

## **A Gender Lens on Public Service Agreements (PSAs)**

**September 2006**

Departments publish Public Service Agreements (PSAs) targets as a mechanism of public accountability. By setting high level objectives and monitoring their achievement in each department, government is able to determine progress in key areas in a transparent way. PSA targets are set in the context of regular comprehensive spending reviews in which resources are allocated to work programmes across government. This process of allocating budgets and setting targets is a key driver of government priorities.

This note focuses on one aspect of government's objectives – that of gender equality. The PSA process must be informed by a gender lens for a number of reasons:

- **Public policy:** Much government work is directed to the reduction of inequality, child poverty and so on;
- **Costs:** Inequalities generate costs, in terms of greater calls on public services; poverty; poor health; reduced productivity; reduced social cohesion and increased conflict. For example, overall cost of DV in England and Wales is £23 billion.
- **Legally:** The Gender Equality Duty, which requires public bodies to promote equality of men and women;
- **Morally,** and reasons of social justice and human rights.

A 'gender lens' is a means of analysing policy, services and other work with a gender perspective. The outcome of such an analysis is a clear picture of the relative position of women and men; the differences between them in terms of employment, earned income, pensions, benefits, health, longevity, patterns of mobility and transport use; representation and voice in public life, public planning and public decision making; and as perpetrators and victims of crime. Beyond this picture, the analysis then informs an understanding of how policies and services will impact on women and men differently and how they may increase or reduce gender inequality.

### **Gender analysis case study: how spending on sports programmes meets men's needs more than women's.**

Spending on sports programmes tends to be gender blind, that is, it disproportionately favours one gender, but does not recognise or adjust for this, and is therefore gender imbalanced. Gender budget analysis research by the EOC and the Sports Council for Wales found that spending on sports in Wales tends to be gender-blind, and favour men. For example, activities with high levels of female participation tended to be more dependent upon self-funding. For example, aerobics classes, popular among women, often require an attendance fee to cover costs. However, football, which is much more popular with men, is subsidised by the public purse, with no attendance fee required. This demonstrates the need for gender analysis of policy and expenditure in order to ensure that both women and men benefit from public spending<sup>i</sup>.

### **Gender Inequality: Prevalence**

The government has pursued a long-term public policy goal of reducing inequality generally. As well as gender, which is a strand of inequality, other strands of inequality in the UK include socio-economic class; age; faith; sexual orientation; disability, and race. However, the indicators show that the women in each of these groups are worse off than men in a range of areas.

- Women working full-time are paid on average 17% less an hour than men (or 38% less if they work part-time).<sup>ii</sup> Half of all women working full-time and 80% of those working part-time earn below the Council of Europe's decency threshold of £6.31 an hour.<sup>iii</sup>
- Closing the gender pay gap could provide gains of up to £23 billion a year<sup>iv</sup>.
- 93 per cent of male employees work full-time compared with only 57 per cent of women.<sup>v</sup>
- More than 80% of women do not qualify for full state pensions as they have stayed home to look after their family.<sup>vi</sup> Less than 20% of women qualify for a full-state pension, compared to 98% of men.<sup>vii</sup> Female single pensioners are one of the poorest groups of the older population - one in five live in poverty.<sup>viii</sup>
- UK society saves around £57 billion a year thanks to unpaid work carried out by people caring for disabled, ill or elderly relatives. Approximately 60% of carers are women.<sup>ix</sup> Despite this, the weekly entitlement offered by the "Carer's Allowance" is less than two thirds of that offered by long-term incapacity benefit or the full basic state pension, leaving many women with an income of less than £47 per week.<sup>x</sup>
- One woman in four will experience domestic violence at some point in their lives.<sup>xi</sup> 2 women are killed by their current or former partner each week.<sup>xii</sup>
- 53% of all lone parent households are classed as "poor"<sup>xiii</sup>. 90% of lone parents are women<sup>xiv</sup>

### **Gender Inequality: Invisibility**

A gender lens is particularly important because gender based inequality is sometimes invisible. The indicators and statistics we use are not routinely disaggregated by gender. The inequality between women and men in their disposable income, for example, can be hidden because income is often assessed at household level only, and assumption is made that income within the household is distributed equally, although research indicates that this is not the case. Only some parts of the economy and of economic activity are measured, and these are the areas that are dominated by men. Much of women's activity in the unpaid caring sector is not counted in the usual measures of GDP. But the articulation between the paid and unpaid sectors is critical; for example, as women move into the paid labour market, their unpaid work stops or reduces. This has unforeseen effects, including increased demand for paid care work and for public services such as eldercare. Economic models in standard use generally fail to take into account the gendered nature of economic activity and economic indicators fail to include much of women's activity in national accounts. However, the use of gender disaggregated statistics and satellite accounts can help to address these shortcomings.

### **The forthcoming Public Sector Duty to Promote Gender Equality**

The WBG supports the Government's proactive approach to advancing gender equality by introducing this public sector duty to promote gender equality (GED). Achieving gender equality will rely on an approach that incorporates gender analysis from the policy design stage, through to its implementation, as well as evaluating and monitoring this process against its aims. The WBG believes that in order to achieve this gender analysis, should be incorporated into tracking public revenue and spending, otherwise known as gender budgeting .

The duty presents a *legal obligation* on public bodies, including all central government departments to actively promote gender equality, requiring them to identify their gender equality objectives (after consultation), plan how to achieve the objectives, take the planned actions and report publicly on progress - departmental PSAs are the ideal framework for fulfilling those requirements. As such, it is essential that the Comprehensive Spending Review rationalise its goals and programmes by integrating strategies to implement the CSR and the gender duty together. This is especially necessary, given the CSR's importance in setting the outcome-focused agenda for public spending.

### **PSA targets**

PSA targets have been criticised since their inception because they were constructed in a gender blind way. Very few of the targets demonstrate any awareness of gender inequality, let alone attempt to tackle it. In order to comply with the GED, gender should be mainstreamed into the targets of all departments.

The exception to this is the Gender PSA, which is an excellent initiative aiming to give a focus to this key area and to tackle gender inequality across

government. The Gender PSA could usefully be strengthened by the inclusion of targets that have more strategic significance. It gives the appearance of being constructed from a series of existing, achievable targets, rather than being the product of strategic thought. As a result, some key drivers of women's inequality are excluded. Taken as whole, the Gender PSA represents a key opportunity for government to monitor its progress on achieving women's equality.

In order to more effectively meet the desired outcome of a Gender PSA, that is to 'bring about measurable improvements in gender equality', a two pronged approach is necessary where

- i) each department addresses gender differences within their own PSAs and;
- ii) a focussed Gender PSA tackles a small number of strategic and cross governmental issues, such as closing the pay gap and tackling gender based violence.

In the context of the Government's current initiatives to join up its work on equalities, it would be useful to mainstream a diversity perspective within the gender PSA, and PSA sub-targets on gender. That is, they would apply an understanding of the barriers faced by different groups of women depending on other strands of inequality. For example, in order to overcome barriers to women's employment, a race analysis is important. This may include determining the particular barriers faced by ethnic minority women that restrict them to working below their potential.

***The WBG recommends the inclusion of a strategic gender PSA, and gender sub-targets for other PSAs in the Comprehensive Spending Review.***

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Source: Duncan, R. and Mortimer, J. (2004) An investigation into equality and gender-related issues of sports participation and budgeting of local authority leisure centres in Wales: Final Report, Equal Opportunities Commission and Sports Council for Wales

<sup>ii</sup> The Fawcett Society: "Make some noise: facts and figures on the equality gap." Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2006 from

<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/leaflet%20short%20final.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=23>

<sup>iv</sup> DCLG (2006) Government Action Plan: implementing the Women and Work Commission Recommendations. Accessed on September 12, 2006 from

[http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/publications/www\\_govtactionplan\\_sept06.pdf](http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/publications/www_govtactionplan_sept06.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> "Women and Men in Britain: The Labour Market." Equal Opportunities Commission at [http://www.eoc.org.uk/PDF/wm\\_labour\\_market.pdf](http://www.eoc.org.uk/PDF/wm_labour_market.pdf). Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2006.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid

<sup>vii</sup> <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=21>

<sup>viii</sup> <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=21>

<sup>ix</sup> "Women and Men in Britain: The Work-Life Balance." Equal Opportunities Commission at [http://www.eoc.org.uk/PDF/wm\\_labour\\_market.pdf](http://www.eoc.org.uk/PDF/wm_labour_market.pdf). Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2006.

<sup>x</sup> Kate Bellamy, Fran Bennett and Jane, 2005. "Benefits? A gender analysis of the UK benefits and tax credits system" Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2006 from <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Benefits%20final%20copy.pdf>

<sup>xi</sup> Commission on Women and the Criminal Justice System, 2003. "Interim Report on Victims and Witnesses." Accessed from

<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/Report%20on%20Victims%20and%20Witnesses%20July%202003.pdf> on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2006.

<sup>xii</sup> The Fawcett Society: "Make some noise: facts and figures on the equality gap." Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2006 from

<http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/documents/leaflet%20short%20final.pdf>

<sup>xiii</sup> <http://www.fawcettsociety.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=22> Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2006

<sup>xiv</sup> [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/issues/gender/links/0503uk.htm](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/issues/gender/links/0503uk.htm) Accessed on 21<sup>st</sup> August 2006.