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GENDER INEQUALITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Executive's Programme for Government contains a commitment to bring forward, consult on and implement cross-departmental policies to tackle gender inequality within a strategic framework for the period 2001-2003. The Gender Equality Unit within OFMDFM has committed itself to publication of a Gender Strategy by December 2002. This paper provides a background to policy making in relation to equality between men and women and highlights key areas where statistics indicate that equality between men and women in Northern Ireland could be progressed.

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SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

The remit of the Gender Policy Unit within the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) covers equality between women and men, people with and without dependants, people of differing marital status, and people of differing sexual orientation. The Unit has committed itself to publication of a Gender Strategy by December 2002

This paper provides a background to policy making in relation to equality between men and women and highlights key areas where statistics indicate that equality between men and women in Northern Ireland could be progressed. The following key facts emerge from the available data:

- **Childcare** provision in Northern Ireland is improving, but 90% of public sector employers and 96% of private sector employers do not provide assistance.
- Women are less likely to be **economically active** than men (44% of those currently in employment are women and 40% of female employees work part-time); almost 90,000 women in Northern Ireland choose not to enter the labour market because of family/home commitments.
- Women are under-represented in 13 out of 17 government **training** and employment programmes, with lowest representation (15%) in New Deal 25+.
- Females are more likely than males to participate in **education** beyond age 16 and to achieve at a higher level, particularly in literacy.
- Women are more likely than men to be **employed** in the service sector and in lower paid jobs (only 31% of all managers and senior officials are women).
- Men in full-time employment **earn** 27% more on average than women in full-time employment.
- Women are more likely to experience **poverty** than men (almost two-thirds of all income support claimants are women).
- Over 7,100 women were victims of recorded **violence** against the person and sexual offences in Northern Ireland in 1998/99.
- Female **children** remain vulnerable with the number of recorded cases of indecent assault against them rising by 26% to 342 in 2000/01 (although the rise in the number of recorded cases of indecent assault against a male child was even greater at 56% on the previous year).
- Women are more likely than men to report feeling stressed and to show signs of **depression** (24% of women showed signs of depression compared with 17% of men).
- Women are clearly under-represented in positions of **power** in Northern Ireland.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Executive's Programme for Government contains a commitment to bring forward, consult on and implement cross-departmental policies to tackle gender inequality within a strategic framework for the period 2001-2003. The Gender Equality Unit within OFMDFM will be taking the lead on developing this strategy. The remit of the Gender Policy Unit within OFMDFM covers equality between women and men, people with and without dependants, people of differing marital status, and people of differing sexual orientation¹. The Unit has committed itself to publication of a Gender Strategy by December 2002. This paper provides a background to policy making in relation to equality between men and women² and highlights key areas where statistics indicate that equality between men and women in Northern Ireland could be progressed.

2. POLICY MAKING AND EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITY BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

2.1 The issues which effect equality of opportunity between men and women, not only in the workplace but in the wider society, are well known. Whilst over the last thirty years the legal status of women in Europe³ has undoubtedly improved and women individually and collectively have made huge gains, effective equality is far from being a reality. Women are still:

- employed in low pay low status jobs;
- paid less than men for work of equal value;
- the victims of poverty and unemployment⁴ more often than men;
- discriminated against in social protection systems;
- more likely than men to suffer chronic and acute ill-health;
- marginalised in political and public life; and
- frequently subjected to violence.

2.2 When analysing women's situation in society it is clear that different policy areas are inseparable. It is not possible to deal with issues of economic character and employment separately from issues around societal responsibility for care and issues of social protection. In recognition of this, therefore, an approach to policy making which has come to be termed *mainstreaming* has developed. The European Union,

¹ The Gender Policy Unit's remit does not include Sex Discrimination Legislation, which is the remit of Anti-discrimination Unit II. Its remit does however cover monitoring 'NI compliance with EU and international obligations'.

² As differences between men and women cannot be separated from their role in society as carers and their family responsibilities, the paper does not consider separately equality between those with and without dependants and people of differing marital status.

³ The European Commission recognises that law is insufficient in itself to promote de facto equal opportunities. The Commission therefore has made efforts to promote specific measures aimed at promoting equality between women and men, through successive multi-annual action programmes designed and implemented in partnership with the Member States. (<http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c00006.htm>).

⁴ The 'real' level of female unemployment is often hidden by unemployment figures derived from the claimant count.

a driving force for equality between men and women not only in terms of legal status, describes mainstreaming in the following way:

Gender mainstreaming involves not restricting efforts to promote equality to the implementation of specific measures to help women, but mobilising all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account at the planning stage their possible effects on the respective situation of men and women (gender perspective). This means systematically examining measures and policies and taking into account such possible effects when defining and implementing them.⁵

2.3 The European Union has adopted what it refers to as a 'dual approach' to address strategically the issue of inequalities between men and women. This approach combines the integration of a gender perspective into all European Community policies and programmes (gender mainstreaming) with specific actions in favour of women (as expressed in the Amsterdam Treaty). For example, equality is being mainstreamed into Structural Funds, as regulations now state that funds must 'help to eliminate inequalities and promote equal opportunities'⁶. An example of an action oriented specifically to women is the DAPHNE programme 2000-2003 which was adopted on December 1999. The programme is designed to promote gender equality by seeking to protect female victims, both women and girls, from violence.

2.4 In July 2000, the Commission of the European Communities published 'Towards a Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005)', which underlined the importance of the dual approach to tackling gender inequality. To ensure that its effectiveness could be assessed, the framework strategy was based upon: clear assessment criteria; monitoring tools; the setting of benchmarks; gender proofing; and evaluation. The framework strategy identified the following 'five inter-related fields of intervention' (within which operational objectives were to be pursued):

- promoting gender equality in economic life;
- promoting equal participation and representation;
- promoting equal access and full enjoyment of social rights for men and women;
- promoting gender equality in civil life; and
- promoting change of gender roles and stereotypes.

2.5 At the Nice Summit in December 2000, the 15 EU Member States signed The European Charter of Fundamental Rights as a political declaration. Article 23 of the Charter (which may be taken into account by individual national law courts and the European Court of Justice but it is not legally binding) is entitled 'Equality between Men and Women' and states:

- Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and pay.
- The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex.

⁵ Communication: "Incorporating equal opportunities for women and men into all Community policies and activities" (COM(96)67final)

⁶ Parliament Decision, 6959/1/99 REV 1, C4-0215/99

2.6 In the UK, the Government recognises that policy can have, and often has had, a different impact on women and men and that it is essential, therefore, that it considers the impact of all policy proposals on women and monitors the effects of its policies. Since the 1997 election, a new infrastructure for delivering for women in government has been developed. The Ministers for Women (The Rt. Hon. Patricia Hewitt and The Rt. Hon. Barbara Roche) and the Women and Equality Unit are now located within the Cabinet Office in an attempt to ensure that the women's agenda is 'at the heart' of government. The unit is responsible for 'co-ordinating work across departments, adding energy and momentum, and supporting Ministers across Whitehall in their efforts to promote women's interests'. The current stated priorities of the unit are:

- developing policies which support flexible working and enable women to juggle their busy lives;
- delivering high quality services in health and education that respond to women's needs;
- enabling women to play a greater part in public life;
- working to close the pay gap between men and women.

2.7 The Employment Bill 2001,⁷ which was introduced in the House of Commons on 8 November 2001 and which is due to complete its passage through the Lords soon, is described as a wide ranging package. A number of areas covered have particular significance for gender equality, as provisions cover:

- work and parents – maternity, paternity and adoption (leave and pay)
- introduction of an equal pay questionnaire
- provisions to implement the Fixed Term Work Directive
- work focused interviews for partners of people receiving working-age benefits

2.8 In Northern Ireland, Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998⁸ places the mainstreaming of policy development on a statutory basis. Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('the Act') requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.⁹

2.9 Making clear that the statutory duty involves more than the avoidance of discrimination, guidelines from the Equality Commission state that 'Public bodies should actively seek ways to encourage greater equality of opportunity and good relations through their policy development'.

⁷ Not all provisions of the Act will extend to Northern Ireland

⁸ Northern Ireland Act 1998

⁹ In addition, without prejudice to its obligations above, the Act requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions, to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

3. EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN IN NORTHERN IRELAND

3.1 The gender equality debate can be divided into a number of key areas as follows:

- i. reconciliation of work and family life;
- ii. women's participation in the labour market;
- iii. inequalities in education and training;
- iv. labour market segregation;
- v. unequal and low pay;
- vi. poverty and the social security system;
- vii. violence against women;
- viii. the vulnerability of female children;
- ix. women's health; and
- x. women's role in decision making.

I) RECONCILIATION OF WORK AND FAMILY LIFE

3.2 Much sex inequality stems from society's failure to recognise and accommodate the fact that women continue to bear the main responsibility for childcare and the care of the elderly and other dependants. The Fairplay for Women in Northern Ireland initiative¹⁰ identified the lack of affordable high quality childcare as the single greatest obstacle to gender equality in Northern Ireland¹¹. The reasons for this are clear:

Inadequate childcare reduces women's opportunities to undertake education and training; it limits their ability to go out to work, and, even, if available, it can restrict the number of hours women are able to work and the nature of work women do. For women in employment, the absence of adequate childcare often forces them to leave when children are born, or to move from full-time to part-time work, thus reducing their earnings, promotion prospects, and benefits such as pensions¹².

3.3 Children First¹³, which was published in February 1999, set out proposals for a childcare strategy for Northern Ireland which would aim to fill the gaps in childcare provision. The Strategy document recognised that provision of childcare in Northern Ireland fell far short of Government's vision and noted that in Northern Ireland:

- access to day nursery and out-of-school places compares unfavourably with Great Britain and other regions of Europe;
- provision is uneven and not properly co-ordinated to meet the needs of individual children and their parents;

¹⁰ Fairplay for Women in Northern Ireland was established in February 1996 by Baroness Denton, with a remit to encourage women to realise their full potential.

¹¹ Fairplay for Women Final Report (1998). Belfast, EOCNI

¹² Policy Research Institute (1991) - Women, Employment and Social Policy in Northern Ireland: a problem postponed. Belfast, PRI/QUB/UJ

¹³ Children First: The Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy. DHSS (1999)

- the information available to parents is inadequate;
- families in rural areas are at a particular disadvantage;
- provision for children with special needs is particularly limited; and
- childcare projects in receipt of funding are financially vulnerable.

3.4 It should be recognised, however, that over recent years provision of pre-school education and day care places has increased, following the introduction of the Pre-School Education Expansion Programme. Nursery places have increased by 54% over the last five years (13,105 enrolments in Nursery Schools and Classes in 2001/02 compared with 8,522 in 1996/97) – Source).¹⁴ In relation to day care places, in 2001 there were 41,957 places in Northern Ireland - 0.14 places per head of population under age 12, compared with 0.12 per head in England.¹⁵ In addition, the Executive's Draft Programme for Government states that by 2002/03 there will be provision of one year of pre-school education for every child¹⁶.

3.5 Indications are, however, that employers remain resistant to providing assistance with childcare. A recent report by NISRA¹⁷ found that 90% of public sector employers and 96% of private sector employers did not provide assistance with childcare, usually because of the cost involved or because of having a geographically dispersed workforce.

II) WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET

3.6 Women's role as carers prevents them from participating to the same extent as men in the labour market. Women are less likely to be economically active than men and, when they do work, they work fewer hours than men.¹⁸

- Almost 90,000 women in Northern Ireland choose not to enter the labour market because of family/home commitments.
- 44% of those currently in employment in NI are women.
- 40% of female employees work part-time compared with 6% of male employees.

III) INEQUALITIES IN EDUCATION AND TRAINING

3.7 Training programmes are an important mechanism for reintegrating into the labour market women, who for a range of reasons including caring responsibilities, may have taken a break from work. However access to the New Deal initiative which forms "*the cornerstone of the Government's Welfare to Work pledge*" is benefit based. For a number of years, the Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern

¹⁴ Department of Education Statistics & Research Branch

¹⁵ From DETI 'Women in Northern Ireland', January 2002 (ratios calculated using NISRA and ONS population data). Day care provision includes day nurseries, registered childminders and playgroups.

¹⁶ Draft Programme of Government

¹⁷ NISRA Occasional Paper No. 5 – Flexible Working and Childcare Assistance: A Survey of Employers

¹⁸ Statistics from DETI 'Women in Northern Ireland', January 2002

Ireland (EOCNI)¹⁹, in its 1999 Annual Report, expressed concern that this may be discriminatory:

The Commission has long noted its concern with any such benefit-based programmes. In its response to the Long-Term Unemployment consultation document in June 1997, we highlighted in particular that women returning to the labour market could face problems qualifying for such programmes because they are not receiving Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). Experience has shown that the change from unemployment benefit to JSA has resulted in a disproportionate number of women disappearing from the claimant register, reducing further the number of women with access to claims based programmes such as the new deal.

While we welcome any increase in access to reemployment services for lone parents and the partners of unemployed men, the unequal provisions in the Lone Parents New Deal and New Deal for Partners result in additional difficulties for women who want access to these programmes. The inadequacy of childcare in all of the New Deal options adds to these difficulties.²⁰

3.8 The under-representation of women in training and employment programmes is clearly evident from the occupancy statistics in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Training & Employment Programme Occupancy at March 2001

Programme	%FEMALE
Job Brokerage	42%
Employment Support	34%
Rapid Advancement Programme	34%
IFI Wider Horizons	40%
Enterprise Ulster	47%
Jobskills	29%
Jobskills Modern Apprenticeship	23%
New Deal for Disabled People	40%
New Deal 18-24	31%
New Deal 25+	15%
New Deal 50+	25%
Open Learning	66%
ILAs	65%
Worktrack	76%
Job Bridge	53%
Bridge to Employment	40%
The Walsh Visa Programme	19%

Source: Department of Education and Learning

¹⁹ Now incorporated into Equality Commission as Sex Equality Directorate

²⁰ EOCNI (1999) The Equal Opportunities Commission for Northern Ireland 23rd Annual Report p9.

3.9 Conversely, female participation in education is much higher than that of males.²¹

- Participation rates for 16 and 17 in full-time education in NI were 78% for females and 66% for males in 2000/01.
- 60% of students enrolled at NI universities and 59% of students enrolled in FE colleges in 2000/01 were female.

3.10 While there appears to be an under-representation of females in training and employment, the educational achievement of females is much higher than that of males.²² Concern over the widening gap between males and females, particularly in literacy, has prompted the Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment to publish guidelines for improving the attainment of boys.²³

- 65% of girls left NI schools in 1999/00 with at least 5 GCSEs (grades A-C) compared with 49% of boys. 3% of girls left without any GCSEs compared with 7% of boys.
- Girls are almost twice as likely as boys to obtain an A or A* grade in GCSE English (differences in ability in English appear as early as age 7 or 8 with 35% of girls achieving level 3 at Key Stage 1 compared with only 25% of boys).
- 43% of girls left school in 1999/00 with 2 or more A-levels compared with 29% of boys.
- In 2000/01, 63% of NI domiciled students attaining undergraduate qualifications and 58% of those attaining postgraduate qualifications were female.

IV) LABOUR MARKET SEGREGATION

3.11 Job segregation or employment segregation refers to the concentration of men and women in different types and levels of activity and employment, with woman being confined to a narrower range of occupations than men (horizontal segregation) and to lower grades of work (vertical segregation). Desegregation, therefore, refers to policies which aim to reduce or eliminate segregation (horizontal/vertical) from the labour market. As the tables below show significant gender based job segregation exists in Northern Ireland,

3.12 In terms of horizontal segregation, female employment is concentrated in health and education sectors with women being under represented in manufacturing and other non-service sector employment (Table 2).

²¹ Statistics from DETI 'Women in Northern Ireland', January 2002

²² Statistics from DETI 'Women in Northern Ireland', January 2002 and 'Focus on Boys: Guidance on Improving Attainment, Particularly in Literacy', CCEA

²³ 'Focus on Boys: Guidance on Improving Attainment, Particularly in Literacy', CCEA

Table 2. Employment Distribution by Industry

Industrial Sector	MALE	FEMALE
AGRICULTURE, HUNTING, FORESTRY AND FISHING	4%	1%
MINING AND QUARRYING	1%	0%
MANUFACTURING	23%	8%
ELECTRICITY, GAS AND WATER SUPPLY	1%	0%
CONSTRUCTION	10%	1%
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE; REPAIRS	16%	18%
HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS	5%	7%
TRANSPORT, STORAGE AND COMMUNICATION	6%	2%
FINANCIAL INTERMEDIATION	2%	3%
REAL ESTATE, RENTING & BUSINESS ACTIVITIES	8%	8%
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE	10%	8%
EDUCATION	5%	15%
HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK	5%	24%
OTHER SERVICE ACTIVITIES	5%	4%
	100%	100%

Source: Quarterly Employment Survey December 2001, DETI Statistics Research Branch

3.13 In terms of vertical segregation, women in Northern Ireland make up a significant proportion of those employed in various low paid jobs (Table 3).

Table 3. Employment Distribution by Occupation

Occupation	MALE	FEMALE
Elementary occupations	10%	12%
Process, plant and machine operatives	16%	3%
Sales and customer service	4%	10%
Personal Services	2%	15%
Skilled Trades	28%	4%
Administrative and clerical	6%	23%
Associate professional and technical	8%	13%
Professional occupations	11%	10%
Managers and senior officials	15%	9%
	100%	100%

Source: DETI Statistics Research Branch 'Women in Northern Ireland' (January 2002)

3.14 The roots of gender segregation in the labour market can be found in the education system, with a disparity in the subjects studied by males and females.²⁴

- In social science, business and administration subjects, 75% of all enrolments in 2000/01 at NI Further Education Institutions were female.
- Of the total enrolments on science courses at NI Further Education Institutions in 2000/01, 37% were female.
- Students at FE colleges on Engineering & Technology and Architecture, Building & Planning courses are almost exclusively male.
- In medicine and dentistry and related subject areas, 81% of full-time undergraduates at NI universities were female in 2000/01.

²⁴ Statistics from DETI 'Women in Northern Ireland', January 2002

- Women accounted for only 17% of first degree graduates in engineering and 32% in mathematics and computing science in 1999/00.

V) UNEQUAL PAY

3.15 Unequal pay and income are major sources of gender inequality. The effects of unequal pay and income on women include: reduced economic independence; greater likelihood of low pay while working; and greater likelihood of poverty in old age. Reasons for unequal pay include: different patterns of working amongst women and men (women are more likely to work part-time and take breaks in employment to care for children); discrimination within pay systems; under valuation of women's jobs; and the vertical segregation referred to above (only 31% of all managers and senior officials in Northern Ireland are women).²⁵

- The average gross weekly wage for females in full-time employment at April 2001 in NI was £322 compared with £409 for males.

VI) POVERTY AND THE SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM

3.16 It has already been noted that, for a variety of reasons, but most especially because of childcare and domestic responsibilities, women's work histories do not correspond to the male pattern. However, although women are the main recipients of social security benefits, in most European countries' social security systems have been created with men in mind as the primary claimants. In addition, women's access to benefits often derives in some way from their relationship with others rather than their own employment record. The result is that social protection for women can be patchy and inadequate. In Northern Ireland, as in most European countries, taking care of family and children is not considered an economic activity and therefore does not entitle women to social security benefits.

3.17 Research commissioned by the EOCNI²⁶ examined three main ideas for reforming the social security system which would have an impact on women's personal incomes. The reforms had been argued for in terms of their 'woman-friendliness' - that is, their potential to increase gender equality in the social security system and women's independent or personal incomes. These ideas centred around: changes to the nature of assessment for, and payment of, means-tested benefits; changes to the contributory system; and the introduction of a Basic Income.

3.18 The interaction of the tax and social security systems can create disincentives to taking up work, the so-called benefit trap or poverty trap. Research by NISRA²⁷ found that lone mothers in Northern Ireland claiming benefit often do so for long periods. The research also found that 'lone mothers in Northern Ireland have more difficulty than lone mothers in Britain in finding and keeping employment'. The research found that whilst lone mothers in Northern Ireland often wished to take up employment, they faced obstacles due to inadequate provision of support for dependants, and their own low levels of educational attainment.

²⁵ Statistics from DETI 'Women in Northern Ireland', January 2002

²⁶ McLaughlin, E Trewsdale, J and McCay, N (1999) Women, Social Security, and the New Labour Government. Belfast, EOCNI

²⁷ NISRA (199?) Mothers on Benefit: a study of 1665 lone mothers in Northern Ireland.

3.19 Benefit statistics confirm a greater incidence of female poverty than male poverty in Northern Ireland.²⁸

- 62% of all income support claimants in May 2000 were women (about one-fifth of all income support claimants are lone parents).

VII) VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

3.20 Police statistics and statistics gathered by Women's support groups reveal the extent of domestic violence against women which takes place in Northern Ireland.²⁹

- A total of 7,109 females (excluding children) were victims of recorded violence against the person and sexual offences in Northern Ireland in 1998/99.
- In 1999 in Northern Ireland, Women's Aid refuges accommodated almost 3,000 women and children and gave information, support and advice to 25,547 people.
- NI Women's Aid's 24 hour Helpline receives an average of 650 calls per month.

3.21 *Well into 2000*, The Regional Strategy which set out such a vision for improving the health and well-being of the people of Northern Ireland identified domestic violence as an important cause of injury, death and psychological trauma and indicated that action against domestic violence would be taken forward on a multi-agency basis within the framework of the policy framework *Tackling Domestic Violence*³⁰. This identified four priorities for action:

- to raise public awareness of domestic violence as a serious problem;
- to challenge seriously the attitudes and behaviour of those who perpetrate or condone it;
- to improve support and treatment services for victims; and
- to build a clearer picture of the nature and extent of domestic violence.

3.22 *Well into 2000* proposed that the Northern Ireland Regional Forum on Domestic Violence, which was established in September 1995, take forward work on the policy framework in relation to domestic violence. The Forum brings together the main statutory and voluntary groups associated with the victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. It provides a focal point for co-ordinating action in taking forward the objectives set out in "Tackling Domestic Violence". Much of the work of the Forum is done by five working groups covering inter-agency co-operation, criminal justice, education and training, research and information and the Churches.

²⁸ Benefit statistics from Department of Social Development

²⁹ Statistics on recorded crime from PSNI; other statistics available at www.domesticviolenceforum.org

³⁰ "Tackling domestic violence: a policy for Northern Ireland" (1995) published jointly by the Department of Health and Social Services (Northern Ireland) and the Northern Ireland Office.

3.23 The Research subgroup has identified the need to understand more about the effects of domestic violence on children as a priority area for research. It has also indicated that future work would include overseeing of research on male victims of domestic violence.

VIII) THE VULNERABILITY OF FEMALE CHILDREN

3.24 While all children are vulnerable (there were 1,414 children on the Child Protection Register in Northern Ireland at March 2001), female children are particularly vulnerable.

- In 2000/01, there were 342 recorded cases of indecent assault against female children in Northern Ireland (an increase of 26% on the previous year) and 134 indecent assaults on male children (an increase of 56% on the previous year).³¹

IX) WOMEN'S HEALTH

3.25 There are of course many differences between males and females in terms of health. The longer life expectancy for females (about 80 years in Northern Ireland compared with 74 years for males) contributes to their higher rate of disability (56% of Severe Disablement Allowance recipients and 68% of those receiving Attendance Allowance are women). The statistics also suggest that women have more mental health problems than men.³²

- 24% of women show signs of depression compared with 17% of men.
- 44% of females report quite a lot or a great deal of stress or worry compared with 34% of males.

X) WOMEN'S ROLE IN DECISION MAKING

3.26 The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the 'Northern Ireland Committee' Irish Congress of Trade Unions argue that 'There are still far too few women in the places where decisions are made...If women are to be at the centre of policy making their presence has to become more visible in every aspect of public life'³³. Statistics provide evidence of the under-representation of women in public life.³⁴

- Of the 108 elected NI Assembly Members, 14 (13%) are women.
- Only 19% of Local Government Councillors are women.
- Women hold 32% of public appointments in Northern Ireland.
- Women hold just over 10% of senior posts in the NI Civil Service.³⁵

³¹ Statistics on recorded crime from PSNI

³² NISRA Northern Ireland Health and Wellbeing Survey 2001 (mental health measured using General Health Questionnaire)

³³ Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and 'Northern Ireland Committee' Irish Congress of Trade Unions 'The Woman's Agenda for the Northern Ireland Assembly'.

³⁴ Statistics from DETI 'Women in Northern Ireland', January 2002

³⁵ Department of Finance & Personnel press release, March 2001

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 Statistics reveal the existence of inequality between men and women in Northern Ireland. At European, UK wide, and local level a number of strategic responses to this inequality have been proposed. The Executive's Programme for Government contains a commitment to bring forward, consult on and implement cross-departmental policies to tackle gender inequality within a strategic framework for the period 2001-2003. The Gender Equality Unit within OFMDFM will be taking the lead on developing this strategy. However, if strategic approaches to increasing equality of opportunity between men and women are to be effectively monitored, it is important that they include targets and that progress towards attaining the targets is measured.

4.2 This paper shows that further progress is required in the following areas:

- i. reconciliation of work and family life;
- ii. women's participation in the labour market;
- iii. inequalities in education and training;
- iv. labour market segregation;
- v. unequal and low pay;
- vi. poverty and the social security system;
- vii. violence against women;
- viii. the vulnerability of female children;
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