



Women's equality in the UK – A health check

Shadow report from the UK CEDAW Working Group assessing the United Kingdom Government's progress in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

April 2013

Understanding and supporting
women and their organisations



About the Women's Resource Centre

WRC is a unique charity which supports women's organisations to be more effective and sustainable. We provide training, information, resources and one-to-one support on a range of organisational development issues. We also lobby decision makers on behalf of the women's not-for-profit sector for improved representation and funding.

Our members work in a wide range of fields including health, violence against women, employment, education, rights and equality, the criminal justice system and the environment. They deliver services to and campaign on behalf of some of the most marginalised communities of women.

There are over ten thousand people working or volunteering for our members who support almost half a million individuals each year.

For more information on our work, please contact:

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About the UK CEDAW Working Group

Following WRC's Seizing the Opportunities of CEDAW conference in London in March 2009, a UK CEDAW Working Group was established, made up of women's sector and human rights organisations from across the UK covering a variety of areas of work and expertise, and including the women who attended and were involved in the CEDAW 2008 examination. This group has met regularly since then to work towards producing the report as well as other work and support around CEDAW in the UK for the women's and voluntary sectors. This has included capacity-building training and events on CEDAW and its Optional Protocol across the UK, media work to raise the profile and understanding of international human rights instruments, and attending the CEDAW Pre-Session Working Group meeting in Geneva in October 2012.

More information on the work of the UK CEDAW Working Group can be found at:

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Executive summary

During the last reporting period, 2008-2013, the United Kingdom Government's equality policy has yielded only partial results. Many of the crucial issues raised by the CEDAW Committee in the 2008 examination remain unmet and there has been regression in some key areas. The Government has made declarations supporting equality and human rights but has reduced the UK's national women's and equality machinery, (P36) as well as reducing the department with this responsibility. Equally as concerning is the current threat to UK human rights protections offered to women via the Human Rights Act,¹ which Government ministers have threatened to repeal. Although there has been welcome legislation, often the implementation has been inadequate or there have been reservations about it in terms of the impact on women's rights in practice. In general policy changes have been regressive for women's rights. The Government has done little to promote public awareness of CEDAW or to mainstream gender equality across Government and inequality remains in many areas of society.

As the Government admit themselves in their 7th Periodic Report,² progress does not go far enough in terms of realising substantive gender equality. In 2010, the Government undertook a comprehensive spending review which has resulted in severe reductions in public spending which impacts disproportionately on women.³ (P33 para 2.20) The Government's policies have had a negative impact on many women through the loss of jobs, income and services. Additional measures announced will intensify those losses for all but the richest women and fail to understand the immediate substantive impacts on women's lives.⁴

Gender stereotypes abound in all areas of society and intersectional discrimination against women who have diverse and intersecting identities under a number of 'protected characteristics'⁵ is also commonplace. There still is a frustrating lack of continuous monitoring and periodical evaluation of the implementation of laws and measures, and in the collection and evaluation of disaggregated data to ensure that these are meeting women's diverse needs. (P40 para 3.21)

The lack of implementation of a gender-sensitive framework of equality and non-discrimination in the UK continues to impact negatively on women's lives. The material effects of this include:

- the continued failure to address the high level of violence against women and girls (VAWG), and the embedded causes of this, and to sustainably fund specialist dedicated women-only services for these women (P182 para 19.46)
- the reduction in legal support and access to justice for women suffering discrimination and violence (P156 para 15.17)
- welfare reforms which are pushing more women into poverty and insecurity (P133 para 13.17)
- the inadequacies of healthcare support and provision for women (P113 para 12.15)
- the incomplete support for women with 'no recourse to public funds' (P76 para 9.25) and refugee and asylum seeking women (P69 para 9.7)

1. Human Rights Act 1998 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents>

2. Government Equalities Office (2011) CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women) report. United Kingdom's Seventh Periodic Report. GEO: London <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/equalities/international-equality/7th-cedaw-report?view=Binary>

3. The Fawcett Society (2011) The Impact of Austerity on Women. Fawcett: London <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/The-Impact-of-Austerity-on-Women-19th-March-2012.pdf>

4. Women's Budget Group (2012) The Impact on Women of the Autumn Financial Statement 2011. WBG: London <http://wbg.org.uk/pdfs/The-Impact-on-Women-of-the-AFS-2011.pdf> and Women's Budget Group (2013) The impact on women of Budget 2013: A Budget for inequality and recession. WBG: London http://wbg.org.uk/pdfs/WBG_Budget-Analysis_2013.pdf

5. Under the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

- the continued discrimination against women in the labour market in terms of opportunities and equal pay (P101 para 11.14)
- the continued under-representation of women in politics and decision making positions and the lack of success of measures attempting to address this. (P61 para 7.1)

In their report and response to the first list of issues and questions from the CEDAW Committee,⁶ the Government focus on efforts rather than results. These responses also include information about international achievements which although welcome, have no impact on their responsibilities in the UK and have not been replicated domestically. The UK may be seen as providing an example of achievement in terms of the laws and regulations supporting women's human rights and equality in general. However, the reality for women living in the UK is that there is incomplete realisation of these rights and serious attitudinal and behavioural barriers to substantive equality for all women.

The following is a list of critical issues based on concerns raised in the UK NGO CEDAW Shadow Report 2013 *Women's equality in the UK – A health check*. This list has been adapted from the list provided to the CEDAW Committee by NGOs⁷ at the CEDAW Committee's Pre-session Working Group meeting in October 2012. Many of these issues unfortunately remain relevant. We also endorse the other shadow reports produced by our sister organisations in the UK and from the Devolved Administrations.⁸ We link to these in the report to avoid duplication. Questions and recommendations to the UK Government appear below and throughout the report.

Article 1 – Elimination of discrimination:

The reservation to Article 1 undermines CEDAW's implementation in the UK⁹ and shows a lack of commitment to substantive equality for women. The Government rarely acknowledges the Convention in its consultations, legislation and policies. The Equality Act 2010¹⁰ is an example of a significant piece of legislation in which there is no mention of the Government's commitment to, or obligations under, the Convention.

Achievements in gender equality are being eroded in many cases by regressive policies which disproportionately affect women. For example, a report evidencing the impacts of the UK Government's austerity measures upon women in the North East of England highlights the devastating impacts of austerity measures and welfare reforms upon already unacceptable levels of gender inequality.¹¹ Although some services have been funded nationally, the devolution of power to Local Authorities and cuts to their budgets has meant that many of the

6. CEDAW 55th session (2013) List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Addendum: Replies of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of its seventh periodic report, 5th February 2013 <http://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/cedaw/docs/CEDAW.C.GBR.Q.7.Add.1.pdf>

7. UK CEDAW Working Group (2012) First list of critical issues facing women in the United Kingdom, Submitted to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women and prepared by the CEDAW Working Group UK. Women's Resource Centre: London

8. See Women's Equality Network Wales (2012) Submission to the Committee on the Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, WEN Wales response. WEN Wales: Burry Port <http://wenwales.org/wp-content/uploads/Submission-to-the-Committee-on-CEDAW-formatted-version-final.pdf> as well as reports from Engender, the Scottish Women's Convention, Northern Ireland Women's European Platform, the Jersey Community Relations Trust (Appendix: 37), the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Equality Commission Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and Sclater, E. (2012) NGO Thematic Shadow Report: Older Women's Rights in the United Kingdom. Older Women's Network, Europe and National Alliance of Women's Organisations <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/olderwomensrightsukNGOthematic.pdf>

9. This also includes the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories of the United Kingdom.

10. Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

11. North East Women's Network (2012) Findings and recommendations from interim case study: The impact of austerity measures upon women in the North East of England, October 2012 and updated April 2013. NE Women's Network and Women's Resource Centre <http://www.newomens.net/index.php/research-leftmenu-56>

organisations that are needed to support women and improve equality¹² have had to close or their funding has been severely cut at the local level¹³ as demand for these services increases. (P39 para 3.15)

How is the Government “taking action in key areas where there are persistent inequalities compared to the experiences of men” as described in their report,¹⁴ when many policies are disproportionately impacting on women?

Recommendations:

- **Remove reservation to Article 1**
- **Ensure that that all levels of government are compliant with the UK’s CEDAW obligations, and the principles of sex equality and non-discrimination¹⁵ and that devolution and localism does not reduce progress**
- **Ensure that there is a resourced infrastructure that enables women to come together across the UK to discuss issues relating to gender equality, to develop policy and, setting its own agenda, to bring an independent voice to government**

Article 2 – Obligations to eliminate discrimination:

Legislation, such as the Equality Act, is not routinely monitored for its impact and protection in law across the UK is inconsistent. The new Public Sector Equality Duty¹⁶ is already being reviewed with the possibility of abolition. Legislation to improve gender equality, such as the Equal Pay Act¹⁷ and laws on crimes against women, is often difficult to uphold and does not result in substantive change. The mainstreaming of gender equality, despite the Equality Act, is still insufficient.¹⁸ There are significant differences in legal protection for women in different parts of the UK.¹⁹ There have also been severe cuts to the Equality and Human Rights Commission, an A-rated National Human Rights Institution, which has compromised its capacity to monitor, enforce and promote women’s equality. (P38 para 3.14)

How does the Government’s decision not to produce statutory guidance covering the whole of the UK, and to cut the budget of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, support compliance with the Equality Act?

Recommendations:

- **A gender equality impact assessment of the programme of public funding cuts should be carried out alongside an assessment of economic strategy from a gender equality perspective**

12. Women’s Resource Centre (2011) Hidden Value: Demonstrating the extraordinary impact of women’s voluntary and community organisations. WRC: London http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/hidden_value_wrc_sroi_report_2011_22.pdf

13. Towers, J. and Walby, S. (2012) Measuring the impact of cuts in public expenditure on the provision of services to prevent violence against women and girls. Trust for London: London <http://www.trustforlondon.org.uk/FullVAWGReport.pdf>

14. Government Equalities Office (2011) CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women) report. United Kingdom’s Seventh Periodic Report. GEO: London <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/equalities/international-equality/7th-cedaw-report?view=Binary>

15. CEDAW General Recommendation No. 28 The Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of CEDAW (forty-seventh session, 2010) <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/472/60/PDF/G1047260.pdf?OpenElement>

16. Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012) The Essential Guide to the Public Sector Equality Duty. EHRC: London http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/EqualityAct/PSED/essential_guide_update.pdf

17. Equal Pay Act 1970 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1970/41>

18. Equality and Human Rights Commission (2012) Making Fair Financial Decisions Final Report. EHRC: London <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/inquiries-and-assessments/section-31-assessment-of-hm-treasury/the-assessment-final-report/>

19. For example, in the Public Sector Equality Duty: see Equality Act 2010: Guidance <https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance> Accessed: 25/03/13

- **Develop a common model of analysis, for national and local government, and public bodies, to predict the likely equality effects of policy including gender responsive budgeting**

Article 3 – Development and advancement of women:

The Government's austerity programme is producing cuts which are reducing women's access to rights, justice and support.²⁰

The lack of disaggregated data and a reduction in the collection of information, such as the census, means that the true picture of women's inequality is not known and so cannot be addressed appropriately now or in the future. (P41 para 3.23)

What impact will the reduction in data collection have on the ability to analyse the impact of government policies on women and on intersectional inequality including ethnicity, migration status, disability, sexuality and age?

Recommendations:

- **The needs of women within a particular locality need to be assessed in order to develop local strategies to address discrimination and enable appropriate provision of services**
- **Given the negative rhetoric around human rights, the UK Government must ensure that the vital rights and mechanisms contained in the Human Rights Act, which provide important protections for women and girls, will remain in force**

Article 4 – Special measures to accelerate equality:

The CEDAW principles on temporary special measures and General Recommendation 25 have not been fully utilised. Several of these measures have officially been announced but not made compulsory. Our analysis shows that the Government is not prepared to introduce binding temporary measures.²¹ (P44 para 4.6 and P65 para 7.16)

Article 5 – Sex roles and stereotyping:

Recent government policies reinforce gender stereotypes, such as the introduction of Universal Credit, which will increase incentives for the primary rather than the secondary earner within a couple.²² (P134 para 13.21)

Despite an inquiry²³ into the culture, practices and ethics of the media which highlighted the way women continue to be objectified and sexualised,²⁴ the Government has failed to provide guidelines to establish a regulatory regime for ethical media.

What measures will the Government take in order to challenge gender based stereotyping in the media? How will it combat sexist advertising and media representation and include private industry in these efforts?

20. Stephenson, M. (2011) TUC Women and the Cuts Toolkit: How to carry out a human rights and equality impact assessment of the spending cuts on women. TUC: London <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-20286-f0.cfm>

21. For example Fontanella-Khan, J. (2012) 'UK fights Brussels on female board quotas', Financial Times, 4th September 2012 <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b4146a14-f6b6-11e1-827f-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2Oj6nD7B>

22. Oxfam (2012) The Perfect Storm: Economic stagnation, the rising cost of living, public spending cuts, and the impact on UK poverty. Oxfam: Oxford <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-perfect-storm-economic-stagnation-the-rising-cost-of-living-public-spending-228591>

23. The Leveson Inquiry <http://www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/> Accessed: 21/03/13

24. End Violence Against Women Coalition (2012) Final submission to the Leveson Inquiry. EVAW: London <http://www.endviolenceagainstawomen.org.uk/preventing-violence-against-women-media-152>

Article 6 – Trafficking and sexual exploitation of women:

The Government lacks a clear position on the status of prostitution. This results in fragmented and sometimes contradictory responses. A criminal, policing and immigration focus predominates over the provision of exiting strategies that support women, or the effective tackling of demand.²⁵ (P56 para 6.22)

The Government remains focused on immigration and border control in its strategy to combat trafficking, at the expense of the women it claims it is trying to protect.²⁶ (P51 para 6.3)

Migrant domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking and abuses of their human rights; however the UK Government has introduced regressive immigration measures that will make domestic workers far more vulnerable to this kind of abuse.²⁷ (P59 para 6.31)

Recommendations:

- **Review trafficking legislation and policy to ensure victims are identified and adequately supported and to ensure that a consistent and rights-based approach to women who have been trafficked is adopted**
- **Sign and ratify the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families²⁸**

Article 7/8 – Public life and leadership:

Women's equal participation in public, political and cultural institutions is pivotal in the advancement of women. However, the presence of women in political and public life is still not sufficient and needs to be addressed further. The UK continues to be run largely by men²⁹ with the key top positions in public life within the political parties, government, public bodies, regional and Local Authorities, the judiciary, police, private and public sectors held by men.³⁰

The poor presence of women in key decision making bodies is in part due to practical barriers such as difficulties in balancing work and family life, and the costs of standing for election. However, these are often compounded by cultural barriers such as discrimination that women routinely face, for example within the world of politics from the selection stage to their opportunities to progress within parliament. The most recent Westminster Cabinet reshuffle has exacerbated this.³¹ (P61 para 7.2)

What steps will the Government take to ensure an increase in women's representation at all levels of decision making? What pace and level of change does it expect the voluntary approach to improving women's representation to achieve, and what action will it take should this be insufficient?

25. Eaves for women and London South bank University (2012) PE:ER Project Prostitution exiting: Engaging through research. (Funded by Big Lottery) forthcoming

26. Anti Trafficking Monitoring Group (ATMG) (2010) Wrong kind of victim? One year on: An analysis of UK measures to protect trafficked persons. http://www.antislavery.org/includes/documents/cm_docs/2010/a/1_atmg_report_for_web.pdf

27. Lalani, M. (2011) Ending the Abuse: Policies that work to protect migrant domestic workers. Kalayaan: London <http://www.kalayaan.org.uk/documents/Kalayaan%20Report%20final.pdf>

28. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?mtdsg_no=IV-13&chapter=4&lang=en

29. Centre for Women and Democracy (2013) Sex and Power 2013: Who runs Britain? Counting Women In Coalition: London http://www.countingwomenin.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Sex-and-Power-2013-FINALv2.-pdf.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=WRC&utm_campaign=2282094_WRC+March+e-news&dm_i=4DW,1CWVI,BQJQT,4LVG0,1

30. Cracknell, R. (2012) Women in Public Life, the Professions and the Boardroom. House of Commons Library <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05170>

31. Martinson, J. (2012) 'Cabinet reshuffle: a good day for Maria Miller but a bad day for women', The Guardian, 4th September 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/the-womens-blog-with-jane-martinson/2012/sep/04/cabinet-reshuffle-maria-miller-women>

Article 9 – Nationality:

One third of people applying for asylum in the UK each year are women. Despite what the Government has highlighted in its report, evidence shows that gender issues are not fully considered in the asylum system. The failure of the UK Border Agency to reach fair, sustainable decisions has a disproportionate effect on women,³² many of whom are left isolated and vulnerable by an unfair asylum system.³³ (P70 para 9.8) Despite positive work on VAWG internationally, it is contradictory that the UK's own asylum policies place at risk those women who have fled such violence overseas to find safety in the UK.³⁴

More women are likely to enter the UK in an irregular way and there are fewer channels for women to migrate independently, therefore they are placed in a position of dependency and are vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse. Recent changes to family migration policy will make it significantly harder for women to enter the country lawfully, or, once here, to escape violent and exploitative situations.³⁵ (P77 para 9.28) The withdrawal of legal aid from immigration will also make it harder for women to challenge negative decisions. The issues affecting specific categories of migrants, including women with 'no recourse to public funds' who are not covered by the new Destitution Domestic Violence Concession,³⁶ also need to be addressed.³⁷ (P76 para 9.25) No woman should be made destitute as a result of government policy.

Recommendations:

- **Integrate gender equality and the protection of women's rights in all aspects of the asylum process and immigration policy, including in relation to cuts in funding for immigration cases**
- **Ensure that Immigration Judges have appropriate guidance for making decisions on women's asylum cases including those involving gender-based persecution**
- **Extend the Destitution Domestic Violence Concession to all women who are subjected to domestic violence or abuse and immigration control so that they are exempt from the restriction on access to public funds and health and social care services**

Article 10 – Education and skills:

Human rights, and particularly women's and children's human rights, are not included in the core curriculum and there is no compulsory sexual health and relationships education.³⁸ (P88 para 10.18) There is also no coherent, nationwide plan to address sex discrimination and VAWG through the school curriculum.

Cuts to education budgets have led to cuts in services in schools for children with special needs

32. Asylum Aid (2011) *Unsustainable: The quality of initial decision making in women's asylum claims*. <http://www.asylumaid.org.uk/data/files/publications/151/UnsustainableWEB.pdf>; UK Border Agency (2011) *Quality and Efficiency Report: Thematic Review of Gender Issues in Asylum Claims*; UNHCR (2008) *Quality Initiative Project Fifth Report to the Minister*. UNHCR: London http://www.unhcr.org.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/QL_Fifth_Report.pdf

33. Dorling, K. et al (2012) *Refused: the experiences of women denied asylum in the UK*. Women for Refugee Women: London <http://www.refugeewomen.com/images/refused.pdf>

34. Crawley, Heaven et al. (2011) *Coping with destitution, survival and livelihood strategies of refused asylum seekers living in the UK*. Oxfam: Oxford <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/coping-with-destitution-survival-and-livelihood-strategies-of-refused-asylum-se-121667>

35. See Rights of Women (2011) *Silenced voices speak: strategies for protecting migrant women from violence and abuse*. http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/pdfs/Policy/Silenced_voices_speak-strategies_for_protecting_migrant_women_from_violence_and_abuse.pdf

36. Campaign to Abolish No Recourse to Public Funds (2012), *Press Release: Campaign to Abolish No Recourse to Public Funds Celebrates Victory; Home Office Concession for Destitute Victims of Domestic Violence*. <http://www.southallblack SISTERS.org.uk/campaign-celebrates-victory-for-victims-of-domestic-violence/>

37. See Women's Resource Centre, *No recourse to public funds* <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/our-work/no-recourse-to-public-funds/> Accessed: 16/04/13

38. Paton, G. (2011) 'Coalition shelves Labour plan for compulsory sex education', *The Telegraph*, 16th September 2011 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/educationnews/8768980/Coalition-shelves-Labour-plan-for-compulsory-sex-education.html>

or mental health problems which has impacted on women as primary carers.³⁹ (P84 para 10.2)

Many of the cuts to Further and Higher Education have had a disproportionate impact on women, preventing particularly ethnic minority women, those who have children, are from poorer backgrounds and/or are mature students, from gaining educational qualifications.⁴⁰ (P91 para 10.31 and P94 para 10.43) These women may see their earning potential and job prospects reduced as a result. Cuts to English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes also have a large impact on women.⁴¹ (P95 para 10.47)

Recommendation:

Take measures to mitigate the disproportionate effect of education cuts on women and to mainstream gender equality curricula across all levels of education

Article 11 – Employment and economic rights:

The Government claims that there are “historically high numbers of women in employment”,⁴² however, this must be taken in the context of more women of ‘working age’ in the UK than ever before – due to increasing population and an increase in State pension age for women. Furthermore, evidence shows that women’s unemployment is at a 25 year high⁴³ and public sector cuts are seeing women out of work in their thousands. (P99 para 11.8) Barriers to work are increasing for women as childcare costs are among the highest in the European Union and welfare payments are reduced creating a working poor.⁴⁴ (P108 para 11.39)

There are still high rates of pregnancy discrimination which leave many women without access to maternity leave and pay, and render laws designed to protect the health and wellbeing of pregnant workers ineffective.⁴⁵ (P105 para 11.32) Changes to employment rights are also reducing women’s access to redress.⁴⁶ (P106 para 11.36)

The gender pay gap remains significantly larger in the private sector than in the public sector. The percentage of women in business management positions has also remained unchanged and marginal.⁴⁷ (P65 para 7.13) The Government has limited itself to voluntary agreements with private industry which are clearly ineffective.

Recommendations:

- **Introduce measures to promote women’s equal opportunities in employment and pay in the provision of physical infrastructure (roads, rail and digital) including**

39. BBC News (2011) ‘Special needs support promises more parent power’, BBC News Education and Family, 10th March 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-12677259>
40. Stephenson, M. (2011) TUC Women and the Cuts Toolkit: How to carry out a human rights and equality impact assessment of the spending cuts on women. TUC: London <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-20286-f0.cfm>
41. Moore, K. (2011) “Women affected most’ by English language funding cuts’, BBC News London, 18th May 2011 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-13412811>
42. CEDAW 55th session (2013) List of issues and questions with regard to the consideration of periodic reports: United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Addendum: Replies of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of its seventh periodic report, 5th February 2013 <http://www2.ohchr.org/English/bodies/cedaw/docs/CEDAW.C.GBR.Q.7.Add.1.pdf>
43. Saner, E. (2012) ‘Female unemployment crisis’, The Guardian, 20th February 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2012/feb/20/female-unemployment-crisis-women>
44. O’Connell, J. (2012) ‘Soaring childcare costs see parents working for nothing’, The Guardian, 1st September 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2012/sep/01/soaring-childcare-costs-work-nothing>
45. Ward, R. (2011) Health and equality impacts of well paid parental leave. Women’s Health and Equality Consortium and Maternity Action: London <http://www.whec.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/10/HealthandEqualityImpactsofWellPaidParentalLeave20111.pdf>
46. XperthHR, Settlement provisions and employment tribunal system to be reformed <http://www.xperthr.co.uk/article/107972/employment-tribunal-system-to-be-reformed.aspx?mid=35,35> Accessed: 16/04/13
47. Sealy, R. and Vinnicombe, S. (2013) The Female FTSE Board Report 2013: False dawn of progress for women on boards? Cranfield International Centre for Women Leaders <http://www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/dinamic-content/media/Research/Research%20Centres/CICWL/FTSEReport2013.pdf>

investment in social infrastructure (education, care and health services) as this generates jobs for women

- **Introduce mandatory equal pay audits for all employers and measures to guarantee a living wage**
- **Explore investing in a national system of universal childcare to create jobs (in a sector in which women are over-represented), which would help to make employment financially worthwhile for second earners and single parents (both more likely to be women). This would also address in-work poverty and ensure that women are not discouraged from entering employment because of the high cost of childcare**

Article 12 – Healthcare and family planning:

Women's health issues are still not adequately addressed.⁴⁸ Issues such as mental health and VAWG⁴⁹ are not understood and the long-term impacts of these are not dealt with. The changes to the National Health Service (NHS) will have a significant impact on women who rely on these services most, for example the cuts in maternity and care services.⁵⁰ (P124 para 12.54)

The health issues affecting certain groups of women because of their immigration status,⁵¹ (P114 para 12.18) ethnicity,⁵² (P113) women in prison⁵³ (P126 para 12.59) or those living in poverty,⁵⁴ are acute and cannot be ignored.

How will the Government address the current inadequacies of provision and support for women in healthcare and ensure that women have access to rights-based, patient-centred and quality healthcare when changes are made to the NHS?

Recommendations:

- **For the Government to effectively tackle the health issues women and girls face, it must consider the diverse experiences of women's lives, including poverty, sexual violence and abuse, reproduction etc. and understand how these experiences impact on women's health and wellbeing. This must include a cross-government approach which gathers and analyses data on women from different equalities groups**
- **VAWG needs to be a Department of Health strategic priority, integrated into strategies such as the national Sexual Health Programme⁵⁵**
- **Women's health and social care needs must form an integral part of the Department of Health's strategic framework through statutory guidance to Clinical Commissioning Groups on how to proactively fund and commission from the women's voluntary sector**

48. Women's Health and Equality Consortium (2011) Why women's health? WHEC: London <http://www.whec.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2011/11/WhyWomensHealth11.pdf>

49. Women's National Commission (2010) A Bitter Pill To Swallow: Report from WNC Focus Groups to inform the Department of Health Taskforce on the Health Aspects of Violence Against Women and Girls. WNC: London <http://wnc.equalities.gov.uk/work-of-the-wnc/violence-against-women/news-and-updates/309-a-bitter-pill-to-swallow-report-from-the-wnc-focus-groups.html>

50. Bragg, R. (2012) 'How cuts to maternity services are threatening health and care' False Economy, 20th July 2012 <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/blog/how-cuts-to-maternity-services-are-threatening-care>

51. Maternity Action (2012) Guidance for Commissioning Health Services for Vulnerable Migrant Women. WHEC: London <http://www.maternityaction.org.uk/sitebuildercontent/sitebuilderfiles/guidancecommissioninghealthservvulnmigrantwomen2012.pdf>

52. Southall Black Sisters (2011) Safe and Sane: A Model of Intervention on Domestic Violence and Mental Health, Suicide and Self-harm Amongst Black and Minority Ethnic Women. SBS: London <http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/reports/safe-and-sane-report/> and Vale, S. (2012) 'Gypsy and Traveller women in the UK – Ethnic minority women', The Women's Resource blog, 8th December 2012 <http://thewomensresource.tumblr.com/post/37466483604/gypsy-and-traveller-women-in-the-uk-ethnic-minority>

53. Prison Reform Trust (2011) Bromley Briefing Prison Factfile, December 2011. PRT: London <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefing%20December%202011.pdf>

54. UCL Institute of Health Equity (2010) Fair Society, Healthy Lives: Strategic Review of Health Inequalities in England Post-2010 (The Marmot Review). UCL: London <http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/projects/fair-society-healthy-lives-the-marmot-review>

55. Public Health England, Sexual Health Programme <http://www.hpa.org.uk/web/HPAweb&Page&HPAwebAutoListName/Page/1201094614842> Accessed: 16/04/13

Article 13 – Social and economic benefits:

The changes to the welfare system will have hugely disproportionate impacts on women and force many into financial insecurity, poverty and even homelessness.⁵⁶ (P140 para 13.40) £14.9bn worth of cuts per year have been made to welfare payments: 74% from women's incomes.⁵⁷ A survey in 2012 found that, as a result of reduced incomes, one in five mothers miss meals so that their children can eat.⁵⁸

The impact on certain groups of women is particularly acute; single mothers, disabled, older and ethnic minority women see their incomes and services reduced as the cost of living increases. The introduction of Universal Credit in particular threatens to significantly reduce the incomes of 150,000 of the UK's poorest single working mothers and actively discourage mothers in couples from seeking paid employment where their partner is already in work/is seeking work.⁵⁹ (P134 para 13.23)

How will the Government ensure that the disproportionate impact of its welfare policies on women, in particular single mothers, is mitigated? Will it conduct full gender equality impact assessments of the cuts to welfare and other measures in future spending announcements?

Recommendations:

- **Ensure that the introduction of Universal Credit does not increase gender inequality and trap women in poverty and violence by reducing their economic independence**
- **The Treasury must adhere to the requirements of domestic equality law to assess both the individual and cumulative impact of all future tax and benefit changes on equality between women and men and seek to continually improve its data collection and models of analysis so the impacts of policies are fully understood and appropriately addressed**

Article 14 – Rural women:

Rural women face a lack of services exacerbated by cuts to transport services which leave many women isolated. (P148 para 14.4)

Gypsy, Traveller and Roma women are a specifically marginalised group particularly in terms of education, employment, housing, healthcare and gender based violence.⁶⁰ (P117 para 12.26) This issue has been raised internationally with various recommendations made to the Government which have been largely ignored and the Ministerial Working Group in this area has so far taken a gender neutral approach.

Recommendations:

- **Ensure that cuts to public services, such as cuts to public transport, and lack of internet access in rural areas do not restrict women's access to essential services**

56. Oxfam (2012) The Perfect Storm: Economic stagnation, the rising cost of living, public spending cuts, and the impact on UK poverty. Oxfam: Oxford <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-perfect-storm-economic-stagnation-the-rising-cost-of-living-public-spending-228591>

57. The Fawcett Society (2011) The Impact of Austerity on Women. Fawcett: London <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/The-Impact-of-Austerity-on-Women-19th-March-2012.pdf>

58. Netmums (2012) Feeling the Squeeze survey results http://www.netmums.com/files/Feeling_the_Squeeze_Survey_Summary.pdf

59. Save the Children (2012) Ending Child Poverty: Ensuring Universal Credit supports working mums. <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/ending-child-poverty-ensuring-universal-credit-supports-working-mums>

60. See Irish Traveller Movement in Britain (2011) Traveller Women's Community Development Programme: A social return on investment (SROI) evaluation. ITMB: London http://irishtraveller.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Irish_Traveller_movement_SROI_-_Evaluation21.pdf

and increase the marginalisation of certain groups

- **Introduce policy measures to effectively address the housing crisis which disproportionately affects Gypsy and Traveller women**

Article 15 – Equality before the law and civil matters:

There are various barriers⁶¹ to women reporting crime and accessing the criminal justice system and this is exacerbated for particular groups of women, such as disabled, migrant and lesbian and bisexual women.

Access to legal aid is a vital lifesaving resource for many women. Even with some concessions made, the introduction of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012⁶² disproportionately affects the most marginalised women and lays waste to access to justice in the UK. (P157 para 15.21) This fundamentally breaches CEDAW and other international convention obligations, and makes the Optional Protocol inaccessible, by reducing redress for women suffering discrimination and violence.⁶³

The 2007 Corston report⁶⁴ called for strategic progress on the women’s criminal justice agenda, eliminating discrimination and addressing the multiple and complex needs of women offenders and those at risk of offending, as recognised by CEDAW in 2008. However, these are yet to be realised, and disadvantaged women are doubly victimised by being left without access to justice. (P160 para 15.32)

How does the Government justify the increasing numbers of women jailed for minor offences, and lack of diversion of women with mental health problems from prison into therapeutic care?

Recommendations:

- **Monitor and mitigate the impact on women’s access to justice of the deepening crisis in publicly funded legal work and the cost of applying to an employment tribunal⁶⁵ or taking legal action**
- **Prioritise the continuing improvement of victim experiences in the criminal justice system. Train frontline professionals and adopt special mechanisms to improve the support provided to women throughout the criminal and civil law processes to increase women’s confidence in those processes**
- **Adopt a national action plan on women in the criminal justice system building on the Corston report and bringing together different government departments to coordinate a holistic response. The causes of women’s offending must be targeted and gender-sensitive policies, strategies and programmes for women in prisons developed**

61. Rights of Women (2010) Measuring up? UK compliance with international commitments on violence against women in England and Wales. ROW: London http://www.rightsofwomen.org.uk/pdfs/Measuring_up_A_report_by_Rights_of_Women.pdf

62. Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2012/10/schedule/1/part/1/enacted>

63. National Federation of Women’s Institutes (2011) Legal Aid is a Lifeline: Women speak out on the legal aid reforms. NFWI: London <http://thewi.org.uk/campaigns/current-campaigns-and-initiatives/no-more-violence-against-women/take-action>

64. Corston, J. (2007) A report by Baroness Jean Corston of a review of women with particular vulnerabilities in the Criminal Justice System. Home Office: London <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/docs/corston-report-march-2007.pdf>

65. Para 34 of CEDAW General Recommendation 28 requires States Parties to ensure that women can complain of discrimination and “have recourse to affordable, accessible and timely remedies, with legal aid and assistance as necessary...” etc. CEDAW General Recommendation No. 28 The Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of CEDAW (forty-seventh session, 2010) <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G10/472/60/PDF/G1047260.pdf?OpenElement>

Article 16 – Family life:

Various measures are threatening the equality of women in terms of marriage and family law e.g. Universal Credit, cuts to legal aid, lack of affordable childcare, changes to family courts.⁶⁶ (P167 para 16.22)

Forced marriage has been criminalised. This decision was taken against the advice of many women's rights experts, out of concern that it may lead to lower reporting rates rather than the support of at-risk women.⁶⁷ (P162 para 16.4)

What will the Government do to address the significant gaps in specialist minority ethnic and refugee support services including crisis-based accommodation, ongoing and consistent case-work support, outreach, resettlement and therapeutic support needs of women and girls who experience forced marriage? How will it ensure that Local Authorities include forced marriage as a strategic priority within local VAWG/ domestic violence strategies?

Recommendations:

- **Women must have access to public funding (legal aid) to obtain justice and protection in the family courts**
- **Sure Start Children's Centre services must be protected by reinstating the ring-fence to the Sure Start grant**

General Recommendation 19 – Violence against women and girls:

VAWG is a persistent and pervasive problem in the UK which leads to high costs to women and their families and to the Government.⁶⁸ (P170 para 19.5) Despite various strategies and commitments there has been insufficient effective action to prevent and reduce VAWG and new policies have put women in further danger and, with a few exceptions,⁶⁹ reduced what little support is available. Without addressing the underlying causes of VAWG, the wide ranging consequences cannot be dealt with. There is a need for more comprehensive implementation and resourcing for the VAWG *Action Plan*⁷⁰ that is government-wide and reflects women's intersectional identities. New localised commissioning structures are forcing the specialist women's VAWG sector into competition with generic services leading to the loss of women-only spaces and expertise in the gendered dynamics of sexual violence. (P182 para 19.47)

Government action on female genital mutilation (FGM) is inadequate, piecemeal and fails to include clearly resourced targets on prevention, provision and prosecution. Despite evidence of the extent of the practice⁷¹ (P186 para 19.61) which is illegal under the FGM Act 2003,⁷² there

66. Ministry of Justice (2012) Family Justice Review: Government Response. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-justice-review-government-response>

67. Carter, H. (2012) 'Criminalisation of forced marriage 'will push issue underground', The Guardian, 8th June 2012 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/08/criminalisation-forced-marriage-push-issue-underground>

68. Hirsch, A. (2008) 'Domestic violence 'costs £5.8bn'', The Guardian, 25th November 2008 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/nov/25/gender-economy-domestic-violence-women>

69. Rape Crisis (England and Wales) (2011) 'Press release: Government funding announced', Rape Crisis website, 28th January 2011 http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/news_show.php?id=51

70. Home Office (2013) Call to End Violence against Woman and Girls: Action Plan 2013. HM Government <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/crime/call-end-violence-women-girls/vawg-action-plan-2013?view=Binary>

71. For example in 2012 it was found that more than 2,100 women and girls in London had sought hospital treatment for FGM over the last six years - Woodhouse, C. and Clayton, J. (2012) '2,100 women seek treatment for mutilation', London Evening Standard, 16th February 2012 <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/health/2100-women-seek-treatment-for-mutilation-7443780.html> The figures were obtained by Freedom of Information Act requests to London NHS hospitals. The figures showed that 2,167 women accessed hospital treatment for female genital mutilation since 2006, with 708 of those needing to be admitted or have surgery.

72. Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/31/contents>

have been no prosecutions in England or Wales.⁷³

VAWG directly affects one in three women globally, and all women indirectly. The UK has appointed a Ministerial Champion on Violence Against Women and Girls Internationally, but there appear to be no resourced objectives for this role. Work by the Department for International Development on VAWG is ambitious, but is currently siloed within the department and is not integrated with work across government. (P194 para 19.87)

How will the Government measure the achievement of its substantive CEDAW commitments on VAWG? In particular how it is addressing the impact of VAWG on older, lesbian and bisexual, ethnic minority, disabled, asylum seeking, migrant and other minority women.

Recommendations:

- **A 4 nations Independent Taskforce should be established, reporting to relevant Ministerial Groups on VAWG, to examine the relationship between VAWG and mental health, suicide and self-harm; access to education and other services; and the impact of cuts in public spending and legal aid on women and girls. It should also examine legal and statutory responses, including that of the police and social services**
- **It is crucial that there is a minimum standards framework on VAWG based on equality and human rights principles and mandatory training, distributed evenly throughout the UK, for all statutory bodies and others working with women and on VAWG**
- **Ensure that commissioning and funding structures deliver sufficient sustainable, accessible and high-quality local specialised women-only support services on VAWG. Particular attention needs to be paid to the funding of service provision for groups of women who face additional barriers, such as ethnic minority, disabled, transgender women and women with an insecure immigration status**
- **Training for all statutory professionals on the identification, management and support of those at risk and affected by sexual and domestic violence and FGM in particular should be conducted routinely. This will form the foundation for identifying cases through routine inquiry, increased reporting and prosecutions**
- **Ensure policy coherence, prioritisation and resourcing in tackling VAWG, including prevention interventions, so that work domestically and internationally is aligned, that each supports and reinforces the other, and delivers. This includes monitoring and evaluating the impact of the Ministerial Champion on Violence Against Women and Girls and how this work is related to other international policies**

General Recommendation 18 – Disabled women:

Disabled women are disproportionately disadvantaged by the Government's austerity measures.⁷⁴ Cuts to health and social care, public services and welfare benefits have led to disabled people taking their own lives rather than live with the impact of these cuts increasing

73. Ellison, J. (2011) Child Protection System in England, Written evidence submitted by Jane Ellison MP to the Education Select Committee, Session 2010-12, 11/11/11 <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmeduc/writtev/1514/cp60.htm> Contrast the situation in France where there have been about 100 convictions relating to FGM, many of them resulting in parents and FGM practitioners being sent to prison. See BBC News (2012) 'FGM reconstructive surgery made me 'complete'', BBC NEWS World, 24th July 2012 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-18976217>

74. Disability Benefits Consortium (2011) Benefiting Disabled People? A report by the Disability benefits Consortium looking at the support offered to disabled people and people with a health condition by the benefits system and how this support could be improved. www.lcdisability.org/download.php?id=1647

the barriers they face on a daily basis.⁷⁵ (Appendix: 36)

Recommendation:

Create a fair simplified system which assesses disabled women’s gender and disability specific needs for benefits, accessible employment opportunities and support. The system must assess disability, housing and income benefit entitlement on a case by case basis, rather than impose a ‘one size fits’ all model on disabled women

General Recommendation 27 - Older women:

The Government has done little to address the specific inequalities experienced by the ageing population of women in the UK. Recent policies have made this group even more vulnerable.⁷⁶ We support and endorse the submission on older women’s rights which the Committee has received.⁷⁷

The full report and extensive appendices with further information are available at: <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/our-work/cedaw/cedaw-shadow-report/>

75. Butler, P. (2011) ‘Do Cuts Kill?’, The Guardian, 16th November 2011 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/patrick-butler-cuts-blog/2011/nov/16/do-public-spending-cuts-kill> and Benefitsclaimantsfightback (2012) ‘Disabled activists and UK Uncut join to oppose ‘cruel and unnecessary’ welfare bill’, National Protest Against Benefits Cuts blog, 25th January 2012 <http://benefitclaimantsfightback.wordpress.com/2012/01/25/disabled-activists-and-uk-uncut-join-to-oppose-cruel-and-unnecessary-welfare-bill-2/>
76. Women’s Budget Group (2010) The Impact on Women of the Coalition Spending Review 2010. WBG: London http://wbg.org.uk/RRB_Reports_4_1653541019.pdf
77. Sclater, E. (2012) NGO Thematic Shadow Report: Older Women’s Rights in the United Kingdom. Older Women’s Network, Europe and National Alliance of Women’s Organisations <http://thewomensresourcecentre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/olderwomensrightsukNGOthematic.pdf>

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