



**nirwn**  
**Northern Ireland  
Rural Women's Network**

**Northern Ireland  
Rural Women's Network (NIRWN's)  
Response To**

Public Consultation on  
**Draft Programme for Government  
Framework 2016-21**

Northern Ireland Executive

**July 2016**

NIRWN

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## 1 Introduction

**1.1** NIRWN's vision is a rural community where women are respected and valued and where they have the opportunities, confidence and ability to visibly take up positions of power and influence in all areas of life.

NIRWN key objectives:

- Increasing the voice of rural women through giving them a voice at Policy level
- Playing an advocacy and lobbying role on behalf of rural women
- Encouraging women in decision-making and providing representation for rural women
- Information and networking opportunities for rural women
- Working within the Regional Support for Women in Disadvantaged and Rural Areas Programme, funded by DSD and DAERA to give a voice to rural women

### **Mission**

NIRWN's mission, as a rural regional support organisation, is to advance rural women's equality and participation in society. We will ensure rural women are recognised and supported to fully participate as equal citizens in the development of sustainable rural communities and society.

**1.2** NIRWN, as a member of the Women's Regional Consortium funded through DSD, welcome the opportunity to respond to the Consultation on Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21

**1.3** This response is informed by our membership's views on the Draft Programme through our research and stakeholder engagement.

## 2 Comments:

### 2.1 Introduction

#### 2.1.1 Framework

NIRWN support the need for a Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016-21. NIRWN agree with the Executive that *'we need a cohesive Executive working to deliver for all'*. NIRWN welcome the chance to engage *'outside Government to develop plans which recognize the various parts that many different organisations and sectors play'*. It is our view that the community/voluntary sector has been working collaboratively for many years; pooling resources to effect maximum change. NIRWN on behalf of our membership base is keen to be engaged in the proposed action planning process and to work with the Executive and others in the development of detailed plans.

#### 2.1.2 Context for Rural Women

Women in NI today are still economically, culturally and politically unequal. Women continue to struggle with dominant patriarchal values and structures in every sphere of private and public life and are underrepresented in public life and the political arena where change may be influenced and enacted. The process of social change in NI has been impacted by the NI Conflict<sup>1</sup> and, Post Good Friday Agreement policy making has not improved matters for women in NI<sup>2</sup>. The lack of gender parity that exists throughout Northern Irish society is, in our view, a key factor hindering the development of a new shared future. Women in NI have not been afforded the opportunity to participate equally in progressing the country from a post conflict society to a peaceful society. This is having a negative impact on their social and economic development, particularly those already experiencing disadvantage; such as rural women. It is imperative that our region has 'visible' women at decision-making level if sustainable peace is to be achieved.

This is amplified for women in rural areas due to Access Poverty<sup>3</sup>. The accessibility of: education, training, work and childcare provision and the cost and availability of public transport

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<sup>1</sup> **Women Living in Disadvantaged Communities: Barriers to Participation**; Dr Helen Mc Laughlin

<sup>2</sup> **Review of Gender Issues in Northern Ireland**, Michael Potter NIAR 510-13, 2014  
<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/Documents/RaISe/Publications/2014/ofmdfm/1514.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> **TRPSI Framework**

<https://www.daerani.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/dard/Final%20Version%20-%20Consultation%20Document%20on%20Proposals%20for%200Successor%20Framework.pdf>

are factors in determining women's participation; particularly in rural areas<sup>4</sup>. Women in NI remain under represented in public<sup>5</sup> and political life<sup>6</sup> and rural women's participation in public and political life is further hindered by geography and distance from decision making spaces. Even within the wider women's sector rural women still need a stronger voice<sup>7</sup> and support: *'There are also stark inequities between Government funding for service delivery to women's groups between rural and urban (1.3% v 98.7%)'*<sup>8</sup>. It is imperative that women in rural areas are listened to and supported so that their historic invisibility is not mirrored in a post-conflict society.

## 2.2 How the Draft Programme addresses Rural Women's Key Issues

NIRWN through extensive Stakeholder engagement in 2015 developed a Rural Women's Manifesto<sup>9</sup> which succinctly summarises the key issues our membership identified as important to be addressed for them. NIRWN has taken each of these issues and examined to what extent the Draft Framework may have the potential to effect positive change on these.

### 2.2.1 Caring Responsibilities

Access to flexible, affordable childcare in rural areas is imperative to allow access to: training and education; to facilitate social interaction with other adults; employment; engagement in public and political life. Lack of appropriate childcare is the single biggest barrier to women's engagement in education and training, work and public and political life. The research shows that childcare provision is much more than, a useful extra which 'helps' women to participate: it is more correct to say that without it, many women from disadvantaged and rural areas are entirely unable to consider education or work at all<sup>10</sup>. The lack of a NI Childcare Strategy since the Good Friday Agreement has played a huge role in ensuring it remains an urgent issue.

It is part of our rural and cultural tradition that women in families bear most of the caring responsibilities in terms of childcare, elder care and caring for those with a disability. Caring responsibilities often isolate women, particularly those in rural areas who may become excluded from fully participating in; social, economic and community-based activities. Flexible, affordable,

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<sup>4</sup> Rural Women's Manifesto *Rural Women Speak* NIRWN June 2015

[http://www.nirwn.org/nirwn%20rural%20women\\_s%20manifesto%20final%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.nirwn.org/nirwn%20rural%20women_s%20manifesto%20final%20(1).pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Women and Public Appointments in NI

[http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/assembly\\_exec\\_review/11914.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/raise/publications/2014/assembly_exec_review/11914.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Women in Politics and the NI Assembly [http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/reports/assem\\_exec\\_review/women-in-politics.pdf](http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/reports/assem_exec_review/women-in-politics.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Evaluation of the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (Final Report, June 2015)

<sup>8</sup> Evaluation of the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (Final Report, June 2015)

<sup>9</sup> Rural Women's Manifesto [http://www.nirwn.org/nirwn%20rural%20women\\_s%20manifesto%20final%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.nirwn.org/nirwn%20rural%20women_s%20manifesto%20final%20(1).pdf)

<sup>10</sup> **Women Living in Disadvantaged Communities: Barriers to Participation**; compiled by Dr Helen Mc Laughlin

2009 <http://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/e-library/women%E2%80%99s-living-disadvantaged-communities-barriers-participation>

accessible quality childcare is difficult to find in many rural areas. Distance from work means rural women's childcare starts earlier and ends later, up to 2 hours a day more than their urban counterparts. This can make childcare unaffordable and work/life balance unrealistic. The recent economic downturn has also had an impact on grandmothers, who are increasingly required to shoulder greater childcare responsibilities.

*'The situation is getting worse with women moving into retirement and immediately Taking on care responsibilities for grandchildren due to the high cost of childcare. Our area also has a higher than average level of people caring for disabled/older People but no support structures for those carers''*

If the NI Executive wish to: Reduce educational inequality (Indicator 12); Improve the skills profile of the population (Indicator 14); Reduce Poverty (Indicator 19); Increase the proportion of people in Work (Indicator 16); Reduce Economic Inactivity (Indicator 17); Increase the proportion of people working in good jobs (Indicator 18); Increase the size of the Economy (Indicator 20); Improve mental health (Indicator 6); Improve cultural participation (Indicator 27); it is the view of NIRWN and our membership that these cannot be effectively achieved without first addressing caring responsibilities as a barrier to women contributing to these indicators.

**- Draft PfG Outcomes which have the potential to positively address this:**

- We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential
- We have more people working in better jobs
- We have a more equal society
- We prosper through a strong *regionally balanced* economy
- We care for others and we help those in need
- We give our children and young people the best start in life

**Draft PfG Indicators which have the potential to positively address this:**

- 6. Improve mental health
- 9. Improve support for adults with care needs
- 15. Improve child development
- 17. Reduce economic inactivity
- 19. Reduce poverty
- 23. Improve transport connections for people, goods and services.
- 42. Increase quality of life for people with disabilities.

## Recommended Indicators to address Caring Responsibilities barriers:

- Increase the number of accessible, affordable, quality, rural childcare places
- Improve support for carers'

### 2.2.2 Rural Transport

Access poverty is certainly a problem for our members, in a recent consultation with our membership one consultee stated:

*'There is a need to support women in both rural and urban business. However, the cost is exacerbated in rural areas by the fact that it is essential to have a car. Access to high speed broadband and affordable, accessible childcare also provide challenges in rural areas'*

The two consistent, urgent issues expressed by our members that need to be addressed on behalf of rural women are: access to transport and; access to flexible, affordable childcare. In the case of rural transport, our members are reporting a decrease in the services and support:

*'Rural transport is vital to be able to access key services and to access friends and family. I have witnessed a significant reduction in rural transport services'<sup>11</sup>*

The lives of rural women are affected directly and indirectly by their access to transportation. The absence of regular public transport in most rural areas makes the vast majority of women dependent on private automotive transportation. Rural women, like youths and seniors, are one of the groups that are most often 'transportation disadvantaged'. Research indicates that rural women have more limited access to family vehicles than do men.

The disadvantage women face in accessing reliable transportation affects their livelihoods, access to social services and impairs their ability to undertake the role of caregiver to family members. Lower incomes for women in rural communities mean that maintaining a vehicle may be beyond the reach of individuals, even when they need one to get to work<sup>12</sup> or access childcare.

Female youth and seniors are doubly disadvantaged. Young women are less likely to have access to a car than their male friends, making them dependent on rides to work and social activities, sometimes with young men who have been drinking, or have already lost their

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<sup>11</sup> Rural Women's Manifesto [http://www.nirwn.org/nirwn%20rural%20women\\_s%20manifesto%20final%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.nirwn.org/nirwn%20rural%20women_s%20manifesto%20final%20(1).pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Leach 1999; Winson and Leach 2002 **Contingent Work, Disrupted Lives: Labour and Community in the New Rural Economy.**

licences.<sup>13</sup> It is well documented that women isolated on farms are especially vulnerable to abuse<sup>14</sup>, a situation worsened without a means of transport to allow for a quick exit.

Rural women's experience of work in the "new economy" often means multiple jobholding<sup>15</sup> highlighting the need for transportation options. Without reliable access to transportation, rural women face challenges in; getting to job interviews, maintaining employment outside the home, accessing childcare, performing household tasks and taking on voluntary activities.

Recent research conducted by NIRWN<sup>16</sup> identified lack of access to transport as a major issue for rural women accessing education, training work and childcare. It was clear also that the picture regionally varies greatly depending on where you live; with West of the Bann having particularly poor infrastructure. Often provision is linked to the school terms, resulting in no service during holidays.

#### **Draft PfG Outcomes which have the potential to positively address this:**

- We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure
- We have high quality public services
- We have a more equal society
- We prosper through a strong *regionally balanced* economy

#### **Draft PfG Indicators which have the potential to positively address this:**

- 23. Improve transport connections for people, goods and services
- 25. Increase the use of public transport and active travel
- 42. Increase quality of life for people with disabilities

#### **Recommended Indicators to address Rural Transport barriers:**

- **Increase transport accessibility in rural areas**
- **Improve interconnectivity of transport providers**

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<sup>13</sup> Dunkley 2004 **Risky Geographies: Teens, Gender, and Rural Landscape**

<sup>14</sup> Hornosty and Doherty 2004 **Resistance and change: Building a framework for helping abused rural women'**

<sup>15</sup> Fuller 1999; Ames et al. 2006; Leach et al. 2006 **"I'm Just Glad My Three Jobs Could Be During the Day": Women and Work in a Rural Community**. Volume 55, Number 1, pp. 119-131(13)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.nirwn.org/nirwn%20rural%20women\\_s%20manifesto%20final%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.nirwn.org/nirwn%20rural%20women_s%20manifesto%20final%20(1).pdf)

### 2.2.3 Education & Training of Women

The right to education is one of the most important means to achieve gender equality. Education and training need to be delivered over the course of a lifetime, adapting to changing life circumstances and reflecting rural women's needs at the time. Community based education and training for women is imperative in rural areas. It is a fundamental building block in supporting women to rebuild confidence and capability to enter the workplace, and as a means to access lifelong learning in its own right to maintain overall wellbeing. Community education is generally delivered based on local community need, and as such takes account of the complexity of women's lives and barriers to education such as childcare, course fees and academic environment.

NIRWN members have identified community based education as critical to them, their families and their communities for a variety of reasons. 94% of our survey respondents identified a need for community based education in their rural community. Community education delivered at point of need reduces the cost and increases accessibility; in addition it provides a purpose for people to come out of the house and addresses social isolation. Women's Groups in particular have a proven track record of an holistic approach to community based education; identifying and addressing additional needs (such as health and wellbeing; domestic violence, poverty etc.) through the provision of community based classes:

*'This is a fundamental building block to support women to rebuild confidence and capability and to re-enter the workplace or as a means to access lifelong learning in its own right and to maintain overall wellbeing'*

*'In order to build strong communities education would be very welcome'*

*'This has been sadly missed since it was largely stopped by government a few years ago'*

Experience indicates that those who have benefitted and developed as a result of community based education and services in their area are very likely to reinvest and volunteer their time in their communities in the future. This contributes to the long term sustainability of vibrant rural communities. Where Groups are meeting without classes they have expressed a need for small budgets to maintain heat, light etc. so they can continue to come together socially.

At present the Executive in our view has no Department and therefore no Minister; Committee or Civil Service team responsible for the delivery of community based education. The

Department for **Economy** is responsible for Further and Higher Education. This in itself is a clear indication that the NI Executive do not understand the holistic benefits of community based education and the fact that access to education is about much more than a route to employment or contribution to the economy. It does not take account of the important role of non-accredited courses as a first step back to formal education; nor does it take account of the fact that FE Colleges are all based in large towns.

**Draft PfG Outcomes which have the potential to positively address this:**

- We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential
- We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure
- We have high quality public services
- We have a more equal society
- We enjoy long, healthy, active lives
- We prosper through a strong *regionally balanced* economy

**Draft PfG Indicators which have the potential to positively address this:**

- 11. Improve educational outcomes
- 12. Reduce educational inequality
- 13. Improve the quality of education
- 14. Improve the skills profile of the population

**Recommended Indicators to address Education barriers for rural women**

- **Increase the number of accessible, affordable, quality, rural childcare places**
- **Improve the variety of education provision**
- **Increase the number of educational places in community settings**
- **Increase transport accessibility in rural areas**

#### **2.2.4 Rural Women, Poverty and The Economy**

Our research indicates that those in the rural west are experiencing more deprivation. It is clear to NIRWN from what our members share with us; that farming families in particular are often fairly asset rich: land, property and machinery but extremely cash poor and struggle to provide for their families, resulting in high levels of anxiety leading to ill health.

Household incomes, poverty rates and the labour market have all worsened in the last five years. The farming and the construction industry, which once sustained and extended families through male employment can no longer do so. This has resulted in the need for rural women to take on

extra work or return to the workplace, often in Part-time, low paid jobs. Paid work is not equal for women and men. Two thirds of those earning minimum wage or below are women and women's annual earnings are on average 33% below that of men. The poverty rate for pensioners is higher in NI than in other parts of GB with nearly half a million pensioners in NI living below the poverty line, including fuel poverty.

Many rural women have embraced self-employment and entrepreneurship but would like support to achieve sustained business success. They require networking opportunities, mentoring and training support and support that is not just focused on extra job creation and export. Rural women would also like embryonic start up business support that is not focused on farm diversification, for those women who are considering self-employment but do not live on a farm.

*'Many women particularly from the farming background, would benefit greatly from support in relation to business. Often this can be crucial for their financial survival and in many instances may be the one thing that keeps a farm family afloat'*

Without a thriving rural economy, rural way of life is under threat.

Rural Community Support Structures are the backbone and the lifeblood of rural communities; where rural communities are thriving it is inevitably being driven by a vibrant community support structure. Those communities that lack rural community support structures are left experiencing further social and financial deprivation and inevitably a lack of community 'on the ground' expertise to address it. It is our observation that success breeds success; where a community Group/Network are successful in securing funding and support to deliver one service for their area; they can more easily secure further funding and support for more services. This is good news, however we witness some rural areas with a very strong community support structures and others with virtually none. We would like the final Framework to be able to identify and support areas in particular that have weak and low community support structures and build their capacity

Financial Poverty and Access Poverty are clearly linked. Rural women cannot address their financial poverty if they lack access to transport and childcare.

### **Draft PfG Outcomes which have the potential to positively address this:**

- We are an innovative, creative society, where people can fulfil their potential
- We connect people and opportunities through our infrastructure
- We have high quality public services
- We have a more equal society
- We have more people working in better jobs
- We prosper through a strong *regionally balanced* economy

### **Draft PfG Indicators which have the potential to positively address this:**

- 11. Improve educational outcomes
- 12. Reduce educational inequality
- 13. Improve the quality of education
- 14. Improve the skills profile of the population
- 16. Increase the proportion of people in work
- 17. Reduce economic inactivity
- 18. Increase the proportion of people working in good jobs
- 19. Reduce Poverty
- 20. Increase the size of the economy
- 21. Increase the competitiveness of the economy
- 22. Increase innovation in our economy
- 23. Improve transport connections for people, goods and services
- 24. Improve internet connectivity
- 33. Reduce underemployment
- 34. Improve regional balance of economic prosperity through increased employment
- 41. Increase the proportion of graduates moving into employment or on to further study

### **Recommended Indicators to address Poverty and Economic barriers for rural women:**

- **Increase the number of better jobs West of the Bann**
- **Improve work/life balance**
- **Reduce the percentage of women in low paid work**
- **Reduce roaming telephone charges in rural areas**
- **Improve small business support for small rural business owners**

### 2.2.5 Social Isolation, Health and Well Being

In a recent survey of NIRWN membership when asked: 'Is there a need to address social isolation for women in your area?' 90% of respondents indicated Yes, with 7% unsure and 3% indicating No. It is clear that social isolation is a huge issue for those we represent; comments included:

*'Because of a lack of reliable public transport and a dearth of community-based Projects, many women, especially those tied to caring or farming responsibilities are socially isolated' and;*

*'Given the physical remoteness rural people face it is really important we have contact with others, this is essential to our health and well being'*

Our members can clearly identify themselves the impact of social isolation on health and wellness and the impact community based activities and education can have on addressing this. In a link to Financial Poverty some members went further and echoed the experience of rural transport that, not only was social isolation still an issue for many; funding that had been in place to help address it in some areas has now been cut:

*'The cuts in support for women in rural areas will have a detrimental effect on their physical and emotional health and wellbeing'*

Rural life is often portrayed as idyllic, countryside living where life is slower and the beauty of the surroundings compensates for the lack of access you may have in an urban setting. This can be the case; rural life has a lot to offer many. This image does however not account for the impact of lack of service provision on health and wellbeing. Rural Women's Groups and Rural Community Groups offer a vital link to rural women and their families in reducing social isolation; providing activities; a base for service delivery and often, bespoke support. This work has been historically under resourced<sup>17</sup>, yet has the potential to save the economy by addressing social isolation's inevitable Health and Wellbeing impacts. Rural women experiencing domestic violence are more vulnerable due to their social isolation and distance from service support. Women are outliving men in a population which is living longer but lacks the infrastructure to support this emerging demographic.

#### **Draft PfG Outcomes which have the potential to positively address this:**

- We have high quality public services
- We enjoy long, healthy, active lives

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<sup>17</sup> Review of Government funding for the Women's sector OFMDFM/DSD 2012 and Evaluation of the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme (Final Report, June 2015)

- We have a more equal society
- We care for others and we help those in need
- We have a safe community where we respect the law, and each other
- We give our children and young people the best start in life

**Draft PfG Indicators which have the potential to positively address this:**

- 2. Reduce health inequality
- 3. Increase life expectancy
- 4. Reduce preventable deaths
- 5. Improve the quality of the healthcare experience
- 6. Improve mental health
- 7. Improve health in pregnancy
- 9. Improve support for adults with care needs
- 23. Improve transport connections for people, goods and services
- 27. Improve cultural participation
- 28. Increase the confidence and capability of people and communities
- 31. Increase shared space
- 42. Increase quality of life for people with disabilities

**Recommended Indicators to address social isolation, health and well-being barriers for rural women:**

- **Increase the opportunities for rural women to meet, participate in community life and access information**
- **Improve the regional balance of support to women**

## **2.4 Overarching Comments and Concerns moving Forward with a Final Programme for Government 2016-2021**

### **2.4.1 Gender Equality**

NIRWN is concerned that whilst there is a clearly stated Outcome; 'We have a more equal society' there is an absence of an explicit and robust gender equality dimension in the the proposed indicators and measures. This has the potential to prove too restrictive to take proper account of the complex, interacting and often gendered factors underlying the vulnerability and poverty of women in deprived and rural areas. There is a need to enhance gender disaggregated data and consider gender budgeting. Gender neutral models and policy-making tools may have

an implicit gender bias. For example, a gender budget analysis of new Deal programmes in the UK revealed that only 8% of funding for these programmes go to lone parents, of whom 95% are female. Yet 57% of funds go to young people, of whom only 27% are female<sup>18</sup>.

#### 2.4.2 Rural Development (BREXIT)

The Draft Programme for Government Framework does not take account of the post referendum decision to exit the EU. The UK BREXIT decision has implications for rural women both in the context of EU funding and in light of human, economic and social rights that are currently protected by EU legislation.

The only certainty we have is that the impact will be significant in our local communities, given that the EU was the instigator and consistent driver of Rural Development policy and practice for the past 40 years.

There has been no substantial, dedicated mainstream rural development fund in Northern Ireland; we have relied upon European funding to largely finance rural development initiatives since the early 1990's. BREXIT therefore creates fear and concern about the future of rural development. The current Rural Development Programme, is worth £630 million in total, with the Rural Development Priority 6 element worth £80 million of which, 80% is Exchequer funded.

We would urge this Executive to protect this level of funding at a minimum going forward. We would like the current funding level to be ring fenced and protected for the duration of the RDP. We would like the scope of activities currently supported, in line with identified need by rural communities, to be sustained. We need assurance that rural development as a policy priority for this Executive and doesn't fall off the agenda.

As an organisation concerned with social justice issues we would like assurances that the hard won social and human rights enshrined in EU policy are protected in a new structure. It is imperative that the EU protection afforded to the citizens of NI, particularly those most vulnerable continue unbroken and unchanged as BREXIT unfolds. Rights,<sup>19</sup> at the same time, however, 'the protection of these rights *'may [still]...be subject to change* arising out of government plans to consult on repealing the Human Rights Act and replacing it with a bill of

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<sup>18</sup> Gender Budget Analysis in the UK, Women's Budget Group <http://wbg.org.uk/gender-budget-analysis-in-the-uk/>

<sup>19</sup> T. Lock, 'What does Brexit have to do with human rights?' OUP. [Online]. Available at: <http://blog.oup.com/2016/06/brexit-human-rights-law/>

rights'.<sup>20</sup> As implied, such change – should it come - would ultimately be a matter for the United Kingdom government. However, in the meantime, from a social justice perspective, it remains important that the executive should unambiguously affirm its compliance commitment to extant right protections across all policy development and levels, *but particularly at programme level given what is at stake in this debate*. In the absence of an EU policy driver we would also recommend the urgent development of a Bill of Rights for NI as set out in the Good Friday Agreement.

### 2.4.3 Rural Proofing

NIRWN welcome all the intended outcomes for Framework. We would add to the Indicators

- *'An increase in levels of knowledge, information and understanding in relation to the rural aspects of poverty and social isolation across government', statutory agencies and those with a remit and responsibility for delivering to rural dwellers'*

It is the reflected experience of our members that often those tasked with delivering for them are not in essence unwilling but often lack the appropriate *'levels of knowledge, information and understanding'* in relation to rural life; including the rural aspects of poverty and social isolation. Our experience as an organisation that advocates on behalf of our membership; government in particular, though not exclusively often believe they understand the complexities of rural life and how to factor this into their decision making to ensure equality; the reality is often very different. It is for this reason that we would like to see robust measuring indicators for progress against this new statutory requirement. We would want to know e.g. as a result of increased knowledge, information and understanding what is now being done differently? What changes have been made in your deliver practice? etc. Only this type of measuring will ensure that what has been learned does not stay with an individual but leads to real and systemic change for those experiencing rural poverty and social isolation. NIRWN welcome the Executive's proposed Outcome 'We prosper through a strong, competitive, regionally balanced economy' and we feel strongly that robust rural proofing is the way to achieve this.

We would highlight that the proposed Framework has the potential to impact positively on the

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<sup>20</sup> M. Evans, 'What Brexit means for our human rights', *The Justice Gap*. [Online]. Available at: <http://thejusticegap.com/2016/06/brexit-means-human-rights/>

UK Government's International Commitment to CEDAW Article 14<sup>21</sup> '*States Parties shall take into account the particular problems faced by rural women..*' and '*States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas...*' NIRWN would like to see the Executive through this Framework supporting other government Departments to contribute actively to the CEDAW Article 14 commitment.

#### 2.4.4 Outcomes Based Approach

The Draft Framework clearly has established the view that Outcomes Based Approaches is the only way to move forward and the assumption seems to be it is an approach that is without flaw. NIRWN firmly support new and innovative approaches, particularly those that are evidence based, measurable and accountable to delivering real changes for the better for our citizens. We urge caution with the view that OBA is the one and only answer as it seems very useful for visioning but a simplistic approach to dealing with complex issues. Critics of OBA observe that the complexity of factors underlying social problems is such that substantive change to those problems cannot be plausibly and readily ascribed to specific interventions. This crucial point has been summarised thus:

*'to hold programmes or organisations accountable for producing results, you must be able to identify who has been responsible for producing which outcomes. The trouble is, that's impossible. Outcomes are not produced by organisations (or programmes, teams etc). Real-life outcomes are produced by a huge range of factors and interventions working together (in technical terms – outcomes are emergent properties of complex systems)'<sup>22</sup>.*

### 3 Concluding Remarks

NIRWN are pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the Draft Programme for Framework 2016-2021. We welcome the Outcomes proposed and look forward now a final Framework which takes account of mainstreams equality, gender budgeting and rural proofing to effect tangible improvement in the lives of rural women. Rural women and their families need actions; furthermore they need these actions resourced. We welcome the aspiration to address regional imbalance for too long now rural women have been under resourced<sup>23</sup> for support and this needs to change; DAERA cannot be viewed by others as the 'one stop shop' for rural delivery. We look

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/convention-on-the-elimination-of-all-forms-of-discrimination-against-women-cedaw-articles>

<sup>22</sup> T. Lowe, '**Soapbox: the sorry tale of 'outcome-based performance management'**', Sluggor O'Toole [Online]. Available at: <https://sluggerotoole.com/2016/07/05/soapbox-the-sorry-tale-of-outcome-based-performance-management/>

<sup>23</sup> **Review of Government funding for the Women's sector** OFMDFM/DSD 2012 and **Evaluation of the Regional Infrastructure Support Programme** (Final Report, June 2015)

forward to supporting the Executive, rural women and others with the development of action plans and delivery of final a Programme for Government Framework 2016-21.