



A Charter for Women's Equality

*Our vision is of an Ireland, and of a world,
where all women and men have equal power
to shape society and their own lives. (NWCI)*

Introduction

This Charter for Women's Equality has been developed in the context of an economic crisis which has seen women bear the brunt of cuts to social welfare and public services, while women's ability to participate in a diminishing workforce has also declined steeply. Violence against women is dramatically increasing, with under-funded services struggling to cope, while at the same time experiencing cuts to their budgets.

The impact of the recession on women is rarely discussed in public debate, and there is rising concern amongst women and women's organisations that feminist voices are not being heard either, in discussions about recovery and the future of Irish society.

The Charter has been developed at a time when

- Women do most of the unpaid care work and Ireland has the poorest level of childcare provision in the EU
- Women are concentrated in low paid and part time work, while considerable gaps in earnings between women and men persist with women currently earning 17% less than men.
- The risk of poverty for women is 14%
- Lone parents have the highest at risk of poverty rate at 36.4% and 92% of lone parents are women in poverty.
- The 40% male/female target on the boards of state agencies remains unmet.
- Ireland's democratic deficit remains at drastic levels and is declining, with women comprising only 13% of TDs (and falling) and 19% of local councillors.

The EU Commission Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities between Women and Men has recommended

that member states should 'shape their responses to the economic and financial crisis in a way which is sensitive to its differential impact on women and men and demonstrates commitment to gender equality, including a gender dimension in national recovery plans' and to 'ensure that all proposed policies are subject routinely to gender impact assessment, as a matter of good policy making, and undertake gender impact assessment of the measures currently being taken at national level'.

In this context it is a matter of urgency that we firmly embed the principles of gender equality into the programmes, policies and practices of decision and policy making institutions at local and national levels.

The Purpose of this Charter is to

- Support all those in decision and policy making structures at local and national level to name and enhance their ability to address women's inequality.
- Establish opportunities for discussion on appropriate and new ways of promoting women's equality.
- Support feminist organizations in their efforts to achieve human rights for women.

The Charter is the result of 5 regional consultation meetings with women's groups, statutory agencies and local development organizations which were held throughout the year in Dublin, Galway, Donegal, Killarney and Waterford as well as a national roundtable seminar in November 2010.

The National Women's Council of Ireland is the national representative body for women in Ireland representing our 180 (and rising) member organisations and working with them to advance the position of women in Ireland.

The National Collective of Community based Women's Networks is a national women's organisation with a membership of twenty-three community based women's networks around the country.

We are feminists, in that we are committed to achieving equal political, economic, cultural and social rights for women. We will support organisations to use and implement this charter.



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Declaration

Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace².

This Charter represents the commitment of _____ (Name of Organisation) to making women's equality a reality.

_____ (Name of Organisation) recognises that women still face widespread inequalities, violence and discrimination with serious repercussions for economic and social cohesion, sustainable growth and development.

- We believe that it is necessary to include a strong, explicit focus on the needs of women in our strategies, policies, programmes and services.
- We recognise the importance of ensuring that the views of women are central to our decision making processes.
- We recognize and value the contribution women make to Irish society through economic, social, cultural and political development and we will strive to harness and build on that contribution in our work.
- We acknowledge that the full participation of women and the protection of their rights are essential to the development of a sustainable, thriving and equal Irish society and we are committed to playing our part in making that a reality.
- We recognize that the impact of our policies, actions and services will be stronger when gender considerations are taken into account at the outset and when the achievement of human rights and equality for women informs everything that we do.
- We acknowledge the diversity that exists amongst women and the specific and multiple forms of oppression and discrimination faced by particular groups of women. . We will ensure that responses to meeting the needs of women reflect this diversity and prioritise those who are most marginalised.
- We are committed to taking the necessary and appropriate steps to eliminate all forms of sexism and discrimination against women and remove barriers to women's equality.
- We wish to develop our organization as one where women can participate as equals. We want our organization to be a place where sexism and discrimination against women is effectively addressed.
- We will ensure that we are aware of all relevant equality laws and that these laws are respected and fully complied with in our employment practice and in the implementation of our work programmes.

“ Especially in times of crisis, we need to incorporate the gender dimension in all of our policies, for the benefit of both women and men, ”

President José Manuel Barroso.

Programme of Action

To realise a vision of women's equality _____ (Name of Organisation) _____ (Name of Organisation) will take action in the following areas;

Programme Planning and Implementation

Addressing the needs of the people we serve in an effective and efficient way involves naming the specific problems experienced by different communities and in particular recognizing the different concerns of women and men within these communities. Incorporating a gender dimension into our planning and implementation processes will ensure that policies, programmes and services are designed to have a lasting and sustainable impact on women, men, families and communities.

_____ (Name of Organisation) is therefore committed to;

- Naming the achievement of women's human rights and equality as a priority in our work.
- Gathering information and data on the position of women within our target communities/audiences.
- Setting clear targets and actions to address the distinct needs of women.
- Consulting with women and groups working with women and establishing on-going dialogue with them to enable women to express their needs and what they want from the programmes, policies and services of the organisation.
- Testing out new services, new plans and new programmes at design stage for their impact on women and others experiencing inequality³.
- Measuring outcomes for women and men from the implementation of our strategies.
- Introducing gender budgeting⁴ to ensure that the way in which resources are allocated within and from the organisation reflects the needs of women and in particular those who are most vulnerable
- Providing women and men with appropriate, accessible and user friendly information on services available, rights and entitlements.

Participation in Decision Making

Women's representatives must be encouraged to participate and must be accepted by others as full participants taking part on equal terms⁵. Changing the way in which decisions are taken may require change in the culture of the organisation. This will result in the empowerment of women and better outcomes for women, families and communities as they bring their knowledge and experience to bear.

_____ (Name of Organisation) is therefore committed to;

- Working to achieve gender balance on all committees and boards within the organisation.
- Ensuring the highest level of participation of women possible in the planning of policies, programmes and services.
- Ensuring that women's representative groups are given a space at all possible decision making tables in the organisation.
- Providing childcare, social care and transport supports to enable women to participate
- Establishing consultative fora and undertaking outreach work with women, to assess their needs and build appropriate strategies and actions.

Processes

Building the participation of women requires that processes within

_____ (Name of Organisation) are inclusive, adaptable and open to change. We acknowledge that women's participation involves more than the creation of gender balance based on numbers.

_____ (Name of Organisation) is therefore committed to;

- Ensuring that our processes of community consultation and engagement are designed and structured in a way that ensures maximum participation of women, in particular those who are most marginalised.
- Ensuring that processes of selection of representatives to our committees and/or board, target and encourage women to come forward for selection/election.
- Organising and planning meetings in a way which supports and enhances the meaningful participation of women and all those in our target communities/audiences.
- Developing our understanding of the issues affecting women through analysing existing research, undertaking additional research where necessary and participating in gender awareness training.

Progress Monitoring and Review of Implementation

Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of this Charter is the responsibility of

_____ (Title of individual/committee/board)

They will report to _____ (name of committee/board)

on an annual basis on progress regarding implementation. _____ (Name of organisation)

will liaise and consult with women's organisations at local and national level and with local and community development bodies. We will do this on an on-going basis to monitor and to evaluate the extent to which our work is meeting their needs and preferences and to shape the design of new policies, programmes, services and delivery methods.



Government commitments at national and international levels to achieving women's equality

This Charter for Women's equality is being implemented in the context of a wide range Government Commitments at national and international levels for the promotion of women's Human Rights. We are working to play our part in meeting these commitments to women.

• The National Women's Strategy

The National Women's Strategy (2007 – 2016) was launched by the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform in April 2007. The National Women's Strategy is 'the Government's statement of priorities in relation to the advancement of women in Irish society for the period 2007 to 2016'. The vision of the NWS is 'an Ireland where all women enjoy equality with men and can achieve their full potential, while enjoying a safe and fulfilling life'. The objectives and actions in the NWS fall under three themes:

- Equalising socio and economic opportunity for women
- Ensuring the well being of women; and
- Engaging as equal and active citizens

The EU RoadMap for Equality Between Women and Men

This Roadmap outlines six priority areas for EU action on gender equality for the period 2006-2010: equal economic independence for women and men; reconciliation of private and professional life; equal representation in decision-making; eradication of all forms of gender-based violence; elimination of gender stereotypes; promotion of gender equality in external and development policies. For each area, it identifies priority objectives and actions.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. Consisting of a preamble and 30 articles, it defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.

The Irish Government signed the Convention in 1979. The Convention defines discrimination against women as "...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field."

By accepting the Convention, States commit themselves to undertake a series of measures to end discrimination against women in all forms, including: "to ensure elimination of all acts of discrimination against women by persons, organizations or enterprises".

The Beijing Platform for Action

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) was adopted at the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995. It is an internationally agreed plan (including agreement by Ireland), setting out actions to be taken by Governments for achieving equality for women across 12 critical areas – poverty, education and training, health, the economy, power and decision-making, human rights, armed conflict, institutional mechanisms, the environment, violence against women and the girl child.



PROGRESS (2007-2013)

This publication is supported under the European Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS (2007–2013).

This programme is managed by the Directorate-General for Employment, social affairs and equal opportunities of the European Commission. It was established to financially support the implementation of the objectives of the European Union in the employment and social affairs area, as set out in the Social Agenda, and thereby contribute to the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals in these fields.

The seven-year Programme targets all stakeholders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

PROGRESS mission is to strengthen the EU contribution in support of Member States' commitment.

PROGRESS will be instrumental in:

- providing analysis and policy advice on **PROGRESS** policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in **PROGRESS** policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large

For more information see: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327&langId=en>

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission.

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Equality Authority.

Bibliography

1 E.g. Statutory bodies (local authorities, FAS, VECs, HSE), Local Development Companies, Trade Unions

2 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Fourth World Conference on Women, 15 September 1995, A/CONF.177/20 (1995) and A/CONF.177/20/Add.1 (1995).

3 Adapted from Towards Age Friendly Provision of Goods and Services (2nd edition), Equality Authority 2010.

4 Gender responsive budgeting helps to track the way that budgets respond to women's priorities and the way that funds are used to reduce poverty and promote gender equality. (Adapted from Gender Responsive budgeting in Practice UNFPA and UNifem(www.unfpa.org))

5 Adapted from Gender Mainstreaming in the Local Development Programme 2000 – 2006 Area Development management Ltd (now Pobal)

Useful Contacts

Name	Address	Phone Email	Website	
National Women's Council of Ireland	9 Marlborough Court, Marlborough Street, Dublin 9	01 878 7248	info@nwci.ie	www.nwci.ie
National Collective of Community Based Women's Networks	Brookfield Enterprise Centre, Tallaght, Dublin 24	085 131 2983	nccwn@eircom.net	www.nccwn.org
AkiDWA (African and migrant women's network)	AkiDwA, 9B Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1	01 814 8582	info@akidwa.ie	www.akidwa.ie
Irish Feminist Network	c/o 9 Marlborough Court, Marlborough St, Dublin 1	01 878 7248	irishfeministnetwork@gmail.com	www.irishfeministnetwork.com
National Traveller Women's Forum	1st Floor, Unit 4, Tuam Road Centre, Tuam Road, Galway	091 771 509	ntwf@iol.ie	www.ntwf.net
Banulacht (feminist development education organization).	20 Lower Dominick Street, Dublin 1	01 872 3039	info@banulach.ie	www.banulacht.ie
Women's Resource and Development Agency	6 Mt Charles, Belfast, BT7 1NZ	0044 028 9023 0212	info@wrda.net	www.wrda.net
SIPTU Women's Committee	SIPTU, Liberty Hall, Dublin 1	01 858 6302	asped@siptu.ie	www.siptu.ie/equality/National Womens/Committee/
Irish Congress of Trade Unions Women's Committee	31/32 Parnell Square, Dublin 1	01 889 7777	congress@ictu.ie	www.ictu.ie/about/committees/18/
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