

UN QUESTIONNAIRE ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Part One

Overview of trends in achieving gender equality and women's advancement

The election of the Labour Government in May 1997 brought a determination by the new administration to improve the position of women. Central to this aim was the establishment of a new Women's Unit to support the Ministers for Women. These are the Rt. Hon. the Baroness Jay, Leader of the House of Lords and a member of the Cabinet, and the Rt. Hon. Tessa Jowell who is Minister for Public Health and the House of Commons spokesperson on women's issues.

The Women's Unit, based in the Cabinet Office at the heart of government, ensures the contribution of the women's perspective in the wider government agenda. Its aim is to listen to women's concerns, to reflect and promote their concerns within Government and in turn to communicate effectively what the Government is doing to meet those concerns. The UK Government's agenda for women is set out in the *Policy for Women, Plan for All*. This reflects the commitment not to marginalise women's interests and concerns and to recognise that progress for women is progress for the whole of society. The agenda for women reflects the gender mainstreaming approach in that its goal is to integrate the needs and aspirations of women at from the outset. The style of the Women's Unit is to add value to existing initiatives and to act as a taskforce within Government, not to act as a separate lobby for women.

Equality for women and equal treatment are at the heart of Government thinking and delivery in every area. In health, education, financial policy and social security, radical changes have already been made to ensure that the impact on women of any policy is not only recognised but taken into account. Of course there is no room for complacency and the UK is striving ever harder for more and better. The Government is realistic in its approach to tackling the problems that women encounter daily. It is still the case that many women

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designed to: |

in the 1990s the women's perspective into budget cross-country government
led to the introduction of the *Better Government for Women* initiative
to inject the women's perspective into policy initiative
practical benefits for
women's NGOs;
a research programme, to pro

its project areas has:

closely in the process with HM

magnitude of the disparity
lifetimes;

service/retail sectors

the NHS;

"relation to a new nurse

and publicity at an NHS Human
resources with over 40 local NHS

approach towards teenagers.

Home Office, Social Exclusion Unit and the Department for Education and
Employment (DfEE);

brokered a new commitment to work on gender stereotyping within
DfEE;

- a major *Listening to Women* exercise consisting of a programme, a series of twelve Ministerial round tables, a meeting of national NGOs and a 'talkback' radio programme distributed and designed to elicit views from
• four focused projects designed to address particular concerns to women that do not have a Government department and have therefore

- family friendly
- women's income
- teenage girls
- a mainstreaming

In the first quarter of 1999 the *Women's*

Women's Incomes over a Lifetime

- fed ideas into the 1999 Budget
- published a document demonstrating

between men's and women's incomes

Family friendly practices in the National

- initiated a new family friendly strategy
- contributed to publicity and recruitment scheme;

- established partnerships with six trusts
- had a successful project launch and Resources conference, leading to

Teenage Girls

- established the importance of

- influenced drafts of the *Our Healthier Nation* White Paper, *Smoking Kills* White Paper, work in the Social Exclusion Unit on young people and teenage pregnancy and the Home Office on teenage boys.

Violence against women

- jointly funded research with Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) and the Department of Social Security, provision of services.

Home Office to transfer project after publication of reports
 and the country
 measures and
 is summer

uch is already beginning to have an impact with a
 initiatives and...
 include the incorporation of the women
Modernising Government White Paper, the 'Beacon'
 guidance for Regional Development Agencies, new
 especially for regional planning, guidance on the
 city development plans, the National Strategy for

Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions' Rural England consultation paper, the Department for
 Media and Sports, tourism strategy, the National Careers Strategy
 Giving Age. The Women's Unit has also had detailed input to the
 for Education and Employment family friendly employment promotion
 detailed involvement in drafting parental leave regulations and
 the implementation of the Employment Relations Bill.

at recent budget, details of which are given in...
 rights of the Government's policies, as they
 en are:

ment to promote family-friendly initiatives, including through
 Employment Relations Bill, the Fairness at Work White Paper, and
 ment the Working Time, Part-time Work and Parental Leave
 s:

Deal for Lone Parents to help lone parents move from welfare

significant income related benefits increased to help families

tion of a National Minimum Wage from 1st April 1998

care Strategy.

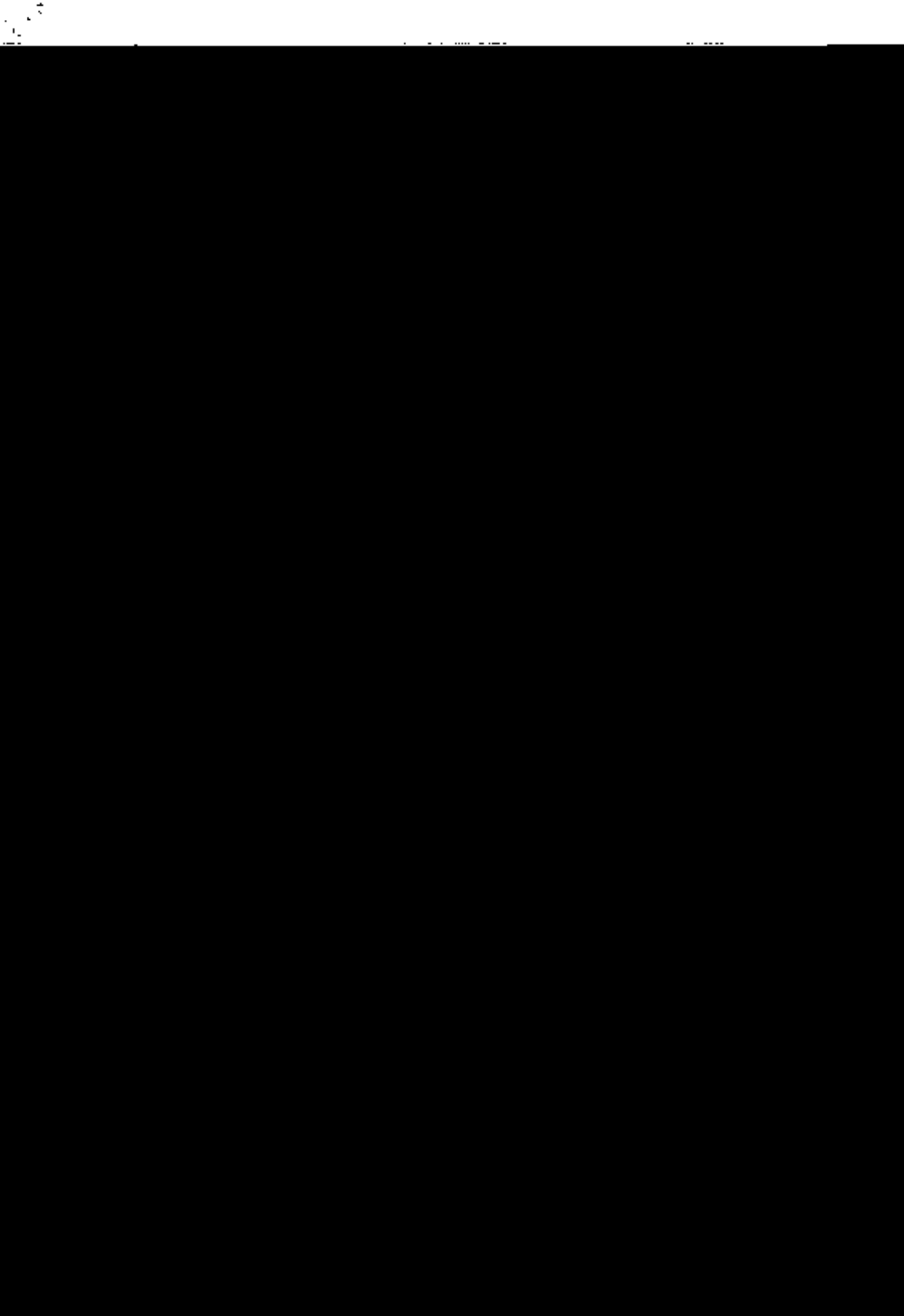
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to all government departments to ensure that the
perspective is an integral part of policy making and
in Modernising Government White Paper to meet the
men:

ted to children in most vulnerable areas under Sure Start
es and children the best start in life.



will be a minimum income guarantee - to be
April 2000 - for pensioners aged 60 and over of
rate for older pensioners)

from April
updated by
£76.0000

the minimum tax guarantee will ensure that pensioners 65 and
below £110 per week pay no tax (£115 for those 75 and

old increase in the winter allowance from £20 to £100 will help
pensioner household

Policy in financial policy

the UK Government's wider commitment to improve gender
policy, it seeks to ensure that gender issues are integrated into
economic policy making, for example by consideration of the gender
of the strategy is currently assessment of the national budget
economic area of policy appraisal under review as this is a relatively
and Government is keen to build up expertise and work

There is undoubtedly room for improvement. For example, the process is
restricted by the absence or limited availability of gender disaggregate
information. Improving the availability of this information is a high priority
area for future work and was an annex to the 1998 Pre-Budget Report.

In progress, the Government consults regularly with outside
These include the Women's Budget Group, an independent think
in the relationship between women, men and economics. The Women's
Group is made up of individual women economists and social policy
from academic institutions and NGOs, as well as independent
experts. The Group meets officials in the run-up to and aftermath of the

useful statistical
assessment is made
men of a variety
Disaggregating
key mechanism for

Distributional analysis is an important topic and
underpinning to the gender impact assessment. D
of Budget measures both collectively and individ
of policy and non-policy instruments to which re
or impact of measures which affect women and
and presenting the impact on women effe

securing the maximum amount of useful feedback, and also demonstr

Institutional Measures to follow up and implement the Platform for Action

Following the general election of May 1997, the Prime Minister appointed the first ever Minister for Women in the Cabinet. The Minister for Women is supported by the Public Health Minister based in the Department of Health.

The Women's Issues Committee, comprising senior ministers from across all major Government departments, whose remit is to review and develop the Government's policy and strategy on issues of special concern to women and to oversee its implementation. Members act as focal points for women's concerns in their departments.

The Ministers for Women are supported by a Women's Unit already described in the answer to the question on the group of senior officials in the Cabinet's Sub-Committee for communication.

up to global conferences Arrangements to co-ord

responsibility for ensuring compliance with the UK's international obligations on women's rights and co-ordinates all action to follow up to Beijing. Following Beijing, the UK Government gave a commitment to publish an annual progress report and to hold an annual meeting with NGOs to discuss progress on implementing the Platform for Action. The latest progress report *Delivering for Women: progress so far* was published in November 1998, while in January 1999 the Women's National Commission (see below) arranged, on behalf of the Women's Unit, a meeting with NGOs on that report and to take a forward look at what still needs to be done in the UK to improve women's lives.

The National Commission is the Government's official advisory body to ensure that the informed opinion of women is taken into account together with the WNC, many government departments, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. The Commission also provides a forum for women's views on their work.

The Women's National Commission stimulates debate among women's governmental organisations (NGOs) in order to increase their influence on public policy and to ensure that the views of women are brought to the Government. In co-operation with both the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) and the Women's Unit, the WNC produced a national report on the Beijing Global Platform for Action in 1997. In June 1997 the WNC's report *Growing up female in the UK* inspired by the Platform for Action. Post Beijing, the WNC obtained Consultative Status with the Global Platform's

Status with ECOSOC at the UN and as a result brings UN materials to women and to women's organisations of the UK, and organises responses from them. Individual NGOs also attend the annual Commission on the Status of Women meeting.

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Child Tax Credit

The Family Credit in October 1999 will be increased to cover up to 70% of eligible costs of childcare.

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Bill L. Albert, Jr., Director of the Bureau of Prisons, has been instrumental in the development of the new program. The program is designed to provide a comprehensive approach to the treatment of inmates. It includes a variety of services, including educational, vocational, and recreational activities. The program is based on the principle of individualized treatment, which recognizes that each inmate has unique needs and abilities. The program is designed to help inmates develop the skills and attitudes necessary for successful reentry into society. The program is a significant step towards the goal of reducing recidivism and promoting the rehabilitation of inmates.

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...the Government has published its Employment Bill, which will currently before the House of Commons. It contains a number of areas which will affect the way in which women work, including:

- **Maternity Protection:** The Bill will provide mothers with a minimum of 11 weeks of leave before and after the birth of a child, and will also provide for the payment of maternity allowances during this period.
- **Part-time Work:** The Bill will give part-time workers the same rights as full-time workers, including the right to request a change to full-time work.
- **Family Friendly Measures:** The Bill will introduce a number of measures to help families balance work and family commitments, including:
 - **Flexibility at Work:** This will allow employees to request flexible working arrangements, such as reduced hours or working from home.
 - **Parental Leave:** This will allow parents to take up to 13 weeks of leave to care for a child under the age of five.
 - **Carer's Leave:** This will allow employees to take up to 13 weeks of leave to care for a dependent adult.
 - **Shared Parental Leave:** This will allow parents to share up to 52 weeks of leave between them.

The Government is committed to ensuring that these measures are implemented in a way that is fair and effective for all employees, and will continue to work with employers and trade unions to ensure that the Bill is implemented successfully.

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Review of Sex Discrimination Legislation
The Government is considering the Equal
Opportunity Commission's recently published
proposals for changes in the sex
discrimination legislation.

Subject level for the
Women in the
Parliament's issue.

July 1987 and is
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document, meaning
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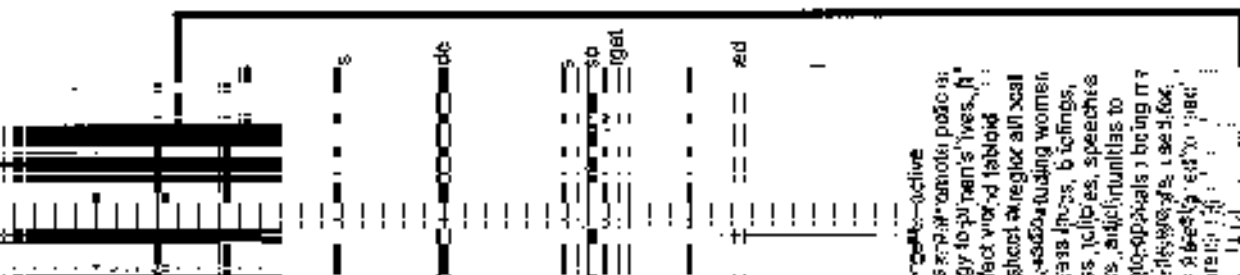
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Medical Register (gross mis-
FGM practice.

- The Department of Health is supporting organisations aiming to eradicate FGM in countries where FGM is common. This will lead to a reduction in the elimination of the practice.