductive Health

- Reduction in teenage pregnancies and reduction in Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).
- Increase/decrease in the number of unplanned pregnancies.
- Age at time of first sexual intercourse.
- Whether or not family planning services are easily accessible in non-intimidating locations.
- Whether or not legislation is in place which bans FGM.
- Whether or not education and awareness raising programmes on the issue of FGM are in place.
- Factors which contribute to the increase in teenage pregnancy, and to the increased incidence of STIs — such as alcohol, reliance on condoms etc.

Diverse Groups of Women

- Data on health status of women in specific groups such as asylum seekers, Traveller women, older people, people with disabilities.
- Life expectancy at birth of specific groups, such as Travellers.
- Improvement in older women's health.
- Poverty risk for women with a mental health problem.
- Whether or not an Island Health Policy is developed and implemented.
- Whether or not the Travellers Health Strategy is implemented.
- Whether or not the recommendations on the health and treatment services for prisoners in the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) Report Number 22, is implemented.
- Whether or not all health facilities have linguistically and culturally accessible services for migrant women and girls.
- Comparison between the health status of island women and women in the general population.

- Number of men and women caring for dependent relatives.
- Gender breakdown of carers.

Medical Practitioners

- Availability of less than full-time training posts in all health board areas.
- Availability of retraining post/schemes.
- Availability of retainer posts (e.g. working 1 or 2 days per week).
- Exploration of alternative positions/training that afford financial security for vulnerable parent groups.

Violence Against Women

- It is important to define what constitutes violence against women. It should include mental, physical, emotional, sexual, economic, social isolation, and the exercise of power and control over women by men. This definition needs to be enshrined in legislation.
- Domestic violence is prevalent in all classes of society and this needs to be acknowledged. It is often misrepresented as being a phenomenon of lower income groups.

Specialist Front line Services for Women and Children who Experience Violence

Need for a Comprehensive Range of Front line Services

- A comprehensive range of services needs to be available to women in all health board regions. These should include a Helpline, crisis accommodation, counselling, and advocacy/accompaniment/on-going support and support groups. In some counties there are no front-line domestic violence services at all.
- There is need for a Helpline, a refuge and a Rape Crisis Centre in each county. Outreach and support services both in relation to domestic violence and rape and sexual assault should be available within fifty miles of any home. There is an absence of services in some areas, notably an absence of domestic violence services in the Sligo, Leitrim, West Cavan area and this needs to be addressed.
- As a matter of urgency the number of refuge places should be substantially increased in line with demand and there is need to provide funding for transport costs to refuges.
- Refuges should have the capacity to accommodate large families.
- There should be safe centres for young girls who run away from home because of domestic violence.
- Counselling and outreach services should be put in place for homeless women who have experienced violence and for women involved in substance misuse.
- Support needs to be available for women who are experiencing violence from their children.
- Rape crisis centres and court accompaniment services dealing with domestic violence should be provided with premises in or adjacent to court buildings in order to provide support for victims during court hearings.
- Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) providing back to work/study programmes and community arts programmes for women who have left abusive relationships should be adequately funded through a dedicated mainstream funding line under the Department of Education and Science.

Standard of Care and Support for Women

- All front line services should develop and implement a code of practice. There is need to introduce a minimum standard of care that victims of domestic violence can expect to receive if they seek help and there is a need for regulations to underpin women's refuges.
- The safety of women accessing services and the safety of women providing services should be prioritised. Confidentiality should be a core underlying principle of service provision. The woman should be welcomed, taken seriously and have her privacy respected. The woman should be encouraged to make her own decisions and her choices should be respected.
- Crisis accommodation should be designed to accommodate children.
- Refuges/safe houses should be open on a 24 hour basis.
- There is need for immediate financial support for women leaving abusive relationships.
- There is need for programmes to empower women to report violence at an early stage.
- Victims should be supported to become independent of violent partners.
- There is need for more one-to-one victim support.
- There should be self-defence classes for women.

Funding

- Front line services, which are mainly run by Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), have not been fully recognised and have been underfunded. Multi-annual, guaranteed, index linked funding should be provided to service providers in the NGO sector. This would allow services to engage in forward planning and to retain experienced staff. Core funding should include an annual allocation for training and development needs of the organisation and staff.
- There is need to increase core funding which is linked to clear criteria. Funding criteria should be developed by existing services providers (refuges, rape crisis centre, outreach) in conjunction with the National Steering Committee (NSC).
- There is need for parity of income for counsellors working in Rape Crisis Centres with counsellors working in the health board services for adult survivors of sexual abuse.
- The three national organisations concerned with violence against women, namely the Rape Crisis Network of Ireland, the National Federation of Women's Refuges and Women's Aid should be adequately resourced to ensure their capacity to help build the capacity of the sector. Specific funding should be allocated for them to employ policy workers.
- The National Steering Committee should seek funding to address the gaps in front line services.

Community Based Supports

- More supports are needed for community organisations to address the issue of violence against women.
- Community based projects which provide support and court accompaniment services to women who have experienced domestic violence should be adequately funded.
- There is need to clarify the role of Community Development Projects (CDPs) and the role of support agencies in relation to violence against women. A code of practice needs to be developed to support staff in projects to make appropriate responses and referrals for women experiencing male violence.

- There is need for regular training of staff and voluntary management committees of Community Development Projects (CDP) on the issue of violence against women.
- Increased support should be provided to Community Development Projects (CDPs) funded by the Department of Social and Family Affairs and to other relevant community organisations so that they can understand the dynamics of male violence, make appropriate referrals, publicise the issue of male violence and undertake and become more effective in influencing policy.
- Increased funding should be provided to Women's Aid as the community development support agency on violence against women in the Department of Social and Family Affairs.
- Community based projects should be represented on the Regional Planning Committees (RPCs).

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Services should be monitored and evaluated and statistics on clients should be compiled by ethnicity, disability and income.

Traveller Women

Policy and Representation of Traveller Women

- The review of the National Steering Committee should be completed and the needs of Traveller women should be incorporated into this review. Traveller women should be involved in the design and implementation of strategies to deal with violence against women.
- Traveller women participating on the Regional Planning Committees (RPCs) should be resourced to participate and child care and transport costs should be paid.
- There is need to ensure that Traveller women continue to be represented on the National Steering Committee (NSC) on Violence Against Women.
- Organisations working with Traveller women should be resourced to work on the issue of violence against women and to participate in policy formulation.

Services

- The distinct needs of Traveller women need to be taken into account when developing models of good practice for service delivery.
- All service providers need to ensure that their services are culturally appropriate and respond to the needs of Traveller women. Services should be designed in consultation with relevant NGOs. An anti-racist code of practice should be implemented.
- There is need to ensure that refuges are resourced to accommodate large families and that accommodation is provided for older sons.
- Traveller women should be trained to work in refuges and childcare and barriers preventing Traveller women taking up such work should be addressed.
- There is need for the outreach service on domestic violence to liaise with Traveller women and, in consultation with Traveller women, to develop a response appropriate to the needs of Traveller women.
- There is need to evaluate services run by the State and voluntary agencies to identify whether or not Traveller women are discriminated against when they access these services.

- Traveller women experience Gardaí as being slow to respond to domestic violence call-outs and ineffective in taking measures to protect Traveller women. There was a feeling that protection was only available if women had taken out a barring order. Traveller women would like more support from the Gardaí and for the Gardaí not to issue ultimatums or put pressure on them to go to court if they do not wish to do so.
- Funding should be provided for support workers to work with Traveller women on the issue of violence against women.
- There is need to acknowledge that Traveller women experience State violence and that this needs to be addressed.

Education and Information

- There is need for more education in the Traveller community as to what constitutes abuse and there is need for more assertiveness training for women and girls.
- Leaflets advertising services should be user friendly, culturally appropriate and incorporate the use of graphics for Traveller women with literacy difficulties.

Disabled Women

- For disabled women, the concept of domestic violence should be broadened to include violence against disabled women in institutions and other forms of violence experienced by disabled women. The fact that many disabled women who are abused have a mental health difficulty also needs to be taken into account.
- Outreach and advocacy services need to specifically target disabled women.

Women from Minority Ethnic Groups

- Women asylum seekers/refugees are particularly vulnerable and encounter specific problems accessing services:
 - The fear of deportation for some women further silences them from disclosing male violence.
 - Asylum seekers for the most part do not have anywhere to go on leaving a refuge as they are not eligible for local authority housing or to go on the housing list.
 - Service providers for the most part do not have access to the services of interpreters and can find it difficult to communicate with asylum seekers/refugees.

In relation to asylum seekers/refugees and other minority ethnic groups there is need:

- To develop services in consultation with women from minority ethnic groups to support women who have suffered physical, mental and emotional trauma in situations of armed conflict.
- For specific funding to be provided to service providers to train staff on the special needs of asylum seekers/refugees.
- For information and training for women from minority ethnic groups on how to access services responding to women who have experienced violence. There is need for an information package informing asylum seekers of their legal situation and the services available, together with a recognition of the cultural differences.

- For service providers to have training on racism and interculturalism and services should be delivered in a non-judgemental manner.
- To develop the capacity of services so that they are capable of responding to the needs of refugees/asylum seekers such as being aware of the need for translation facilities.
- For information on services to be made available in a range of languages and multi-media formats.
- For women seeking services who are in the country illegally and are experiencing violence, to be able to access services in a way that does not jeopardise their right to remain in the country.
- Women asylum seekers leaving abusive relationships to be allocated separate status, where appropriate.
- To develop new pilot initiatives for women from minority ethnic groups.
- There is need to strengthen the representation of women from ethnic minority groups on the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women and on the Regional Planning Committees.

Women with a Mental Health Problem

- There is need to ensure that services make an appropriate response to women who have a mental health problem.
- There is need for a closer integration between psychiatric services and services responding to women who have suffered male violence.

Women who Use Drugs, Alcohol and Women Exiting Prison

- There is need to develop special services for women drug users who experience male violence and for women who are alcohol addicted. Current services, particularly domestic violence services, do not have the capacity to respond to the needs of these women.
- Resources should be made available to develop best practice models of support to stabilising women who are victims of male violence.
- Many women prisoners have been victims of male violence and they need safe accommodation when they leave prison where they are free from abuse and able to focus on their reintegration into the community.

Needs of Children

- The needs of the children of women who have experienced domestic violence should be recognised and addressed.
- Where appropriate, children should have their own separate representation in court.
- Children's voices should be heard and taken into account in deciding on access and custody cases.

Public Awareness, Education and Information

There is need:

- For the Government to fund a national campaign to raise public awareness of the existence and reality of violence against women and girls. The public campaign should promote a zero tolerance approach to violence, the right of women to be safe and for men to take responsibility for their actions. Violence should be seen as a crime and the realities of the lives of women, subjected to domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, prostitution and trafficking should be portrayed.

- For *Going Forward*, the national directory of services for women who have experienced violence or the threat of violence, published by the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Women and the *Directory of Services* published by the Eastern Regional Planning Committee, to be distributed more widely.
- For a public awareness campaign to challenge the misrepresentation that women are as likely as men to be the perpetrators in domestic violence situations. This misrepresentation is having a negative impact on women. A clear message needs to be promoted that violence of any kind is wrong.
- To resource the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) sector to deliver an extensive public awareness campaign on violence against women. This campaign should specifically target voluntary and community organisations.
- To supplement the national campaign with a campaign at regional level. RPCs could consider establishing a sub-committee to undertake such as campaign.
- For a local media campaign using local radio and local newspapers.
- For information on Helpline numbers to be displayed in surgeries of General Practitioners (GPs), health centres and public offices and service providers need to be resourced to advertise the services.
- To distribute information on the services available to women who experience male violence through the postal service to every woman.
- For information on Helpline numbers such as that provided by Women's Aid and the Dublin Rape Crisis Centres to be displayed in doctors' surgeries, health centres and public offices. National Helplines should receive greater publicity.
- To insert information in Church leaflets on services for women who have experienced violence and information on National Helplines. For public houses and night clubs to alert women to the danger of date rape. Liquor licensing hours should not have been extended.
- To monitor Internet chat lines and pornography on the net.
- For information campaigns at local community level to encourage women to report violence.

Young People

There is need:

- For specific education awareness programmes for boys and girls in which gender identity, gender relations and the continuum of violence in society are explored.
- To provide education programmes and awareness modules in all schools for young men and women, which would allow them to explore male violence in the context of the unequal power relations between women and men and the domination of some men over women. Awareness needs to be raised on what is sexually appropriate behaviour.
- To provide anger management/conflict resolution programmes to the senior classes in secondary schools.
- To mainstream *Exploring Masculinities* in the school curriculum.

- To ensure that each school has clear policies on bullying. This would give young people an appropriate language to deal with bullying and promote non-violent methods in resolving disputes.
- To resource the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) sector to provide inputs into school programmes on violence against women.
- For the health boards and the Department of Education and Science to liaise closely to streamline and mainstream education towards the prevention of violence within primary, junior and senior cycles.
- To integrate programmes on male violence into already existing education and training such as adult education courses, third level colleges and men's education programmes. They should focus on increasing awareness of male violence, changing attitudes that see violence against women as justified and promote equality of women in all spheres of life.
- To prioritise gender equality in education curricula at all levels and in State training schemes.
- To increase awareness among young people of the dangers of date rape.
- There is need for independent counsellors to visit schools to provide children with the opportunity to express their fears and difficulties.

Broader Policy Issues Relating to Domestic Violence

Development of Guidelines and Training

- All professionals and direct service providers should have clear, written guidelines on how to address the issue of domestic violence and rape and sexual assault. Such guidelines should be woman-centred and not blame the victim. Women's safety should be central to these guidelines. They should help personnel to recognise the symptoms of domestic violence, to ask the right questions and to have the necessary time to identify women who have been victimised. They should include guidelines in anti-racist practice, and guidelines for addressing the needs of disabled women. Guidelines should make it easier for victims to disclose and discuss their issues. How guidelines are implemented should be evaluated.
- Appropriate training should be provided for all professionals, including personnel in hospitals, community care personnel, social welfare personnel, General Practitioners, Teachers, School Liaison Officers, Judges and Gardaí. Training should assist personnel to detect and screen for abuse, respond to the issue of violence against women and to make appropriate referrals. An appropriate response from professionals should increase the level of disclosure and make it easier for women to tell their story. Women are often reluctant to use social services for fear of losing their children.
- The Irish judiciary should develop and implement guidelines to inform judicial decisions in relation to custody and access arrangements where there is a history of abuse.⁷
- Where domestic violence is a cause of marital breakdown the perpetrator should not have unsupervised access to children.
- A training budget should be provided for each hospital staff member to undertake training on the identification, disclosure and response to women who are victims of violence. Women's Aid should be resourced to extend its training to all Community Care Areas.

⁷ In the United Kingdom, following an expert report on domestic violence (Glaser and Surge 1999), the Lord Chancellor issued a list of guidelines to inform the judiciary.

- Teachers in second level schools should be trained, supported and resourced to use current education programmes in schools, namely the *Relationship and Sexuality Programmes* to address the issue of violence against women.
- There is need for mandatory reporting of violence in all organisations, schools and institutions.
- School Liaison Officers should be trained and resourced to run awareness raising courses on domestic violence for parents.
- Training should be provided to all staff on how to keep records and how to compile statistics on numbers accessing services. Internal monitoring and evaluation should be an essential aspect of all services.
- Interagency training should be provided to ensure that each agency has a policy on violence against women and adequate referral procedures.
- Resources should be provided to the NGO sector to provide training and awareness of violence against women.

The Courts and Legal System

- There is need to have women solicitors available who have specialised knowledge of the law relating to women and violence.
- The courts system as it is structured at present is not suitable for adjudicating on family disputes. The adversarial nature of the proceedings serves to exacerbate issues between spouses, rather than to alleviate them. There is need to establish regional family courts with waiting facilities which ensure the privacy and safety of women.
- Where there are special family courts, a special room should be available for the provision of an outreach service by a specialist agency to provide information and support to female victims of domestic violence.
- The Probation and Welfare Service should be reintroduced into family law courts. The service should monitor court decisions in relation to the perpetrator, and monitor the protection and safety of the woman and children following the court case.
- There is need to relax the *in camera* rule in family courts in order to collate accurate and detailed information on gender and on how domestic violence orders, maintenance orders and custody and access orders are processed through the courts. Important factors which determine court judgements should be identified.
- There is need for gender equality on juries.
- There is need to appoint more women judges and all judges should receive training on domestic violence.
- Sentences need to be increased for men who commit violence against women and who breach domestic violence orders. Sentences should be served.

Domestic Violence Legislation

- The *Domestic Violence Act, 1996* should be amended to include the powers of arrest which Gardáí have under the *Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act, 1997*. The *Garda Síochána Policy and Domestic Violence Intervention* should be amended accordingly.

- A Barring Order summons is posted to the defendant two weeks in advance of the court case. This can be a very dangerous time for the applicant, whether or not the applicant is residing at the same address as the defendant. This needs to be addressed.
- Legislation covering domestic violence orders should be extended to cover former co-habitees where co-habitees have ceased cohabiting for more than a period of six months, unrelated adults in the household and to cover violence in woman to woman relationships i.e. lesbian and bisexual couples.
- Barring orders should be extended to cover areas beyond the domestic residence.
- As a first step towards accepting the unacceptability of violence, the Government should outlaw the slapping of children. Positive parenting skills training should be developed, promoted and offered to all parents.
- There should be mandatory sentences for breaching a barring order.

Legal Aid

- Legal advice and legal aid should be immediately available to all women experiencing male violence. Civil legal aid should be extended to all solicitors.

The Role of the Gardaí

- There is concern about the inconsistency in the Garda response to domestic violence call-outs. Consideration should be given to instituting disciplinary procedures against Gardaí who consistently fail to implement Garda Policy on Domestic Violence.
- There is need for an ombudsperson to deal with complaints against the Gardaí.
- Gardaí are not always available to respond to domestic violence situations in rural areas.
- The Garda guidelines on domestic violence should be published.
- There is need for ongoing in-service training on domestic violence and on the implementation of the Garda policy. Groups providing direct support on the ground should continue to be resourced to provide this training.
- There is need to ensure that all incidents of domestic violence are fully collated by the Gardaí and to publish statistics on domestic violence call-outs by Garda District.
- There is need for a Unit in every Garda district with specific responsibility for domestic violence. Female Gardaí should be on the team. This would help to increase the reporting of violence in the home. Gardaí should talk to the woman on her own and take account of the views of the woman.
- In large urban areas there is need for a special “helpline” in the Garda station to facilitate an immediate response to domestic violence calls.
- There is need for more encouragement and practical support for victims of domestic violence to call the Gardaí and report incidents.
- There is need to resource local groups to liaise with the Gardaí in relation to domestic violence.
- There is need to provide home protection for victims, for example, providing victims with alarms linked to Gardaí stations and with mobile phones.

- There is need for increased legislation to allow Gardaí to arrest the alleged offender without the woman having to take the initiative.
- Where the offender is a danger to the woman, he should not be released before being brought to court.
- There is need for a more proactive approach on the part of the Gardaí in implementing breaches of domestic violence orders.
- Gardaí should distribute leaflets on domestic violence, together with leaflets on local services when they are called out to a house. They should listen to women and ask women what they want. It is important that there is a woman Garda available to talk to women.
- One submission recommended that there was need to change the pro arrest Garda policy to one of restorative justice. Under restorative justice, a meeting is facilitated between the victim and the offender. The offender is required to acknowledge his responsibility and to state how he would try to ensure that he would not reoffend. A safety plan for the victim would be formulated.⁸
- There is need for more Gardaí on the streets to combat violence in public places.
- There is need for more adequate policing and surveillance cameras on the streets so that women feel safe.
- Gardaí should distribute leaflets with their name and contact number to every woman they deal with.
- An independent ombudsman for the Gardaí should be established.

Perpetrators

- Funding should be allocated to the National Domestic Violence Intervention Programme.
- There is need to strengthen the law to remove perpetrators from family homes.
- There is need to inform women victims when perpetrators are being released from custody.
- Women should have an input into perpetrators programmes.
- The law needs to be enforced in relation to bail orders and the behaviour of the perpetrator should be monitored.
- Programmes for perpetrators should be mandatory for all perpetrators. Perpetrators programmes should not be a substitute for a prison sentence.

Accommodation

- There is need to provide a range of accommodation options for women who have experienced violence.
- There should be a refuge in each county/large population centre. Strict security measures should be in place to ensure adequate protection of staff and clients. There is need for larger units in refuges to accommodate large families.

⁸ Vaughan, Barry, "Selecting Response to Domestic Violence", *Irish Criminal Law Journal*. 11.2, 2001:23-27.

- Where there are no refuges, funding should be provided for outreach services and/or safe houses should be provided.
- Crisis accommodation in the form of “safe house” should be available within a reasonable distance of any home. This is particularly important for women living in rural areas. Local authorities should make safe houses available.
- Women forced to leave their homes because of violence and who have no home should have access to long-term secure local authority accommodation.
- Women who have a joint local authority tenancy and who wish to leave or have left, should be given alternative appropriate local authority accommodation in their own name.
- Local authorities should reserve a quota of houses for women and children leaving home because of domestic violence. Some of these houses should be used as second stage housing and adequate support provided. This support should be funded under Section 10 of the 1988 Housing Act.
- In the absence of refuges or where refuges are full, women are offered Bed and Breakfast accommodation. Such accommodation is often not family friendly. Women and children should not be asked to leave during the day. Bed and Breakfast accommodation needs to be monitored.
- Some local authorities do not pay the cost of Bed and Breakfast for emergency accommodation for women fleeing domestic violence, despite the requirements of the Homeless Strategy. In such circumstances, the local group has to cover the cost.

The Labour Market

- Many women who have experienced violence wish to work and to gain economic independence.
- There is need to make childcare facilities available to women.
- There is need to introduce tax relief on childcare expenses for working women.
- There is need to develop a targeted integrated support package to help women to access education, training and work.

Broader Policy Issues Relating to Rape and Sexual Assault

Standardised Approach

- There is need for a standardised approach to be adopted by front-line personnel who come in contact with victims of rape and sexual assault. This should involve clear guidelines on referral and core services available to victims. Victims have a right to: be seen by a woman doctor; have access to the Morning After pill free of charge; to Sexual Transmitted Disease (STD) treatment and referral to other appropriate services. They should not be seen by a non-resident doctor who may have left the country when their court case is called.

Information Pack

- There is need for an information pack for victims of rape. This should address the myths about rape/sexual assault; the feelings and emotions associated with being a victim of sexual crimes; the stages involved in making a formal report and giving a statement; the nature and purpose of Forensic Medical Examination (FME); the possibility of pregnancy and of contacting Sexual Transmitted Disease (STD) and the services available; details of the legal and court system.

Court Facilities and Legal Procedure

- A key issue for victims of rape and sexual assault is the fact that in criminal justice proceedings the victim is the complainant and witness to the case, which is prosecuted by the State. As such, victims have little control over the processing of the case and in most cases are not informed as to how the case is proceeding. To rectify this, the State's Solicitor's Office should allocate a person to each case to brief the victim during all stages of the case. In particular the victim should be informed if plea bargaining is being introduced and of the outcome of such bargaining.
- Rape victims should have legal representation when attending the trial of their attacker.
- There can be long delays in the processing of rape cases. There is need to expedite and fast-track rape cases to ensure cases are concluded within a year.
- All stages of the legal process should be reviewed with a view to promoting the greatest possible safeguarding of victim anonymity. The significance of anonymity should be emphasised in the training of all professionals who interact with rape victims.
- Separate waiting facilities should be provided in courts and measures should be taken to ensure that the victim is not obliged to be in proximity with the defendant or his supporters when entering or leaving the court.
- There is an absence of a definition of "consent" and a lack of clarification regarding the onus of proof in relation to consent.
- There is need to appoint more women judges and all judges should receive training on rape and sexual assault.
- There is need for gender equality on juries.
- There is need for increased and consistent penalties for crimes against women as leniency of sentences handed down by the courts make women think that violence is not taken seriously.
- Admission of guilt should not result in reduced sentences in rape cases.
- Victims of male violence should be facilitated to give evidence by video if they choose so that they do not have to be further victimised by facing their abuser in court.
- There is need to remove the right to cross examine the victim on previous sexual history.

Media Reporting

- There is need to establish a protocol for media reporting of cases involving rape and sexual assault.

Medical Examination

- There is need to provide a Sexual Assault Unit in all health board regions and for:
 - Additional resources to be allocated to the Unit to implement the *Sex Offenders Act*.
 - The Unit to promote its work and role in relation to sexual offences.
 - The Unit to collect and compile data on offenders from relevant statutory and NGO organisations such as the Probation and Welfare Service, prison service and Rape Crisis Centres. It should also track offenders.
 - Provision of ongoing training for Gardaí in all regions.
- There is need to examine the reasons why medical personnel are reluctant to get involved in Forensic Medical Examination (FME). There is also a need to develop a form to be used for FME, which

would help to standardise practice. Medical personnel undertaking FME need training in report writing. Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATU) are only located in Dublin City and Cork City. In the absence of such units and an adequate system for undertaking FME, Gardaí, in many instances, have to transport victims to the SATUs in Dublin City and Cork City.

- A medical service on a 24 hour basis should be put in place for all victims of sexual abuse.
- There is need for female medical personnel to examine victims of physical or sexual crimes.

Special Units in Garda Stations

- There is need to improve systems and structures to address the real needs of victims. Although individual Gardaí respond positively to victims of rape and sexual assault, the Gardaí should develop Special Units staffed by trained Gardaí to interview victims of sexual violence.

Training

- There is need to implement a comprehensive training programme for front-line staff who come in contact with victims of rape and sexual assault.
- All personnel involved in rape trials should receive rape awareness training.
- The judiciary needs training on the nature of violence and sexual crimes against women.
- Awareness of domestic violence should be part of the teacher-training syllabus.

Sex Offenders

- There is need for an interagency working group in each region to examine the treatment of sex offenders.
- The sentencing of sex offenders should be monitored.
- The disclosure of sex offenders' previous-related convictions at trial should be permitted.
- There is need to address key issues regarding the effectiveness of the register to be introduced under the Sex Offenders Bill. These include:
 - The need to create adequate structures for police co-operation across jurisdictions.
 - The need to ensure that sex offenders convicted elsewhere are on the register.
 - The need for guidelines on gathering information and of ensuring that the information is accurate.
 - The need to evaluate how effective the register is in reducing rates of sexual crime.
 - The need to assess the resource implications for the Probation and Welfare Service if they are to monitor and supervise offenders.
 - That victim impact statements are taken into account when deciding on whether or not a prisoner should be released from prison and the victim informed of the release date.
 - The need for guidelines for sentencing of sex offenders to be implemented and monitored.

Report on Attrition

- There is need to implement the recommendations of the Attrition in Sexual Assault Offences Cases in Ireland: A Qualitative Study.⁹

Prostitution

- Prostitution needs to be recognised as a form of violence against women. Legislation should be introduced which decriminalises prostitution for women.
- No laws should be permitted to decriminalise or legalise prostitution in any form.
- There is need to eliminate unjust structures such as poverty and inequality, which keep women in prostitution.
- Special provision needs to be made to assist women to make the transition out of prostitution.
- Women's experience in prostitution should not be referred to when a woman is bringing a charge of rape.

Women and Children who are Trafficked

- Short-term residence permits should be provided to victims of trafficking.
- There should be co-operation between the law enforcement officers across Europe and internationally to ensure that women and children are not trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation and to ensure that traffickers are prosecuted.
- There is need to implement the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organised Crime.

National Steering Committee and Regional Planning Committees

- There is need for cross party commitment to the continued resourcing of the National Steering Committee (NSC) and the Regional Planning Committees (RPCs).
- The NSC and RPCs should be reviewed and their effectiveness assessed. The review should take account of the recommendations identified in the National Task Force on Violence against Women. The review should examine the composition and role of members of the RPCs. Consideration should be given to ensuring that the judiciary and Gardaí are represented on all RPCs.
- The National Steering Committee together with the eight Regional Planning Committees (RPCs) should develop a Three-Year Plan. The Plan should identify the crisis and emergency accommodation and other front-line services which are needed and ensure that adequate resources are allocated for the provision of accommodation and services.
- RPCs should have an independent chairperson.
- RPCs should have objectives, set targets and develop indicators to assess whether or not the targets are being met.

⁹ Leane, Maire, et al, Attrition in Sexual Assault Offences Cases in Ireland: A Qualitative Study, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Dublin 2001.

- RPCs should ensure that criteria for allocating funding are clear, and ensure that there is standardisation in the allocation of funding to all front-line services.
- The community and voluntary sector should be adequately represented on RPCs.
- RPCs should consider rotating their meetings to make them more accessible to women living in different parts of the region.
- The National Steering Committee should set out clear guidelines in regard to the establishment of local interagency fora on violence against women:
 - The safety of women should be primary.
 - Community participation should be maximised.
 - Personnel from agencies should comprise both on the ground personnel who work directly with women who experience abuse and personnel who have the power to influence change within their own agencies.
 - As many agencies as possible working with the issue of violence against women including those working with marginalised women, should be represented.
 - Regular evaluation and monitoring should take place.
- There is need for a closer liaison between the National Steering Committee and the Regional Planning Committees and regular reports should be produced by the NSC and the RPCs.
- The NSC and the RPCs should adopt a broad definition of violence against women, which would include not only domestic violence and rape and sexual assault, but also prostitution, pornography and the issue of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Organisations working with women involved in prostitution should be represented on the NSC.
- There is need for training for all members of the RPCs in the dynamics of violence and best practice models of service provision.
- There is need for resources to be provided to the NGO sector to allow NGOs to participate effectively at RPC meetings.
- The funding model in the South Eastern Health Board Region should be applied in all other regions.
- RPCs should ensure that there are clear terms of reference available to members, that minutes of meetings are sent out in advance of meetings, that attendance at meetings is recorded and there is an outline of how funding is allocated.
- The Department of Health and Children should provide funding for front-line services. There is need to develop a budget line in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform for perpetrators' programmes and for men's groups.
- There is need to resource the NGO Coalition on Violence Against Women.
- There is need to resource groups working to address poverty and social exclusion to enable them to develop appropriate responses to male violence.
- There is need to provide funding for services identified by the NSC as being in need of funding.
- Organisations representing women from minority ethnic groups and disabled women should be represented on the NSC and RPCs.

- There is also need to strengthen cross border co-operation between projects operating in border areas.

Role of Statutory Agencies

- The role of the Combat Poverty Agency, the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission in addressing issues relating to violence against women should be defined and these agencies should be resourced to carry out their remit in this regard.

Government Policy

- All relevant Government departments and agencies, namely the Departments of Health and Children, Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Education and Science, Social and Family Affairs, Environment and Local Government and Health Boards should state clearly their policy on violence against women. This would help to clarify the role of representatives of these agencies on the NSC and RPCs. It would also provide a good basis for inter agency training and for clarifying referral procedures between agencies.
- There is need to establish a separate Government Department and Minister dedicated to domestic violence.

Other Forms of Violence

Stalking

- There is need for an organisation in Ireland to: raise social awareness on the nature of stalking; support and counsel victims; establish regional support groups; liaise with personnel from organisations which have a brief in regard to stalkers or who come in contact with victims of stalkers; and to promote research on stalking.
- There is need for documentary programmes on television to increase public awareness of the dangers of stalking and how victims can increase their personal safety.
- There should be peer-led groups of women who have survived stalking. Groups should be resourced to liaise with other countries to learn best practice models for addressing stalking. Models of best practice in Los Angeles and Washington in the United States should be studied.

Racism

- Racism, including systematic prejudice, should be recognised as a form of violence. This is particularly the case for women from minority ethnic groups.
- Where Traveller families live on the roadside, they are often intimidated by members of the settled community. They also experience violence during evictions, which are frightening and aggressive. This needs to be recognised.
- Many women from minority ethnic groups have experienced State violence and violence in armed conflict. This needs to be recognised.

Female Genital Mutilation

- Legislation should be in place to protect girls and young women at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Homophobia

- Homophobia and the high level of public violence including physical, verbal, emotional harassment and bullying against lesbian and bisexual women needs to be recognised and addressed. Lesbian and bisexual women in marriages, those living in rural areas and lesbian and bisexual women of colour are particularly vulnerable to homophobic harassment and violence.
- PULSE should record crimes of homophobia.
- The numbers of Garda Liaison Officers needs to be increased to provide a 24-hour service nationwide.
- Garda Liaison Officers should also be involved in training colleagues in consultation with lesbian and bisexual groups.
- Judges should be trained to deal with crimes of homophobia.
- Counsellors trained to deal with victims of homophobic crime should be provided.
- There is need to implement a safe schools programme for lesbian and bisexual students using the Massachusetts Model in A Queer Quandary (2000).
- There is need for a national anti-homophobia campaign.
- All statutory and voluntary agencies should be trained in anti-homophobic practices. Agencies should be monitored and penalties should be imposed if they are racist in their attitudes and practice.

Abortion

- Abortion is another form of violence against women and is the ultimate violence against the unborn child. Abortion should not be legalised in Ireland.
- Legislation to allow abortion in any circumstances must not be enacted in Ireland.

Maternity Practices

- The practice of forced labour, meaning acceleration of labour by means of physically invasive procedures, without the woman's full consent is a violation of women's rights and constitutes violence against women. Women's right to say no to routine medical procedures must be accepted. Securing women's fully informed and freely given consent to all medical interventions in labour must become a requirement in all maternity hospitals. The medical concept of tacit consent should be disregarded as it has led to abuses in maternity care.

Violence against Older Women

- There is need to highlight violence by family members caring for older women. This is a crime which is hidden.
- There is need to publicise the unacceptability of harassment of older people by young people.
- Older people are also subject to more muggings and burglaries.
- There is need to allocate personal alarms to people over 65 years.
- Discrimination against older women and, in particular, grandparents must be removed from school textbooks.

Research and Monitoring

There is need for research on:

- On the prevalence of rape and sexual harassment.
- On the experience of survivors of rape and sexual assault within the judicial system.
- On the prevalence and nature of violence experienced by particular sub-groups of women, for example, disabled women, Traveller women, women from minority ethnic groups and on links between domestic violence and women's mental health.
- On the health impacts of violence on women and their families.
- On the extent and nature of the use of the corroboration warning and the introduction of past sexual history. The complainant, as it stands, cannot be cross-examined on past sexual history unless there is an application to the trial judge and his sanction obtained. There is little known about the extent and circumstances under which judges in practice can grant permission for the woman's past sexual history to be introduced. The Report of the Task Force on Violence against Women noted that complainants report that questioning about their previous sexual history is invariably hostile and they describe counsels' cross-examination as offensive, aggressive and degrading. It is the experience of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) that while such evidence is only permissible at the discretion of the judge, that permission is not generally withheld. It is necessary that strict adherence to the law be enforced.
- On the high attrition rate in rape and sexual assault cases and the effectiveness of the Sexual Assault Units in hospitals in impacting on attrition rates. This involves publishing statistics on the number of cases reported, number of cases which reach court and outcome of court cases.
- While rape is a horrendous crime in itself, no matter under what circumstances it takes place, there should be research on the extent to which alcohol plays a part.

Experience of Women

There is need for research on:

- The experiences of women of the health services, including Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments of Hospitals.
- The number of women trapped in the cycle of violence for reasons of economic disempowerment.
- On the reasons why many women withdraw their applications for domestic violence orders.
- The effect which pornography and pornographic images in every sector of the media, and in public advertising displays, play a part in the perpetration of violence of any description against women.

Children and Young People

There is need for research:

- Into the causes of violence against women and the impact of such violence on women and children.
- On the effects of domestic violence on children.
- On reasons why young people abuse their mothers and possible solutions.
- On bullying and abusive behaviour among students at school.
- On the circumstances and needs of teenage girls involved in domestic violence relationships.

- On the effects of alcohol on young peoples' behaviour, which can end in death for themselves and for others.

Custody and Access

- There is need for research on the prevalence of child abuse in custody and access cases with a view to drawing up judicial guidelines to reduce the recurrence of child abuse where custody and access is granted.
- There is need to research the most appropriate access venue. Access should not be granted in the house or caravan in which the woman and children live.
- Research should be carried out into how access arrangements for fathers who have been abusive could be best facilitated.

Perpetrators

There is need for research:

- On the low conviction rate of perpetrators of domestic violence and breaches of domestic violence orders.
- On treatment programmes for perpetrators of rape and sexual abuse.

Best Practice

- There is need to review global best practice on how the legal system could enhance protection for women victims of domestic violence.

Violent Behaviour

- There is need for research on alcohol abuse and its links to violence.
- There is need for research on the full range of abusive, intimidatory and violent behaviours exhibited by men towards women. These should be taken into account by policy makers.

Prostitution and Trafficking

- There is need for research on the prevalence of prostitution and the routes into prostitution for women and children in order to develop intervention programmes and exit routes.
- The scale of the trafficking of women and children for the purpose of sexual exploitation should be researched and the trafficking of women and children should be eliminated.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- There is need for research on violence against lesbian and bisexual women both in the public sphere and within lesbian and bisexual relationships.

Garda Policy

- An independent body should monitor the implementation of Garda policy on domestic violence, both at a regional and national level. The monitoring should be commissioned by the National Steering Committee (NSC) and the Regional Planning Committees (RPCs). The study should examine:
 - The extent to which the Gardaí use their powers of arrest.
 - Consistency of Garda response.

- Effectiveness of Garda policy in protecting victims.
- Adequacy of resources allocated to the Gardaí.
- The effect of reduced opening times of Garda stations on the ability of the Gardaí to respond effectively.
- Garda response to Traveller women.
- Liaison between Gardaí and local community organisations providing services to women.

Women and Sports

- The involvement of Ireland's soccer team in the World Cup provides an opportunity to research whether or not there is a relationship between match results and reported incidents of domestic violence.

Statistical Data

- There is need to provide gender disaggregated data on male violence.
- Services should be monitored and evaluated and statistics on clients should be compiled by ethnicity, disability and income.
- A national standard for documenting appropriate information/data across all statutory services/agencies on domestic violence should be developed and implemented.
- There is need for a gender breakdown of all criminal and civil justice statistics relating to violence against women. Statistics should be disaggregated by county and by gender of victim/perpetrator.
- The NGO sector should record and compile statistics on service users and these should be published.
- There is need to disaggregate data by ethnicity and gender.
- There is need to compile and publish statistics on the attrition rate in cases of rape and sexual assault. This would involve publishing statistics on the number of cases reported, number of cases which reach court and outcome of court cases.
- There is need for a gender breakdown of all statistics issue by the criminal and civil judicial systems in relation to cases of domestic violence, custody and access and information on all violent crimes should be published on an annual basis.
- Cases of domestic violence homicide should be tracked through the civil and criminal justice system to ascertain whether or not the woman applied for a domestic violence order, had made previous complaints to the Gardaí, and if so, whether or not the Gardaí responded to the call.
- The case histories of women/children who have been killed in the context of domestic violence incidences should be tracked and monitored in order to assess how the current system could be improved.
- Statistics on domestic violence orders should be desegregated on a gender basis.
- Statistics on whether violence against women is cited in separation and divorce cases should be compiled.
- Statistics by Garda District should be available to local groups to use for discussions on domestic violence in the community and in secondary schools.

- Adequate recording systems should be put in place by service providers so that statistics can be compiled on numbers of women accessing services.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

Services

- Decrease/increase in the number of women accessing services for women experiencing male violence.
- Numbers of women refused accommodation in refuges.
- Women refused accommodation in refuges by age, class and ethnic background.
- Increase or decrease in the number of hours the members of the medical profession have engaged in training relating to male violence.
- Level of satisfaction of women who access refuges and other direct services for women who experience male violence.
- Availability of counselling and programmes for perpetrators.
- Whether women experiencing violence in rural areas have access to support services.

Custody and Access

- Percentage of child custody cases awarded to males and females.

Regional Planning Committees

- Whether or not the Regional Planning Committees (RPCs) are accountable and transparent.
- Whether or not there is continued funding for RPCs.

Role of Gardaí

- Whether or not Garda call-outs to domestic violence response are monitored.
- Time taken for Gardaí to respond to domestic violence call-outs.

Employment

- Numbers of women leaving violent relationships and returning to work.

Young People

- Number of schools providing assertiveness courses.

Perpetrators

- Increase in the number of male perpetrators attending perpetrators programmes.

Female Genital Mutilation

- Legislation in place which bans Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Availability of Statistics

- Whether or not statistics are available at a local level.
- Whether data is compiled by hospitals on confirmed and suspected cases of domestic violence.

Women and Armed Conflict

Ethnic Minorities

- The Government should define and implement an integration policy in relation to refugees and asylum seekers.
- There is need to develop gender guidelines, which refer to every aspect of the asylum application process, as well as to the reception and integration of asylum seekers in Ireland. Targets should be set for the implementation of guidelines and implementation should be independently monitored.
- Gender specific violence should not be evaluated differently from other forms of violence that are held to amount to persecution.
- A woman who is at risk of serious harm because of transgression of social mores, such as disobeying laws of adultery, dress and child bearing should be recognised as a refugee.
- Where a woman cannot avail of State protection, for example, because of the risk of abuse of a male relative or where it is not feasible for woman to move on their own to another part of the country, she should be granted refugee status.
- The Government should provide free, culturally appropriate and gender sensitive counselling and other services to women asylum seekers, especially for women who have been subjected to gender-based torture or who are survivors of armed conflict.
- Legislation should be put in place to protect women and girls at risk of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- Asylum seekers should not be punished for their illegal entry or presence in the Irish State.
- The Government should recognise the impact on children of being sent back to danger zones when parents are denied residence in Ireland. This is against the United Nations Convention regarding a child's right to safety.
- The rights of children of asylum seekers in Ireland needs to be clarified.
- Parents of children who are Irish citizens should have a right not to be deported.
- Asylum seekers need access to comprehensive information on services available to them, including domestic violence services and services relating to rape and sexual assault.
- There is need for increased co-ordination of services for asylum seeking women.
- Asylum seekers should have the right to third level education.

Application Procedures

- There should be gender guidelines on the procedures for making applications for refugee status.
- Women asylum seekers should have the option of having their claims assessed on their own merits and independently of male family members.
- There is need to give adequate time to asylum seekers to complete their application for refugee status.
- Female interviewers and female interpreters should conduct interviews with female asylum seekers. Women should be given the option of having the same interpreter for the duration of the asylum determinations.
- Interviewers should be trained in gender sensitive issues and be able to create an atmosphere for disclosure of sexual violence.
- Full and comprehensive gender sensitive information services should be given to refugees on arrival.
- HIV positive status should not impact negatively on the outcome of their application for refugee status.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should be employed by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner.

Training for Service Providers and Professionals

- There is need to provide comprehensive intercultural training for all service providers.
- There is need to incorporate an intercultural dimension in the training of professionals such as teachers, nurses and social workers.
- The Gardaí should undertake anti racist training and adopt an anti-racist code of practice.

Education and Work for Ethnic Minority Women

- There is need to provide gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate English language courses for woman asylum seekers and refugees. These programmes should have appropriate childcare supports.
- The right of girl refugees to education and the right of women refugees to work/training should be legislated for.
- Asylum seekers should have access to employment, particularly after six months. The range of work visas and permit schemes should be extended to make the system more flexible.
- Refugee and asylum seekers should be given a work permit for six months while their claims are being processed. If successful, this permit could be extended.
- Survivors of armed conflict should be given the right to work.
- Each Government Department should employ women from minority ethnic groups.
- There is need to employ extra staff, preferably from an ethnic minority group at all entry points and in all services for ethnic minorities.

Accommodation and Provision

- Residence in communal reception centres should not exceed six months. Long-term stay can lead to loss of personal initiative. Guidelines should be established for reception centres and asylum seekers should be consulted in relation to the running of the centres.

- Reception Centres should not be located in isolated areas where asylum seekers cannot access mainstream community activities and which hinders integration.
- Asylum seekers in direct provision who are more than six months waiting for their application to be processed should be given equal rights to accommodation and social welfare as other Irish citizens.
- The particular needs of pregnant women should be taken into account in terms of diet and the need for nourishment.
- Direct provision should be discontinued.

Capacity Building, Information and Training

- There is need to provide core funding for organisations representing ethnic minority women. These organisations should provide childcare and language training.
- There is need for resources to promote contact between existing women's groups and networks and ethnic minority women's groups.
- There is need to promote community based, anti-racism and intercultural programmes.
- A national education campaign is needed to inform the public of the reality and circumstances of the lives of refugees.
- There is need to counter the view that there is a conflict between responding to the needs of foreign nationals and responding to the needs of Irish people who are disadvantaged.
- Refugees and asylum seekers and women from minority ethnic communities have little knowledge of their rights in Ireland. Information campaigns on the rights of minority ethnic groups need to be undertaken.
- History and civic classes in schools should include a module on the factors which contribute to armed conflict and the mass movement of people.
- All schools should have education programmes on the diverse cultural backgrounds of minority ethnic groups coming to Ireland.
- There is need for anti-racism and equality training for all service providers.
- There is need for more community participation and consultation regarding the integration of asylum seekers at local and regional levels.
- There is need for fora where minority ethnic groups can inform Irish people of the culture, politics and history of their countries of origin.

Conflict Resolution and Humanitarian Aid

- There is need to provide humanitarian relief for women victims of war, including witness protection in war crime tribunals.
- Every effort should be made so that mothers are not obliged to leave their home and family for the purpose of taking part in army activities, and armed conflict.
- The Government needs to acknowledge that women's experiences of armed conflict are very different to those of men. Women have a right to be heard by people who understand their position, especially in relation to crimes of violence, rape and forced pregnancy. They should also have access to counselling and support.

- Women's views should be taken into account in situations of armed conflict and women should be included in peace negotiating teams.
- Women's skills need to be recognised and used in conflict resolution.
- Specific examination of gender aspects of the impact of humanitarian activities should be taken into account in humanitarian aid.
- Informed democratic choice should be given to the electorate with regard to Irish participation in aggressive conflict, as opposed to peacekeeping, and with regard to allowing countries at war to use our airspace and facilities.
- Where women have experienced rape during war situations the perpetrators of these crimes should be pursued and brought to justice so that a clear message goes out that rape will not be tolerated.

Education and Public Awareness

- There is need to resource education programmes that promote justice, and peace through mutual understanding and respect for a diversity of cultures, beliefs and traditions.
- There is need to provide education and training for women in political skills, communication skills, conflict resolution skills and to assist women to assert their human rights.
- There is need to raise public awareness of how women are treated in war situations.
- There is need for a national debate on Ireland's neutrality. Asylum seekers and refugees should be resourced to participate in the debate.
- Organisations representing the interests of refugees and asylum seekers and which have expertise in dealing with situations of armed conflict should be funded so that they can inform the debate.
- There is need to increase public awareness of the types of violence that women coming to Ireland have experienced.

Gender Balance

- There is need for gender balance on public bodies, both nationally and internationally. This can lead to stability and peace and diminution of armed conflict.
- There is need for a gender balance on United Nations Delegations and Fact-finding Missions. There is also need to get the perspectives of people resident in the countries being visited.
- There is need for more women in senior positions in governments and armies to influence conflict resolution.
- Gender representation in armed forces delivering humanitarian aid should be considered.

The Role of the Irish Government

- The Irish Government should promote the establishment of a European Civilian Peace Corps consisting of trained and skilled, unarmed professionals, male and female to engage in conflict prevention and resolution.
- The Irish Government should provide humanitarian relief for women victims of war. In particular, it should work to strengthen support for women in areas where there is armed conflict including the provision of witness protection in war crime tribunals.
- The importance of liaising with women's Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in countries in which Irish forces are involved in humanitarian projects should be recognised.

- The Government should continue to contribute to humanitarian aid to support women in war situations who are vulnerable and often subjected to rape.
- There is need for training for Irish policy makers and others involved in conflict issues.
- The Irish Government should withdraw its offer of Irish airports and Irish space for use by foreign military aircraft to facilitate the war in Afghanistan.
- There is need for consultation regarding the use of Irish airports. A democratic decision is necessary on whether to support situations of armed conflict. Future decisions which have implications for Irish neutrality should be taken only following consultation with the electorate.
- The Government should make a commitment to promote self-determination in colonised countries.
- The Irish Government should promote policies and sanctions against countries who use rape as a tool of war.
- The Irish Government through its involvement in the European Union (EU) and the United Nations (UN) should encourage women's participation.
- The Irish Government should ensure that Irish aid reaches community groups.
- Ireland should ensure — both for herself and internationally — that no humanitarian aid is made conditional on population control policies.

Armed Conflict

- Women's ethical voice in the main religious traditions in Ireland has been virtually silenced and their influence in the popular culture of the nation is weak. In the last twenty years women scholars throughout the world have critiqued the dominant assumptions governing the major ethical traditions. They have critiqued the priority of spirit over nature that implicitly denigrated women; the priority given to abstractions over concrete experience; the priority given to rights versus responsibility, and the priority given to developing universally applicable norms as instruments of imperialism. Feminist scholars argue that we should honour our various forms of knowing, including embodied intuition; develop the ethics of responsibility; and rather than always trying to find ultimate solutions, that we should think locally and act globally. To enable and empower them to be more effective in a democratic society, women should have access to critical feminist ethical thinking.
- Programmes exploring alternative ethical perspectives from a woman's viewpoint, at both personal and global levels, should be supported.
- Cross-border and cross-cultural spirituality sharing should be supported and encouraged.

The Arms Trade

- There is need for an open debate on the links between Irish industry and the arms trade. The role of computer firms needs to be specifically addressed.
- All manufacture and exports of military equipment from Ireland should be banned. There should be a requirement on new industry in Ireland that no arms shipments will be made from Ireland.
- The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment should withdraw the export trade licences for companies making parts of weapons and developing software for armed conflict. If this cannot be done immediately the final destination of all weapon parts and software should be audited. Death and destruction should not be contributing to our economy.

- Names of companies making components for weapons in Ireland should be publicised.
- The Irish Government should use its influence to ensure that the European Union's (EU's) code of conduct on arms sales is strengthened. There is need, for example, for: more transparency in arms sales; binding legislation to commit members to restrict arms sales; and a tightening up of "end-use" monitoring to ensure where arms are destined for and for what purpose.
- The Irish Government should use its influence at the United Nations (UN) to strengthen policy on reducing arms spending and promote demilitarisation.
- All staff in armed forces should be trained in how to deal with the trauma of victims of war.
- The Government should take leadership at an international level against the arms trade.
- The Irish Government should promote the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons.

Northern Ireland

- It is important to recognise the role played by women and particularly poor women in the conflict in Northern Ireland. A minority of women were active participants while the majority of women played a vital role in supporting families and the wider community. The role of the Women's Coalition needs to be recognised.
- There is need to build on existing research and studies that have been carried out in Northern Ireland regarding the gender dimension of the armed conflict and to build on the potential for peace through innovative initiatives of women.
- There is need for a commitment by the Government to involve women in the process of national reconciliation.
- There is need to fund women's groups who are responding to the trauma of women and their families who have been imprisoned as a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland.
- Support should be provided to women who have lost their husbands/partners in armed conflict or in rioting.
- There is need to support cross border initiatives that promote peace and co-operation.
- There is need to fund community based cross border initiatives.
- The Irish Government should support positive interactions between women's groups, North and South.
- There is need to provide counselling for women who have been traumatised by the conflict in Northern Ireland and in border counties. Outreach services should be provided to allow as many women as possible, particularly those from the poorest areas, to access counselling support.
- There is need to provide training for professionals, such as General Practitioners (GPs) so that they can understand the trauma which many women have experienced.

Women Republican Prisoners

- A major issue for Republican ex-prisoners is the difficulty their criminal record poses in accessing housing, employment, travel insurance and adopting children. Like other prisoners, women

Republican prisoners need support and assistance in accessing education and employment opportunities on exiting prison.

- Women who have served a political sentence should not be discriminated in the workforce.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- There is need to ensure that sexual orientation is included in the grounds for granting residency to persons fleeing persecution.
- Staff working in the Office of the Refugee Applications Commission need training in order to be sensitive to the differences in culture and sexual orientation.
- Human rights training should include sexual orientation awareness training for all UN peace-keeping personnel and personnel engaged in EU peace-keeping operations.

Research and Monitoring

- There is need to fund research on issues of concern to women in cross border counties.
- There is need for research on the effects of the Northern Ireland conflict on women and on family units.
- Research should be carried out to identify the obstacles experienced by women from minority ethnic groups in accessing employment.
- Direct provision should be monitored.
- There is need for research on the extent to which Ireland is involved in the manufacture/provision of weapons of war.
- There is need to ensure that humanitarian aid is not made conditional on population control policies.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

- Numbers of women asylum seekers requesting asylum in Ireland.
- The numbers of women asylum seekers granted refugee status.
- Access of asylum seekers to adequate accommodation, health care, educational opportunities, income and employment.
- Amount spent on military budgets, arms production and production of implements of torture at an international level.
- Numbers of women and children forced to carry arms.
- The level of provision of supports (financial, developmental, educational) for women who are affected by armed conflict.
- Number of women affected by armed conflict who participate in the decision-making structure and forums in Northern Ireland.
- Whether or not there are equal representation of women to men in Government representations to the United Nations (UN) and European bodies in relation to addressing issues of armed conflict.

- Whether or not there is equal representation of women at national Government level when addressing issues of conflict resolution, including in the North-South Ministerial Council.
- Increase or decrease in Government commitment to Humanitarian Aid especially in relation to food shortages and especially in countries in conflict.

Women and the Economy

Equal Opportunities

- The National Employment Action Plan 2002 should be gender proofed.
- An Inspectorate of the Equality Investigations Agency should be formed to carry out inspections and equality audits of workplaces and public services, rather than waiting for complaints and court action.
- All County Enterprise Boards should employ a gender equality officer to ensure a positive environment and supports for women in business. Responsibilities would include:
 - Establishing women-specific support programmes.
 - Administer a mentoring programme.
 - Target financial institutions to overcome gender stereotyping of women as non-traditional entrepreneurs and recognise women's ability and right to enter the business arena on a par with men.
 - Support the development of small option loans and a positive promotional environment for SMEs and micro-enterprises initiated by women.
- All local authorities should report on progress made in strengthening their commitment to equal opportunity.
- Equality training programmes should be mandatory in the workplace.
- Training for senior managers on gender issues should be provided.
- There is need to proactively address discrimination against women in interviews and raise women's awareness of their rights under the Equal Status Act and the Employment Equality Act.
- Equality legislation should be extended to cover all members of society, including those who are employed in institutions claiming a church or Roman Catholic ethos.
- Gender biased questions should be removed from all documentation.
- There is need for training and support for small firms and businesses in the area of equality and gender sensitivity.
- There is need to reward companies and organisations where there is good practice regarding equality in the workplace.
- The Government should utilise the services of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) to encourage the promotion of women to higher positions.
- There is need to build the confidence of women to avail of promotional opportunities in the workplace.
- There is need to ensure that discrimination does not exist with regard to career options.

- Companies should be monitored to ensure that they comply with equal pay directives.
- The Government should take measures to achieve 60 per cent participation of women in the labour force by 2010. At present it is 48 per cent.
- There is need to monitor whether or not one-third of Assistant Principal posts are filled by women in 2005. This goal was set in June 2000.

Low Paid and Part-Time Work

- Women are six times more likely than men to be in low paid part-time work and are concentrated in specific sectors of the economy. Only three per cent of top executives are women. Sixty-seven per cent of female employees are concentrated in three occupations: services, clerical and professional/technical. Only 1.2 per cent of the 25,000 apprenticeships are women. There is need to introduce radical measures to desegregate the labour market.
- Specific measures and targets should be put in place to significantly reduce the pay gap between men and women.
- Since the introduction of Information Technology (IT), secretaries undertake a wide range of tasks and responsibilities. The different levels of responsibility needs to be recognised and a career path developed.
- The vast majority of low paid workers are women. There is need to increase the minimum wage and to monitor and enforce the operation of the minimum wage. Employers should be penalised if they do not pay the minimum wage. All on the minimum wage should be taken out of the tax net.
- The Government should examine pay relativity's between different jobs in order to insure that cultural assumptions no longer determine women's work and women's skills.
- It is not possible to compare women's and men's salaries unless methods of measuring equal value across different types of jobs and sectors are developed. There is need to develop these methods.
- The scope for comparison of jobs is restrictive. Under present legislation, women taking cases of equal pay for work of equal value can only compare with individual men in their company. In sectors where nearly all workers are women it should be possible to make comparisons with men employed by other firms.
- Part-time jobs need to be made more secure in terms of an adequate wage, leave entitlements, sick pay and suitable shifts. There is an absence of sick pay for the first three days of illness.
- There is need to substantially increase tax credits and make them refundable.
- Under present equality legislation, it is difficult and time consuming to take a case for equal pay. When a woman wins an equal pay case, the results only benefits the individual woman and the employer does not have to revise pay structures to benefit all workers in the same situation. Under current pay legislation, it is not possible for trade unions to take a "class action" for groups of workers claiming pay discrimination as each case is decided on it own merits. In addition, it is expensive to take a case. This needs to be addressed.
- There is need to adopt a policy to provide places on third level courses for women on low incomes and for women returners.
- A tax incentive should be introduced for women in the workforce who are studying in their own time. Additional qualifications for low paid workers would help them to move out of the segregated labour market.

- There is need for action to ensure that those involved in staff selection have undergone training in equal opportunities in order to change the general attitudes towards female applicants.
- The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, trade unions and the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) should take measures to eliminate the economic exploitation of young women in low paid employment.
- There is need for a campaign to inform part-time workers of their rights under labour law.
- There should be high penalties for employers who do not register workers for PRSI contributions.
- There is need to introduce study leave to enable women to take time out for further training. PRSI contributions should be covered.

Family Friendly Policies

- Family friendly policies need to be promoted and legislated for. The reconciliation of work and family life is critical to the achievement of gender equality in Irish society and in particular for the equal participation of women with men in employment. The absence of family friendly policies in employment makes it more difficult for women to remain in paid work, to have real choices regarding work options or to improve their labour market position with regard to pay and promotional opportunities.
- Incentives should be offered by the State to employers to adopt family friendly policies. Funding should be made available to companies to carry out pilot projects on family friendly work practices, such as job-sharing, flexi-time and parental leave.
- National Agreements should reflect the development of these policies as a priority. The Partnership 2000 Report on Women's Access to Labour Market Opportunities should be implemented.
- The extent to which home-based work can contribute to flexibility should be addressed.
- Public sector employers should provide models of good practice in terms of accessibility, equal pay and promotion for women.
- The work of the woman in the home, as a wife and mother, in bringing together and harmonising the responsibilities and activities of the family members as individuals and as members of the family, with the demands of society and the economy must be duly recognised and valued in all social and economic policy. The institutional value of marriage should be upheld by way of family-friendly economic policies and family-oriented taxation and welfare measures.

Flexi Work Practices

- There is need to encourage employers to adopt more flexible approaches to working hours, making it possible for parents to work during schools hours.
- There is need to encourage flexi-working arrangements in all sectors and industries throughout the country in collaboration with the trade union movement.
- A percentage of all jobs should be flexi or job-sharing to encourage more women to take up positions.
- There is need to encourage term time working schemes, job-sharing and teleworking.
- The Government should promote innovative working arrangements such as home-based working and teleworking.

- There is need to create opportunities for women to engage in new ways of working such as distance working. It is important that this work is protected by employment protection legislation.
- The working year should be reduced, giving the employee 8 weeks leave. The salary should be divided out over 52 weeks.
- There is need to support and reward companies which adopt family friendly work practices.
- Everyone should have the option of retiring at 55 years with a pension.
- Promotional prospects should not be effected by women's decision to work flexi hours.
- Women who take career breaks should not be penalised in terms of promotion and career prospects and should come back into the workforce at the same level when they left for the career break. There is need to examine practice in other EU countries.
- A State agency in conjunction with several private companies should pilot the establishment of a technology centre with facilities for distance working. It would have between 30-50 desks and on-site childcare facilities. The private companies would have priority to rent desk space and childcare for their employees to use the centre and be connected by computer technology to the main offices. During evening time and at weekends, the centre could be used for adult education, IT training, youth initiatives, thus maximising the use of the centre.

Breastfeeding Mothers

- Specific support programmes need to be developed for mothers who continue to breastfeed on their return to paid employment. There is need for adequate breaks and appropriate on-site facilities for working mothers to express and store breast milk.
- Employers and personnel should be educated on why breastfeeding co-workers need support.
- On-site or near-site childcare needs to be available so that infants can be breastfed during the day.
- Crèches should make appropriate arrangements for mothers who wish to have their children fed expressed milk or to breastfeed their babies at arrival/departure times to crèches.

Leave

- Women in the private sector only receive the social welfare maternity benefit, which is not topped up by the employer. Women should be entitled to the full wage while on maternity leave. The employer or the Government should pay the difference.
- There is need to introduce a payment for parental leave on the same basis as maternity benefit. The payment should be made for all children up to the age of 18.
- People who take parental leave should not be seen to be less serious about their career.
- Parental leave should be extended to one year.
- Men should be encouraged to share the caring responsibilities carried out in the home for children and dependent family members and not to look on women as the sole family makers. They should be encouraged to avail of the options to nurture their families.
- A Family Leave Payment should be introduced based on the current model of Maternity Benefit to enable family members to make arrangements for caring for children, older people or incapacitated family members. This scheme would substitute for the different types of leave currently in place. It has worked well in Australia.

- There is need to monitor the operation of the parental leave policy in order to determine the extent to which it is effective.
- There is need to examine the obstacles facing women who return to work after taking leave to rear their families.

Childcare and Social Care

- Specific targets for childcare places should be put in place to solve the current crisis in childcare.
- The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme should ensure that affordable, quality childcare is accessible to women who are most disadvantaged so that they can enhance their economic position.
- There is need to publish annual statistics on the development of the childcare infrastructure which is being developed under the Regional Operational Programmes of the National Development Plan, 2000–2006.
- The allocation of the €12 million towards capital grants for childcare facilities for civil servants should be published. The fund was announced in the budget 2001.
- There is need to monitor the implementation of the Ministerial Guidelines under Section 28 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 to determine whether or not there are inconsistencies in how planning applications are treated.
- There is need to examine childcare models in Holland and Finland where both parents can work part-time.
- Quality standards should be set for childcare services and these should be monitored.
- There is need to introduce regulation so that crèches are open during holiday periods.
- Whenever ‘childcare’ is discussed it is always in the context of children being looked after in crèches etc., by someone other than their mother or father. Childcare should, rather, refer to extra moral and financial support being given to the mother (or father) to care for their own children in their own home.

Tackling the Supply Side

- There is need for the State to take full responsibility for services for elder care, childcare and after school care and to regulate these services.
- The Government needs to ensure an adequate supply of affordable good quality childcare for working parents.
- The Government should become more involved in the direct provision and funding of childcare.
- There is need for after-school care for school-going children and out-of-school term childcare.
- The majority of employers still do not recognise that they may have a role in providing childcare for employees. Companies in enterprise parks and industrial estates should provide on-site childcare facilities for their employees.
- Employers employing large numbers of employees should be required to provide childcare facilities and there is need to establish a scheme to encourage employers to provide on-site childcare facilities.
- There is need for more crèches in rural areas.

- There is need to develop a Home Relief Service for farm families which would include child and elder care, housework and the care of disabled family members.
- Developers should be obliged to build crèches in new housing estates.

Childcare Personnel

- There is need to introduce a public service grade of childcare worker to provide facilities for public service staff.
- All childcare personnel should have specific training in the area of childcare.
- There is need to fund locally-based initiatives to train childcare workers.

Funding

- There is need for a tax relief on childcare expenses.
- There is need to raise Child Benefit in order to give women a realistic option as to whether they should remain at home with their children or enter the paid workforce.
- A capitation grant scheme should be introduced for regulated pre-school care. This would directly subsidise the cost of childcare places.
- The scheme of capital grants for childcare facilities for civil servants should be extended to public servants.
- A national childcare framework should be established and grant-aid should be provided to registered crèches or nurseries with up to twenty children.

Women Returning to Work

- The Government should introduce a national mainstream education and training support programme for women who wish to return to work. This programme should provide women with the necessary skills to access sustainable employment. Childcare and eldercare supports should be provided.
- The loss of secondary payments and childcare allowances which women who move from training to work can experience needs to be addressed. Similar proposals were put forward by the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) *Alleviating Labour Market Shortages* (2001).
- A Welfare to Work Colloquium should be held by the Department of Social and Family Affairs to explore the development of a welfare to work strategy.
- The Government should provide specific work placements in the public sector to support the transition from training courses to real jobs.
- There is need to recognise and develop the skill base developed by women in the home, such as budget management, supervisory skills and time management.
- There is need for increased mentoring programmes to support women who are returning to work.
- Women returners should be given options to acquire skills in traditional trades.
- There is need to identify the true unemployment levels among women.

Marriage Bar

- Many women civil servants who married prior to 1972 had to resign from their jobs and were forced to retire. They have not got a PRSI number. The majority are not entitled to a pension. Their situation needs to be reviewed and a response made to their poor economic circumstances. The Homemakers' Scheme, introduced in 1994, should be extended to these women.
- A person forced to resign work on marriage and who took up work later in life may have the required number of stamps to receive a pension. However because the stamps are averaged out over a period of fifty years she may not have the required average per year to get a full pension. In addition, because a woman may be entitled to a partial pension she is effectively barred from getting a dependant's allowance which could be more than the partial pension. These issues need to be addressed, as it is unfair to penalise women who were forced to resign, in such a manner.

Pension Rights

- The Homemakers' Scheme was introduced in 1994 for people who were working in the home and caring for children up to the age of 12 years or for people who were incapacitated. It only applies after the date of its enactment in 1994. It should be extended to cover all women who in the course of their insurable life spent time homemaking.
- The eligibility criteria for the Old Age (Contributory) Pension should be modified to take account of the difficulties experienced by women accessing the pension because of broken social insurance.
- Women who have worked as volunteers in developing countries or in crisis areas should be given credits for pensions and other benefits for their time abroad.
- There is need to monitor the mechanisms put in place allowing women with interrupted or reduced insurance records to qualify for pensions.
- There is need to extend pension credits to all women including those of pension age who are at present ineligible for the contributory old-age pensions because of their caring responsibilities for children, disabled people or older people. Large numbers of women have no contributory pension in their own right.
- Pensions are insufficient and unrealistic, particularly the Widow's Pension. Extra benefits such as free telephone rental and free television licence should be given to all widows.
- The adjustment to a Widow's Pension following the death of her pensioner husband should be delayed for six weeks as a humane response to difficult life changes and difficult economic circumstances. The drastic reduction in the pension experienced by widows in these circumstances should be reviewed.
- Pensions should be paid to women who have been active in their homes and communities and should be based on the value of work carried out to the economy.
- The uncertainty of pension rights for part-time workers and contract workers needs to be addressed.

Taxation

- All those on a minimum wage should be removed from the tax net.
- Cohabiting couples should have equal rights to married couples.
- There is need to increase tax allowances for part-time workers.

- The income tax rate for persons over 65 years should not be more than 15 per cent.
- All information on tax affairs should be sent to both husband and wife.
- Tax relief should be available to women who incur childcare costs while in the labour force. Childcare costs per day in Ireland are 20 per cent of average earnings, while the average cost in other European countries is 8 per cent. Tax relief should be given on vouched childcare expenses.
- There should be a tax free allowance for children.

Individualisation of the Tax System

- Full individualisation of the tax and social welfare system should be progressed.
- Women should be seen as individuals within the PAYE taxation system and should have the right to opt to be taxed separately from their husbands. At present the husband has to sign a form granting permission.
- The negative effects of individualisation of the tax system should be balanced by the phased introduction of refundable tax credits for all, thus providing value for what is now seen as “unpaid” work such as caring for children or elderly relatives.

An alternative view is that:

- Tax individualisation should be withdrawn and tax incentives, which favour double income families, should be abolished. Tax individualisation denies recognition to the nuclear family and is unjust to parents who choose to care for their children at home.

From Training/Education to Work

- Back to Work courses need to have structured follow-on work placements, combined with further training.
- There is need to promote adult education for women with disabilities as a means of accessing employment.

The Voluntary Sector

- Women should occupy 50 per cent of senior paid positions in the voluntary and community sector.
- All voluntary workers working in a caring capacity or in community development should be entitled to travel allowances.

Community Employment and Job Initiative Programmes

- The duration of Community Employment (CE) schemes should be three years or sufficient to allow women to complete accredited training courses which are linked to progression routes to further training or work.
- The training allowance for individuals on CE schemes should be increased.
- The age restrictions for CE schemes should be removed.

- CE schemes, which are concerned with caring for the elderly, need to be given increased recognition. There is need to ensure that contracts are long-term in order to guarantee that the service is not interrupted or terminated. When schemes are discontinued both carers and recipients experience loss.
- Participants on Job Initiatives Programmes should be able to job-share.

Social Economy

- Social economy initiatives need to be resourced more fully and sustained.
- The social welfare and secondary benefits of participants on social economy initiatives should not be effected.
- The age restrictions for social economy schemes should be removed.
- Schemes for visiting and caring for older people should be part of the social economy, with guaranteed long-term contracts to service providers.

Community Application of Information Technology (CAIT)

- Community Application of Information Technology (CAIT) negotiated under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) should be expanded.

Disseminating information on worker's rights

- The Government should undertake a public campaign to inform workers, particularly part-time workers of their rights under labour law.
- A mobile citizen's advice facility should be used to disseminate information on women workers' rights to women in villages and smaller towns.
- The Equality Authority and the network of Citizen Information Centres should be resourced to conduct a nationwide awareness-raising campaign on workers' rights and entitlements.

Women in the Home

- A realistic index-linked payment should be paid to every woman who works in the home.
- A basic wage of €445 should be paid to all "childminders". A childminder is defined as a parent or parent substitute whose main occupation is full-time care of child/children in the home. Childminders are workers whose work is essential to the economy.
- Women undertaking unpaid work in the home should be granted social insurance credits.
- The payment to women in the home should be based on the value of work carried out to the economy.
- The State should recognise the choice by some married couples to have their children cared for by one of the parents in the home (normally by the mother) and this choice should be supported and encouraged.
- The State should recognise the choice of all those married couples, who wish to do so, to have their children cared for by one of their parents (normally the mother) in the home, and this choice should be supported and encouraged. Similar support should be give in the case of lone parents.

- The institutional value of marriage should be upheld by introducing family-friendly economic policies, and family-orientated taxation and welfare measures. Economic policies, in particular, should be such as to deepen and ennoble women in such traditional roles as wife and mother.
- Women who left education and work to care for children and who wish to return to the workplace should be supported.
- Unpaid caring work of women in the home should be recognised through the introduction of social insurance credits. Retrospective pension credits should be provided for women who do not benefit from the current Homemakers' Scheme.

Measuring Women's Unpaid Work

- The United Nations' Development Programme has developed methodologies for measuring unremunerated work in the home. Using similar methodologies, the unpaid work in the home in Ireland should be measured.
- Unpaid work in the home and the community should be measured and valued, in the formal measurement as part of GNP/GDP.
- The Central Statistics Office (CSO) should cease to include women in the home under the "inactive" heading.
- Satellite Gross Domestic Product (GDP) accounts should be used to track the contribution of unpaid work in the home and community.
- The Government should fulfil its commitment to carry out a comprehensive time-use survey (TUS) to measure the full extent of the unpaid work of women in the home and its contribution to the economy and society. This survey must be properly funded and resourced. The fieldwork for a national TUS needs to be spread over a year. The estimated cost is €1.5 million at 1998 prices.
- The contribution of women to farming should be quantified.

Banking and Credit

- Women lack access to credit and bank loans and can thus find it difficult to start up enterprises. Women should have greater access to credit in terms of bank loans and mortgages.
- Women should have equality of status in banking arrangements particularly in their ability to get loans and mortgages.
- Social banking should be promoted and legislation put in place to confer favoured status to the non-profit financial sector for example, the credit union movement. Credit unions are frequently used by women to acquire credit.
- The Government's Special Saving Incentive Scheme should be complemented with a new Saving Scheme designed specifically for low income households.
- There is need to clarify whether women who do not have a PRSI number are entitled to participate in the Government's Special Saving Incentive Scheme.
- Banking regulations should be reviewed in relation to their accessibility to women participating in FÁS training programmes.
- Banking regulations should be reviewed in relation to the obstacles which women from minority ethnic groups encounter in accessing loan finance.

- Bank staff often only communicate with a husband or male partner about financial matters which are the concern of the partners. All bank matters should be communicated to both partners.
- The practices of banking institutions should be monitored to determine whether or not they discriminate against women.

Family and Small Business

- Family business units in which wives or female partners play a significant role should be registered in the names of both partners.
- Women in family business should be entitled to PRSI and pensions.
- Support should be provided for women from minority ethnic groups to start up their own businesses.
- Support and funding should be available to set up country markets.
- European Union (EU) regulations relating to home industry are too strict and are putting some women out of business. Regulations need to be reviewed. More support is needed for small home industries.
- Women should be promoted as entrepreneurs.
- There should be enterprise training on natural resources in rural areas to develop employment opportunities.

Financial Support for Women in Small Businesses

- Women need support to start their own business. Many women feel discriminated against by financial institutions and feel the reason they are not able to access loan finance is because they are women.
- The State should provide seed money for women to set up small businesses.
- There is need for ongoing financial and mentoring supports for women in small enterprises.
- There is need for a higher rate of financial grant from State agencies for women in recognition of their difficulty of obtaining matching funding for business start-up.

Women and Agriculture

- The role of women in the agricultural workforce should be recognised. In Ireland, farm inheritance is patrilineal, that is the farm is passed on through the male line. More than 90 per cent of women enter farming through marriage. Women for the most part do not own or inherit farms and 91 per cent of farms are owned by men. Women do not have a herd number or are not a voting member of the local agricultural co-operative. While women may work on farms and contribute significantly to farm production, many have no income of their own and no independent occupational status in the social security and income taxation systems. Even when women contribute between twenty and thirty-eight hours a week to farm work their main occupation is recorded as home duties.
- There is need to promote farming as a career for women and every effort should be made to develop agriculture awareness among school children.
- State agencies should support the right of women to the ownership of the family farm and joint names of herd numbers should be promoted.

- There were two suggestions regarding PRSI:
 - Women who work on the farm should not be classified as only engaged in home duties.
 - There is need for a new PRSI category for spouses working in a self-employed family business/family farm called “Self Employed Spouse” or Class SS. For the self-employed spouses the relevant benefits would be the Old Age Contributory Pension in their own right and Maternity Benefit. The self-employed spouses would be covered under the self-employed PRSI system (not the Employee PRSI System) as part of the overall PRSI Contribution based on farm income.
- Farm women should be recognised separately from their husbands under the tax and PRSI system. Under the Contributory Class S, Social Insurance Benefits, a Disability Benefit should be included for both partners.
- Farm women should be recognised as economic partners similar to all other employees in the farm business, in legal, financial and tax terms.
- Agri-company legislation should be amended and updated to reflect equal members benefits on investments in farming co-operatives and friendly societies.
- Women should be given the right to a second enterprise to protect the future viability of the farm and to reflect their input as women farmers. In this context, the Department of Agriculture and Food should investigate amending the premia quota’s headage and grant regimes so as to refocus them in favour of protecting the viability of the family farm unit (husband and wife working on the farm). At present a husband and wife farming with just over 160,000 litres of milk quota are barred from purchasing suckler cow quota.
- There is need to develop a ‘Farm Woman’s Network’.¹⁰ This could include an e-mail support discussion group for those with access to computers. The establishment of a Rural Support Helpline should be examined. A One Stop Shop with information on a range of services should be available.
- There is need to implement the recommendations of the Report of the Advisory Committee on Women in Agriculture.
- A family member under 35 years returning to take up farming is not entitled to the grant assistance for “installation aid” if they do not possess a “green certificate”. This discriminates against the son/daughter returning, as previous employment/education experience is not considered. This situation needs to be addressed urgently.
- There is need for more positive discrimination in favour of farm women to encourage their participation on agri-boards, agricultural committees, agriculture and fishing co-operatives and other bodies.
- There is need to support diversification in agriculture and to develop strategies for the development of rural communities.
- There is need for a public awareness programme to encourage joint ownership of land between men and women and to encourage farmers to consider equally the transfer of land to daughters as well as sons.

^{10a} *The Report of the Advisory Commission the Role of Women in Agriculture.*

Women in Fishing Communities

- There should be mandatory training in the fishing industry for fishermen in order to combat the large number of accidents at sea.
- Partners of fishermen need training in finance and accountancy in order to manage the family business.
- Women who are married to fishermen need more information on share ownership, pension funds and pension entitlements.
- Given the large number of tragedies at sea, counselling and support should be available for families of fishermen. They need long-term access to counselling.
- An allowance should be paid to the woman/parent who stays at home to mind children. This allowance is particularly important for partners of fishermen who are often absent for long periods of time.
- Given the possible demise of the fishing industry, there is need to provide education and training for partners of fishermen in order to help them to access employment.
- There is need to establish an association to represent crew men's wives/partners in fishing communities along the west coast.
- Fishing co-operatives should develop women friendly policies and welcome women as equal members.

Asylum Seekers

- Asylum seekers who have been in the country for more than six months and are awaiting a decision on their application should be granted the right to work. Recognition should be given to the qualifications of asylum seekers and refugees.
- There is need to provide childcare for refugee and migrant women who are particularly dependent on childcare provision because of being separated from their wider family support networks.

Older Women

- There is need to increase opportunities for older people who wish to work.
- The public and private sector should recruit older women i.e. women aged 65 and over.
- The diversity policy, which includes older women, being developed in the civil service should be extended to other sectors of the economy.

Traveller Women

- The employment needs of Travellers need to be addressed. Restrictive legislation, such as the *Casual Trading Act, 1995* and the *Control of Horse Act, 1996* and the *Market Trading Act* have contributed to the deterioration of many of the income generating opportunities for Traveller families, particularly scrap metal recycling, horse trading and market trading. Outside of the Traveller economy, Travellers find it difficult to access employment. They can experience discrimination in the form of employers not willing to employ Travellers. Poor education, poor health and poor accommodation can also exclude Travellers from accessing employment.

- One of the most important sources of employment for Traveller women is in development work with Traveller organisations. It is important that progression routes are developed from Community Employment (CE) and training to work full-time in development work.
- Affirmative actions need to be introduced to ensure that Travellers retain their Medical Card and benefits for five years after taking up employment. This is important given the health status of the Traveller community when compared to the general population. This proposal is in keeping with reform of benefits to reduce poverty traps, enhance employability and to positively impact on Traveller women's access to the labour market.
- There is need for education and awareness programmes which challenge the attitudes of employers to employing Travellers. A quota system in regard to employing Travellers should be introduced for the private sector.
- Traditionally Traveller women did not seek or were not supported to work and earn money in their own right. Ways to address this cultural difficulty need to be explored.
- Quality childcare needs to be provided for Traveller children taking into consideration the specific needs of Traveller children. Culturally and developmentally appropriate curriculum should be used which present positive Traveller role models. Traveller women need to be trained to provide childcare for Traveller families. Traveller women are more confident when childcare is provided by members of the Traveller community.
- Traveller organisations should receive funding to provide quality childcare for Traveller women who are attending training courses or working on employment schemes, in line with the funding received by the Traveller Training Centres and VTOS.
- Access to employment is now the remit of the Equality Authority. Traveller groups need to be funded to work as community advocates and support Travellers to take cases under equality legislation.

Women from Minority Ethnic Groups¹¹

- There is need to monitor the impact of the Employment Equality Act on women from minority ethnic groups.
- There is need to develop specific targets and actions for women from minority ethnic groups in the Employment Action Plan.
- Supports are needed for women from minority ethnic groups to develop social economy initiatives.
- All active labour market programmes should take account of the needs of women from minority ethnic groups. This should include the setting of targets in respect of their participation and progression.

Island Women and Women in Remote Rural Areas

- There is need for adequate childcare facilities on the islands and in rural areas and childcare should be provided by local people. This would create employment opportunities locally.
- Teleworking should be encouraged and supported.
- Telecottages should be developed.

¹¹Minority ethnic groups refer to groups other than Traveller groups.

- Sustainable tourism should be developed.
- Training in alternative farming enterprises and organic farming should be provided.
- In order to attract industry to remote areas, there is need for improved transport and roads, an adequate telecommunication infrastructure (ISDN and/or satellite) and more power for industry.

Disabled Women

- At present Therapeutic Earnings for disabled people is capped at €20 per week. Any additional earnings are subtracted from the disability allowance. Capped earnings need to be increased.
- The loss of primary and secondary benefits is a disincentive to entering the labour market. This needs to be addressed.
- Employers need more education on the barriers experienced by disabled women entering the workforce.
- The recruitment practices of employers should be monitored. Employers should be accountable for any discrepancies between the number of disabled female applicants and the number of female employees.
- More opportunities for women with disabilities must be created in order for them to participate fully in the workplace.
- Special supports, such as personal assistants need to be in place to help disabled women to access employment.
- There should be equal opportunities and pay for women with intellectual disabilities.
- Disabled people who can work should be given the opportunity to work and be safeguarded by employment legislation which protects workers' rights.
- The recommendations of the Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities- A Strategy for Equality should be implemented.
- The Government should enforce the three per cent quota and launch a public awareness campaign regarding the discrimination against disabled people in accessing employment.
- Many disabled women work in sheltered workshops on very low payments. This issue needs to be addressed.
- There is a tax break/grant to employers for setting up facilities to employ people with disabilities. This should be available for setting up crèche facilities.

Women Exiting Prison

- The criminal record for non-violent crime should be removed after a prescribed number of years in cases where no subsequent crime is committed.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- All employers should be subject to employment legislation that protects employees on the grounds of sexual orientation.

- The remit of the Equality Authority should be expanded to carry out equality monitoring or alternatively an independent monitoring body should be established.
- Positive action is required to remove the gender pay gap.
- Where workplace benefits exist, legislation should ensure that they are extended to partners and children.
- Tax-free allowances should be transferable between unmarried partners.
- The Carer's Allowance should be extended to partners in same-sex couples, where relevant.
- Public sector pension schemes should be extended to include partners in same-sex couples. Mandatory public sector pension schemes (including "spouse and child" schemes) are discriminatory as they do not take account of partners within same-sex relationships or children of the relationship not physically born to the member of the scheme.
- The Widow's Pension should be extended to the surviving partner of same-sex couples.
- On the death of a partner, lesbian and bisexual women in same-sex partnerships are categorised as "strangers in blood" in the context of inheritance tax and probate tax. These issues need to be addressed.
- Lesbian and bisexual women in same-sex couples should be exempt from Probate Tax and CAT. Probate Tax is payable in full. The Capital Acquisition Tax (CAT) exemption threshold for assets passing from one partner to another is at the lowest level for same sex couples. This may lead to the loss of the family home for same sex couples.
- The Equality Authority should issue their long awaited recommendations based on the publication *Partnership Rights of Same Sex Couples* (2000).

United Nations

- The United Nations should employ more women and include more women on peace missions.

International Trade

- The official Government position in its dealings with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should be one which supports the adoption of core labour standards. The core labour standards include trade unions rights, the elimination of child labour, and the prohibition of forced labour and non-discrimination.
- The provision of the WHO/UNICEF Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent World Health Assembly Resolutions on Infant Feeding should be implemented in their entirety and where necessary legislation should be enacted to allow this to happen in Ireland. Existing legislation needs to be enforced.
- Ireland should use its position as an EU member and signatory of the Cotonou Agreement:
 - To guarantee fair trade agreements between EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) member countries.
 - To promote greater representation of civil society organisations, in particular women's organisations at trade discussions.

- To ensure that trade agreements under Cotonou have a gender dimension acknowledging the different impacts of trade on women and men.
- To challenge the exploitative trade practices of EU members.
- The Irish Government should promote a policy at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to ensure that positive actions and human rights under the Platform for Action (PfA) are not regarded as barriers to trade.
- The Irish Government should consider trade policies and particularly trade liberalisation from the perspective of the impact on women's political, economic, social and cultural rights.
- There is need for the National Plan for Women to incorporate a perspective which links aid and trade policy from a gender perspective. There is need to ensure that there is coherence between the policies of the World Trade Organisations and the commitments in the PfA.
- International human rights instruments should underpin all trade.
- There is need for Ireland to review its Overseas Development Aid to ensure that it promotes the commitments of the PfA.
- There is need for coherence between the three Government departments responsible for trade policy i.e. the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of Agriculture and Food. A gender perspective should underpin policies.
- There is a need to ensure that humanitarian aid under whatever heading is not conditional on population control policies.

Research and Monitoring

Comparative Study

- A longitudinal study should be undertaken which compares men and women on socio-economic status, educational attainment, career choices and the levels reached within chosen careers.

Measuring Women's Work

- There is need to quantify the contribution of women to farm work.
- Unpaid caring work in the home and the community should be measured and valued, in the formal measurement of GNP/GDP.
- A national time-use survey should be carried out to assess the value of all work carried out in the home and in the community, paid and unpaid.
- There is need to measure the contribution of grandmothers to childcare provision.

Clerical Workers

- In relation to administrative/secretarial work there is need for research to examine the tasks, skills, education, decision-making responsibilities, hours worked, salaries and related benefits of secretaries. This is necessary in order to clarify the changing roles and responsibilities of secretaries and to review their pay scales.

Low Pay and Pay Differentials

- There is need for research to examine pay differences between different jobs.
- There is need for research into the concentration of women in low paid employment and in particular there is need to examine the pay of women from ethnic minority backgrounds and of women from economically disadvantaged communities.
- There is need to monitor and enforce the operation of the minimum wage.

Promotion

- There is need for research on promotional structures in jobs and reasons why women are not in senior management positions.
- There is need for research on the role of trade unions in promoting the advancement of women to senior management positions.
- Family Friendly Initiatives should be monitored to ascertain who is availing of such options as job sharing, career breaks and flexible work. The impact of participating in such initiatives for a worker on his or her future career and promotional prospects should be monitored.
- There is need to research the obstacles to women becoming managers in the private corporate sector.
- Research should be undertaken to ascertain whether or not women are reluctant to enter management roles and to investigate the impact of the “glass ceiling”.

Marriage Bar

- There is need for research on the circumstances of women who were obliged to leave the public service because of the “marriage bar” which remained in operation up until 1973. Many of these women are now living in poverty.

Bank Credit

- There is need for research on women’s experience in transacting business with banks.

Childcare/Leave Arrangements

- There is need to examine the obstacles facing women who return to work after taking leave to rear their families.
- There is need for research into the relative merits of having young children cared for in the home on a full-time basis by their own mother (or father) as against being cared for outside the family context. The implications for society and particularly for the children themselves should be taken into account.
- Quality standards should be set for childcare services and these should be monitored.
- There is need to examine models of leave for parents in Holland and Finland where both parents can work part-time.
- There is need for an immediate study to be undertaken into all the available research on the distinctive merits of having children cared for in the home on a full-time basis by their own mother (or father) as against being cared for outside the family context. The implications for society and particularly for the children themselves should be taken into account [See Patricia Morgan, *The Hidden Costs of Childcare*; and Lynette Burrows, *The Fight For the Family* Family Education Trust].

Disabled Women

- The high unemployment rate among disabled women needs to be researched. The research should focus on the link between unemployment and the limited educational opportunities available to disabled women. The low level of supports, such as personal assistants should be considered in the research.

Monitoring

- The recruitment practices of employers should be monitored. Employers should be accountable for any discrepancies between the number of disabled female applicants and the number of female employees.
- The remit of the Equality Authority should be expanded to carry out equality monitoring or alternatively an independent monitoring body should be established.
- Companies should be monitored to ensure that they comply with equal pay directives.

Statistical Data

- Women who work on the farm should not be classified as only engaged in home duties.
- There is need to recognise the work of women in the home in official statistics.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

Employment Status, Pay Differentials and Promotion

- Salary and pay scales of men and women.
- The number of women in top paid jobs.
- Wage differences between men and women by experience, education, sector of employment, work pattern.
- Bonuses awarded in the public and private sector by gender.
- A reduction in the pay gap between men and women.
- Promotion rates in the public and private sectors by gender.
- Percentage of women and men working as domestic/ industrial cleaners.
- Percentage of men and women by employment status.
- Discrepancy between the number of female applicants and the number of females employed.
- The percentage of women and men in home duties by education attainment.

Unemployment

- Levels of unemployment and underemployment among men and women.

Taxation

- Changes in social welfare and taxation policy to ensure that all women are considered separately and in their own right.
- Whether or not women are treated as individuals in the welfare and taxation system.

Training

- Number of employers who have attended training on the Employment Equality Act.
- Availability and cost of on-the-job training and access of men and women to training opportunities.
- Number of women returning to skilled work following their successful completion of a training programme designed for women returners.

Public Transport

- Percentage of women dependent on public transport to get to work.

Banking

- Changes in banking policy to allow women who are working or not working to open a bank account without having to provide details on the income of their partner.

Family Friendly Policies

- The degree to which conditions of work and promotional opportunities are family friendly.
- The availability of family friendly working arrangements in companies.
- Changes in attitudes of both employers and employees to family friendly working arrangements.
- The purpose for which men and women take career breaks and whether or not they are subsequently promoted.
- The length of the career break taken by men and women and their subsequent promotion.
- The number of companies, colleges and hospitals providing childcare facilities.
- Level of provision of accessible childcare services.
- The extent to which recognition and acknowledgement is given in Government policies to Articles 41.1.1, 41.1.2, 41.2.1, 41.2.2 and 41.3.1 of the Constitution of Ireland.

Agriculture and Fishing

- Increase or decrease of women's membership of fishing co-ops.
- Comparison of the number of deaths of fully trained crew fishermen and non-fully trained crew members.

Diverse Groups of Women

- Increase in the number of older women working.
- Whether or not the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment implements an island policy granting all islands access to ISDN and/or satellite.
- Number of women asylum seekers accessing jobs appropriate to their education/training.

Developing Countries

- Number of Irish firms participating in the arms trade.
- Percentage of GDP derived from the arms trade.
- Levels of pay and salaries of women and men in developing countries.

- Whether or not there is a minimum wage.
- The percentage of salaried workers earning the minimum wage.
- The extent of job security.
- Employment status by employed, unemployed, independent business, unpaid work in family enterprises.
- Number of small business owners starting up their own business activity.
- Access to loans and other productive resources, such as land.
- Right to unionise and to engage in union activities.
- Number and percentage of workers who are union members.
- Number of strikes and organised protests.
- Working conditions of employees as measured by salaries and overtime pay, other benefits, work hours, health and security, duration and stability of employment, access to and quality of housing.
- Extent of sexual abuse and intimidation in the workplace.
- Maternity rights as measured by anti-pregnancy practice, dismissal during pregnancy, maternal leave and childcare.

Women in Power and Decision Making

Gender Balance

- There is need to address the following factors identified by women, which hinder women's participation in leadership positions and decision-making structures:
 - Gender socialisation.
 - Patriarchal structures, including the influence of religion.
 - Male domination on decision-making boards.
 - The culture of the institutions is not woman-friendly.
 - Inflexible working hours.
 - Language used.
 - The nurturing role of women is seen as an obstacle in regard to women's participation.
 - An absence of a gender agenda in most agencies.
 - Invisibility of women's work.
 - Excessive demands on women because of multiple roles.
 - Women's lack of confidence and low expectations.
 - Lack of motivation to keep going.

Government Ministers, Departments and Committees

- The Government should set targets for the appointment of women to senior positions in Government Departments and in particular in the Department of Finance.
- Fifty per cent of Principal Officers in the Civil Service should be women by 2005.
- Only three of the fifteen members of the Oireachtas Committee on the Strategic Management Initiative are women and neither the Chair nor the Vice Chair is a woman. This issue needs to be addressed.
- A woman should be Minister for Health and Children.
- A woman should be Minister for the Environment.

State Boards

- There is need for a 40:60 gender balance on State Boards.
- The 40:60 balance should be enforced and legislated for.

- The 40:60 gender balance should include a diversity of women including women from minority ethnic groups, lone parents and older women.
- There is need to review the gender balance on State Boards annually.
- The critical mass of 30 per cent of either gender on decision-making boards should be supported as an initial step. Women should comprise 50 per cent of board members by 2005.
- Where a woman ceases to be a member of a board, she should be replaced with a woman.
- There is need to limit the number of board places people can hold.
- There is need to identify the barriers to women participating on State Boards.

Local Authorities, Health Boards and Partnership Companies

- Local authorities should ensure a gender balance in appointments to committees.
- Guidelines should be established regarding appointments to committees. Local authorities should account on an annual basis for any deviation from the recommended percentage of female appointees.
- Programmes such as EQUAL and LEADER should be reviewed in order to assess the participation of women and the extent to which women-focused activities are given equal importance to men-focused activities. Marginalised women need to be encouraged to participate on these boards and incentives provided for them to do so.
- Partnership structures and in particular Area Development Management (ADM) and County Development Boards should be evaluated in terms of the extent to which they promote women's participation in decision-making.
- There is need to appoint more women to the County Development Boards. There is also need to develop a strategy to gender proof local development policy.
- Each county should establish monitoring boards to monitor participation on local boards and other decision-making structures.
- There is need to examine the role and representation of women in local community development and County Development Boards.
- There is need for greater representation of women on the health boards.
- The composition and nomination process to regional health boards needs to be reviewed.

Private Industry and the Professions

- There is need for equal participation of men and women in the judiciary.
- Private industry should be encouraged to put quotas in place at management level.

Education

- Government quotas should apply to the management of primary and secondary schools and third level institutions.
- Women as mothers should have more representation on school boards.
- There is need for more women to participate in designing and developing curricula at all levels of the education system.

Voluntary Organisations and Co-operatives

- Community and voluntary organisations should promote gender equality in their organisations, particularly in relation to senior management positions, paid and unpaid.
- Youth organisations should take a proactive role in promoting the participation of women in their organisations.
- Women have traditionally been excluded from agricultural and fishing organisations and co-operatives. There is need for positive measures to include women as members and to include women in decision-making roles.
- There is need for farm organisations to put in place a programme to ensure gender equality in all decision-making areas.
- Women should be given equal status as men in the Roman Catholic Church.
- Church organisations should ensure gender equality in decision-making structures.
- There is need to build models of good practice based on women's involvement in the community and voluntary sector and incorporate them into social, political, cultural and economic decision-making structures.
- Women should have equal representation to men in the trade union movement and in the voluntary and community sector.

Accountability

Transparency

- Appointments to State Boards and quangos should be based on expertise or open selection and not on political allegiances.
- All appointees to State and semi-State Boards should be selected because of their relevant experience, qualifications and proven suitability to serve on such boards. In appointing new members the background and reasons for the appointment should be publicly recorded.
- There is need for a transparent appointment system with independent assessment of potential appointees.
- There is need for transparent and fair access for men and women to positions of power in all agencies.
- There is need to publicise every vacancy and invite people to apply.
- Quota and time scales for the achievement of gender balance should be specified.
- More transparency is needed regarding the allocation of funding and on the criteria which are used to assess funding applications.
- The gender balance on State Boards and other bodies should be monitored and reported on annually to the Dáil and account given for any deviation from the recommended percentage of female appointees.
- Government Departments and agencies should report to the Dáil on their progress in achieving targets for women in senior positions in Government agencies.

Representation of Service Users

- The concept of service user representation should be accepted and implemented in all decision making structures.
- Consumers of services should be members of State Boards and agencies, where appropriate.
- Service users and midwives should participate on hospital boards, health boards and other bodies.
- The concept of service user representation should be accepted and implemented for all health care decision-making structures.

Sanctions

- A system of sanctions and incentives should be devised as a mechanism to promote implementation of directives relating to gender representation and the role of women in power and decision-making. Sanctions should be imposed for the non-implementation of measures designed to promote the advancement of women and should include:
 - Written communication on non-compliance and requesting a written response on reasons for non-compliance.
 - The withdrawal or scaling down of funding in direct proportion to the failure of organisations to implement gender participation and the participation of other marginalised groups.
 - Publicly naming boards which do not comply.
- Grant aid and funding to political organisations should be conditional on the inclusion of women's concerns on their agenda and on a gender balance on their decision-making structures.
- Appropriate sanctions should apply to programmes such as EQUAL and LEADER if they are not addressing the issue of gender participation on management boards.
- Tokenism should be replaced by enforcement to ensure equality for women in power and decision making.

Monitoring Mechanisms

A number of suggestions were made in relation to monitoring mechanisms.

- An Equality Co-ordinating Committee or National Monitoring Committee should be established to monitor and review the Government's 1991 commitment to a 40:60 gender balance on State Boards. An annual audit of the gender balance in decision-making positions in State agencies and publicly funded bodies should be undertaken.
- A Task Force/National Monitoring and Evaluation Committee involving the Social Partners and the voluntary and community sectors should be established to develop a coherent, integrated national strategy for the achievement of gender equality in power and decision-making. The achievement of time-bound targets and quotas for the achievement of gender equality in specific areas should be a primary objective of the Task Force and progress should be monitored. Women from marginalised groups should be represented.
- There is need to appoint an equality officer at senior level in each Government Department to oversee the proofing process and to co-ordinate training of personnel in equality awareness and equality proofing so as to ensure its effective implementation.

- There is need to resource a “watchdog” group at county level to monitor women’s participation on local boards and other decision-making structures and to ensure the minimum of 40:60 representation as set out in Government policy.
- As part of the yearly audit of the Comptroller and Auditor General’s Office the composition of each board should be set out in the annual report.
- There is need to make provision within the National Development Plan (NDP) for the application of poverty proofing in conjunction with gender and equality proofing to ensure that women from diverse and poor backgrounds can participate in decision-making structures. This process should also be applied to the preparation and implementation of National Agreements.
- An Equality Impact Assessment should be undertaken on all public sector programmes and policies.
- There is need for grants for employers to carry out gender equality audits and gender impact assessments.

Register

- A database or register of appropriately qualified women available to sit on corporate, institutional and Government boards should be developed.
- A register of suitably qualified/experienced candidates should be drawn up by the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCi). If a particular State or semi-State agency cannot from its own resources provide a suitably qualified female, then the NWCi register should be used.

Empowering the Voluntary and Community Sector

- Women in local communities and young women in particular should be empowered to participate in local and regional decision structures.
- There is need to develop appropriate mechanisms to ensure that quotas pertaining to women’s participation in the voluntary and community sector are met. Additional supports should be put in place to ensure that women experiencing poverty can participate in a meaningful way.

Involvement of Marginalised Groups

- The commitments contained in the White Paper for Supporting Voluntary Activity with a particular focus on the inclusion of marginalised women should be implemented.
- Increased funding should be given to community and voluntary organisations that develop and proactively encourage the participation of women who are poor and women experiencing multiple forms of disadvantage.
- The informal nature of community/neighbourhood unwaged work where women are most active should be recognised and this sector should be represented on decision-making structures.

Representation

- Women’s groups should be represented on the National Adult Learning Council, Local Adult Education Councils and the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland.
- The proposed Life Long Learning Task Force should include representatives from the voluntary and community sector.

- There should be representation of economically disadvantaged women on the Higher Education Networks and in the Equality Unit within the Department of Education and Science. Specific policies to meet the needs of disadvantaged women need to be developed.
- Women's community education projects should be represented on the proposed Local Adult Learning Boards.
- It is the right of women to be able to participate in positions of power and in the decision-making process in such a way that their special gifts and qualities can impact upon public and social life in a complementary way with those of men.

Supports

- Practical resources (childcare/social care provision, transport facilities, caring allowances) to enable women to participate in social, political and cultural activities/institutions should be provided.
- Apprenticeship-type methods of learning as a way of developing skills and competencies of women active in their communities should be supported to up-skill women to undertake paid work.

Leadership Training

- Women's community groups, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), women's networks and women's study departments in third level colleges should be resourced to develop training programmes in leadership, politics and public participation for women. Women from marginalised groups such as Traveller women, women from minority ethnic groups, disabled women, women with caring responsibilities, women from rural areas and women from island communities should be represented on decision-making structures.
- Women need to be supported and given the confidence to participate at decision-making level in local community organisations. There is need for more women to go forward for the position of chairperson of local groups. The terms "girls" and "ladies" used to refer to women is demeaning and disempowering for women.
- A support framework and leadership training should be put in place to build the confidence and skills for women who are involved in decision-making positions.
- There is need for training opportunities for girls to take on leadership roles at an early age. School councils could provide training in leadership roles.
- The Leadership Initiative which is supported by the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) and funded by the Equality Authority recommends that an international conference on Valuing Diversity and Women in Leadership should be held during the Irish Presidency of the EU in the first half of 2004 and this should be a central theme of Ireland's Presidency.
- There is need to develop civic education programmes to educate and train women to confidently and actively participate in the political process affecting their lives.

The Political System

- There is need to employ more women as advisors to Government Ministers.
- There is need for a gender equality clause in the Constitution to ensure that all Oireachtas bodies are gender balanced.
- There is need for equal participation by men and women in political life and the organisations of political life should facilitate this.

- There should be quotas for short periods of time to increase the number of women in the Dáil and Oireachtas. A contrary view was expressed that there should be no quotas.

Political Parties

- Political parties should ensure that there is a gender balance in the nomination of candidates.
- Women's branches of political parties should be consulted in relation to policy.
- Political parties should adopt family friendly practices such as revised sitting hours in the Dáil and Senate and provide crèche facilities at meetings.
- Political parties, before receiving Government funding, should have mechanisms in place to promote gender balanced participation.
- There should be feedback mechanisms to those who represent the people locally, nationally and internationally to facilitate greater participation.

Supports for Women to Enter Politics

- In order to address the imbalance in the power and decision-making process there is need to target women in a systematic way to stimulate interest about the political process. This could be done through a module in schools on the workings of local and central Government. This module could also be offered to community organisations and networks.
- There is need to provide political leadership training for women and support to enable them to enter local politics.
- There is need to encourage political parties to create structures which are more open and attractive to women, challenge women to see themselves as political candidates and support women in politics.
- There is need for a network for women who wish to become involved in politics.
- Special measures should be put in place to encourage more women to become involved in the political system and to seek public office.
- Women should be encouraged to use their votes.
- There is need to encourage women independent candidates to run on a "women's issues" platform.

Decision Making

- The under representation of women in the main religious institutions is an area of manifest inequality. If women's voices are to have influence in this key culture-creating area, independent bodies, which remedy this imbalance, are necessary and must receive public support.
- Women's role in decision-making in the churches needs to be promoted.

The Promotion of Gender Equality

- There is need for programmes to raise men's awareness on the need for gender equality on decision making structures.
- Attitudes towards women are a significant factor in enforcing sexist stereotypes and excluding women from power. The curriculum, teaching process, structures and supports, which have served to reinforce traditional roles and stereotypes, should be altered radically.

- There is a need for a more proactive ethos in our educational institutions to affirm young women so that they are confident enough to consider life options on the basis of their own needs, self worth and ambitions.
- There is need for a positive action programme to increase the number of women taking up decision making positions in public life in rural areas. A core element of this initiative should be the development of equality action plans by national and local rural development organisations.
- There should be an audit of all State institutions to examine the involvement of women and whether or not the organisational culture is anti-woman.

Family Friendly Mechanisms

- The establishment of family friendly practices such as the timing of meetings held by local, regional and national organisations, the provision of child care and social care and funding for travel need to be put in place to facilitate the greater involvement of women in decision-making.
- There is need to make the workplace more family friendly and introduce greater job-sharing, flexi time and paid parental leave.
- Member agencies of the County Development Boards should be resourced and supported to identify and implement family friendly work practices and policies.
- Political parties and the Government should adopt family friendly practices.
- There is need to promote the role of men in family life and child rearing.

Disabled Women

- Funding for capacity building for disabled women's organisations needs to be put in place to enable women with a disability to meet together to discuss matters of common concern and to engage in policy influencing work.
- The disability movement needs to understand disability from a gender perspective.
- There is need for policy makers and others to be informed and aware of the issues arising from women's experience of disability based on the social understanding of disability, rather than relying on the medical and individualistic model of disability.
- Disability and awareness training is necessary to enable non-disabled women to learn, understand and reflect on their own attitudes to disability. Such training should be facilitated by women with disabilities.
- All women's groups, when they are developing projects at local level, should consider the accessibility of such projects to women with disabilities through consultation with local women with disabilities.
- An equality proofing mechanism should be developed so that the impact of a particular project or proposal on women with disabilities is always considered.
- Disabled women's organisations should be supported to build their capacity, to network and develop their own specific political agendas so that their voices can be heard. They need to be able to effectively participate and engage in self-representation. There is need to establish a designated budget line to support participation of disabled women in decision-making.
- Organisations who wish to include disabled women in consultations should read the draft guidelines prepared by the National Disability Authority, *Effective Consultation with people with Disabilities*.

- Community Development Programmes and Local Development Programmes should promote disability and prioritise the capacity building of disabled women.
- Information on the electoral process should be made more available to disabled women and polling stations should be required to be accessible to all disabled people.
- There is need for the positive promotion of women with disabilities to decision-making positions, such as heads of schools and universities.
- There is need for more women with an intellectual disability to be involved in Government and decision-making bodies.

Traveller Women

- Traveller women should be represented on all consultation fora and the National Traveller Women's Forum (NTWF) should be invited to participate on such fora in order to ensure that the needs of Traveller women are addressed.
- Gender equality needs to be supported by equality proofing. In this regard, the specific needs of Traveller women should be taken into account when gender balance is being promoted. Resources should be available for childcare, transport costs and capacity building.
- Funding should be provided to Traveller women to participate on the Local Traveller Accommodation Consultative Committees and local authorities should be required to have a gender balance on these committees.
- Traveller women need to be more involved in decisions which are currently controlled by men, such as the way of life, where the family lives, money matters, travelling, match-making and buying vans.
- Civil servants and service providers should be trained in anti-racist practices.
- Elected representatives should have an understanding of the Traveller community and have the capacity to represent the needs of Traveller women.
- Any national campaign to combat racism and discrimination should have a specific focus on Traveller women and their experience.
- There is need to ensure the right of Traveller women's groups to effective participation and self-representation. There is need to establish a designated budget line to support this participation.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- Political parties should have an inclusive policy to integrate and include lesbian and bisexual women and their issues.
- There is need for adequate childcare provision to support lesbian and bisexual women to participate in decision-making fora.
- All public and influential organisations, whatever their remit, should encourage the visibility and acceptance of lesbian and bisexual women.

Women from Minority Ethnic Groups

- There is need for a national strategy to increase the number of women from minority ethnic groups in decision-making. This should include ongoing training, resources and monitoring mechanisms.
- There is need to ensure the right of women from minority ethnic groups to effective participation and self-representation. There is need to establish a designated budget line to support this participation.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should be represented on the new National Qualifications Authority.
- Organisations representing women from minority groups should be included in partnership negotiations for Government programmes. They should also be represented on the Women's Health Council.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should be represented on the Reception and Integration Agency.
- There is need to target women from minority ethnic groups in the local Government reform process and new structures established.
- There is need to ensure that there is a high level of awareness and commitment to anti-racism and anti-sexism within the Civil Service at all levels, in particular among front-line staff and key decision makers.
- Equality proofing should take into consideration the specific concerns of women from minority ethnic groups.

Economically Disadvantaged Women

- The professionalisation of many areas of work in communities has led to a situation whereby decisions are being made which effect the lives of women living in communities by middle-class professionals who usually do not live in these communities.
 - Skills need to be developed within communities to enable local women to participate in decision-making structures.
 - There is need to ensure the rights of economically disadvantaged women's groups to effective participation and self-representation. There is need to establish a designated budget line to support this participation.
- Economically disadvantaged women should be represented on the Higher Education Networks of the Equality Unit within the Department of Education and Science.

Women as Midwives and Women as Mothers

- It should be a precondition for the development of woman-centred maternity care that women, both as users and as providers of maternity care, participate in decision-making regarding maternity services.
- The new nursing legislation should reflect both midwives and consumers perspectives. It should incorporate recent international advances in midwifery legislation.
- Women have traditionally been excluded from policy making, and services have traditionally reflected the needs of male medical providers. Midwives should be recognised as equal providers with doctors of services in maternity care.
- Service users should be represented on all relevant policy making bodies.

International Trade Negotiations

- There is a need for greater participation of women in trade negotiations and in monitoring trade agreements.
- Officials involved in trade negotiations should undergo gender training.
- Trade agreements should take account of inequalities between countries, between men and women and avoid deepening the gap.

Research and Monitoring

- There is need for research into the barriers to women's participation at all levels of decision-making and to develop a resource strategy to remove barriers.
- Research should be undertaken to determine the factors inhibiting women getting into politics.
- There is need for research on diverse models that encourage and support the involvement of women in political life, for example, the French model of parity democracy.
- Research should be undertaken on alternative models of political participation and decision-making such as Scandinavian models.
- Research should be undertaken on the degree to which politics is responding to the interests of women.
- Research needs to be undertaken on women, power and decision-making which takes into consideration the interconnecting variables of poverty, class and gender and the extent to which women from the "grass roots" are enabled to represent themselves.
- Women have devised alternative ways of working in their communities. These models of good practice need to be named, researched and mainstreamed.
- Training in research methods and practices, project monitoring and evaluation should be made available to community groups.
- Research should be undertaken on the community development industry, who controls it and to whom official spokespeople are accountable.
- Partnership structures and in particular Area Development Management (ADM) and County Development Boards should be evaluated in terms of the extent to which they promote women's participation in decision-making.
- There is need to provide funding for local groups to carry out research on the participation of women in local power structures.
- There is need to examine male-centred power and decision-making structures with the objective of institutionalising less authoritarian and hierarchical structures.
- There is need to research the numbers of women and positions held by women in accountancy, business and finance sectors.
- There is need for research on women's involvement in religious institutions.
- Research on women's participation and involvement at different levels of decision-making in the various Churches should be undertaken and published.

Statistical Data

- Data should be disaggregated on the basis of the diversity of women's experience. This would assist in the identification of the specific needs of women and assist in the development of strategies to address these needs.
- There is need for comprehensive statistics on women in management and a more detailed breakdown of the current figures generated by the Quarterly National Household Survey by levels of responsibility.
- More information should be available on the position of women in professional firms, for example accountancy, legal and financial firms.
- Data should be disaggregated on the basis of ethnicity. This would assist in the identification of the specific needs of Traveller women and assist in the development of strategies to address these needs.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

- The number of women engaged in party political activity.
- The positions held by women in political parties.
- The number of women involved at all levels of decision-making in the various institutions in Irish society, such as Government, business, finance, media, academia and religion.
- The degree to which gender balance is achieved in memberships of boards and State agencies.
- The gender balance in national governing bodies of sport and in key positions within sporting organisations.
- The number of women involved in the community and voluntary sector in decision-making positions.
- Female participation rate in local and national politics.
- Increase in the number of older women on local authorities, county councils and other local organisations.
- The percentage of candidates by gender put forward for selection by political parties for local and national Government.
- Percentage of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) by gender.
- Percentage of senior management in the private sector and public service sector by gender.
- Percentage of SET graduates on State Boards. This is an indicator of women's participation in non-traditional areas.
- Extent of unionisation of women in countries in receipt of Overseas Development Aid.
- Number and percentage of women in senior positions on the negotiation teams of the unions in developing countries.
- Disaggregation by gender of the responsibilities in trade policy organisations.

Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

National Plan for Women

Dissemination of the National Plan for Women

- The National Plan for Women (NPW) should be disseminated widely, and groups and organisations, which participated in the Plan, should be updated on how the Plan is being progressed. There should be a commitment to engage in further consultation with individual women and women's groups after a specified time period.
- There is need to develop an information strategy and to ensure that there is continual media coverage of the National Plan for Women (NPW).
- The NPW should be launched in every county and should be publicised on radio and local newspapers. It should be sent to every household and a summary copy should be made available to every woman.
- The NPW should be the focus of next year's International Women's Day.

Monitoring Implementation of the National Plan for Women

Mechanisms

A number of recommendations were made in regard to the monitoring of the NPW:

- A Task Force should be established to monitor the implementation of the NPW. The Task Force should have a secretariat, budget and a team of high-grade staff. Progress reports should be produced on a regular basis which should identify barriers and gaps as well as reporting on progress.
- A Minister for Women's Affairs should be appointed to ensure the implementation of the NPW and to ensure that all Government Departments have a gender equality agenda.
- There is need to establish a statutory body, chaired by a Cabinet Minister, which has responsibility for reviewing and monitoring the NPW.
- Adequate resources should be made available to ensure the successful implementation of the Plan.
- The NPW should be anchored in the Department of the Taoiseach.
- There is need to establish an Equality Monitoring Mechanism with a remit to set targets, indicators, and time scales and to review progress of the National Plan for Women. Senior civil servants and key agencies should be involved and a Cabinet Minister should be chair.
- An Annual Report on the National Plan for Women (2001-2005) should be presented to the Dáil and the Social Partners.

- The National Plan for Women should be bench-marked and monitored within an equality framework. Links with other monitoring committees, such as committees overseeing the National Development Plan (NDP), the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) and the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) should be developed.
- The National Plan for Women should be monitored and reviewed on an annual basis.
- An ombudsperson for women should be established to ensure that the National Plan for Women is fully implemented.
- The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) should monitor the implementation of the NPW and its effects on women, taking into account the diversity of women's situations.

Involvement of the Women's Sector

- There is need to ensure that the NGO sector, regional interests and grass-root women's organisations are represented on the National Steering Committee.
- There is need to ensure that there is a regional dimension to the monitoring of the National Plan for Women.
- The diversity (disabled women, lone parents, women from minority ethnic groups) within the women's sector should be taken into consideration when monitoring and evaluating the National Plan for Women.
- There is need to develop a national consultation strategy, which ensures that all women who participated in the consultation process have a voice on the ongoing development and implementation of the NPW. There is need for a comprehensive recording of all data, feedback of decisions of those consulted and a cycle of consultation which builds on, rather than revisits, issues.
- The National Women's Council of Ireland, along with other interested parties, should monitor the National Plan for Women.
- NEART, which is not in receipt of Government funding, should be acknowledged and recognised as representing many women in Ireland whose views and aspirations are not otherwise represented.

Redraft of the National Plan For Women

- The language used in the National Plan for Women is unfamiliar to women and a barrier to participation. This should be addressed in the redraft of the Plan.
- There is need to specify targets, indicators, time-scales and resources for the National Plan for Women.
- The final form of the NPW should be written in consultation with a broad spectrum of expert opinion and with reference to the wide range of relevant social literature.
- The Plan should outline the strategic linkages between the NPW and the National Action Plan Against Racism arising from the third UN World Conference Against Racism.
- A series of regional workshops should be held in 2002 at which the Government present and discuss the revised draft of the National Plan for Women.
- The term "action" and "Beijing Platform for Action" should be included in the title of the NPW.
- All the recommendations of "Promises Made, Promises Broken" should be incorporated into the redraft of the NPW.

- The NPW should refer back to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and include all objectives of the PfA in the NPW. Commitments already made in the Beijing Platform for Action should be implemented.
- The NPW should be framed in terms of women's rights.
- There is need to contextualise the NPW and present a rationale for the Plan and a mission statement.
- The redraft of the NPW should include a section on religion and spirituality.
- All information relating to the NPW should be available in Braille and tape.
- The outcome of the consultation process for the NPW should be made available so that local women's organisations can insert outcomes into local County Development Plans and other local policies.
- Women need to dialogue with men regarding the changes needed to further equality between men and women.
- A new and independent ombudsman-type office should be created to monitor the Government's implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and reports to that grouping, and similar national and international reports in relation to equality and women, so as to ensure they do not become legally binding or are otherwise imposed on sections of society, groups or individuals who find them to be contrary to their religious beliefs, moral values and traditions etc.

Gender Equality

Monitoring Mechanisms

- There is need to establish comprehensive gender equality monitoring mechanisms which include:
 - A Minister at Cabinet level acting as chair.
 - Full participation of senior civil servants with responsibility and authority for implementation of governmental policy.
 - Formal links to key mainstream agencies and other relevant bodies.
 - Specific targets and indicators, and review of procedures for progressing and measuring gender equality.
- Responsibility for gender equality should be integrated at the highest level of Government, such as by the appointment of a Cabinet Minister with a full and separate Government Department for equality.
- A national commission on gender equality should be established. Women's Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), networks, community organisations should be fully represented along with all Government Departments and relevant State and semi-State agencies. Attention should be paid to ensuring appropriate representation for marginalised groups of women. Mechanisms for gender proofing all Government policies should be devised by the commission.

Proofing National and EU Legislation and Programmes

- The programmes under the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005) need support and resources to ensure their continuance as gender equality measures. The Irish Government representatives at both Commission and Council level should be required to support this and other measures. Information needs to be made available on the Gender Equality programmes (2001-2005).

- There is need to disseminate information on the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality. Additional resources need to be available to develop the capacity of the women's sector to promote gender equality and develop good practice.
- The EU Equal Treatment Directive on Gender Equality, should be transposed into Irish law immediately.
- All aspects of the National Development Plan (2000–2006) should be gender proofed.
- There is need to extend the system of gender proofing to all Government decisions and each Government Department should specify its role in relation to gender equality and set specific targets. A gender perspective should be integrated into all legislation, public policies, programmes and projects.
- All new legislation should be subjected to gender impact assessments.
- Mechanisms should be put in place to ensure that the outcome of National Budgets are analysed from a gender perspective. All future budgets should be gender-proofed to assess the value of budgetary measures to women and men. This should go beyond the amounts of money being spent in the form of GNP and GDP. New tracking measures should be introduced to monitor changes in the quality of life and the environmental well-being of women and men.
- Under the National Development Plan (NDP) it should be mandatory that local authorities and the General Council of County Councillors comply with the guidelines under the Local Authority Act 2001. Finance should be made available not only for expenses but for comprehensive training programmes for Councillors and for child care costs and facilities.

Involvement of Minority Groups

- There is need to ensure that minority groups such as women from minority ethnic groups and disabled women and Traveller women are targeted in policies, strategies and programmes and that there is a commitment to enhancing their position as equals within Irish society.

Gender Equality Units

- There is need to provide a specific budget and staffing to the Equality Unit in the Department of Education and Science. The Unit co-ordinates and monitors the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into all areas of the education system.
- The Equality Unit in the Department of Education and Science should produce an Annual Report on progress on implementing gender equality in schools.
- Increased resources should be allocated to the Gender Equality Unit within the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

Committee on Women's Rights

- There is need to re-establish a dedicated all-party Women's Rights Oireachtas Committee with the same status as the Public Accounts Committee.
- The Joint Committee on Justice, Equality, Defence and Women's Rights needs to be strengthened in order that it can perform an effective policy influencing role.

Women's Forum

- There is need for an independent space or forum for critical reflection, given the negative impact of the traditional religions on women's sense of self. This would offer women experiences of ritual-leadership and ethical-theological exploration and allow women to increase their understanding of their spiritual authority and moral agency, especially in the fields of sexuality and reproduction.

Equality

Equality Legislation

- The Government should increase funding to the Equality Authority to carry out greater promotion of the Equality Act, greater dissemination of information on the Act and information on the monitoring and evaluation of the Act.
- The Government should fund the Equality Authority to establish a network of regional sub-offices.
- The Equality Authority should consult women's organisations to ascertain the effectiveness of the equality measures, particularly in relation to disadvantaged and socially excluded women, i.e. Traveller women, refugees and asylum seeking women.
- Equality legislation should be amended to include economic status, class inequality, political beliefs and ex-prisoners.
- There is need to remove the exclusion granted to religious institutions under equality legislation.
- Equality legislation should be made more relevant to Traveller women. Traveller women should be included as a named group in order that the multiplicity of discriminations against them can be addressed.
- Gender discrimination should be examined in the context of the Equal Status Act and sanctions applied accordingly.
- There is need for community equality advocates to assist people in taking cases under equality legislation.
- Increased resources should be made available to the Equality Authority to enable it to engage in outreach work and awareness-raising within the women's sector and to support women to take cases under the equality legislation.
- There is need for research into the social impact of religions on women's lives.
- The formal opportunities afforded to women to explore religious issues, such as theology, ethics, spirituality, and ritual.
- Informal opportunities afforded to women to explore empowering spirituality's such as yoga and transcendental meditation.
- The degree to which research into social impacts of religions on women's lives is resourced and researched.

Equality Proofing

- Equality proofing should be extended to all levels of decision-making including local, regional and national levels.

- Strategies of the County Development Boards should be equality proofed. Women experiencing multiple forms of exclusion should be involved in the work of County Development Boards.
- All statutory agencies should have equality officers to equality proof policies and services.

Support for Women's Organisations

- In order that women can pursue the equality agenda, there is need to:
 - Develop a budget line that supports coalition building between women's community groups and organisations.
 - Target organisations which represent women from minority groups such as disabled women, Traveller women and women from minority ethnic groups.
 - Target organisations representing women who experience multiple forms of discrimination.
 - Support national organisations promoting sectoral interests such as lone parents and Traveller women.
 - Insert a woman's perspective into existing programmes such as the Community Development Programme (CDP) of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.
 - Gender mainstream the Local Development and Social Inclusion Programme.
 - Expand the LEADER programme to include the Network of Women Farmers as a nominating body for LEADER.

Equality Initiatives

- An equality scheme, based in legislation should be drawn up within each of the pillars of the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) to the satisfaction of an independent appointed agency under the aegis of the Human Rights Commissions, north and south. The equality scheme under the Good Friday Agreement, provides a useful model which at present is implemented only within Northern Ireland.
- The National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), the Equality Authority and the Human Rights Commission should be supported to promote the development of anti-sexist and anti-racist codes of practice within local development bodies and State agencies.
- There is need to ensure that equality is included as a Strategic Result Area under the Strategic Management Initiative (SMI).
- Educational institutions should be legally accountable for performance on equal opportunities issues.
- All policies should be proofed to determine their impact on poverty, their capacity to contribute to achieving the NAPS targets and their ability to address inequalities leading to poverty.
- The accessibility of public services for people with disabilities as dealt with in the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) needs to be addressed.

Poverty Proofing

- Local authorities and State agencies should involve locally based women's groups in the development of poverty proofing measures.

- In poverty proofing, the hidden nature of women's poverty needs to be recognised. Many categories of women, such as homeless women are not always visible in statistics. The extra cost incurred by women carers is not recognised.

Links between Poverty Proofing, Gender Proofing and Access Proofing

- There is need to link poverty proofing and gender proofing when analysing policies.
- The National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) should distinguish between gender and equality monitoring.
- The Employment Action Plan 2002 should be gender proofed, poverty proofed and rural proofed. Proofing should take account of the extent to which it includes specific target groups such as asylum seekers and refugees, older women, lone parents, people with disabilities and Traveller women.
- All State and semi-State organisations should "access proof" policies and services to ensure that they are accessible to everyone.

Ombudsperson for Women

- There should be an ombudsperson for women.

Award System

- There is need for a special award system to acknowledge women who have succeeded in breaking through male barriers and who provide role models for women.

Equality for Women Measure

- The policy fora established under the Equality for Women Measure which involve key policy makers in relevant Government Departments and statutory agencies should be used as part of the institutional mechanisms to resource Government Departments in the ongoing implementation of the National Plan for Women, and in responding to the aspirations of women as documented in the Plan.

The Women's Sector

Funding

- There is need to develop a designated funding framework for funding the women's voluntary and community sector.
- Funding should be index-linked to the number of local members of the target group employed or involved in initiatives.
- Multi-annual core funding should be available to an increased number of community organisations, both in rural and urban areas.
- There should be statutory funding for women's networks. Women's networks should assess women's needs at regional level and promote the participation of marginalised women in policy development.
- There is need to develop a coherent national women's network which would establish common links between different groups of women and provide a formal link between community groups and the formal local, regional and national decision-making structures.

- Family Resource Centres should be given resources to provide parenting courses. They should provide support groups for young mothers and engage in outreach to make contact with women and families who are isolated or suffering from depression.
- A national network of women's resource centres should be established and funded.
- Funding for grassroots women's groups should be ring-fenced. There is need to critically examine the poverty industry in terms of who it represents.
- There is need to establish a budget line in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to provide multi-annual funding of €6,000 for women's groups.
- The Department of Education and Science should provide core funding for more women's community education initiatives. The key role of education in breaking the cycle of disadvantage is widely acknowledged.
- Community initiatives which respond to vulnerable groups of women, such as homeless women, women in prostitution and women using drugs should be further resourced.
- Self-help groups should be encouraged and resourced.
- Given the large amount of funding which has been invested in the community and voluntary sector there is need for more accountability as to how it is spent.
- The Funding Handbook by CAFE (Creative Activity For Everyone) should be made widely available to organisations engaged in development work.
- Local groups need support in finance insurance.
- There is need to ensure that adequate funding is provided to the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi).

Recognition of Voluntary Work

- The work and expertise of the unpaid voluntary sector should be recognised and respected. This work could be recognised through the provision of credits for pensions and through the provision of financial assistance to cover expenses.
- Voluntary sector workers should have pay scales linked to pay scales for workers in the public sector.
- A gender perspective needs to be developed in mainstream programmes such as the Community Development Programme (CDP).

Access to Information

- Information Technology (IT) should be promoted as a means of democratising society, improving access to information and providing a mass tool of education for women.

Local Government Reform

- There is need to decentralise Government structures and create a reformed local Government structure on where the interests of women would be adequately represented.

Local Agenda 21

- There is need to support and develop Local Agenda 21, which provides a framework and process to address the role of women in decision-making.

The Environment

- The key role which women play as consumers, with the main responsibility for household waste disposal, should be recognised. Women should be targeted by education and awareness programmes and should be involved in the main policy fora.

Social Partnership

- Women from ethnic minorities, women in the home, grassroot women's groups and older women should be represented in social partnership structures.

United Nations Conference on Women 2005

- The Irish Government should publicly affirm its support for a fifth UN conference on women to be held in 2005.

Secular State

- There is need to establish a Constitutional Commission to examine the Constitution with respect to establishing a secular state.
- There is need to replace articles in the Constitution which embody the values and creed of one or several churches, with articles based on the Rights set out in the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This is inoffensive to the values and creeds of people of different religions and creeds, and those with none.
- Provision should be made, throughout society in each of the pillars of the National Economic and Social Forum (NESF) to discuss the constitutional changes proposed by the Commission. A model of practice can be found in the recent discussions held throughout communities in the six countries on the 11 Plus issue which were instituted by the Minister of Education in Northern Ireland.
- Teacher training should be provided by the secular state, and the National School curricula, though they may include study of comparative religions, may not include doctrinal dogmatic training in any particularly denomination or creed.
- Equality legislation should be extended to cover all members of society, including those who are employed in institutions claiming a church or Roman Catholic ethos.
- If the Irish Constitution were to be replaced by a 'secular' constitution, it would not be acceptable to a large majority of the people of Ireland.

Women and Health

- There is need to ensure complementarity between all policies and programmes concerned with improving the health status of poor women, including the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS), the Plan for Women's Health, the National Health Strategy, the National Health Promotion Strategy and the Travellers Health Strategy.
- There is need to poverty proof all policies and programmes related to women's health at design and review stages. In particular, there is a need to poverty proof the Plan for Women's Health in the context of the review of the Plan, which is now being undertaken. This will help identify how the Plan has contributed to tackling health-related problems among disadvantaged women and what future work is required.

- There is need to provide adequate resources to implement, monitor and review all health strategies, in co-operation with women.
- There is need to develop information and research systems to provide a better understanding of the complex relationship between women, poverty and ill health.
- Women living in poverty or at risk of poverty, including groups of women experiencing multiple disadvantages should be involved in the development of health policies and services. This should be based on good practice community based models.
- There is need to increase resources for community development/partnership initiatives to include a specific focus on health in their work and in particular the health needs of women in poverty.
- There is need to invest in community based action for better health for women and include those who are disadvantaged in the design and delivery of community based services, both in primary care and in health promotion and preventative programmes.

Family Matters and Social Welfare

- A Working Group to plan for the implementation of an individualised social welfare system based on a fully inclusive social insurance model should be established.
- There is need for a separate Family Division specialising in family matters in relevant Government Departments.

Family Friendly Policies

- Political parties should be asked to examine their procedures, activities and timing and location of meetings, to minimise any disadvantage to women, and encourage their participation.
- Measures must be put in place to ensure that women's participation in the work place or public life is not impeded by barriers to breast-feeding.

National Plan for Men

- There is need for a parallel National Plan for Men (2002-2006) to address issues of concern to men.

Disabled Women

- The National Disability Authority should ensure that disabled women have a voice in their structures at all levels.
- Support for disabled women under the equality legislation needs to be increased and the legislation needs to be strengthened so that it becomes an adequate vehicle to redress the discrimination experienced by disabled women.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- Government agencies where appropriate, should include sexual orientation in data collection.
- Mechanisms need to be introduced to ensure the sexual orientation-proofing of all Government policies and documents.

- Positive action programmes which provides positive support and encouragement to lesbian and bisexual women should be designed and implemented.
- All Government and employment agencies should implement policies to combat homophobia.
- Equality monitoring should be performed either by expanding the remit of the Equality Authority or by establishing an independent monitoring body.

The Task Force Report on Travelling People

- There is need to implement the recommendations of the Task Force Report on Travelling People.

Minority Ethnic Women

There is need to:

- Strengthen the Incitement to Hatred Act in order to ensure that it offers concrete protection to women from minority ethnic groups.
- Consult with women from minority ethnic groups in the review of the Equal Status Act to be undertaken in 2002.
- Implement the EU Council Directive in regard to the principle of equal treatment between person irrespective of ethnic and racial origin into Irish law.
- Consult with and focus on women from minority ethnic groups in the Report on Ireland under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) to be undertaken in 2003.
- Ensure a focus on women in the preparation and implementation of the forthcoming National Action Plan on Racism.
- Mainstream a gender perspective in the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and in the Human Rights Act.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should be involved in any new policy development or monitoring mechanisms for the advancement of women.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should be involved in the development, implementation and monitoring of the National Plan for Women.
- There is need to develop mechanisms to monitor the impact of the Equal Status Act on women from minority ethnic groups.

Research

- There is need to research the reasons why there are more male assistant principals, deputy principals and principals in second level schools and more males in promoted posts in third level institutions. Specific initiatives should be introduced to address the imbalance.
- Research should be carried out by the Economic and Social Research Institute to ensure that the implementation of the National Plan for Women affects all categories of women positively. Any policies which have negative effects on women should be modified or discontinued.

- There is need for research on the reasons why more women do not go forward for promotion to senior management level in the civil service, in representative bodies, in policy-making bodies and in business.
- There is need to research whether or not family friendly practices have been adopted and implemented by public bodies at local and national level.
- Research is needed to identify alternative models and styles of sporting and recreational participation and activities to the current competitive model of sports.
- There is need to research effective strategies for progressing gender equality in the workplace.
- There is need to investigate the delay in the administration of Wills.

Statistical Data

- There is need to develop information and research systems to provide a better understanding of the complex relationship between women, poverty and ill health.
- Local women's groups and organisations should be trained to compile relevant gender statistics at local level.
- There is need to address data deficits and analyse data in a manner which allows for the development of strategies and policies appropriate to meet the needs of women from minority ethnic groups.
- There is need for more qualitative data to reflect women's narratives of their experiences of inequality.

Qualitative Data

- The submission of The Forum Women's Group to the National Plan for Women (NPW) entitled 'Measuring Success — From Whose Perspective', which deals with qualitative gender sensitive indicators, should be made available to all relevant personnel at Departmental/Government level who are, or will be responsible for agreeing the types and lists of gender-sensitive indicators to be used to measure women's advancement under the 12 Critical Areas of Concern of the Beijing Platform for Action. It should also be made available to personnel in the Task Force or other mechanism to monitor progress in implementing the National Plan for Women.
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should actively foster the use of qualitative participatory research methodologies for evaluating all relevant local programmes promoted under the Beijing Platform for Action.
- Resources should be made available to conduct a full review of the international and Irish literature available on models for the development of qualitative social indicators, and a paper prepared on the models available and their relative efficacy.
- Resources should be made available to conduct a series of small-scale qualitative participatory studies to develop a set or sets of 'quality of life' factors at grassroots level. The diverse experiences of women in terms of age, ability, ethnicity, religious preference, sexual orientation, educational attainment, socio-economic background, membership of the Travelling community and other factors should be taken into consideration.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

- The degree to which structures are established that ensure that the National Plan for Women is monitored.

- Increase in the numbers of women entering politics.
- The extent to which developing countries translate rights into laws in relation to inheritance, property, access to banks and credit, freedom of action, the right to vote, economic independence, divorce, abortion, salary, labour rights, sexual harassment in work and domestic violence.

Human Rights of Women

The Irish Constitution

- There is need to introduce a gender clause in the Constitution.
- There is need for equal protection in the Constitution for all families.
- A non-discrimination clause should be inserted in the Constitution.
- The Irish Constitution should make provision for real, effective recognition of social, economic and cultural rights.
- Articles 41.1 and 41.2 of the Irish Constitution should be retained and strengthened in order to safeguard the rights of all women.
- There is need to replace articles in the Constitution which embody the values and creed of one or several churches, with articles based on rights set out in the United Nations (UN) Universal Declaration of Human Rights and which is inoffensive to the values and creeds of those of different religions and creeds, and those with none.
- Provision should be made throughout society to discuss the constitutional changes necessary.

Human Rights Commission and the Good Friday Agreement

- There is need to specify the ways and means that a gender perspective on women's human rights will be taken into account in the remit of the Human Rights Commission.
- There is need to provide information on the resources that will be made available to the Human Rights Commission over the period covered by the National Plan for Women (2001-2005), including information for implementing women's human rights initiatives.
- Minority ethnic groups should be represented on the Human Rights Commission.
- The Human Rights Commission should engage in a public education campaign to highlight the potential of the human rights agenda for advancing equality.
- The recommendations in regard to human rights in the Good Friday Agreement should be implemented.
- A Bill of Rights, based on a democratic consultation process, as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement and which is currently being promoted in Northern Ireland should be implemented.

Human Rights

- Institutions, including churches, which practice discrimination against women in the hiring of staff, should not be subsidised by State funds, directly or indirectly. Women have the right to expect

equality of treatment when applying for such jobs. The practice of hiring staff should be transparent and professionally accountable.

National Anti-Poverty Strategy

- There is need to adopt a rights based approach in the National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS).

Animal Rights

- Humans need to respect the rights of other life forms in particular, there is need to respect the rights of animals.

Legal Aid

- Access to legal aid should be a human right. The present waiting time, which can take up to six to nine months, is an infringement of this right.

Marriage and the Family

- There is need for all policies to recognise and take into consideration the diversity of family forms in Ireland today.
- The nuclear heterosexual family/family based on marriage should be given clear, exclusive legal protection to avoid undermining its unique status in society.
- The State should support the principle that marriage is the best environment for children to be born.
- Policies should be instituted to encourage as large a number of children as possible to be reared at home by their mothers. This tradition should be actively supported by legislation. The policy to increase childcare places as proposed in Draft One of the National Plan for Women (NPW) should be critically examined before implementation.
- As marriage remains the corner stone of a successful society, young people should be educated about marriage from early school years onwards stressing the importance of long-term marital commitment.
- Women have a right to work in the home and care for their family, if that is their wish, and no obstacles of any kind — whether in terms of discrimination through the devaluing of that role from whatsoever source or from a financial point of view — can be placed before them.

Scientific Developments

- Women have the right not to be exploited by the scientific and medical professions with regard to their health and human dignity, for example, through the promotion of IVF and other technological measures.

Midwifery Based Birth

- Women's right to choose a physiological birth should be recognised. The option of midwifery based care in pregnancy, birth, and during the postnatal period should be available to every woman.

Magdalene Homes

- The infringement of the human rights of women in Magdalene Homes should be investigated. There is need to set up a Tribunal of Inquiry to examine the operation and legal framework of the Magdalene Homes. Compensation should be paid to women who spent long periods of time in these homes against their wishes.

Pension Rights

- Women forced to leave the workforce because of the marriage bar should have the right to have their situation reviewed.

Work and Social Welfare

- Women should have the right to equal pay and equal career prospects.
- Women should have the right to be treated equally to men in social welfare and tax legislation.
- Everyone should have the right to a basic income.
- People should have a right to all information on welfare entitlements.
- The payment of 1.7 per cent of salary to the Spouse and Children fund in the public service discriminates against single women with no children. Women who are single have a right not to contribute.

Accommodation

- Women should have the right to adequate and appropriate accommodation.
- The cost of housing limits the human rights of women to exercise decisions about the size of families. This needs to be addressed.

Health Care

- Women should have the right to essential health care.
- All people have the right to information regarding the risks of HIV and AIDS.
- All people and, in particular, women, have the right to full and accurate information about the dangers to their health from chemical substances of all kinds.

Sports

- Women have the right to engage in sports at the level of their potential. Failure to protect this right impinges upon the physical, spiritual and psychological health of women.

Education

- Everyone should have a right to an education.
- There is need for a human rights education programme in schools and in society.

- Families have the right not to have their children participate in life skills and sex education programmes in schools and children have the right to have this education provided for them by their parents.

Right to Protection from Male Violence and Pornography

- Women should have the right not to be subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Specific legislation should be accompanied by an education programme for the medical profession and for ethnic minorities.
- Women and children should have the right to protection from all forms of violence, including violence within the home.
- Women should have the right to live in a society free from sexual violence and domestic violence.
- Women workers should have the right to work in an environment free from bullying and sexual harassment.
- Women and girls who are homeless and who are seeking escape from situations of domestic or institutional violence should have the right to be protected and sheltered.
- All women and children have the right to live a life free from demeaning and oppressive images. The presence of pornography in our newspapers and corner shops is a violation of this right.
- Rape must not be accepted as a valid form of war.
- Women who are pregnant and all children born and in the womb have the right to protection from violence or coercion during pregnancy and birth.
- Prostitution needs to be recognised as a form of violence against women and there is need for a national strategy addressing prostitution and the exploitation of vulnerable women:
 - the practice of soliciting prostitutes should not be decriminalised.
 - legislation should be introduced which decriminalises prostitution for women.
- Women have the right to protection against exploitation by those involved in the sex industry.
- Pornographic and other material which is explicitly violent, especially on television, has been shown to lead to abuse and violence against women, and should be strongly opposed. Likewise, advertising on bus shelters, hoardings etc. , which portray women in near-nude and explicit poses which demean women and depict them as 'sexual objects' should be banned and must be vigorously objected to by all decent people.

Protection of Sexual Integrity

- All women have the right to have their sexual integrity, including their virginity, chastity or fidelity in marriage, respected and preserved.

Unborn Child

- In the context of genetic engineering the girl child must be equally protected as the male child.
- The unborn child has a right to be protected from HIV and AIDS.

Abortion

A range of views on abortion were expressed:

- Women should have the right to safe legal abortion in Ireland.
- Women who have been raped or who are suicidal should have the right to terminate their pregnancy in Ireland.
- The unborn has a right to life as has every human being once conceived.
- The most basic, fundamental and inalienable right of every human being is the right to life. Rights are hierarchical and the right to life is antecedent to, and superior to, all other rights since, if the right to life does not exist, all other rights are meaningless. Every human being, once conceived, has the right to life and the right to be born.

Right to Contraception and Sterilisation

- Women should have a right to contraception and sterilisation.

Capacity Building

- There is need to inform women of their rights, for example the right to a lactation break and the right to have a home birth.
- Women should have the right to participate in decision-making structures in society.
- There is need to resource organisations promoting human rights in Ireland.
- There is need for a programme of positive action to ensure representation of minority groups in local and national politics.
- Core funding and resources should be provided to a range of organisations, such as organisations representing women experiencing multiple forms of discrimination, organisations representing ethnic minority groups and women's organisations engaged in promoting human rights. These organisations need to:
 - Engage with the political system by developing campaigns around general elections, local elections, advocacy and lobbying.
 - Insert the human rights and equality agenda into the political process.
 - Support women who experience multiple forms of discrimination to be more influential in achieving their rights.

Older Women

- Older people with special needs have the right to appropriate support and care.

Women from Minority Ethnic Groups

- Minorities, such as gypsies, Roma and Travellers have the right to have their culture respected and to have the fundamental right to live in a society free from racism.
- There is need to establish a mechanism to ensure that legislation does not have a negative impact on the rights of ethnic minorities.

- To ensure the rights of ethnic minorities are upheld, the National Immigration Platform should be prosecuted for their distribution of leaflets in the Dublin 7 area. TDs who make racist comments should withdraw their comments or resign.
- There is need to specify the gender specific elements of the Government's anti-racism and inter cultural awareness programme. The proportion of the €5.7 million budget to be allocated to highlighting human rights issues arising from the intersection of racism and sexism should be specified.
- Ethnic minority groups have the right to information in relation to their legal rights and resources should be allocated for training and dissemination of information.
- Asylum seeking women seeking to leave abusive relationships should be entitled as a right to a separate status independent of their partners/spouses.
- Asylum seekers should have the right, while waiting for applications to be processed, to language training, education and vocation training.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should have the right to have access to midwifery based childbirth.
- There is need to monitor progress made by the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA), formerly the Directorate of Asylum Support Services, in facilitating attendance at English language classes by female asylum seekers with young children.
- There is need to allocate resources for training and information dissemination to develop legal literacy among women from minority ethnic groups.
- There is need to put in place specific measures to ensure that women from minority ethnic groups have access to legal services.
- There is need to promote the fundamental right to live in a non-racist society through the elimination of all forms of racism.
- There is need to develop a charter for the protection and promotion of the human rights of women from minority ethnic groups in the light of the new institutional framework in regard to human rights and equal status in Irish society.

Care and Carers

- There is need for a Charter of Rights for Carers.
- Everyone has the right to basic health care and to basic care for special needs.

Women in the Home

- The constitutional guarantee of the role of women in the home should be recognised.
- Women should have the right to remain at home and rear their children.

Traveller Women

- Traveller women should have the right to live in a healthy safe environment and free from racism.
- Travellers should have the right to information about their rights.

- The right of Travellers to practice nomadism and to have health and other services appropriate to their lifestyle should be recognised.
- The religious beliefs, folk traditions and healing traditions in the Traveller culture should be recognised. Research into these traditions should be supported.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- There are no partnership, marriage or family rights for lesbian or bisexual couples. Lesbian and bisexual women should have the same rights as heterosexual couples.
- The Equality Authority report — *Partnership Rights of Same Sex Couples* — should be published immediately.
- Lesbian and bisexual couples should have the same rights as married heterosexual couples in relation to succession rights, property rights, income tax, capital gains tax, workplace benefits, immigration and citizenship. They should have the same rights in relation to adoption, legal guardianship, custody, access, registration of births, fertility services, parental leave and fostering of children.
- In relation to hospitalisation, where a lesbian patient is admitted in an unconscious state, it is unclear if doctors would engage with his or her same-sex partner. It is also unclear whether or not a doctor would respect the wishes of a same-sex partner above those of the blood relatives in relation to hospital treatment.
- Lesbians and bisexual couples should have the right to self determination.
- The rights to residency of non-national partners in lesbian and bisexual relationships should be recognised.
- Lesbianism and bisexuality should be listed as grounds for granting asylum.

Cohabiting Couples

- Cohabiting couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples in relation to succession rights, property rights, income tax, capital gains tax, work place benefits, emigration and citizenship. These rights should be recognised once a formal agreement is signed and responsibilities to ex-partners and families completed.

Disabled Women

- Disabled women should have a right to independent living and the necessary supports to achieve this. They should have the right to freedom of movement, the right to an education and to accessible employment.
- Disabled women should have the right to live in a society free from stigma.
- Disabled women need information about their entitlements. Information should be accessible and should be in Braille and on tapes and in other appropriate media forms.
- Women with an intellectual disability should have the right to an advocacy service.
- The needs assessment of disabled people should be carried out by an independent authority and not by the Department of Health and Children. Disabled women should have access to the services identified in the needs assessment and have the right to legal redress should these services not be provided by the State.

- Cultural venues such as museums, libraries, galleries and theatres should be accessible to disabled women. Many of these institutions provide poor access for disabled women.

Sexual/Reproductive Health

- Disabled women should have the right to the same control over their bodies and their fertility as non-disabled women.
- Disabled women and non-disabled women should have the right to choose whether or not to terminate a pregnancy.
- There is need for education on the issue of disability to ensure that women considering terminating on the grounds that the infant may be disabled should do so with the full information needed to make a considered choice.
- Disabled women should have the right not to be subjected to forced sterilisation.

Irish Language Speakers

- There is need for an acceptance of the right to culture and language and the impact of the lack of language rights on self-esteem.
- In Ireland there is need for a Language Bill and a campaign, which shows the positive aspects of the acquisition of Irish language and the fact that it does not effect the acquisition of the English language. Acquisition of the Irish language makes the learning of other languages easier.

Abducted Children

- The rights of abducted children need to be addressed.

Women and Children in Prison

- Children should have the right not to be born or reared in prison.
- Women in prison should have access to medical care and medical assessment on their arrival at the prison.
- In family law cases, consideration needs to be given to protecting the right of women in custody to breastfeed.

Human Rights Charter

- There is need to clarify the extent to which United Nations (UN) charters are being implemented in Ireland.

Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

- The Government should report on its reservations of CEDAW and where appropriate, a schedule for lifting these reservations should be outlined.
- There is need for an awareness raising campaign on CEDAW and its Optional Protocol as part of the process of preparing the Fourth Government Report under CEDAW.

- There is need for a concrete plan to ensure widespread legal literacy with respect to human rights instruments and agreements, with particular attention to the human rights of diverse groups of women in Ireland.
- The Government should consult with the committee assigned responsibility for women's rights and equality issues in the new Dáil, prior to submitting the Fourth Report on Ireland under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women as required by the United Nations.
- Reservations were expressed about CEDAW's perceived discrimination against women in the home and calls on the Government not to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. This view also rejects CEDAW's response to the Irish Government submission (1999).
- The response states that it considers that the persistence on the emphasis on the role of women as mothers and care-givers constitutes a serious impediment to the full implementation to the convention.
- The response of the CEDAW committee to the Irish Government's submission (1999) — to the effect that the persistence of the emphasis on the role of women as mothers and caregivers constitutes a serious impediment to the full implementation of the convention — must be rejected.

International Dimensions

- A Human Rights Officer should be appointed in every country.
- There is need for a mechanism involving relevant Government Departments and agencies to ensure the full inclusion of women's human rights concerns in the reporting of the Government to the United Nations and related agencies.
- There is need for Irish employers to become involved in the United Nations (UN) Global Compact Initiative (This is a voluntary initiative in July 2000 which called on business leaders, trade unions and NGOs to unite behind a set of values for human rights labour standards and the environment).
- Ireland should ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination.
- The Irish Government should support the adoption of core labour standards in dealing with World Trade Organisations (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.
- There is need to examine the effects of World Trade organisation policies and the European Union (EU) Common Agricultural Policy on the human rights of women in developing countries and where such rights are being undermined, taking steps to address them.
- The European Convention on Human Rights should be incorporated into domestic law.
- Countries becoming members of the European Union (EU) should have to demonstrate that women are equal to men in respect to human rights in their countries.
- There is need to ensure that there is a gender dimension to the proposed anti-racism directive under Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty.
- The Irish Government should put pressure on the European Union (EU) to oppose the practice of child prostitution and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- Ireland's agreement with Nigeria should be reviewed in the light of human rights violations.

- A symbol for women should be created by women to signify the human rights of women and this should be known nationally and internationally.
- Serious reservations were expressed about CEDAW's discrimination against women in the home, and the Government is called on not to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW.

Women's Rights in Developing Countries

- Irish Government should use its role on the United Nations (UN) Security Council to promote and protect the human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan and to involve Afghanistan women's organisations in the delivery of such assistance.
- The Irish Government should lobby for the recognition of international women's human rights, for example, support the recommendations of the Beijing +5 Review to put an end to honour killings, forced marriages and to eliminate dowry related violence.
- The Irish Government should support and resource education work on women's human rights.
- The Irish Government should mainstream gender equality policy in Ireland's Aid policies.
- The Irish Government needs to ensure that humanitarian aid is directed to women.
- The Irish Government should put pressure on China to respect women's rights, particularly with regard to the imposition of the 'One Child' policy and the consequent abortions forced on mothers.
- Economic aid or structural or development funds for the advancement or the empowerment of women must not be conditioned on acceptance of contraception, sterilisation or abortion or promotion of them or on programmes or initiatives to reduce family size or population, either in aid funds being sought by Ireland, or to which Ireland is a contributing party.

Research

- There is need for an audit of women's experience of the court system and legal profession.

Indicators — How Can Progress be Measured

- The degree to which legislative and constitutional reform is introduced to progress the right to work, accommodation and participation.
- Trends in the number of women who are homeless and the number of women and children in sheltered accommodation.
- The length of time a woman is on a local authority waiting list for accommodation.
- Increase or decrease in HIV/AIDS incidences in Ireland.
- Changes in legislation in developing countries on women's rights in the area of equal salaries, maternal leave, labour rights, economic independence, sexual harassment in work, domestic violence, divorce, abortion, inheritance, goods, access to bank accounts and loans, freedom of movement and the right to vote.
- Whether there is legislation in place which bans Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- Whether there is education and awareness training programmes in place on the issue of FGM.
- Whether there is gender guidelines in place for women seeking asylum.

Women and the Media

Media Strategy

There is need for a comprehensive media strategy in relation to women. In this regard there is need:

- For education and training for media professions.
- To ensure equal representation of women in the media.
- To promote a gender perspective in the media.

Statutory Press Council

There is need to establish a statutory Press Council to oversee and monitor all aspects of the media including:

- Education and training of media professionals (incorporating a feminist model).
- Ensuring equal representation in the media at all levels where news value decisions are made.
- Promoting a gender equality perspective with regard to the portrayal of young women, girls and older women, so as to eliminate dehumanising images and promote diversity.

Gender Proofing

- There is need for a statutory body to regulate the media and for that body to take account of gender perspectives.
- Ageism in the portrayal of women in television needs to be addressed and eradicated.
- There is need for age awareness training for all media personnel.
- Restriction on gender focused advertising in the television or print media, for example, page three advertising should be disallowed. Women are still portrayed as dumb, young and beautiful or old and grumpy.
- The Equality Authority should receive adequate funding to promote a balanced and non-stereotypical portrayal of women in the media.

Gender and Equality Proofing and Consultation with the Women's Community Sector

- There is need to publish the outcomes of poverty proofing and gender proofing legislation and of policy formulation relating to public service broadcasting. There is need to specify how the proposed legal protection, regulation or policies provide for the reduction and prevention of poverty.
- There is need to establish and adequately resource an ongoing process of consultation between public service broadcasting bodies and the community and voluntary sector, including groups concerned with issues of poverty and the promotion of the social equality of women.
- There is need to ensure that public service media policies and practices incorporate and reflect the following:
 - the equal rights of entitlement of socially excluded groups and individuals to a public service broadcasting service
 - the equal right of socially excluded groups and individuals to avail of the service, to full information about the service and to have an input into decision-making regarding the service.
- There is need to finance and support the voluntary and community sector and the adult and community education sector to provide media training for women, in particular women experiencing poverty and disadvantage.
- There is need to include representation from community and voluntary agencies, and in particular groups and networks that work with and support women experiencing poverty in national and local strategies to promote Information Technology (IT) for all.
- There is need to target for IT training groups experiencing poverty and social exclusion, including women and minority groups of women and to provide resources to promote 'IT for all'.
- The area of community broadcasting needs to be properly resourced.
- A programme of funding is required for women's groups to set up web sites and computers for local access so that everyone can access the Internet.

Representation of Women on Decision-Making Structures

- There should be equal representation of women and men on the Censorship Board, on the Broadcast Complaints Authority and on Radio Television Éireann (RTÉ).
- There is need to ensure that decision-making structures relating to public service media reflect, by right, women of varying classes, ages, races and abilities in their membership.

Employment of Women in the Media

- There is need to include more women as commentators in specialist areas.
- There is need to increase the number of women presenters, producers, film makers, writers and critics.

Women's Programming

- The Public Service Broadcasting stations should develop a women's programming agenda and provide specific hours of women's programming.
- Women should be allowed to run small transmitted local radios, short-radius without regulation and with Government providing air waves and transmitters in the same way it provides computers to schools.
- There is need for a greater balance of regional programmes which include women and farming and rural issues.
- More programmes on female health should be broadcast on television.
- More "local" issues need to be raised in newspapers and television. Local women's views on issues should be reflected in media coverage.
- The role of women and women's groups in Northern Ireland should be given more media coverage.
- There needs to be more of a focus on how media decisions are made about which issues are newsworthy, how stories are structured and reasons for covering stories in an adversarial way. It is a matter of concern that the Irish media virtually ignored women's rights violations in Afghanistan before the US conflict began.
- There is need for greater coverage of women's sporting events such as camogie and football.

Portrayal of Women and Girls

- The images portrayed of nurses in the media are damaging to the self-esteem of nurses and support the dominance of the male, medical hierarchical model. Nurses are portrayed as women in white, a sex symbol, a handmaid to a male doctor, as a battle-axe with aggressive and unfeminine traits, as a clipboard nurse doing nothing except paper work. Funds should be made available to nurses and midwives to commission television and radio programmes that promote positive images of nurses.
- There is need for a screening mechanism in news rooms to ensure that women are appropriately portrayed.
- There is need to monitor the content of magazines targeting young girls.
- Personnel hygiene advertising which is offensive to women should be removed from television.
- The women's sector should meet with trade unions representing journalists to develop acceptable standards in reporting violence against women.
- Computer games in many instances represent young boys playing games where there is routine violence to girls. Companies producing such games should be regulated and parents should monitor the games which their children play.
- The media should be proactive in promoting a positive image of women of larger sizes.
- To a large extent, myths, images and language relating to women are controlled by commercial interests who reproduce them in the mass media. Research studies demonstrate the negative implications for health, mental well being and self-image of those constantly subjected to violent imagery. Christian and pre-Christian stories from our Irish heritage provide role models of strong, creative women. These stories and images of women must be reclaimed.

- Organisations, which seek to research and mine these resources for women's empowerment and make them available for use in various media, including rituals focusing on positive experiences of women's life-cycles, should be supported.

Training and Education

- There is need for a feminist/women's issues module in all media training courses.
- The capacity of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) to provide media training for women should be developed. There is need for courses for women's groups on the structures of the media and how to access programme makers.
- Media studies should be part of the second level curriculum with a particular focus on the impact on young women of unreal media images of beauty, assertiveness and attractiveness. Courses should help to develop critical viewing skills of young people.
- There is need for parenting courses to help parents to deal with the demands of children who have been manipulated by the media.

Public Awareness and Campaigns

- Government should run a media campaign on television, video and audio, presenting people in non-stereotypical roles.
- There is need to create greater public awareness of complaints procedures and mechanisms available to women regarding complaints against the media.
- There is need for public education campaigns to eradicate the prevailing image of women from the developing world and of disabled women, as objects of charity rather than as subjects of their own development and contributors to society.
- There is need for more awareness programmes in the media on disabled women.
- There is need to promote greater debate at governmental level on the effects of the media on body image.
- There is need to invest in public education outlining the dangerous effects of dieting and poor nutrition.
- There is need for programmes with positive images of the family.

Pornography and Abusive Images of Women

- Legislation is needed to eliminate the portrayal of physical and sexual abuse of women for entertainment.
- There is need to review current definitions of pornography and encourage greater debate on what constitutes pornography.
- The term media should include the Internet which is becoming the largest source of pornography.
- The effectiveness of the recent pornography legislation should be reviewed.
- There is need to develop a nationwide campaign which gives parents information on the child pornography hotline.

- The Child Trafficking and Pornography Bill 1997 should be amended to make it a criminal offence to knowingly make available material of level (b+) to a person who is not legally allowed to purchase such material.
- “Soft” pornography on a continual basis in advertising and programmes changes the threshold of what is acceptable. This needs to be addressed.
- Sexually explicit stereotypical images of women of level (c+) should be classified as incitement of hatred and discrimination for the purposes of the European Commission’s work on the protection of minors and human dignity in audio visual and information services.
- The reporting of rape cases in the media should be more sensitive. It is often depicted from a male perspective.
- Advertising on bus shelters, hoardings, etc., and on television, which portrays women in near-nude and explicit poses which demean women and depict them as ‘sexual objects’ must be vigorously objected by all decent people.

The Internet

- The responsibilities of the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland should be extended to on-line services in anticipation of media convergence.
- There is need for a State Internet Service Provider to provide a controlled portal for parents, schools and libraries.
- Internet providers should support and implement the new code of practice and ethics for Irish Internet service providers.

Advertising Code of Ethics

- There is need for a code of ethics in advertising to regulate stereotyping of women, violence against women, how body image of women is portrayed and ageism in the media.
- There is need for a code of ethics to regulate stereotyping larger people, the negative portrayal of the Traveller community and ethnic minorities.
- There is need for a code of ethics to regulate the portrayal of violence which creates an environment where sexual exploitation is accepted.
- There is need to examine how body image of women is portrayed and the impact of advertising on body image and health.
- There is need for health warnings regarding products which promote extreme dieting.
- There is need to restrict control of products that affect the body’s metabolism.
- There is need for an annual award for responsible advertising.
- There is need to introduce greater control of sponsorship by pharmaceutical and other health care companies to reduce the risk of misguided product bias.
- There is need to legislate against sexist advertising.

Regulation of Advertising

- There is need for an information campaign regarding the work of the Advertising Standards Authority.
- There is need to regulate the market in sexually exploitative material and the use of sexually exploitative imagery in promotional material and advertising for the following reasons:
 - it fosters a hostile environment for women by promulgating the notion that a woman's status is defined by her body and its desirability.
 - it contributes to prejudice against women by suggesting that all women and girls secretly wish to submit sexually for the pleasure of the male viewer.
 - it is complicit in sexual crimes against women and girls, both in its intrinsic placing of women as passive sexual objects and in its positioning of men as consumers of passive sexuality.
- Advertising aimed at children should be better regulated.
- A content scale for sexually explicit stereotypical images should be adopted for all media including print, advertising, audio visual, on-line and broadcast services.
- Publishers, importers, hosts and distributors should be made responsible for rating of individual items against the contents scale. In the case of a publication containing multiple images, the entire publication will be classified according to the highest rating image.
- A separate Value Added Tax (VAT) rate should be introduced for materials, which meet sexually explicit content criteria. This will enable the monitoring of commercial sales.
- Market-specific zoning restrictions should be introduced which would not permit the supply of (b+) material within a one mile radius of a school.
- Retailers of level (b+) material should be licensed.
- Promotional material, advertisements, magazine covers, book covers, and video covers on display, both indoor and outdoor where the general public have access should be controlled so as not to exceed level (a).
- Advertising standards should be reviewed in order to ensure representation of women in a positive manner.
- Advertising which commercialises women or which sells products through exploitation of sexuality should be banned. Companies, which flaunt this ban, should be sanctioned.
- Companies should stop using women to promote cars and drink.
- Advertising should reflect the changing role of men in both their careers and as equal home makers. They should reflect non-traditional households, such as lone parent households.
- Advertising on bus shelters and hoardings which portrays women in near-nude and explicit poses which demean women and depict them as “sexual objects”, should not be permitted.

Eating Disorders and Slimming Products

- Eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia nervosa are coping mechanisms. They develop in response to a distorted belief system. There is evidence that how women are represented in the

media effect women's self image and body image.¹² The forms of media most relevant to the development of body image are the print media i.e. magazines, tabloid and broadsheet newspapers, billboard advertising and the non-print media which include television and cinema. There is need to develop a code of ethics to underpin the work of these industries. This code of ethics should be developed in consultation with women's groups, youth organisations, health professionals with a specialised knowledge of eating disorders and other interested groups.

- There is need for a campaign to increase awareness within the media of the impact both positive and negative these industries have on body image. Young girls feel pressurised to conform to the stereotyped image and are dieting at increasingly younger ages.
- An annual award for responsible advertising, both in industry and as part of a media literacy programme in schools, should be established.
- There is need to promote greater awareness and understanding of eating disorders among the general public and among those involved in the provision of services for people with eating disorders.
- General Practitioners (GPs) should receive more education in regard to nutrition and health issues related to slimming products.
- The sale of laxatives should be regulated. Laxative abuse is a highly dangerous and an addictive practice which can have fatal results.
- There is need to continue to operate strict controls of products which effect the body's metabolism and aid weight loss.
- Advertising in the print and non-print media should use a range of bodily shapes and sizes, which reflect reality and age appropriate models. Advertising of "sexualised clothing" aimed at young girls should be monitored.
- There is need for more consideration to the use of extremely thin models in the media.
- There is need to increase the minimum age for modelling to eighteen years.
- There is need to challenge the practice of airbrushing, as this practice constitutes a misrepresentation, even a distortion of reality leading to the internalisation of a non-attainable ideal.
- Health warnings regarding the dangers of yo-yo dieting and poor nutrition should be included in advertisement for diet products.
- There is need to avoid stereotyping larger people and older people.
- There is need to place less emphasis on weight loss/gain of celebrities.
- There is need to allocate more resources to specialist services for people with eating disorders.

Mid-Wifery and Child Birth

- Birth is commonly portrayed in the media and in films as an acute emergency where the woman's life is saved by medical intervention. Affirmative action programmes are needed to give women the means to correct this distorted and disempowering view of birth.

¹² *Eating Disorders, Body Image and the Media*, British Medical Association, May 2000; Lisa M. Gresz, Michael P. Levine, and Sarah K. Murnen, *The Effects of Experimental Presentation of Thin Media Images on Body Satisfaction: a Meta Analytical View*, 2002.

- The gender based stereotyping of childbirth in the media which reinforces male medical power over women in childbirth needs to be corrected. Midwives are often missing from the scene, while women giving birth are depicted as frightened, passive and helpless. Women should be funded to depict birth in the media in terms of how they experience it.
- Whenever maternity care is being discussed in the media, mothers and midwives should be given similar access to the media as doctors.
- Health programmes and features films should include maternity care and maternity care coverage should include both service users and midwives.

Breast Feeding

- Television and radio programmes, especially “soaps” should be used to promote breastfeeding as a normal and healthy way to feed infants.
- There is need to encourage media portrayal of breastfeeding as achievable for women of all cultures and socio-economic groups.

Children’s Programme

- There is need for more suitable education and entertainment programmes for children before nine p.m.

Media Policy for Island Communities

- The Department of Arts, Culture, Gaeltacht and the Islands should develop a comprehensive strategy regarding women and the media between now and 2005.

Lone Parents

- There is need for more positive images of lone parents in the media. They are often depicted as inadequate.

Women and Sports

- A content analysis of five national Irish newspapers over a ten day period indicated that over 97 per cent of photographs on the sports pages were of men with women making up less than 3 per cent¹³ by 2006, 15 per cent of photographs in Irish newspapers should be of women.
- There is need to increase the coverage of women’s sporting activities.

Traveller Women

- Travellers are almost always presented in the media in a negative light. Newspapers refer to Travellers’ ethnicity when it is not relevant and usually only when something negative has happened.
- Media reporting is one-sided only focusing on Travellers. In terms of dumping rubbish, the media portrays Travellers negatively. It is one-sided in its focus and does not focus on the problem of the dumping of rubbish by other sectors of the population.

¹³ The survey was carried out by the Dublin Sports and Recreation Council, 2002.

- The Guideline of the National Union of Journalists on Race Reporting state “only mention the word gypsy or Traveller if strictly relevant or accurate”. These Guidelines should be developed into legally binding codes of practice in conjunction with the Equality Authority and adopted by media institutions.
- A Watch Dog should be established to monitor how minorities are represented in the media and to compel the media to have fair and balanced coverage of issues.
- The incitement to hatred legislation needs to be radically reviewed in order to successfully prosecute racism in media representations.
- Cultural diversity and interculturalism should be part of the core curriculum of journalists.
- Traveller women should be trained in media production to enable them to create media images, stories which offer their viewpoints on issues and society.
- In developing the Community Advocacy Programme as outlined in the Equal Status Act, the Government should name Traveller women as one of the groups whose interests need to be protected and developed.

Women from Minority Ethnic Groups

- Women from ethnic minority groups should be represented on the RTÉ Authority, the Board of TG4 and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission.
- RTÉ should develop a code of practice which reflects the concerns of women from minority ethnic groups.
- There is need for positive action measures to promote positive coverage of minority women in the print media, on radio and on television.
- There is need to provide adequate resources for the development of multi-cultural journals, newspapers, radio and television programmes.
- Women from minority ethnic groups should be trained in media skills.
- There is need to establish a quota for the employment of women from minority ethnic groups in the media.
- There is need to include women from minority ethnic groups as presenters, programme makers and interviewers in all aspects of the media.
- Refugee organisations should be funded to present and produce their own programmes.
- There is need for greater visibility of Black and women from other ethnic minority groups in the media.
- There is need to monitor racism in the media.
- The public needs a better understanding of the reasons why asylum seekers and refugees seek refuge in Ireland.
- A “media watchdog” should be established to monitor how minorities are represented in the media.
- There is need to provide resources to groups working with women from minority ethnic groups to develop media responses and strategies.

- The “Know Racism” campaign should specifically publicise the difficulties encountered by women from minority ethnic groups.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- Negative stereotyping of lesbian and bisexual women exists in language and images in all forms of media, which in turn reinforces homophobic attitudes within society. The Radio and Television Act 1988 required the Independent Radio and Television Commission (IRTC) to formulate and apply a policy that would ensure plurality of ownership and diversity of content in broadcasting services. In June 2001 the IRTC (set up under the Radio and Television Act 1988) published a Consultation Document called *Regulating for Pluralism and Diversity in Broadcasting — The Way Forward*. This document does not mention lesbian and bisexual women or sexual orientation. There is need:
 - to actively promote positive representation of lesbian and bisexual women in all forms of media to include TV, film, radio, newspaper, magazine, Internet and billboard advertisements.
 - to make it a requirement of the national broadcasting station (RTÉ) to increase equality based programming specific to lesbian and bisexual women.
 - for lesbian and bisexual women to be included in any programme that seeks to regulate for pluralism and diversity in broadcasting.
 - for publicly funded media to undertake anti sexist and anti-homophobic work with all staff.

Older Women

- There is need for positive role models and images of older women in the media. They should not be portrayed as either a drain on resources or as servicing the needs of others. This latter perception has come to include minding grandchildren to allow daughters to re-enter the workforce.

Disabled Women

- There is need for a specific programme on disabled women in the media.
- There should be more images of disabled women in the media. The language used in the media needs to be acceptable to disabled women.
- Disabled women should be employed in the media as reporters, journalists and presenters to ensure that more accurate images of disabled women are presented.
- Disabled actors should play the part of disabled people.
- Codes of practice need to be drawn up in terms of reporting on and depicting disabled women.
- There is need for positive media images of people with intellectual disabilities and there is need to highlight their issues.
- A “media watchdog” to monitor how minorities are represented in the media should be established.
- There is need to encourage the media to represent the woman first and then the disability. Representing the disability first and then the woman assumes a medical model of disability. People with disabilities are portrayed as “super hero” or “super dependent”. They should be portrayed as “ordinary”.

Research

- There is need to research the barriers to women accessing employment in the media.
- There is need for research on the portrayal of women in the media.
- There is need for a national survey to examine how women perceive how they are portrayed in the media.
- Research on the impact of the media on body image should be undertaken.
- There is need for research on whether or not violent images in the media causes an increase in the incidence of violence.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

- There is need to develop gender equality indicators to measure:
 - any correlation between pornography, sales and attitudes to women, incidence of violence against women and domestic violence within the State.
 - any correlation between the introduction of measures limiting use of sexualised images of women in commercial communications and attitudes towards women, incidences of violence against women and domestic violence within the State.
- The degree to which there is gender balance on all issues, political, economic, cultural and social in the media.
- The degree to which there is ongoing review of the standards in advertising and other forms of media especially in regard to how women are portrayed. Newstimes, features and programmes generally should be reviewed.
- Whether or not legislation has been introduced to eliminate the portrayal of physical and sexual abuse of women for entertainment.
- Increased visibility of Black and minority ethnic women in the media.
- Increased funding for asylum/refugee media outlets.
- The percentage of airtime devoted to women in science and technology.
- By 2006, 15 per cent of photographs in Irish newspapers should be of women.

Women and the Environment

Agenda 21¹⁴

- There is need to implement in full the commitments made in Agenda 21 to ensure the participation of women.
- There is need to develop a more holistic approach to building sustainable communities, based upon an active participatory process as the current system of sustainable development with an emphasis on pollution is inadequate. Women should be central to developing this process.
- There is need to carry out a review of Local Agenda 21 plans. Local authorities should resource poorer women to build their capacity to be actively involved in the review, implementation and monitoring of Local Agenda 21.
- There is need to undertake an eco-audit to look at overarching themes such as the relationship between culture and the environment, economy and the environment and the built environment and work management.
- Women should be adequately resourced to participate actively in Local Agenda 21.
- There is need to establish mechanisms by which community groups can participate more fully in decision-making in relation to such issues as waste management, the ratio of public spaces and playgrounds to housing density, public transport and disability access.

Public Campaign and Education

- There is need for a broad based national public campaign to promote a cleaner, greener environment.
- There is need for education on safe measures for waste management.
- There is need for broad based education programmes regarding pollution.
- Environmental education should be an integral part of all formal education.
- School programmes should promote the importance of the rural environment and coastal environment.
- There is need to increase awareness of the dangers on the farm yard from machinery, farm yard chemicals and electrical installations.

¹⁴Ireland, along with many countries, signed the United Nations Charter (UNCED) in Rio in 1992. It became known as Agenda 21 as it identified four strategic principles of governance in the 21st century: the integration of policy; citizen participation; institutional capacity building; and global partnership. Local authorities in each signatory country are required to engage in consultation with local communities to achieve consensus on a local agenda plan. In Ireland each local authority was required by the National Sustainable Development Strategy to prepare a Local Agenda 21 plan and these were completed in 2000.

- There is need to educate fishermen regarding recycling and the disposal of waste products at sea.
- The Department of the Environment and Local Government should work with women's groups to form strategies to minimise household waste and to change attitudes to littering and waste.

Community Facilities

- There is need to monitor the compliance of local authorities relating to their obligation under the Planning and Development Act, 2000. This requires them to include in their Development Plan services for the community including schools, crèches and other education and childcare facilities.
- There is need to plan for open spaces in built-up environments. Green spaces and play areas should be available in all housing developments.
- There is need for more play facilities for children of all ages and playgrounds that are safe and exciting.
- Playgrounds need to be maintained and meet required safety standards.
- There is need for crèche facilities in supermarkets, women's clinics and schools.
- There should be more local day centres for older people in all areas.
- There is need for more social outlets and recreational and sporting facilities for families on low income.
- There should be reserved parking in shopping centres for pregnant women and women with children.
- There is need for more community Gardaí and routine patrol by Gardaí.
- Many older people are afraid of living alone for fear of illness, loneliness and robbery. There is need for collaborative work between local voluntary and statutory agencies and the Gardaí to provide an effective network of surveillance and supports, and to provide reassurance to older people.
- There is need for better planning, lighting and policing to ensure that women are safe on the streets and in parks.
- Older people should be encouraged to have adequate alarm systems and security lighting.
- Neighbourhood watch should be implemented all over the country.

Transport

- There is need to develop a high quality national urban and rural transport system.
- Public transport should be accessible to older people, to mothers with prams and to wheelchair users. There is need to install a lift in all train and DART stations to ensure that they are accessible. Taxies should be accessible to disabled people.
- Low deck buses allow wheelchair and pram access, which is of benefit to the mobility of women with children and older people. These should be available on all routes at frequent intervals.
- Bus services should not be withdrawn from areas without discussions with local residents.
- Existing rail networks should be upgraded and some railway stations which have been closed should be reopened to facilitate commuting to larger towns and cities.
- There should be a lower tax/insurance relief for a second family car where the woman is full time in the home and living in an area where there is no public transport.

- Dublin Bus has negotiated Quality Bus Corridors on several routes on an understanding that the frequency of buses on these routes will be increased to a frequency of every three to six minutes. Monitoring should be undertaken to assess that Dublin Bus is delivering on their commitment.

Rural Areas

- There is an absence of job opportunities in many rural areas and there is need for more industry.
- There is need for more third level colleges in rural areas.
- There is need for adequate street lighting in villages extending outwards on the roads so that women feel safe.
- There is need for more street bins in rural towns.
- There is need for centres for disposal and recycling of paper and clothing in all rural areas.
- There is a lack of safe footpaths for people in rural areas.

Closure of Services

- The closure of Garda stations, banks and shops and the threat to withdraw rural post offices and chemists from rural areas needs to be reversed. Members of rural communities depend on rural post offices to carry out daily business. Any reduction or closure of rural post offices is unacceptable. There is need for a clear commitment to stop the closure of post offices in rural areas.
- The withdrawal of local services from rural areas particularly impacts on older people. This needs to be taken into consideration in policy development.

Planning Permission

- Farm families should be allowed to build on their own land in rural areas.
- The discrepancies in planning procedures between different local authority areas need to be reviewed. In some areas, families who wish to remain in the area cannot get planning permission on their own land. This needs to be addressed. There is also a belief that in some areas, planning permission is linked to political affiliation.
- The criteria and procedure for planning permission in rural areas needs to be simplified and made more transparent. The present difficulties experienced by many families has prevented families from settling in rural areas.

Derelict Housing

- In areas where there are a high number of derelict houses, local authorities should purchase these houses and sell them to young families in need of housing. Tax concessions should be available to these families.
- Local authorities in conjunction with health boards should undertake an annual audit of housing stock in disrepair in rural areas that are occupied by older people, and information on available grants should be given to occupants.

Public Transport in Rural Areas

- A comprehensive publicly funded rural transport system needs to be put in place to ensure that the cost to rural dwellers of accessing jobs, education and health services is no greater than that of the cost of their city-based counterparts.
- The Rural Transport Initiative being piloted in some rural areas should be adapted and extended to other rural areas.
- In the absence of adequate rural transport women and children can find it difficult to access essential services. Free transport for people over 66 years of age is of no value. A voucher scheme should be introduced for taxis and hackneys or other forms of transport.
- There is need to upgrade sub-standard school buses and to re-examine the routes which school buses take.
- Greater use should be made of school buses to respond to the needs of the wider community.
- There is need for incentives for private providers to provide public transport in rural communities.
- Transport for people accessing training and education programmes in isolated rural areas should be subsidised.
- Greater interdepartmental co-operation is needed at Government level to ensure an effective transport system in rural areas, including the approval of routes, the use of bus pass and the licensing of vehicles. There is also need for greater co-operation between the twenty six counties and Northern Ireland to ensure ease of movement across the border.

Small Land Holders

- There is need for policies to enable small landholders to remain in farming. The demise of small farmers will have significant effects on the rural environment.

Farmyard Dangers

- There is need for increased awareness of the dangers of the farmyard. Women need to learn how to lift heavy loads, know about the dangers of farm yard chemicals and take care with machinery and electrical installations.

Water in Rural Areas

- All homes in rural areas should be connected to properly maintained water schemes. There is need for uniform inspection of water schemes in rural area so as to ensure clean good quality water supplies.
- There should be a mandatory testing scheme for all new wells and new water systems to ensure standardised quality water in all areas.
- An audit of water quality in lakes, wells and rivers should be undertaken to test for pollution.

Forestry

- Government incentives to engage in forestry should be reviewed.
- The impact of afforestation on many areas under afforestation should be taken into consideration by policy makers. Some afforestation areas are not environmentally friendly places to live as they keep out the light and create a sense of extreme isolation.

- The negative effects which lorries carrying timber from the forests have on roads should be taken into consideration in policy development.
- Developers who fell trees should be obliged to replant.

Organic Farming and Home Composting

- There is need to support and subsidise organic farming and horticulture to keep prices low and encourage consumption.
- There needs to be greater support for organic livestock in order for it to satisfy European Union (EU) regulations.
- An agency should be created, along the lines of the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to assist local organic producers. The role of the agency should be reviewed regularly.
- Grants should be made more widely available to local women's groups to encourage small organic industries.
- There is need for more information on Genetically Modified (GM) food.
- Genetically Modified (GM) crops should not be subsidised.
- There is need to control slurry smells from slatted houses.

Disposal of Dead Farm Animals

- It is now obligatory to have diseased animals inspected and disposed of. Cattle are often lying dead for a week and then transported in open lorries which are a health hazard. These issues need to be addressed.

Roads

- There is need for consistency of road standards throughout the country.
- There is need to introduce higher penalties for speeding on roads and reduce speed limits on narrow country roads.
- There is need for more traffic calming measures and road humps near schools and in residential areas.
- Local authorities need to improve the standard of maintenance of country roads.
- There is need to reduce the traffic passing through inner cities.
- There is need for more traffic calming measures in village and rural areas.
- School buses should have "stop indicators" on the front and rear of buses. Traffic should be made to stop when school buses are letting children on and off the buses.
- There should be cycle/walk lanes in every county.
- Access roads to beaches should be maintained and sanitary facilities provided.
- There is need to maintain by-roads and to cut hedges and to ensure visibility on winding roads in rural areas.
- Trees should be cut and pruned to ensure safety on roads.
- There is need for proper bus shelters at all official bus stops.

- There is need to ensure proper clearing of drains so that roads do not get flooded.
- There is need to improve sign posting on roads.
- Figures from the Irish Energy Centre suggests that traffic congestion is costing the Irish economy approximately €952 million a year through accidents, pollution and health related damage.
- There is need for a ban on drinking and driving.

Environmental Health

- Telecommunications masts should be removed from areas of population and sited in isolated areas.
- All gas, electricity and telephone wiring systems should be put underground.
- There should be no pylons erected above the ground.
- The impact on health should be taken into consideration in decisions relating to planning applications for mobile phone masts and incinerators.
- Incinerators which emit poisonous gases should be banned.
- Non-toxic materials should only be used in incinerators.
- There should be more open and honest debate regarding incinerators and all alternatives should be explored.
- There should be continuous monitoring of all industrial emissions.
- There should be a limit on the noise level of loud music in public places.
- There should be noise control in places of entertainment.
- The true cost of products which damage the environment should be estimated in terms of increasing health costs and other medical conditions such as asthma.
- Aerosol products should be discontinued.
- There is need for the Government to adopt a policy to reduce the use of pesticides, especially organo-phosphates so as to reduce long-term hidden health costs.
- Ireland should ensure that there is a complete ban on all banned chemicals and medicines to the developing world.
- Toxic waste and increased levels of radioactivity cause disabilities. Everyone should have the right to live in a safe and healthy environment.
- There is need to reduce the biological content of detergents.
- There is need to reduce the CFCs in deodorants.
- The battle to close Sellafield should be intensified because of its particularly negative effects on the health of women and children.
- The Government should lobby for the closure of Sellafield.
- The Government should test soil and water frequently to monitor the emissions from Sellafield and the results should be widely available.
- Women should be employed in the jobs relating to the environment.

- Rights of non-smokers should be upheld and they should continue to have access to smoke-free public areas, buildings and separate accommodation.
- Sun beds should carry a health warning.

Waste Management

- A sustainable waste management strategy should be implemented immediately along the line of Nova Scotia's Waste Resource Management Strategy.

Support for Natural Renewable Energy Sources

- Natural renewable energy sources, such as environmentally friendly wind-power, tidal, hydroelectric and solar schemes should be supported.
- Environmentally friendly cleaning methods, for example the use of steam cleaners for carpets and ovens, should be promoted.

Biodegradable Products and Eco-Friendly Products

- Biodegradable products should be promoted and they should be compulsory in relation to such items as silage covers and nappies.
- Nappy manufacturing companies should be encouraged to use biodegradable materials.
- There is need to promote the use of environmentally friendly building materials. Projects which use eco-friendly materials and design should be prioritised for funding by the Government and other funding organisations.
- Domestic pollution effects the health and safety of our environment. There is need for more information to be made available on domestic pollution and to encourage good practice at household level.

Recycling Facilities

- There is need to provide national recycling facilities for all waste materials.
- There is need to provide centres for disposal of and recycling of paper, clothing, cans and glass in all areas. In most rural areas there is no provision for paper recycling. Recycling facilities should be disability and age proofed.
- Local authorities should have a statutory obligation to provide recycling options for waste disposal.
- Glass recycling plants should be kept open.
- There is need for more regular collection of recyclable materials from residential and business areas.
- There should be a tax on single-use batteries and short-life bulbs.
- There is need to access best practice models from other European Union (EU) countries with regard to recycling /environmental practices.
- Women should be targeted for education on waste management, with particular emphasis on their role as consumers in reusing, reducing and recycling waste. It is important that women make sustainable consumer choices.
- Product refills should be more widely available.

- Any group, institution or body set up by the Government or in receipt of Government funds, should be required to prepare and carry out a resource-management plan to limit waste and increase recycling.
- Compost bins and “green” bins should be delivered to all households.
- Local authorities should provide grants for eco-friendly materials for building.
- Schools should be provided with free or subsidised recycling bins. The practice of schools displaying a green flag outside the school to acknowledge their commitment to recycling should be promoted.

Labelling of Products

- Food should be labelled by country of origin.
- There should be stricter and stronger controls on ingredients of food products to ensure that they do not negatively impact on the consumer.
- There should be precise, clear labelling on all products to show the impact on the consumer and the environment.

Packaging

- Legislation should be put in place to make biodegradable packaging compulsory for industry.
- There should be less packaging and penalties should be imposed on manufacturers for excess packages.
- Money from the sale of plastic bags should go towards recycling.

Refuse Collection and Litter

- There is need for more consumer friendly refuse collection methods. In many rural areas, people have to wheel bins long distances to main roads. Older people should not have to pay for refuse collection.
- There is need for more litter wardens to enforce laws relating to litter and the dumping of waste. Local people should report offences of dumping rubbish and littering to the relevant county council. There is need to clarify who the public should contact regarding complaints regarding litter.
- There should be heavy fines for littering the countryside with plastic bags and silage sacks.
- The law should be enforced in relation to neighbourhoods being soiled by dog foul which is a health hazard.
- Charges for refuse collection should be abolished.

Breast Feeding

- Pollutants and toxic substances including dioxins and polychlorinated biphenyl's (PCB) should be controlled so that they are not found in food and in our bodies. This is especially relevant to women and babies because the unborn child is more at risk.
- Provision should be made for random testing of women and children for dioxins and other toxic chemicals in blood and breast milk.

Food

- There is need for an environmental policy on food quality and beverages.

- There is need for an environmental policy on cleaning fluids.
- Genetically Modified (GM) food should be banned and subsidies should not be given to farmers who are growing GM crops.
- There is need to regulate the use of sprays and insecticides used in growing vegetables.
- There is need to regulate the use of hormones in food.
- There is need to review the stringent restrictions on home produced food for sale.

Water

- There is need for good quality water supplies in all areas.
- Fluoride should be removed from the water system.
- Landfills should be located away from water sources.
- An audit of water in lakes, wells and rivers should be undertaken.
- Water quality throughout the country should be strictly monitored and controlled.
- All tap water should be made safe for consumption.

Housing

- There is need to introduce penalties on speculators for holding on to property and land at a time of housing shortage.
- There is need to ensure that houses are not built on flood-plains.
- The United States model of “housing gift programme” for derelict houses should be investigated.
- All new housing developments should be bio-friendly.
- Housing should not be built unless there is proper sewerage and drainage systems in place. There is concern that many new housing developments are proceeding without these systems in place.

Local Authority

Supply

- There is need to significantly increase the building programmes of local authorities to reduce the current waiting lists so that no one is on a waiting list for more than a year.
- There is need to review and increase targets for social housing under the National Development Plan (NDP).
- Direction should be given at the highest political level to the Planning Group under the Department of the Environment and Local Government which is developing a new local authority rental scheme to ensure that its work on supply issues are addressed.

Quality of Housing

- There is need to reduce the extent of social segregation in housing, which leads to the social exclusion of low-income families.
- There is need to improve maintenance programmes in local authority housing estates.

- There is need for a stronger commitment by local authorities to involve communities in estate management.
- There is need for the Gardaí to build positive relationships with young people and with communities to combat vandalism.
- There is need for a more proactive programme to prevent drug related activities in Dublin communities.
- An audit should be taken of existing local authority housing stock. Minimum requirements for each house should include effective central heating systems. Damp and poorly heated accommodation impacts negatively on the health of families.

Grants for Refurbishment and Extensions

- There is need for local authorities to take on a more proactive role in providing information on grants available for refurbishment of older people's houses.
- Families with large numbers of children who need to extend their houses should receive a grant.
- Families who are accommodating a second family unit and need to extend the house, should be eligible for a grant.

Anti-Social Behaviour

- There is need for an effective procedure to deal with anti-social behaviour and disturbances in local authority accommodation. Present procedures are ineffective.

Other Issues

- There is need for more women Housing Officers to assess priority housing lists of local authorities.
- The voluntary sector which have a remit to respond to the needs of homeless women should be included as equal partners in the policy making process.
- It is important that homelessness is recognised as a structural problem arising from inequalities in our society. Women can often feel blamed for being homeless. Government must make the provision of local authority and affordable housing an urgent priority as homelessness cannot be eliminated without the provision of housing.
- Single women should be given access to local authority housing.

Emergency Accommodation

- Refuges/safe houses should be available to all women who are experiencing violence within a reasonable distance of their home.
- The quality of emergency accommodation available to homeless women needs to be addressed.
- Homeless people should be involved in decision-making in relation to emergency hostels. Participatory methodologies need to be developed to make participation meaningful.
- It is unacceptable to place women and children who are homeless in Bed and Breakfast accommodation.

Transitional/Supported Housing

- There is need to increase the provision of transitional housing for vulnerable groups of women such as homeless women, women experiencing violence, women exiting prison, women using drugs, women in prostitution and women with a mental health problem.

- There is need for small scale supported housing schemes in all villages.
- There is need for an appropriate range of supported housing to be provided for older people.

The Private Rented Sector

- There is need to review the rights of tenants in the private rented sector and to regulate the private rented sector.

Rent Levels

- The recommendations of the Commission on the Private Rented Sector should be implemented and in particular the Private Residential Tenancies Board should be set up to examine rent levels.
- The review of the reasonable rent limits of the Supplementary Welfare Allowance which determine the maximum amount payable through the Rent/Mortgage Interest Supplement should take account of the rent charged in the private sector.

Discrimination in the Private Rented Sector

- The difficulties and discrimination which women with children, and women who are dependent on Rent/Mortgage Interest Supplement have in accessing private rented accommodation needs to be addressed.
- Refugees/asylum seekers, lone parents and lesbians also experience discrimination from private landlords. People who are discriminated against need to be supported to challenge discrimination in the private rented sector under the Equal Status Act, 2000. Changes in the law are needed to make “class actions” possible. Employment status and social class should be included in the Equal Status Act as grounds for discrimination.

The Community Welfare Service

- There is need for written guidelines on what items are available under the Community Welfare Service.
- Practical help such as assistance with finding a flat, paying deposits and providing lists of landlords taking rent allowance, should be provided to people.

Private Ownership

- There is need for improved mortgage relief on houses below €250,000.
- There is need for significant reduction in stamp duty.

The Employment of Women in Planning

- Women should be involved at senior level in the planning of communities and support services. They should be involved from housing design to the provision of adequate transport or shopping and school services.
- More women should be employed in the management of the environment.
- There is need to increase the number of women architects, planners, engineers and women in trades as women have a better understanding of how to manage and design the environment. Designers and planners need to move from “house design” to “home design”.

- There is need to employ women in environmental projects under the social economy initiatives.
- Women, because of their natural and inbuilt nurturing role, have a particular concern for the environment and they should, therefore, be empowered to participate in all aspects of the planning of environmental strategies. Women should be encouraged to be aware of their essential part in the protection of the environment and in promoting respect for the world around us.

Women and Sports

- Sporting organisations need to address the traditional assumption that men have the right of first choice of facilities. Men get access to court and pitches on the day and time of their preferred choice.
- Childcare facilities need to be available at sporting centres.

Traveller Women

- There is need for all local authorities to adopt an anti-racist code of practice.
- There is need to include gender impact statements in the implementation of the accommodation section of the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community.
- There is need to circulate gender-mainstreaming guidelines to all local authorities.
- Traveller women should be involved in the design of Traveller accommodation and the local authority Traveller Five-Year Accommodation Programme should be implemented and this Plan should be extended beyond five years.
- Traveller women should be resourced to participate in Local Traveller Consultative Committees.
- Travellers should have greater access to local authority housing.
- Halting sites are usually located in inappropriate and high risk areas that are either in close proximity to a dump, sewerage, a pylon or a main road. More appropriate locations, which are safe and inhabitable, must be allocated to Traveller families.
- Local authorities should provide serviced halting sites within each county and develop a strategy for waste management including having a skip which is emptied regularly.
- There is need to provide crèche facilities and childcare facilities on Traveller sites.
- In building halting sites, a permanent brick facility should be constructed as part of each mobile site. This permanent structure would contain a kitchen, laundry and dining area, toilet and showers. Each unit should have its own garden area. Each site should have a children's/youth centre where homework support could be provided. Rubbish collection should be provided at least twice a week and dumping or tipping by non-residents should be prohibited.
- A scheme should be introduced by local authorities which would enable families to replace and/or upgrade their mobile homes or caravans every five years.
- A local authority accommodation exchange scheme should be established to facilitate Traveller families to relocate to another area.
- The practice of giving local residents a veto over whether or not a Traveller family moves to a local authority house is unfair. It is also considered unfair that Travellers cannot keep animals in their garden and have to pay an additional €11.00 per week if they want to keep a caravan in their garden for recreational purposes. This latter penalty does not seem to apply to ordinary residents.

- There is need for structured interdepartmental co-operation to address the issues facing Traveller women effectively.
- The Housing Act 2001 should not be enacted and no evictions should take place until the Traveller Five-Year Accommodation Programme is implemented.

Disabled Women

- Disabled women need access to accessible housing.
- Local authorities and other institutions should have dedicated staff members to disability proof their premises, activities, literature and practices.
- Codes of access and certification should be mandatory for all public buildings, facilities and services including roads, footpaths and parking facilities. There should be better signing for parking spaces for disabled people. Disabled women should be consulted by local planners and councils regarding facilities.
- All new houses should be wheel chair accessible on the ground floor.
- Lifts should be provided in all apartment blocks.
- There is need to monitor building regulations to improve accessibility of the built environment.
- There is need to enforce existing building regulations with respect to access.
- There should be modules on disability for student architects and engineers in designing the built environment in order to ensure accessibility for all members of the public.
- There is need to increase Government grants towards adaptation of buildings to make them accessible.
- There should be no means testing for house alarms for disabled women.
- Grants should be made available to all home owners. Although they may not be disabled themselves, they may wish to have their homes adapted to receive visits from disabled friends.
- In designing traffic lights and dished pavements, there is need to take the needs of disabled people into account.
- There is need for a nationwide disability awareness programme of the difficulties which disabled people encounter by the fact that many public buildings and car parks are not accessible to disabled people. The needs of disabled people should be taken into consideration when planning public buildings and facilities.
- All footpaths should be free of obstruction to ensure access for wheelchair users and buggies.

HIV Positive Women

- HIV positive women need access to good quality, warm housing with access to refrigeration for medication. Many are living in poor accommodation and some in damp conditions.
- HIV positive women are also living in hostel accommodation which is overcrowded and where people share bathroom facilities and kitchen areas. Overcrowding impacts on privacy, impacts significantly on physical and mental well-being, and can cause extreme anxiety.

Lesbian and Bisexual Women

- Local community development groups should provide resources and support for lesbian and bisexual women.
- Community groups mission statements should include a commitment to provide a space free of homophobia for lesbian and bisexual women.
- Positive action and outreach is needed urgently in particular for lesbian and bisexual women with disabilities.
- Hostels should accommodate the particular needs of lesbian and bisexual women.
- Lesbian and bisexual couples should have the same rights as married heterosexual couples to Public Housing Lists.
- Lesbian and bisexual women who have been made homeless because of homophobia should be given priority on Public Housing Lists.

Lone Parents

- There is need to increase housing allocations for lone parents.

Older Women

- There is need for a range of housing options for older women. This range of options should include sheltered housing.
- There is need to increase social housing for older people nearer to villages and towns.
- The conditions and standards of nursing homes and social housing projects provided for older people should be regularly monitored.

Women Who Experience Violence

- Refuges/safe houses should be available to all women who experience violence within a reasonable distance of their homes.
- Transitional and long-term supported housing also needs to be available.
- Women who leave home because of violence should have priority on a housing list.

Women who Use Drugs

- There is no refuge or safe house for women who are actively using drugs and alcohol and are experiencing domestic violence. There is need for women recovering from drugs to have access to refuges and to other safe and warm accommodation.

Women from Minority Ethnic Groups¹⁵

- There is need to create participative structures whereby women from ethnic minority groups can participate in policy development in relation to the environment.

¹⁵Issues relating to Traveller women are addressed in a separate section.

- Statutory agencies should address the issue of racism within the private rented sector.
- Refugees and asylum seekers have difficulty accessing private rented accommodation and many experience racism from landlords. Statutory agencies should offer support to refugee and asylum seekers to find suitable accommodation.
- The current system of dispersal and Direct Provision denies asylum seekers fundamental human rights. It is discriminatory and promotes physical isolation and disempowerment. There should be an end to Direct Provision and all asylum seekers should be treated in the same way as Irish citizens in relation to social welfare.
- Direct provision denies HIV positive asylum seekers basic privacy and confidentiality in the context of their treatment regimes.
- The management of Reception Centres should not be sub-contracted to private companies.
- The management of Reception Centres and hostels needs to be improved and personnel should have language skills.

Research

- There is need for research into the presence of pollutants in the air.
- Air quality should be monitored. The results of this monitoring should be communicated regularly to all citizens.
- There is need for research on the effects of mobile phone use on personal health and the environment.
- Research needs to be carried out on the impact of nuclear power stations on the environment.
- There is need to research the causes of autism and the link between autism and environmental factors.
- There is need to fund Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) to explore the link between environmental pollution and women's health.
- There is need to undertake research on the gender dimension of housing and on the link between environment and public health.
- There is need to undertake research on the gender dimension of housing and on the link between bad housing and public health.
- Research should be carried out on the effects on the consumer of fluoridation in the water supply. Results should be made widely available.
- Research should be carried out on the quality of bottled water and the impact of the lack of regulation on bottled water.
- There is need for independent research on the effects of Sellafield on the environment.
- There is need for research on innovative methods of recycling.
- There is need for research into the number of women who are homeless and the number of women with children who are homeless. A review needs to be undertaken of the accommodation available to homeless women and the safety of women in Bed and Breakfast and emergency hostels.
- The Equality Authority should research discrimination against single women with children who claim rent allowance, by landlords.
- There is need to research models of public transport in rural areas.

Indicators

Recycling and the Environment

- Availability of recycling services.
- The number of litter awareness programmes in schools, both primary and secondary level.
- Whether or not Sellafield is closed.
- The percentage of women at different levels within environmental organisations for example, the Environmental Protection Agency and local authorities.
- Percentage of women working as higher level engineers and as higher level scientific officers within the environmental departments of local authorities.

Housing and Local Services

- Quality of housing and the extent to which affordable housing is available.
- Progress in ensuring an effective and efficient transport system city-wide and nationally.
- Number of pensioners using vouchers to avail of local transport services.
- Increase or decrease in access to affordable transport.
- Whether or not people in rural areas have access to rural transport.
- Increase/decrease of the number of rural post offices.
- Increase or decrease in social isolation.
- Social participation such as participation in arts, local culture and heritage.
- Provision of care for older women.
- Levels of childcare and elder care facilities.

Access

- Access to services and facilities, such as health centres, shops, schools, post offices, parks, sporting and leisure facilities for all age groups of women.
- Disability access to accommodation, facilities, transport and amenities.

Crime Rate

- Crime rates and fear of crime.

Trade Policy

- Impact of trade policy on nutrition in the population.

The Girl Child

Explicit Recognition of the Rights of the Child

- The human rights of children and the girl-child are explicitly laid out in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child,¹⁶ which is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. The Convention views the child not solely as dependent, pupil, consumer or person in need of protection, but as an individual with his/her own set of human rights. These rights need to be respected.
- The Government should give more explicit recognition to the rights of the girl-child and young women in laws, policies and practices, particularly as outlined in the United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- There is need to explicitly recognise the rights of the child. This includes the right of the child:
 - To live in an environment safe from all forms of violence.
 - To an adequate standard of living.
 - To have access to housing and health and education services.
 - To have access to both parents, even if one resides outside of the country.
 - Not be subjected to Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) or forced sterilisation.
 - Not to be trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation.
- Additional resources should be provided to organisations promoting the rights of young people.
- Youth and community organisations working on mixed gender projects and applying for funding should demonstrate how they are promoting the rights of both girls and boys. There should be increased funding for projects which seek to promote the voices and skills of girl children.
- In Scotland, children's informed consent, as age appropriate, is required for medical or surgical treatment. This initiative should be examined.
- There is need to ban corporal punishment by parents.
- There is need to challenge the practice in Ireland of land being passed on to the male child. This is a denial of the rights of girl children.

¹⁶Government obligations to ensure the human rights of the girl-child are also laid down in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights, amongst others.

The National Children's Strategy

- The National Children's Strategy is a document of importance and should be disseminated to all organisations and professionals involved with children.
- There is need for the National Children's Strategy to set specific goals, objectives and measures aimed at girl children because of the gendered nature of child development.
- There is need to implement the commitments in the National Children's Strategy aimed at protecting children from abuse and exploitation. These commitments include the full implementation of the Children First Guidelines and the expansion of treatment and counselling services for children who have suffered abuse.

Violence and Sexual Exploitation

- There is need to ensure the implementation of commitments under the Stockholm Declaration and Agenda for Action aimed at combating the commercial sexual exploitation of children.
- There is need to ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography which came into force on the 18th January 2002 and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict which came into force on the 12th February 2002.
- There is need for legislation to ban Female Genital Mutilation in Ireland.
- Specific services for children damaged by witnessing domestic violence are needed. These include child care work within refuges, group based programmes and specialised counselling services for children damaged by witnessing domestic violence.
- Instruction in self defence should be available to all young girls in school.
- Penalties for convicted pornographers, abusers and paedophiles should be increased.
- In order for girl children to feel safe there is need for a zero tolerance campaign against violence and to educate society towards equality between boys and girls.
- All forms of physical punishment by parents should be banned.

Children in War Situations

- Children in war situations have the right to special protection from taking part in or experiencing or witnessing direct acts of violence, insofar as is possible. Girl children should be protected from being exploited by members of conflicting factions or active combatants in war situations.
- Girl children should be protected from rape as a weapon of war.

Child Poverty

- There is need to reduce the number of children in poverty and to establish a bench mark for an adequate income for children including the minimum support to be paid in Child Benefit.
- There is need to ensure that the incomes of poor children remains ahead of inflation, and in line with wages.
- Consistent child poverty should be abolished by 2007.
- The number of children in income poverty should be reduced by half in ten years and fully in twenty years.

- Mothers should be available to respond to the needs of the Girl Child and should be able to do so without undue financial pressure of governmental policies to make herself available for the labour market.
- In tackling the poverty of girl-children and young women, policies need to reflect the changing needs of girls as they move through the life cycle.
- There is need to create mechanisms and supports that facilitate the participation of girl-children and young women experiencing or at risk of poverty in the formulation of policies and the development of programmes that impact on their lives.

Abortion

- Abortion is an act of direct aggression against the girl child in the womb, and a direct and gross violation of the fundamental human right to life of the girl child.

Participation of Young Women and Girls

- There is need for fora where young women and girls can participate in discussions on issues affecting them.
- Paragraph 12.3 of the Draft National Plan for Women relating to national goals in regard to “listening to children”, should include a reference to Student Councils as set out in the *Education Act, 1998*.
- There is need to develop education provision that meets the changing needs of girl children and young women. Girls and young women experiencing or at risk of poverty should be involved in the development of such provision.
- The self-aware, strong woman provides role models as mother, teacher, partner, and worker for the girl child. Organisations, which focus on enabling women to grow in self-awareness and strength, and who base this on deepening the secure foundations of the inner-self through workshops, conferences, meditative practices or other means should be given public support.

National Youthwork Development Plan

- The National Youthwork Development Plan should be resourced and implemented.

Policy Guidelines for People Working with Young People

- There is need to ensure that all organisations and service providers working with young people have operational policy guidelines that ensure the safety and well-being of children and that the rights of the child are respected, facilitated and protected. Such guidelines should cover:
 - safe recruitment practices.
 - safe management practices and policies.
 - detailed actions to be taken when an allegation of child abuse is made against an employee or volunteer.

Child Protection

- Awareness needs to be raised of the Children’s First Document.
- There is need to reduce the waiting list for child protection services and there is need to ensure that professionals are available to work with children with protection needs.

- There is need to ensure the availability of professionals to work with voluntary and community organisations.
- Training in child protection should be given to voluntary and community organisations.
- Issues relating to child protection need to be covered in greater depth in third level colleges.
- There is need to ensure that a Garda clearance is in place for every professional working with children.

Awareness Programmes

- There is need for gender awareness in schools.
- There is need to promote an awareness of the equal value of girls to boys, particularly in relation to inheritance and education.
- The stereotyping of the “girls” roles needs to be addressed at all levels of society and there is need for a greater division of sharing of household tasks in families.
- Girl children have a right to be educated and directed by their parents, and in their home, on any matters relating specifically to sex and sexuality. If this is not possible, then some other suitable person/persons should take on that responsibility, under the authority and careful supervision of the parents. Such education must always be dictated by the stage of development of the girl child and her particular needs at a given time.
- There should be more opportunities for girls to get involved in community drugs awareness/prevention activities.
- There should be a comprehensive drugs/alcohol education in all schools every year up to Leaving Certificate level.
- There is need for the Gardaí to visit schools to raise awareness about violence against girl children and children in general. A feminist perspective as embraced by Women’s Aid should be used in education and prevention programmes about violence.
- Health information in schools should include information on the importance of breastfeeding for children’s health and women’s health.
- Women’s community education projects should raise awareness of the use of girl children for the purpose of producing cheap consumer goods for the west.
- The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform should establish a Unit to develop policy, programmes and information strategies that meet the needs of young women.

Education

Gender Education

- The Department of Education and Science should take responsibility for raising gender awareness in the socialisation of children.
- Cross gender choices should be supported. Positive actions should be undertaken to encourage girls to participate in male dominated areas.
- A gender component should be integrated into all courses at third level colleges. It is not satisfactory to confine gender studies to women’s studies.
- The *Exploring Masculinities* curriculum in schools should be mainstreamed.

- A pilot programme should be devised and run in primary schools, which allows young children to begin to examine gender identity formation. This programme could in the long-term be made part of the quality framework for early children education.
- The *Relationships and Sexuality Education* curriculum should be reviewed and a component inserted about power in heterosexual relationships and forms of coercion used by boys and men in their relationships with girls.
- School books should reflect the diversity of families in Ireland today.
- There is need to encourage girls to see high achieving as positive and to build self esteem, particularly in relation to their male counterparts.
- Boys should be educated about sex education separately from girls. They should be challenged on the types of coercion that they use in relation to girls.
- The rights of the girl-child (and of all children — girls and boys) are subject, in their exercise, to the legitimate authority, including the moral authority, of their mother and father or, in the absence of their parents, those guardians recognised by law who act *in loco parentis*.

Tracking System

- There is need to implement the *Education (Welfare) Act* and support the establishment of a tracking system to monitor the progress of each child within the education system. This would highlight the needs of specific groups, for example, teenage mothers, children with disabilities and members of ethnic and racial minorities.
- A data base should be established to track the link between teen pregnancy and early school leaving.

Other Educational Issues

- There is need for a national plan for early childhood education based on a holistic approach to the development needs of all children and on the principle of equality of opportunity of access.
- All children should have the right to avail of post primary education, unhindered by religious, or social prejudice, the needs of the market or the local economy.
- Many young girls in rural Ireland are on school buses for up to three hours a day. There is need to provide them with hot school meals/hot soup at school.
- Pre-schools need to be better resourced and should be free for all children from the age of three.
- There is need for more youth clubs, which have developmental activities for young people as an alternative to pubs.
- The income threshold for third level student grants should be increased and the level of grant should be reviewed.
- Analysis of the causes of armed conflict should be incorporated into the school curriculum.
- Conflict resolution should be part of the school curriculum.
- The girl-child has a right not to be compelled, coerced or otherwise forced to attend classes or instruction, or to have to endure a curriculum, which is not in conformity with, or respectful to, the moral and religious convictions of her parents and that conflicts with the moral or religious life of the family and home. This must also be the case in relation to boys.

Health

Inequality in the Health System

- There is need to end the two tier health system of care which continues to discriminate against children by providing or denying access to care not on the basis of need but on the grounds of ability to pay.
- A Medical Card should be provided for all children and young people under the age of 18 years.

Parenting Courses

- All parenting courses should be gender proofed and should incorporate opportunities for parents to learn about gender identity formation and ways to contribute to the development of the full potential of their daughters.

Health Education

- There is need to educate girls about the importance of nutrition and exercise as the best means of preventing ill health.
- The level of eating disorders among young girls and young women should be assessed and included in all health care strategies. Awareness should be raised regarding healthy body weight and the prevalence of over weight and obesity and diabetes. Healthy eating should be promoted among young girls.

Sex Education

- A holistic approach to sex education should be developed. Young women should have the right to information on: contraception as a preventative health care measure; the risk of sexually transmitted disease; and the risk of cervical cancer and chlamydia.
- Chastity, and modesty in dress, should be promoted and encouraged for young girls.
- Young women and girls should have the right to information on the dangers to their physical and mental health of contraception and abortion.

Alcohol and Tobacco

- Up to the age of 15 years Irish children compare favourably with the average in other countries on such factors as smoking, alcohol consumption and exercise. There is a deterioration of the patterns of health in the later teen years for boys and girls. There is need to implement the recommendations and commitments that relate to children in the Health Strategy, the National Alcohol Strategy, the Regional Tobacco Control Strategy and the Tobacco Free Policy Review Group.
- There is need for more innovation and resources in relation to prevention, specialised addiction treatment and after care services aimed at young people, both in and outside of the school setting.
- There is need for anti-smoking programmes which focus particularly on young girls.
- There is need for alternatives to the “bush tavern” which involves drinking in parks and woods. The traditional youth club is not appropriate and new and innovative measures need to be developed in both urban and rural Ireland.

Other Health Issues

- There should be increased funding provided to health boards for recruitment of social workers and students studying social work should be provided with special grants.

- Many young girls from their mid teens are working for long hours in smoky pubs to finance second level education and third level education. This constitutes a health risk to young girls. Legislation on permissible working hours should be enforced.
- There should be a ban on children in pubs after six o' clock in the evening.
- When mothers are ill, young girls often remain at home from school to look after the family. There is need for the health board to put in family support services in these instances.

Support to Parents

- Courses in parenting skills should be provided at local level.
- There is need for school programmes to help teen fathers to develop a positive attitude to parenting and family planning.
- There is need for increased support for young mothers.

Fashion Industry

- There is need to encourage the fashion industry to design and promote age appropriate clothing and footwear for young children.
- There is a need to encourage the fashion industry to provide relevantly modest clothing for young girls.

Sports

- There is need for more promotion of sport and outdoor activity for young girls and teenagers.
- Improved sports facilities suitable to girls need to be provided, such as adequate indoor facilities and play areas designed for the younger child.
- There is need to ensure that adequate and non-discriminatory levels of support and resources are provided to ensure that girls are enabled to participate in sports and sports programmes on a full and equal basis to boys.
- School teachers need to be more aware of the how boys create game play, which is hierarchical and competitive, while young girls pursue more non-competitive activities. Teachers need to be trained to respond to both how boys and girls pursue play and sporting activities.

Separate Legal Representation

- There is need to provide separate legal representation for children in court, where this is appropriate.

Children in Care

- There is need for resources to ensure that appropriate care placements are in place and that there are comprehensive after care services for all those who leave care.
- Over 60 per cent of children in care are from families comprising separated, widowed, and lone parent families. To minimise the need to place children in care there is need to provide funding for adequate family support services, mental health services and addiction services.
- There is need to ensure the full implementation of the Children's Act, 2001. If Ireland is to meet the requirements of Articles 37 and 40 of the United Nations (UN) Convention, appropriate

detention facilities need to be provided for female offenders under 18 years of age who are considered a danger to themselves or society.

- In recent years a large number of children have been before the courts that have extreme behavioural difficulties. This has highlighted the inability of the care system to respond appropriately to the needs of these children before their behaviour has reached a “crisis point”. There is need to promote innovative community-based early intervention services and structured programmes for the identification, assessment and treatment of children with emotional and behavioural problems, as outlined in the National Children’s Strategy.
- Children in long-term care should have the option of being adopted.
- There is need to provide mentors for children in care.
- More funding should be invested in fostering.
- There is need to increase the funding for “leaving care schemes” in order to respond to the needs of young people leaving the care of health boards and Special Schools.

Girls and Young People who are Homeless

- Homelessness should be recognised as a structural problem arising from inequalities in our society. The number of children in families who find themselves homeless continues to rise. Focus Ireland found that 1,202 families including 1,260 children were accommodated in emergency Bed and Breakfasts in Dublin in 1999. The Eastern Regional Health Authority (ERHA) statistics (2001) recorded that 1,019 children stayed in refuge accommodation in 2000.
- The Strategy on Youth Homelessness (2001) recorded that more girls than boys presented themselves as homeless to health boards in 2000. Once homeless, even for a short period of time, young people tend to lose contact with families, schools and support networks. Survival on the streets often requires young people to engage in begging, petty crime and prostitution. They may become “encultured” into a street life closely linked to drug use and criminal behaviour. There is evidence of widespread sexual exploitation of young people by male adults, leaving young women vulnerable to abuse. These issues need to be addressed.
- Non-adult, appropriate, safe accommodation should be provided for homeless girls and funding should be ring-fenced. Drop-in centres, youth services, counselling and access to education and training for them should be provided.
- There is need to include measurable targets and timetables for the quickest possible end to the practice of homeless children being accommodated in Bed and Breakfast and refuges.

Teenage Mothers

- Issues relating to teen mothers are dealt with in Section Two on Education and Training of Women.

Lesbian and Bisexual Girls

- Lesbian and bisexual girls grow up in an environment of assumed heterosexuality, which may result in isolation, alienation, low self-esteem, bullying and mental health problems. Despite advances in equality legislation and sex education programmes in schools there is no obligation on educators to discuss sexual orientation in such programmes. Sexual orientation should be part of all sexuality or relationship education programmes in schools.

- Sexuality and relationship programmes should be a mandatory part of all primary and secondary schools' curricula. All teachers should be educated around the issue of sexual orientation.
- The National Youthwork Development Plan should address the needs of young lesbians and there should be adequate youth work services for young lesbians. In particular the national voluntary youth work organisations, youth information centres and special projects for disadvantaged youth should address their needs.

Children and Young Girls from Ethnic Minority Groups

- There is need to target girls from minority ethnic groups for youth work programmes.
- There is need for a realistic level of assistance towards school uniforms to allow adolescent girls from minority ethnic groups to finish secondary school.
- There is need to promote intercultural and anti-sexist values, practice and ethos in schools.
- There is need to consult with girls from minority ethnic groups on appropriate responses to meet their needs.
- There is need to reform the Direct Provision system to ensure that asylum-seeking children enjoy the same basic rights as other children living in Ireland, in line with the principle of non-discrimination outlined in the UN Convention. Recent research has documented the negative impact of the present system of "direct provision" which is causing ill health among babies and malnutrition among pregnant women. There are also significantly higher mortality rates for new-born babies of asylum-seekers and refugee mothers than among infants born to Irish mothers.
- Appropriate accommodation should be provided to asylum seekers to enable adolescent girls to enjoy privacy.

Unaccompanied Girls Seeking Asylum

- There is need to highlight the vulnerable position of the unaccompanied girl-child. A relatively new category of children in care are unaccompanied children seeking asylum. The majority (90 per cent) of these children are placed in adult hostels. Some of these children are as young as 14 years of age. They are referred to schools and other appropriate services through a specially assigned social worker or project worker. However, most of the time they are unsupported. They shop and cook for themselves and spend their leisure time unsupervised.
- Health boards need to develop appropriate accommodation and support services which are gender-specific for unaccompanied girls seeking asylum.

Girls and Young Women from the Travelling Community

- Traveller children are a minority within a minority experiencing the ill effects of inadequate accommodation, poor living standards and are vulnerable to ill health and poor physical development. Young Travellers are often raised in extremely poor living conditions, with no safe play space and nowhere to crawl. 50 per cent of the population is less than 15 years of age and 40 per cent are less than 10 years. There is need to set out specific targets regarding the well-being of Traveller girls.
- Traveller girls should have the right to celebrate and live in accordance with their culture and identity without fear of discrimination and marginalisation, as stipulated by Article 30 of the United Nations (UN) Convention.

Voice of Traveller Girl

- The voice of the Traveller child should be heard and inform work with Traveller children.
- Travellers organisations should be resourced to enable them to represent the interests of Traveller girls at local, regional and national level.

Education

- Traveller children should have access to an intercultural curriculum in the education system, where equality of access, participation and outcome for all Traveller children are ensured.
- Education and training offered to girls should be linked to employment opportunities.

Childcare

- Traveller girls, as with Traveller women have domestic responsibilities including childcare. The provision of good quality childcare reduces the burden on Traveller girls. All childcare facilities should adhere to anti-racist and anti-sexist codes of practice and promote cultural diversity.

Policy Developments

- The specific needs of Traveller girls should be prioritised in the National Youthwork Development Plan taking into account the cultural and gender needs of Traveller girls.
- The legislation to create the position of Ombudsman for Children must be cognisant of the needs of Traveller children and Traveller girls.
- The National Children's Strategy should specifically name and address the needs of Traveller children and Traveller girls.
- The Early Childhood Education Agency should name and prioritise the needs of Traveller children and Traveller girls.

Girls with a Disability

- Significant geographical variations exist in relation to the availability of support services such as therapies, assessment services and development services, for disabled people. These services are often urban based. There is need to improve access to services as outlined in the Report of the Commission on the Status of People with Disabilities in order to facilitate the active participation of children with disabilities in society.
- There is need to reduce waiting lists for assessment.
- There is need to ensure that sufficient professionals are available to work with children with physical disabilities.
- There is need to ensure that sufficient professionals are available to work with children with intellectual disabilities.
- There is need for more speech therapists and occupational therapists.
- Additional resources for remedial teachers are needed.
- There is need for more residential care places.
- Girl-children with disabilities have a right to find in the home and school, an environment, both physical and social, suitable to the needs of their development.

Family Supports and supports for Community Organisations

- There should be family support workers for families with children with severe disabilities.
- Additional respite services and day care services are required.
- Support should be given to community organisations dealing with children with intellectual disabilities.
- Support and training should be provided to community organisations addressing the needs of children with physical disabilities.

Education and Youth work

- There should be equality of choice for girls and girls with a disability in second level education.
- There is need for a realistic level of assistance towards uniforms, books, personal assistants and adaptive aids to allow disabled girls to finish secondary school.
- Relationship and sexuality education should be available to disabled girls on the same basis as non-disabled girls.
- There is need for more practical realistic sex education in schools, and young women with a disability should have access to sex education.
- There is need to target disabled girls in youth work programmes.

International Affairs

- The Government should pursue at international level the education of the girl child in developing countries. A minimum legal age for school leavers should be set.
- The importation of goods using child labour should be banned.
- Through our membership of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the Government should encourage developing countries to ratify the Convention on minimum wage and minimum age.
- Ireland will sit on the executive board of UNICEF for the first time in 2002. Ireland should use this opportunity to continue to promote the education of girls as a priority within UNICEF programmes and particularly to promote the empowerment of women and girls to enable them to make choices.
- The Government should bring pressure on international Governments where child abuse such as child labour and children working in hazardous work, is widespread.
- The Government should take positive action to influence multi-national corporations not to trade with companies which use child labour.
- The Government should campaign at an international level against all forms of violence and sexual abuse of girls such as circumcision of girls, forced sterilisation of women and girls and forced abortions.
- The Government should campaign at an international level to ensure an end to child and girl child slavery globally.

Research and Monitoring

- There is need for further research to examine the gender differences in the development of boys and girls and how boys and girls experience being children. This should be done as part of the “whole children” perspective outlined in the *National Children’s Strategy*.

Violence

- Research is needed on the impact of domestic violence on children including girls.
- The girl-child, in particular, must be protected from all forms of pornography and sexual exploitation of any kind, as well as from any other form of exploitation of the vulnerability of the girl-child. Any infringement in this regard must be adequately and severely punished.

Diverse Groups of Girls

- There is need to undertake research on the needs of young girls from minority ethnic groups.
- There is a need for research on the well-being and needs of unaccompanied children seeking asylum.
- There is need to monitor the impact of the Youth Work Act on the situation of girls from minority ethnic groups.
- Research should be undertaken on the needs and rights of the Traveller girl.
- There is need for research on the impact of the care experience on children in care, their siblings, parents and communities and in particular on the mother and the mother's future ability to parent her child.

Research Methodology

- Participative research methodology should be encouraged when researching the experience of children.

Statistical Data

- Data relating to children in health, education and other sectors should be disaggregated by sex, age, disability and membership of an ethnic minority.

Indicators to Measure Progress on the Advancement of Women

- Percentage of girls and boys who are victims of sexual assault and/or physical and sexual abuse.
- Number and sex of children trafficked both reported and prosecuted cases.
- Number and sex of children engaged in prostitution.
- Increase or decrease in the reporting of all forms of child abuse.
- Number of boys and girls leaving school early.
- Numbers of girls participating in social activities such as youth clubs and sports.
- Increase or decrease in child poverty.
- Increase or decrease in teenage pregnancy.
- Increase or decrease in youth homelessness.
- Increase or decrease in the number of children accommodated in Bed and Breakfast and in refuges.
- Increase or decrease in alcohol and drug abuse among young people.
- Legislation in place which bans Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- No reported cases of FGM.