

Women and Equalities Committee

Oral evidence: [Implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 5 in the UK](#), HC 885

Wednesday 11 January 2017

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Mrs Maria Miller (Chair); Tracy Brabin; Angela Crawley; Philip Davies; Ben Howlett; Jess Phillips; Mr Gavin Shuker.

Questions 1–65

Witnesses

[I:](#) Professor Graham Long, Senior Lecturer in Politics, Newcastle University; Marianne Haslegrave, Director, Commonwealth Trust and Vice-Chair, UK NGO CSW Alliance; Dr Helen Mott.

[II:](#) Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Fellow, Centre for Human Rights in Practice, University of Warwick School of Law; Sam Smethers, Chief Executive, The Fawcett Society; Jessica Woodroffe, Director, Gender and Development Network.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- Dr Graham Long – [SDG0033](#); [SDG0034](#); [SDG0042](#)
- [Commonwealth Medical Trust](#)
- [UK NGO CSW Alliance](#)
- [Dr Helen Mott](#)
- [Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson](#)
- [The Fawcett Society](#)
- [Gender and Development Network](#)

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Professor Graham Long, Marianne Haslegrave, and Dr Helen Mott.

Q1 Chair: Thank you very much for joining us this morning. We know it always takes a lot of time to prepare for these sessions, so thank you for that, and thank you for being with us. A number of colleagues on the Committee have obligations elsewhere in the House, so please accept our apologies in advance if people come and go at various intervals; but I will be here throughout, as indeed will other colleagues.

Before we start, may I ask you to give your name and the organisation you represent, maybe starting with Helen?

Dr Helen Mott: Hello, my name is Dr Helen Mott, and last year I was commissioned with others, by the British Council, to write the first report in the UK on how the UK is or is not progressing towards meeting its obligations under SDG 5 and the other indicators of gender equality.

Marianne Haslegrave: Good morning. I am Marianne Haslegrave. I am with the Commonwealth Medical Trust, and I am also a vice-chair of the NGO CSW Alliance, but my main expertise has been following the whole process of the 2030 agenda at the UN in New York, so I know a lot about the process.

Professor Graham Long: Good morning. My name is Dr Graham Long. I am a senior lecture at Newcastle University, in the politics department. For the last two or three years I have been studying the SDGs.

Q2 Ben Howlett: Hello and happy new year to you. It is a very good report, by the way; I was reading it over Christmas. How important do you think it is that the UK engages with the SDGs generally, and particularly in relation to goal 5?

Dr Helen Mott: It is important for a number of reasons. I guess you are interested in why it is important to Government, and it will be important to Government in terms of international credibility and engagement. It is certainly true to say that, while DFID has put a lot of resource and time into the gender equality agenda overseas, we also have to look domestically at what needs to be done here. It is very important for Government in that respect.

It is also important because these SDGs represent a kind of distillation of knowledge about what is needed to make progress against gender equality, which is a global inequality. If we can work to these goals, targets and indicators, then we know that we will be making progress where we need to make it in the UK.

Marianne Haslegrave: First of all, when we talk about the 2030 agenda, it incorporates the SDGs. The SDGs are part of the whole



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process, which is going to guide everything and is universal, up to 2030. At the moment, the UK is not part of the process. We are behind the scenes. We were absolutely wonderful during the development of the 2030 agenda and the SDGs, and now we have totally faded from the scene. From the point of view of the UK's position going forward, we need the greatest credibility we can have.

We should be implementing the 2030 agenda. The Prime Minister at the time signed on to it, at the summit that took place in 2015, and now we have a hiatus and a major gap. The agenda, per se, is really important. Goal 5 is equally important, but beyond goal 5 we must mainstream gender across what should be happening here in the UK. When you look at the 2030 agenda, as I mentioned, it is universal: that means that everybody in the UK should have their lives improved as a result of it. Beyond that, it is also an interlinked agenda. You cannot just work on goal 5; you have to work across the agenda, and that is going to be extremely important when you look at women's affairs.

Those are some of the points. The credibility is extremely significant. We should be reporting for the first time in 2018. So far, 60 countries have reported. Seventeen of them are in Europe, and then we get countries like India and China reporting. Where are we?

Professor Graham Long: Just to stress, there are some concrete ways in which the agenda is being scrutinised. The credibility becomes concretised by what the UK will look like when it undergoes that scrutiny and how effectively the UK can advocate for the agenda elsewhere in the world if it does not take the agenda seriously at home. Those are two things to stress.

Q3 **Ben Howlett:** We are coming on to scrutiny a little later on, but, in general terms, how important do you think it is for the UK to end up engaging on goal 5 specifically?

Professor Graham Long: It is very important. To magnify one thing that Marianne said, this is an interlinked agenda, and you cannot pick and choose. First, it looks bad if you pick and choose, but also you harm the ability to implement the whole thing if you pick and choose. Goal 5 should not be taken in isolation; gender is mainstreamed elsewhere in the goals as well. It is very hard to prioritise one of these goals and say that it is more important than the rest, so I would resist an invitation to do that. As a whole, it is a very important package. It is also important because, to get a bit more airy-fairy, it says something about common humanity. The claim that this is a universal agenda to be implemented in all countries is a recognition of a common humanity, at a time when, in today's world, we know that there is plenty of division going around. It is important in that larger sense, as well.

Q4 **Ben Howlett:** The impression I am getting is that we took a great lead in terms of creating this set of goals, but we have not necessarily delivered. To ask the question in a different way, what does the UK risk by not



implementing this domestically? What would be put at risk, or how could things not be enhanced, as a result of not implementing the full strategy?

Dr Helen Mott: The UK risks a credibility fail. The UK risks not achieving what we need to achieve under all the other legislation that we have before us and all the other obligations we are signed up to, for example on violence against women, CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and so on. Our equality legislation requires us to do two things: to act against discrimination and to promote equality and empowerment, and these goals also appear here in the SDGs. It really is incumbent on us to lead the way, given that we have such well-regarded legislation and policy, and to show how we can meet our obligations under these goals. It is important.

Marianne Haslegrave: What does the UK risk losing? I would agree that we could put ourselves into isolation when it comes to the whole process, which is not a good place to be, particularly when we worked so hard to get gender equality, women's empowerment, sexual and reproductive health and rights into the agenda. The UK spoke up, spoke up and spoke up all the time. Now it is not there.

It goes beyond that, because, when we are looking at how the UK works in the international field when it comes to women's empowerment and gender equality, it is through the CSE: the Commission on the Status of Women. I know that the Committee goes to the CSW, but gradually there is a movement—you can see it with what is happening in the UN—towards the 2030 agenda, and away from the way we have looked in the past through the work of the CSW and the Commission on Population and Development.

I read this morning that the president of the General Assembly and the president of ECOSOC are getting together to look at how they are going to move the agendas of both bodies towards the 2030 agenda, and two facilitators have been appointed on the harmonisation of work. Now, as this goes up, the importance of CSW and similar bodies will go down, because they are only commissions of ECOSOC. We need to begin to transfer our thoughts, our work, our reporting and everything else in that direction.

Professor Graham Long: It risks undermining the UK's promotion of gender equality overseas. In terms of the content of the agenda, it risks failing to maximise progress on these important objectives, which is bad in itself. If this is a decent stab at defining the kind of world and Britain we want in the future—and if people do not think that is true, they should say so—then, by definition, any failure to engage seriously with this or any failure to push towards these objectives leaves Britain and the world worse off than they could have been.

Dr Helen Mott: We risk slipping down the league tables, if you want to look at it in a league table light. As you know, this Committee published a report yesterday about women in Parliament. In recent years, we have



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slipped down the international league table in terms of representation of women in Parliament, from 25th in the world to 48th. We risk further slippage if we are not paying attention to these goals and setting in place the strategies and committees we need for oversight and to drive change in those areas.

Q5 Ben Howlett: How aware do you think the Government and wider civil society are about the SDGs, particularly goal 5? If it is not as high as it should be, how should we increase the awareness?

Dr Helen Mott: When we conducted our research for the British Council report, when the SDGs had been known about for a fair few months, it was really clear to us that, certainly in the gender equality field, non-governmental organisations and Government dealing at an international level were aware of the SDGs, and were then aware of the SDG 5, for gender equality specifically. However, locally, women's organisations working at a domestic level do not know anything about it, so did not understand how the agenda would affect the work they were doing, did not understand patterns of influence around that and did not understand where we fit into the picture.

There is definitely a lot of work to be done. Other Governments, as has been said already, have already reported on what they are doing, including raising awareness and communications. There is information available to look at other Governments and what they have done.

Q6 Ben Howlett: For the benefit of the Committee, which countries have already reported back?

Dr Helen Mott: Finland and Germany, in particular, have been very good in terms of talking about engagement.

Marianne Haslegrave: Can I tell you the European countries? These either have reported already or will have by the end of this year: Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Slovenia, Monaco, Czech Republic, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Norway and Switzerland.

Professor Graham Long: It is pretty clear that awareness is limited in the UK. Not everybody has to be aware of the whole agenda, but they have to be aware of how the commitments made here to produce a national response that reflects the wider targets could impact people's lives. They do not have to know all 169. They have to know that some of these are worth seeing; and they should expect to see change in their lives as a result of these things. There are some messages that are more important than others.

Q7 Jess Phillips: What will happen if they do not do it is a really important question, and it seems, from what you have just said to Ben, that it is reputational. There is no legally binding issue; we are not going to be kicked off the UN Security Council if we do not do it.



Dr Helen Mott: It may not be legally binding, but we are bound by other instruments, and we need to be paying attention to what is set out here, specifically under SDG 5.

Q8 Jess Phillips: On using it as a lever to get government and civil society action to make it legally binding, if women's organisations knew about it and action was happening on a domestic and local scale that was completely counter to the SDGs, should organisations, along with commissioners and Government Departments, be using that as a way of enforcing the SDGs?

Dr Helen Mott: I would imagine that that process would look something like it looks already, in terms of the Government's reporting to CEDAW—the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Q9 Jess Phillips: As you have said, Graham, you do not need to know all 169 targets. I do not know all 169. I do not know 69. Within goal 5, which do you think are the most relevant targets for the UK, domestically?

Marianne Haslegrave: I would like to give you one example: Baroness Tonge has introduced a Bill on raising the age of marriage for girls from 16 to 18. That is in line with one of the targets under goal 5. It also fits in with CEDAW. One would say that most of the targets are important, particularly those that relate to violence, and I am sure that others later on will go into further detail.

To go back to your previous point, if the UK Government do nothing, civil society will start doing things. They have started already. For example, at CSW this year, the UK NGO CSW Alliance has a workshop. It has been accepted, and that is a side event that specifically relates to goals 1 and 8. Civil society is jumping ahead. There will be a lot more interest. Civil society generally is looking at doing shadow reports, reporting in different ways, and we cannot wait for ever. For civil society, or those who know about it—and I would say that not everybody does—the whole concept of having our own goal, which is a good goal in comparison with the MDG goal, and then the concept of mainstreaming gender across the 2030 agenda sustainable development goals, gives us an opportunity.

Q10 Jess Phillips: I do not disagree with you that civil society will hold their feet to the fire, but, as someone who has worked in civil society in the women's sector, in a localised setting, I do not think those people are going to; that is the truth. I do not think that the domestic elements of SDG 5, compared to the international elements of all the SDGs, have anywhere near the civil society framework to provide for them. I speak as somebody from the coalface. All of the CEDAW stuff meant absolutely nothing to me in Refuge. I used to think it was another load of people talking in a room; that is the truth.

Anyway, if anyone else would like to add on, which of the targets in goal 5 should we in the UK be focused on looking at domestically?



Professor Graham Long: I have something to say about that, but it is probably not what you want to hear. We should ask what makes something relevant. It seems to me that the most straightforward way of talking about relevance is to see if there is a live issue with it in the UK and the ambition in the SDG target seems appropriate. On that basis, all of SDG 5 is relevant. Prioritisation is inevitable and welcome to a certain extent; otherwise no progress would be made. On the other hand, it has to be approached very carefully: cherry picking and going for the lowest hanging fruit is undesirable.

There are lots of good ways to prioritise the targets that are relevant, but a lot of them here are relevant. Some of them, judging by the indicators, do not speak as much to the UK's context, and that is understandable. However, by and large, the ones that are zero-based, the ones that aim at something for all or the ones that aim at complete elimination of a practice or something like this are just straightforwardly relevant to the UK.

Q11 **Jess Phillips:** Are any completely unachievable for the UK? I suppose that is the reverse question.

Professor Graham Long: I have something to say about this as well. Patently, the targets are ambitious. Eliminating violence against women is an ambitious target. I tend to think two things in response to that. The first is: if that was not going to be the target, what would be the right target?

Jess Phillips: Eliminate it a bit?

Professor Graham Long: Exactly, yes. It is not clear what the ambition would be if it was not zero-based. Aiming for anything short of zero leaves some people behind, and it is most likely going to leave those furthest to reach behind, so there is a structural reason for pitching it at that level.

One thing is: if not that, then what? The second thing is that it really invites helpful scrutiny of what targets are currently there and how they compare against the ambition. There is a target on the violence against women strategy to reduce it, but it is not quite clear by how much or how much action has been pledged to. We can look at that against the global ambition and ask, "Is this the right level?" It is a helpful resource from which to scrutinise the levels of ambition we do already have in place and see whether they track the global ones.

Q12 **Jess Phillips:** Are there any we cannot achieve or should not try to achieve?

Dr Helen Mott: I would always be loth to pick something and say, "No, we should not be focusing our attentions on this." The reason I would be loth to do this is that gender inequality and the empowerment of women and girls, as I think you said earlier, cannot be separated out into different little areas. There is a reason that violence against women is a



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thing, and that reason is to do with women's and girls' inequality and disempowerment. These things are all connected, so I would be loth to do that.

There are clearly places in the UK that we have dedicated more resource to thinking about or perhaps we have even had more traction on. For example, as you will know, violence against women strategies are in place in the nations of the UK, and that makes a big difference. We do not have an overarching gender equality strategy across Government, which is what our stakeholders called for loud and clear in our research for this.

Q13 Jess Phillips: Do you all agree that there is a need for a strategy for goal 5 in its entirety?

Marianne Haslegrave: You have to bring in the mainstreaming as well. Just talking about goal 5 is not going to do what women need and want. If we cannot take a leading position on this, a lot of other countries are going to fall behind as well.

Q14 Jess Phillips: With regards to that, what are the implications of the "leave no one behind" principle on the UK scene, in both implementation and monitoring?

Dr Helen Mott: We need to step up in terms of our data collection. That much is really clear. Going back to 2012, the EHRC in its reflections on CEDAW said, "We have actually lost a number of the mechanisms we had for recording the data we need, to measure our progress against gender equality", and that remains the case. To an extent, we have gone backwards. Although in our report we say—and it is true in a global context—that the UK is in a really good position in terms of its ability to monitor, on the ground those surveys and data are not necessarily always available, certainly not in the way we would like them to be, and, very importantly, they are not generally disaggregated.

As an example, a recent report by the Women's Budget Group and Runnymede showed that the impact of austerity measures on black and minority ethnic Asian women was more than double the impact on women or on black and Asian minority ethnic members of the population. It is more than summative. We need to have information that allows us to disaggregate and look at older women, lesbians, migrant and refugee women—a really important area that we should certainly be focusing our attention on—women with disabilities and so on. We do not have that at the moment. I would like, if there is time, for us to talk a bit more about data.

Q15 Tracy Brabin: To pick up on that, the targets that we set domestically are going to be critical to how the goals are then implemented in the UK. What progress has been made so far in establishing these targets?

Dr Helen Mott: Are you talking about the indicators?



Tracy Brabin: Yes.

Dr Helen Mott: I wish I could give you a decent answer to that question. I do not know. It is a bit opaque.

Marianne Haslegrave: I will not talk about specific indicators, because Graham knows far more than I do about those, but I have been following it at the global level. There is the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, which has already met four times. They have set up global-level indicators, which are used predominantly for the Secretary-General's report, because they will not necessarily be terribly helpful for us. We need our own indicators, to go with our own strategic action plan. We also need to look nationally and then regionally; but regionally in Europe is more difficult than it is in some of the other regions. It is developing our own national level, and I know that Graham can tell you more than I can.

Professor Graham Long: The ONS is now due to report on a provisional or first suggested set of national indicators in the spring. I do not know when in the spring that will be. There has been some work done on this, and at one point the ONS was quite close to releasing a framework and decided to hold it back a bit longer. I do not envy the ONS's job here. It is a very difficult job, both to do the disaggregation properly and to choose a number of indicators that is not excessive but covers all the different aspects of the targets that are important. At the moment, the global indicator set is imperfect in that respect, and it will get better over the next 15 years.

The indicator set is very important, in terms of how purposive it is. What you measure places some constraints over what you produce evidence to do. If you do not measure the right things—especially if you are not sensitive to “leave no one behind”, or you think that by and large the UK does not have a problem with that, so we will not have an indicator for it—then you will risk missing some things that you will just never know about; that do not appear obvious. Undernourishment in the elderly, for example, is not an SDG 5 issue, but there is an SDG target that directly speaks to that issue. If you were to ask people, “Do you think undernourishment is a problem in the UK?”, they might say, “Obesity is, but undernourishment is not.” You risk missing especially vulnerable and marginalised groups.

To feed that back into the “leave no one behind” point, data is very important. The data should feed in to a review structure that focuses on the most marginalised and where different forms of discrimination and disadvantage intersect. It should feed into policy design as well. There are ways to design specific policies that either put the furthest behind first, or aim to reach the furthest behind as a matter of urgency. It might even be a different approach to how a policy is made, quite apart from the content of the policies.

Q16 **Tracy Brabin:** You mentioned the pushback of the ONS date for reporting. Are you really concerned by that? Is it a red flag?



Professor Graham Long: I do not think it is a red flag. There might even be merit in holding it back. It is important that we have the best set possible. Once we have the best set of indicators possible, the ONS should engage extensively at international level to improve the quality of international indicators. It has to be linked together. In principle, you would think that, where something is more worth the ONS measuring than what the UN has decided should be measured, there will be a good reason, and if there is a good reason then it will be worth bringing to an international forum and looking at whether it is a good idea for other countries to do the same thing. It should be a process of global improvement, in which the ONS plays a role.

Q17 **Chair:** You were talking before about the fact that 17 EU countries have already responded. Surely they have been grappling with these issues and possibly some will have similar challenges to those we have. For instance, how has Germany dealt with this particular issue?

Professor Graham Long: Different countries have engaged to different degrees with the UN indicator set. That is understandable in the early stages, because it was a work in progress and it was agreed only at the start of this year. Countries have chosen different sets of indicators for their initial assessment. As to whether the indicator that the UN has chosen and the indicator that you might have available for the UK measure precisely the same thing, in some cases those indicators are not quite commensurable; they do not quite map on to each other. There will be some kind of gap. That does not stop you from getting a rough assessment, and it has not stopped countries that have reported back from doing enough of an assessment to decide what it is they would like to do.

Not all of their exercises have been perfect. The Netherlands, for example, tends to focus more on the environmental side. The Belgians have gone for a fairly short list of initial indicators, which may miss some things off. There are different approaches. You are right: there is some learning by doing to be done here, as well as learning by discussing best practice, across regions and in places like the OECD, as to what kinds of indicator frameworks can best be developed.

Marianne Haslegrave: Germany, according to what I was told by some of the German NGOs, can measure about 30% of the global indicator framework. It is the same with Uganda; they have data for about 30% of it. We have one of the most sophisticated statistical offices, and they are highly regarded, so their full input is very important. However, for the last two meetings of the IAEG, they have not even been present as observers. The UN is losing out, and so are the Governments.

Take target 5.6, which is on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. There is target 3.7, which is on sexual and reproductive health, and information, education and services. Measuring 3.7 is much easier, and we can probably do that very well. Measuring reproductive rights is giving the UN a lot of difficulties. It is what you call



a tier 3 indicator. They have divided the indicators into three tiers: the ones they have everything for are in tier 1; the problems are in tier 3. I think that is the only one in tier 3 under goal 5, because it is very difficult to measure it. This is where we need the total involvement of the national statistical office over here.

Q18 Tracy Brabin: What do you think would be good best practice and advice to improve these domestic targets?

Q19 Marianne Haslegrave: We need to take hold of them. We need to take hold of the targets to implement them. It is okay measuring them, but, if you are not implementing, measuring seems to me to lack something. When we are following CSW and looking at CEDAW, we should be making those links. We are a sophisticated country and are very able to do this, but, because we are not bothering with the 2030 agenda and the SDGs, we are missing out.

Dr Helen Mott: For SDG 5 in particular, it has been difficult to get information. I understand that the ONS received something around £6 million in the last Spending Review to get cracking on these indicators, so it is slightly alarming, as far as we are concerned. We need to be reporting soon, and we do not have the indicators in place. For gender equality indicators, I did notice, in the preliminary submission from the ONS and the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development, that there had been a consultation process. It looked to me as though there were no gender equality stakeholders engaged in that process whatsoever, and therefore, at this preliminary stage, the information suggestions around SDG 5 are not particularly great.

My suggestion is to ask civil society, ask women's organisations, ask academics who work in the field for their input into this, and perhaps reconstitute the gender statistics user group that used to be a thing back in the day, which has not met for some time, I believe. This would bring EHRC, ONS and other stakeholders together to talk about what we need to know and what the particular issues are around gender equality and violence against women statistics.

Tracy Brabin: That is really constructive.

Professor Graham Long: I am not sure I am worried in quite the same way, because it is very difficult. I have tried to get indicators for a lot of these, and the devil is in the detail. If we want to do a very good job, it is going to take some time. There has been a consultation, and they do have some money. They have a team working on it. It is not lying in somebody's inbox and not getting done. Somebody is working on it. They might stress that they are also consulting with Government Departments about this.

Whenever there is a difference between what we currently measure and what the Government Department finds it useful to measure, versus what the SDG says we should measure, it is always a question of whether one of those is right, whether we should combine the two into some kind of



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third option. It is not always straightforward. If the indicator we have is doing a good job, it is not always a straightforward question to say, "What should we do with that?", given that the SDGs have a different indicator set attached to them. Do we do an extra indicator? Do we modify one? Can we extrapolate one from the other? It is also important that they consult with Government to get a sense of what different Departments are doing, how they measure these things and how they are using them.

One thing you might hope for from a delay in the ONS report is that, behind the scenes, this could be informing what the Government are doing in terms of strategy; I do not know how far this is happening. It would be great if the government strategy was aligned with the indicator set that the ONS was coming out with, and I guess it would also be good if the converse were true. If that is going on behind the scenes, then that is a positive step in some respects.

Tracy Brabin: We always yearn for joined-up thinking, don't we?

Q20 **Chair:** Specifically on that, in what way could we surface whether or not the Government are working in that way? Secondly, is this not running the risk of creating delay, because they are trying to get perfection rather than just getting going in the way that other countries have just got going, even though it may not be the best set of indicators in the world? At least we would start.

Professor Graham Long: There is a risk to not doing this as quickly as they could. I hope I am not misspeaking, but I think the ONS is on record as saying that it has been consulting with Government Departments. The detail of that consultation is not necessarily my place to know. There are some things here that need to be relatively confidential.

Chair: It is something we can ask the Minister.

Professor Graham Long: I would imagine that you surely could.

Q21 **Mr Gavin Shuker:** Briefly, on the ONS—and forgive my ignorance—at the end of this process when the ONS independently, but in consultation, comes up with this set of indicators, is there an approval process within Government? Have the Government said anything about what they want to do to make sure it is the right set?

Marianne Haslegrave: I do not think the Government have said very much at all, and from our point of view, as civil society, we are seeing a gaping hole. While other countries have Government working with civil society—in the case of Finland and Germany they even reported together—and have ongoing consultations, here we do not know. The process started off, before the change of Government, in the Cabinet Office, which is really where it belongs. Now it has gone to DFID. I know that they are rebuilding a team in DFID; they had the most wonderful team for negotiations, which was disbanded so quickly and much was lost. It is in the wrong place, in so far as DFID is very good at what it



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does, but it does not do the domestic side. We cannot just look on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as something for them and not for us.

We need the right structure. I was very heartened to be invited to come this morning, because we had the International Development Committee, which has done some wonderful work, but this is a home-based Select Committee that is taking on the issue of the 2030 agenda. It is an entry point that, for civil society, is so important.

Q22 Mr Gavin Shuker: On the specific point of the approval mechanism for this, Graham did you want to say something?

Professor Graham Long: I am not aware that there is anything in place. This is an initial set of indicators that will be advanced by ONS. I understand that there will be an open consultation after that, and academics will be asked at that stage. After that, I am not quite clear what state this enters into.

Q23 Mr Gavin Shuker: Is there not a risk that there is quite a lot of politics—small “p” or big “P”—involved in choosing what you measure, and of course this is a period of time over multiple Governments, potentially?

Dr Helen Mott: I agree with you. That is why it is so important, at the outset, to give assurances. I guess that women’s organisations and civil society do not feel they have the assurance, at the moment, that it will not be that kind of political agenda and that it will be a gender equality agenda. One of the most consistent findings in our report—we interviewed over 35 gender equality stakeholders in the UK—was the issue of women’s and girls’ voice to Government. It feels to civil society as if that has been lost over recent years, and it is something that needs to have attention paid to it.

Q24 Mr Gavin Shuker: What in SDG 5 do you think is going to be the most challenging for us to make progress on domestically? You are obviously only allowed one.

Dr Helen Mott: I could not possibly give you one.

Chair: What about the top three, then?

Dr Helen Mott: Interestingly, political participation, from which flows so much other important stuff in terms of making waves for gender equality, is a really key issue, and has been very stubborn and intractable in the UK. It is very heartening that there has been movement recently, and in fact this Committee in itself is a really good step towards making progress in that direction. However, unless we see some serious commitments, I do not see voice, participation and influence happening that quickly. Of course, it would be impossible not to prioritise violence against women and the elimination of violence against women.

The difficulty we have there, as with so much of this agenda, is that so much of it is about getting in there to change destructive social norms.



Social norms are really hard to change, and they require big, concerted action led by Government, involving civil society and business. In terms of achievability and challenge, for me it is the changing of social norms, because it really requires focus and strategic dedication.

Q25 Mr Gavin Shuker: I assume everyone would agree with that, but does anyone want to add anything to our challenge list?

Marianne Haslegrave: We have to look at the agenda as a whole. Even within goal 5, I would not like to see any of us starting off by cherry-picking it, because it links to the rest of the agenda. It is an integrated, interlinked agenda that needs to move forward together.

Professor Graham Long: To cheat a bit, I would say that doing this while leaving no one behind is going to be a particular challenge. It is a very important challenge that this agenda invites us to address. I think, like Marianne, that some of the elements of gender equality elsewhere in the agenda are, in some ways, a good thing, a sign that this is mainstreamed throughout, rather than having its own little niche. It is obviously more than a niche. It is important to look beyond goal 5 for the important elements: how gendered persistent poverty in the UK is, and how that might be resolved. Given that there is a pretty clear commitment in the target to reduce relative poverty in the UK by one third, you would expect an ambitious national response to that. The question would be, "Are we going to reflect that level of ambition in what the Government or somebody might commit to do? If not, why not?" There is a lot of purposeful stuff elsewhere in the agenda.

Q26 Mr Gavin Shuker: With your mapping exercise, have you been able to establish the areas where it will be the hardest to measure progress? We mentioned a few earlier, but are there any standout ones where you are most concerned about measuring progress?

Professor Graham Long: To be honest, it is a very complicated question, because you can divide it into whether you are measuring the current global indicator, which is particularly difficult. For example, the global indicator on target 5.6, about sexual and reproductive health and rights, asks about the quality of consent of people, and that is comparatively difficult to measure, compared to access to services and such things. However, there are so many. You can almost grade it in terms of how big the data challenge is.

Participation in politics in the UK is one thing. We measure some aspects of gender equality in participation fairly well, but participation occurs in a number of places in the agenda. My impression was that some of the targets elsewhere, as in goal 16, are structurally hard to measure. Things that tend to be private or hidden, or are reflective of gender inequality or an environment of gender inequality, will be hard to measure for those reasons. Illicit flows are hard to measure by dint of being illicit, so they are not only structurally hard. On other things we might be able to make



more progress. Measuring political participation and what the goals are looking for there might be worth looking at.

Q27 Mr Gavin Shuker: Are there any where we just do not have the quantity of data, but it would be possible to collect it? I appreciate that some of them, as you have said, are quite qualitative and quite hard to make a judgment about. Is there any low-hanging fruit that we are just not collecting the data on at the moment? Do we need to design ways to do that?

Dr Helen Mott: We are waiting to see what the indicators might be. It is a circular question. I would want to come back to that point about leaving nobody behind. The EHRC has made representations regarding this before, but, thinking about gender equality particularly, certain communities of women—institutionalised women and women with insecure immigration status—are not picked up in regular data sweeps that we might think about. In gypsy, Roma and travelling communities, likewise, there are women and girls who are potentially very vulnerable and very disadvantaged. We hardly have any data in terms of those. In terms of leaving nobody behind, that is a really big challenge.

Professor Graham Long: Some disaggregation is already done fairly well in the UK, by groups such as the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Migrant status is one area that is not particularly well disaggregated, even though there is a commitment to disaggregate on that basis. A target under labour rights, for example, refers specifically to migrant women as a particular group to concentrate on. I am just not sure how far the data is in place to do that.

Another area that is very difficult is 5.4, which is about recognising and valuing unpaid work. The indicator that the SDG gives us does a very good job of that, but it is an incredibly tough question that is worth asking: what kind of form should valuing unpaid or domestic work take? What does that mean in practice? The target gives us some quite helpful suggestions of things you might do: provision of public services, infrastructure, social protection policies, promotion of shared responsibility in the family. These things are only suggestions that we do not have to take, but it is worth investigating whether they do any useful work and contribute to a better understanding of what that valuing or promoting might look like.

Q28 Ben Howlett: Moving on from those points, actually, given that we are expected to send in data on an annual basis and have already missed the 2017 HLPF deadline, there is a question about mechanisms for looking at accountability and progress as well. Do you think the right mechanisms are in place to track that progress and scrutinise Government while they are trying to fulfil those key objectives?

Professor Graham Long: There is a global mechanism in place. There is an instruction to seek out an appropriate regional mechanism, which obviously looks complicated by Brexit. There are quite a few soft



monitoring mechanisms: mutual support, best practice sharing and this sort of thing at the European level. There is no reason why the UK could not still engage with some of those, even in the presence of Brexit. Globally speaking, there is a mechanism, and it is still in its formative phase. This is not a legally binding framework, so the kind of sanction you get with this accountability is very limited, but there is some accountability there.

To speak to the point about what this means for local groups, at the last HLPF, Uganda gave a report on how glowing things were in Uganda, and then a disabled person from Uganda stood up in the United Nations and said, "I do not recognise your description of how you say life is in Uganda for disabled people." By creating forums and spaces—the UN creates a whole load of forums and spaces, and there are also spaces at the EU level—where groups and individuals, especially the most marginalised, can have the space to speak is itself an exercise in empowerment that may be worth while, but is also a kind of accountability. I thought, "That is bad."

Q29 Ben Howlett: To unpick that a little, you have talked about the supranational level; you have talked about the international level. What about the domestic level of accountability?

Professor Graham Long: In the agenda, the same document that contains the targets also contains guiding principles for accountability, and that includes the creation of a domestic accountability mechanism. There is some wariness around language of accountability. It means different things to different people, and some states are very wary of it, but let us call it follow-up and review. It is inclusive and participatory follow-up and review at the national level and the local level. Different countries wanted space to decide for themselves what that might look like, how frequently it would meet, what it would look at on a rolling basis and these sorts of questions. There is definitely space for different national approaches.

Even within the UK, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Government may have been more active on the SDGs and doing the SDGs internally than the UK Government as a whole. It may be that there are lessons to be learnt domestically on how they are looking to work them into their national plans and these sorts of things. However, there certainly is scope for the development of an overarching domestic accountability. There do not have to be a lot of new structures. It might even take place through the parliamentary committee structure. Parliament has a big role to play. If there is one area where I have the impression that the UK is doing a very good job, it is in the amount and quality of parliamentary scrutiny on the SDGs, internationally and domestically. This is one area in which Parliament is really to be commended, and there is no reason why that could not be the basis of whatever review structure you might look for at the national level.



There is a question about how you make that more inclusive or make it more participatory, and maybe how you build some structures around the parliamentary process. It cannot just be experts and people testifying to committees. It has to be wider than that somehow. Maybe that is a useful question to ask about UK politics more generally: how to make it more participatory, how to invite a wider range of people into structures of accountability. There certainly is scope for a UK accountability mechanism, if people wanted to generate it, and there is a commitment to generate something, however far people can be held to that.

Q30 **Ben Howlett:** I would be very interested to hear from the NGOs' perspective.

Marianne Haslegrave: First, on the regional aspect, when it comes to us reporting regionally, it is nothing to do with the EU. It is to do with the UN regions. Europe actually includes the United States, Canada and Israel. It is a very large region. They divided the world into five regions, and ours is a little strange. It has a problem in so far as it deals mainly with economic issues and not social issues, which is of concern to civil society, because women generally should be seen more in the social side. Efforts are being made to be involved at the regional level, and there will be a meeting—I think it is in April or May this year—in Geneva, for our region. That is something you might want to keep on your radar screen.

Having attended the last meeting of the High Level Political Forum, when it comes to the type of accountability, the reviews in this process are voluntary. That means that countries that do not want to be terribly involved are not, but it is an opportunity for countries that want to be involved and want to make use of the process to do so. The UK would be in line with a number of other countries that would like to see more of a dialogue with the countries when they are reporting. In the main, countries are reviewed in clusters. They are grouped and questioned together. It is not in depth in the way it is for something like the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It does not have the same teeth. However, if we commit ourselves properly, then at the national level there can be good scrutiny, in the same way that, when we report to CEDAW, civil society does shadow reports. It talks to the members of the committee and so on.

In developing the process—it is a question of developing it, because we do not have it—at the national level, we could have strong accountability from the Government, which is what civil society would want to see. At the international level, at this coming session, 40 countries have put their names forward to be reviewed, and they have three days to do it; it is not going to be an in-depth evaluation. However, ultimately, the whole 2030 agenda needs to be implemented nationally, and not seen purely from the international level. That is where the real effort needs to be.

Q31 **Ben Howlett:** Helen, your report and the work the British Council has done suggests that there is a lot of best practice out there. Specifically, you talked about disaggregating data a lot in your written response. Is



there something more you would like to look at in terms of that area of work, in relation to accountability?

Dr Helen Mott: I am interested in resourcing. For example, I know you have had a submission from the Fawcett Society, whom you will be hearing from later, with ideas that they have for a scorecard of a wide range of indicators that could be looked at. I am interested in how we look at resourcing in the current climate, to make sure we have data, accountability and engagement between civil society and Government, as these issues are worked out together.

Q32 **Ben Howlett:** To sum up, the question we normally tend to ask at the end of Select Committee hearings is this: if the Minister was sitting here now—and we very much hope the Minister will accept our invitation to come and speak to us on this—what single recommendation would you like to make, to improve the UK's domestic implementation of SDG 5 specifically?

Dr Helen Mott: I cannot give you one. I will give you two. Based on the experience of those stakeholders we interviewed for this study, the primary thing that might help to shift progress and implementation would be a strengthening of a platform for engagement between Government, civil society and women's organisations. We have a good platform for engagement with business, as regards gender equality, but we would want it to be broader than that. That would be one thing.

The other thing, because of the importance of social norms, has to be relationships and sex education: statutory, through school, through education. It is the only way to shift harmful and destructive social norms and promote equality.

Marianne Haslegrave: My one thought is that, even if the Government in general are slow in moving forward, the Government Equalities Office and the Minister should be looking at moving what they are doing into this framework, so that we are working in the broadest possible way and one that fits in with what has been the flagship of the Government Equalities Office internationally, which is the participation at CSW.

Professor Graham Long: To give you an answer about form rather than content, you would want to see a national action plan or national response with a clear gender equality component, and that response would contain targets that either reflected the global ambition of these goals, or else explained why they did not. Please do not miss the power of "leave no one behind" and the gender equality stuff elsewhere.

Chair: Thank you so much for your time today. You have given us incredible food for thought, on a very complicated area. We have been exchanging notes about other people we might want to talk to, as a result of the evidence you have given us this morning. We cannot thank you enough and will now move on to our next panel. Thank you very much.

Examination of Witnesses

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson, Sam Smethers, and Jessica Woodroffe gave evidence.

Q33 **Chair:** Thank you very much for agreeing to be our second panel this morning. As I said before, we note that it does take a lot of time out of your diary, and we are immensely grateful, particularly given that we seem to call on the Fawcett Society, particularly, to join us on a number of occasions in the Committee work we do here. Thank you very much for coming in today. We are going to do as we have done before, and have a number of questions from various members of the panel.

Ben Howlett: Happy new year, if it is not too late to be saying happy new year. I never quite know when I am supposed to stop saying it. Really, the question is around leadership and how much leadership the Government have been showing on goal 5, in particular. Would you say they are?

Sam Smethers: Thank you very much for inviting us to give evidence to you today. Our concern is that there is a vacuum of leadership domestically. We are not experts on the international agenda, so I am not seeking to comment on that. In terms of the domestic SDG 5, there is an absence of leadership. That is demonstrated by the absence of a plan, the absence of indicators, the fact we have missed our first reporting opportunity and so on. That is a bit of a problem.

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: I would agree with Sam. There are some areas where there is leadership on elements of SDG 5, but they are not seen within the context of the SDG 5 implementation. There is work on violence against women, for example, but there is not the linking up and coherent strategic approach. That is where the problem is.

Jessica Woodroffe: I wondered whether it was worth putting it in the international context, because that is my background. What is really striking is the leadership that both David Cameron and Justine Greening showed on the international stage, particularly on gender, and that is what we have to see the contrast with. A lot of the language on gender equality would not have been in Agenda 2030 were it not for the UK. The target on unpaid care, which is my personal favourite, might not have been there without some of the support of the UK. This is the contrast we are seeing, and it is really important, because on the one hand the UK runs the risk of looking very paternalistic, very patronising and not being prepared to practise what it preaches, by having called on countries with far fewer resources to do things that it will not itself commit to. That is the context we need to see this in.

It is simply not on for the UK Government to say that other countries must comply with all the targets—because there is no picking and



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choosing—within the gender goal, and not then put the same level of resources in. That is the background against which we need to judge the level of commitment.

The other important thing, having been through the international process, is that it was very clear all along that this was not about business as usual. This was about a spur to increased action. The UK Government coming back and saying, “But we are already doing this” is not good enough. The whole point about the SDGs was to ramp it up a level; whatever level you were at, you had to ramp it up a level. That is another thing that has been a bit disappointing.

The other point within that is that there is always a danger, when there is something like Brexit, to say that gender equality has to take a back seat, because we have this crisis. That is the other thing that is important about the SDGs: they specifically apply to countries in conflict, countries with major humanitarian crises. There are no excuses not to meet this in full. I just wanted to put that background in, because, in that context, the leadership that is being shown is pretty poor.

I know in the previous session you were talking about the ONS. I am here representing my own organisation, but also Bond, which is the network of NGOs working on international development. Their feedback is that the ONS has been the most transparent part of this process so far and has been better at consultation than other parts. Transparency is really the key. We have been told there will be an implementation report, potentially in the next couple of weeks, apparently. We still do not know what is in it, so it is very difficult to judge. Again, in the context of Agenda 2030, transparency was key. This was all about a dialogue with stakeholders, a dialogue with civil society. The fact that we are being told that things are happening behind closed doors does not fit with the spirit of Agenda 2030. Sorry, that was a long answer, but the background is important.

Q34 Ben Howlett: I am glad it might be in the next couple of weeks, but previous Ministers had promised it would be by the end of last year. I suppose we will have to wait and see on that. Can I just unpick the causes of that? At the moment, people like to say, “There is a risk from Brexit that we are going to push this back,” but the NGO community was saying before the reshuffle and change of Government that things were being delayed. What do you think is causing this delay and the lack of leadership?

Sam Smethers: There is a lack of ownership, both in terms of that leadership position, but also across Government. I do not think anyone is really owning responsibility for how we take forward what we need to do within the UK. That is missing. That paternalism creeps in: that it is actually for someone else. Maybe because it is called development goals rather than equality goals, we think it somehow does not apply to us.



Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: Linking back to what Helen Mott was saying in the previous session, because there has been a lack of mechanisms for engagement between the women's voluntary sector and Government to the extent that existed in the past, there has not been co-ordinated external pressure from domestic women's voluntary organisations, many of which have absolutely no idea that there are these things called sustainable development goals or SDG 5. I am a member of a network of women's organisations in the west midlands. I mentioned that I was coming here today, and everybody looked at me blankly.

There has not been the leadership to say, "This is an important thing we have signed up to. We have led the way globally on this, and now we are going to deliver domestically", which has made organisations start getting involved, pushing on their bit and identifying issues. That mechanism needs to be in place for engagement, in order to create the pressure that is one of the key things for leadership to happen.

Jessica Woodroffe: There is also this thing about it basically still being rooted in DFID. We saw the International Development Secretary's response to the IDC, where she was saying that this is essentially about global poverty. The SDGs are not, essentially, about global poverty. They are about all the different things that are in the SDGs. Implementation of the SDGs has to come out of DFID. It just does not make sense that it is still with DFID, and that is probably the biggest barrier.

Chair: Domestic implementation is Government Equalities Office. It is not DFID. The Government are clear on that.

Jessica Woodroffe: In terms of the leadership, you say the Government are clear on that, but we are getting very mixed messages about who is leading overall in terms of the SDGs

Q35 **Ben Howlett:** In all the debates, I do not think I have had a final answer from all the different Ministers who have given a response as to where it actually lies. It was in Cabinet Office; after the reshuffle, it moved to DFID for the domestic implementation plan. Do you think that has caused confusion within the NGO community? It sounds like it has, but what do you think that has caused in terms of its implementation?

Jessica Woodroffe: I am not sure it matters whether there is confusion within the NGO community. We have to sort ourselves out. It is confusion within Government that matters. Yes, we need the Prime Minister to play a leading role in this, in the way that her predecessor did. This is about whole-government action, and this shuffling around about who is doing what is clearly not working.

Q36 **Jess Phillips:** I think you have already answered this, about the need for a cross-governmental plan. In the International Development Committee's work on this, the Government have said that there is no need for one, because of the single departmental plans. To what extent do you think that SDG 5 is included in the single departmental plans?



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Sam Smethers: As we said before, there is some cherry-picking going on. Government are doing certain things that you can say correspond to some of SDG 5, and then other things do not seem to be taken forward at all and are not visible. Does that mean they do not care about those priorities? They are missing the opportunity to join those things up, as your previous witnesses said. If you do not see the value of the strategy and the plan, and all you are doing is acting on one or two key things that are priorities for you as a Government, but you are not seeing the value of that joined-up approach, then you are not developing a strategy and you are not going to meet the whole of SDG 5. That is what is missing.

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: It links to what Jessica was saying. This is about pushing Governments to take a step forward, rather than simply looking at what they are currently doing and saying, "There is something here that fits under this target, and there is something there that fits under this target". That has been the pattern, for example, with reporting on CEDAW, where there has been a tendency to look at the CEDAW clauses, find things that fit underneath them and say, "We are achieving all these different things." The point of having a goal with a future date is that you are doing more than what you would have done already. It is difficult to see from the outside that this is something that has been a focus of thinking across Departments.

Q37 **Jess Phillips:** You cannot see SDG 5 in the plans, per se, necessarily.

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: I have not been through every single plan, but it is not something that jumps out at you as a priority.

Q38 **Jess Phillips:** Which bits of SDG 5 do you think are specifically missing? The previous people who gave evidence stated that, if they had to pick a top three, violence against women would be in it. Obviously, the Government have a violence against women strategy, domestically. Are there specific areas where there are gaps?

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: There are a few gaps. One is women's unpaid work. I do not think there is a strategy. It does not fit anywhere neatly. Some of it has impact on women's poverty in old age: the surest route to poverty in old age is to be a woman and look after other people for nothing. That shows how we value unpaid work, if the price you pay for it in retirement is poverty. It does not fit neatly into any Department, so there is a gap there.

There are particular issues around reproductive health, particularly abortion rights in Northern Ireland. As your previous report on the Treasury's equality impact assessment of its Budget shows, there are gaps in the sorts of monitoring and assessment you would need to do in order to achieve SDG 5. I can maybe come on to this later, but we have the mechanisms though the public sector equality duty to do quite a lot of this, if they are used properly.



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Jessica Woodroffe: I would very much agree about the unpaid care, and the reason why it is my favourite target is that it is relatively new. As everybody has said, they are all equally important; they are all integrated, but unpaid care is the one people talk less about, partly because it moves around. The Treasury is the area we really need to look at, partly because of unpaid care and the way macro-economic policy impacts on unpaid care, as well as the other targets, but also because of the resources. Taking an international perspective, the millennium development goals—the predecessors of the SDGs—worked where resources and donor money was channelled in to implementing the targets.

In the case of the UK, there is not going to be donor money coming in, but where is that additional money going to come from? We are expecting, in other countries, additional resources for implementing the SDGs, and yet, if we are stepping up, stepping up requires resources, and there is not really any discussion about that.

Chair: There is £6 million going to the ONS.

Sam Smethers: One thing that the Government have put a great deal of positive focus on is closing the gender pay gap and gender pay gap reporting, and this Committee has looked at that in detail. We always say that you will not close it unless you address all the causes of that gender pay gap, and the unequal impact of who takes on caring roles is one of the major causes. Even where they are placing a strong focus on a particular outcome, they are still not doing strategically what needs to be done in order to achieve that outcome. There is a bit of a disconnect.

Q39 **Jess Phillips:** You all, as did previous witnesses, seem to agree about the need for a cross-departmental plan specific to the implementation of SDG 5. Do you think there is any evidence of single departmental plans being a good way of going forward, if you had to come up with a positive? You do not have to if you genuinely cannot come up with one. It is like with Brexit; I always try to be as positive as I can possibly be.

Sam Smethers: I am not going to directly answer the question, but I suppose I will answer it in a slightly different way. In my experience of working for a statutory body, working outside Government and engaging with Government, one of the big challenges is always getting Departments to work across departmental boundaries and to work together. That has been my experience. I am sure it is not an uncommon one. Achieving that with something that is about cutting across Departments is fundamental, so putting something in place to help you achieve that is fundamental, because otherwise it is just not going to happen. That is the lesson, really.

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: All the targets within the goal cut across more than one Department anyway. Take violence against women. There is a Home Office lead on that, but there is also Education, Local



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Government and Health. We recognise that, in some areas, unless you link up, you will not get that concerted action.

Jessica Woodroffe: Can I also not quite answer the question? We should not say that we should only have cross-departmental. We need both. I did not want us to only move into cross-departmental. Specifically on SDG 5, gender equality, as we all know, affects absolutely everything. There is nothing it does not affect. In particular, target 1, on all forms of discrimination, refers to every single Department. What we need there, in addition to resources, is technical capacity. That is the other point about the cross-departmental plan: the shared analysis of how you achieve gender equality, and that is where GEO has a very strong role to play. The plan needs to be resourced by expertise.

Q40 **Jess Phillips:** And would there be a cost implication to that?

Jessica Woodroffe: Not only cost. There is an analytical implication. DFID is very good at gender analysis and leads the field among international donors in understanding how to achieve gender equality. Using that across Whitehall would be a very interesting thing to do.

Q41 **Jess Phillips:** To be more domestically minded, do you think the public sector equality duty is an effective mechanism to ensure the implementation of SDG 5 at a departmental level?

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: It could be. What we have is a piece of legislation that has potential and has had its teeth drawn, in many ways. The specific duties are too weak to have any real impact on the behaviour of any public body. They have to have at least one objective, and have to publish some information; well, most people can find an objective somewhere, and everybody publishes some information. If you look at the specific duties in both Scotland and Wales, they are more extensive and have had a bigger impact. You could even have a specific duty to have due regard to SDG 5, which would help focus people's minds.

There is also the implementation and the monitoring of the public sector equality duty, where the Equality and Human Rights Commission's ability to monitor and enforce is very, very limited, which has meant that we have ended up with cases going to judicial review, which was never the intention of the public sector equality duty. The idea was to get away from the courts. The idea was to encourage public bodies to take proactive action at a structural level, which is exactly what SDG 5 is about.

It has become about a formal legal test as to whether or not you carry out an equality impact assessment, which does not really help anybody. In some individual cases, it can be a useful way of getting people to stop and think again, but, in terms of getting people to think proactively, it is not the most useful way forward. However, we have this legislation, and it is world-leading to say that we are going to place a positive duty on public bodies, rather than be reactive and be about discrimination. There



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has been a backing away from it. It is almost like people are a bit ashamed that there is this ground-breaking piece of legislation and are not prepared to use it to say, "Look, this is the way you get public bodies to think about equality."

You need to specify gender within there. I have been researching how the public sector equality duty has been implemented in the last four years, and one of the things I found in local government in particular is that gender has vanished off the agenda, with the loss of the gender equality duty. Only one quarter of local authorities have an objective relating to gender equality. You cannot rely on it, as it is currently framed, to do the job, but specific duties that mention gender equality, for example SDG 5, could be an important way forward.

Sam Smethers: Duties need to have some teeth, to be honest. Like with anything, it is about ownership and leadership. If you do not own it hearts and minds, you are not going to do it unless someone has an element of stick behind you somewhere. It has to be in how you are performing as a local authority, how you are receiving money as a local authority. How are you delivering on that duty? Who is watching? What sanction is there if you do not do it? Fundamentally, in the absence of any teeth, it has struggled to have any impact.

We were all very excited when the gender equality duty came in; we thought it was going to be transformational, and it just has not been. That is partly because it has been lost through this general duty, but also because placing a duty is not the same as owning and delivering the duty, and we have never got beyond placing it. That is a fundamental problem with all our equalities legislation. It is about rights of the individual, responsibilities for the organisation and whether we have the balance right between those two things. If the organisation has responsibility, how do we know it is delivering?

Q42 **Jess Phillips:** It is better in Scotland and Wales, you said.

Sam Smethers: There are more specific duties. The wording of the specific duties is better

Q43 **Jess Phillips:** Why do you think that happened? Why is it better in Scotland and Wales?

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: Scotland and Wales make their own decisions about how they draw up the specific duties, and they made the decision to draw up the specific duties that they did.

Q44 **Jess Phillips:** They took what was implemented and enhanced it. They ran with it and they enhanced it.

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: The general duty sets out the broad framework and the obligation to have due regard, and then it is up to nations to decide what comes underneath that. Your own report showed how little impact the public sector equality duty has had on the behaviour



of the Treasury, for example; they have not carried out the sort of equality impact assessment of their own work that needs to be done. More teeth would help.

- Q45 **Angela Crawley:** Building on the matter of devolved areas, we have covered already some of the issues around Northern Ireland in particular, but what can the UK Government learn specifically from what Scotland and Wales are doing in terms of implementing and monitoring the SDGs and specifically SDG 5?

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: As with the public sector equality duty, it is about looking at what you are doing and recognising that you need to have a comprehensive plan in place. In terms of the detail, you would be better off asking representatives of the Scottish and Welsh Governments.

Sam Smethers: There are two things I would point to, in terms of Scotland and Wales. In Wales, they have objectives for equality and a plan to deliver it. In terms of the quality of the plan, there are things that could be improved about it, but there is a forward-looking plan, over four years, from 2016 to 2020. That is covered by their own duties under the public sector equality duty, so it is not relating to SDG 5 specifically, but that is the Welsh Government's plan for how they are going to take forward equality within Wales.

In Scotland, they have had for some time reporting on the gender pay gap in public bodies. They have just reduced the threshold to 20 employees for that. That is significant. They have repeatedly collected those data on public bodies. We have not done any of that in England.

- Q46 **Angela Crawley:** Specifically on that point, Scotland has a national performance framework as a way to measure, and Wales also has that within its programme for government, and like in Scotland it has built it into the mainstream through the legislation. Is there more that can be done by the UK to ensure that that is consistent across the UK as well? Each of the devolved nations is doing slightly different things, and the UK appears to be lagging behind in that respect.

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: As you have set out, for many of the things we have been calling for the UK Government to be doing, work in those areas has started in Scotland and Wales. More generally, the UK can often learn a lot from what is happening in the devolved nations, which we do not. There is not that transfer of information, so it seems to me. Back to the point that Helen was making earlier, one of the things that used to happen within the women's voluntary sector was a four nations approach. There were links, and that kind of learning could be shared, so that organisations based in England that were technically UK as a whole, but actually very England-focused, could learn from what was happening in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and then promote those models and initiatives, push for them and recommend them. That sort of networking has been lost.



Q47 **Chair:** If there are not any indicators that have been agreed, how can Scotland and Wales have a plan? Do we know whether they have a plan that is showing progress? When were the plans set up? I am slightly perplexed.

Sam Smethers: The plan I was referring to for Wales relates to their own equality duties. It is not SDG 5.

Chair: That was my confusion. These are more general plans.

Sam Smethers: Yes. I am not aware of plans in place on SDG 5.

Q48 **Angela Crawley:** Coming back in on that point, at the very least in Scotland you have a framework with indicators, which are marked against the human rights and SDGs. You have a very clear way, in my opinion, of measuring that success. Is there a model, either from Scotland or from Wales, that you think the UK should replicate, or is there another model that you would advise or recommend from elsewhere that we should adopt in that respect?

Jessica Woodroffe: In terms of reporting?

Angela Crawley: Yes, or monitoring or tracking.

Jessica Woodroffe: There are a number of countries that are way ahead of the UK—Germany, Finland and Norway, picking the European examples. It is striking how countries with far fewer resources are also way ahead. The thing that Marianne was saying earlier that the voluntary national reporting is really important. In the way the SDGs are set up, countries can choose whether to report to the High Level Political Forum or not. It seems to me that a country like the UK should have been first in line, volunteering to report, and a very specific recommendation from this Committee, I would have thought, would be to say that the UK should volunteer to report in 2018. It would seem to be very odd if they did not do that. Some of the other things will follow, because, although, as Marianne said, the actual scrutiny of the High Level Political Forum will be very brief, the process of producing that report, as we all know, does spur on action.

Germany and a number of other countries have much better consultation processes, and other people have mentioned this. The millennium development goals are useful in that they have already happened, so seeing what worked with them is relevant. Where, in this case, women's organisations were involved in the design, implementation and, most importantly, the monitoring of plans, there was more success than where they were not. One of my members, Womankind, is working with an organisation called the Feminist Dalit Organisation in Nepal, to help them monitor Nepal's implementation of the SDGs. It feels like, if the Feminist Dalit Organisation in Nepal can do this, surely we can muster the wherewithal in the UK.



That is where we come back to transparency. As other people have mentioned, that whole relationship between civil society, particularly women's organisations, and the implementation of SDG 5 is crucial because, if you get the accountability and monitoring processes right, if you have the transparency, that is when things start happening.

Q49 Angela Crawley: Specifically and finally, what actions should the UK Government take to ensure that they co-ordinate policy work and ensure consistent compliance across the UK?

Sam Smethers: We need the leadership, as we said before. There needs to be a co-ordinated strategy from the centre, whether it is in the GEO, the Cabinet Office, or whichever Government Department ends up leading for the UK on it. That needs to be pooled across Government Departments. It needs to be in consultation with devolved Governments too, learning the lessons of what works well in the other nations of the UK, because they are way ahead of us in terms of recognising their responsibilities on equality and doing what they can do within their existing duties on equality.

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: I agree, and I would add to that looking at the existing legislation and how it can be used to help promote achievement of SDG 5, because it is not just an issue for national Government. If we are going to achieve the targets, which apply to local government, it will apply across the public sector. Partnership with the women's voluntary sector and civil society is, again, key to delivering a lot of this; a lot of the violence against women services, for example, are delivered by the women's voluntary sector. Across all those targets, there are women's organisations working with a huge level of expertise.

Jessica Woodroffe: The concept of "leave no one behind" was very much a UK Government concept. In relation to Northern Ireland and abortion, and the target on sexual and reproductive health and rights, if the concept of "leave no one behind" is going to be put into practice, then targeting those areas that are most behind seems very important.

Q50 Tracy Brabin: Building on what you have been saying, organisations like yours have been working incredibly hard to put pressure on Governments already, to bring in conventions and duties such as the public sector equality duty and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. How can these mechanisms support progress towards SDG 5?

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: I have covered some of that already. On the public sector equality duty, it seems that SDG 5 is about proactive action and tackling inequality at a structural level. It is not just about dealing with individual issues of discrimination. That is exactly what the public sector equality duty is designed to address. It has not been able to do that thus far, but I do not think that is a problem with the general duty as such or with the concept; it is a problem with the way it has been implemented and enforced.



There is huge potential to improve that. If you want public bodies to take the action they need to take in order to achieve SDG 5, then they need to be thinking about equality in everything they do. That is what the public sector equality duty asks them to do. We have the law in place; we need to look at ensuring it is enforced effectively.

Q51 Tracy Brabin: Would you have thoughts about how that is done, to use those existing duties to put pressure on the Government?

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: As I say, I would strengthen the specific duties, so that they are actually meaningful. At the moment, they do not really place any obligations on public bodies to do anything that they would not already be doing. You would have to include something specifically about gender equality, because the evidence is that, if you do not talk about gender equality, people forget about it. I would increase the capacity of the Equality and Human Rights Commission to monitor and enforce, but also to do all the work of sharing best practice and encouraging good behaviour. This was not supposed to be a stick piece of legislation. This was supposed to be about best practice, and sharing ideas.

There are lots and lots of pockets of really good work around the public sector equality duty, where organisations have transformed their approach, in all sorts of different areas of equalities. However, there has not been the work to bring those ideas together in a systematic way, to share them, to train people, to build the capacity of people within the public sector to understand what is required of them. It has become very much about avoiding judicial review at all costs, which means making sure you do some sort of impact assessment, however poorly carried out that is.

Thirdly, back to what I have been saying about the engagement with the women's sector, legislation on its own does not do it. It has to be about partnership and participation.

Sam Smethers: I totally agree with everything you are saying, but there has to be some stick there. I feel that is part of the problem, so an element of sanction has to be in place.

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: You need a stick, but you have not got enough carrot either at the moment.

Sam Smethers: No, maybe not, but we have one of our northern cities, Sunderland, where they are going to have no refuges in place for women. The last refuge is disappearing because the funding is disappearing. Is that at all consistent with having due regard to equality? Clearly not, but somehow people think it is a decision that can be made. Obviously it is going to be challenged, and hopefully we can persuade them to reverse it; there is a campaign building against it and so on, but that kind of thing should not be possible. Somehow, because those duties do not have any traction, that decision can be made for financial reasons or whatever



reasons drive them to make it. That is where we are getting it wrong. There is no bite from the equality duty itself to challenge that. That is why we need to strengthen it.

Jessica Woodroffe: I just want to talk about CEDAW, because this is a legally binding convention. One thing that is important about the SDGs and CEDAW is that the SDGs are the razzmatazz. They are the statement that we need to get going on this. CEDAW is the legally binding mechanism, and I do not think we should lose sight of that. In some ways, using the SDGs to draw attention to CEDAW is as important as the other way around. That is particularly true in a Brexit world: UN regulations and conventions will become all the more important in terms of protecting women's rights in the UK.

We have a CEDAW report coming up this summer, and making that link between the SDGs and CEDAW, perhaps using the UK Government's report to CEDAW as one of the ways of reporting on the SDGs, might be a useful thing to do, bringing those two things together. CEDAW also has that longevity, so we have a baseline; we have the last report. It is very important to remember that CEDAW is there and to use the SDGs as an avenue into CEDAW.

On the conversation about whether it matters that local women's organisations do not know about the SDGs, to be honest, I am not totally sure it does. What matters is that local women's organisations are holding their local government and central Government to account for gender equality. If the SDGs are a useful way of doing that, that is great. If CEDAW is a better way of doing it, that is great. What is important is that they are holding them to account. The SDGs are very important in galvanising us, but they are not the only way.

The other point in connection to CEDAW comes back to this thing about the UK on the international stage. The UK played such a big role in the SDGs, and this is a way for the UK to maintain some semblance of leadership around gender equality, by now implementing and taking CEDAW seriously.

Q52 **Tracy Brabin:** The Fawcett Society has done enormous work on the ratification of the Istanbul convention. Do you think having that ratified would have an impact on achieving SDG 5?

Sam Smethers: Absolutely. That is very strong, in terms of the evidence the Committee has received, but there is also a massive consensus on the significance of the ratification of the Istanbul convention. It just has to be part of the framework as we go forward. I do not think there should be any compromises on that. One of the reasons why it has not happened is that it is meaningful and it would have some traction, because it brings with it equipment on resourcing services, for example, for women, which we know are going to be under pressure eventually. Maybe that is one reason why the Government have



held back on doing that—I do not know—but it is really fundamental that we have it in place.

Q53 **Tracy Brabin:** It is a resources issue.

Sam Smethers: It could be. One of the elements of the convention is that it requires those resources to be in place, and we know that is a massive challenge, in the women's sector, in terms of supporting women who are fleeing violence or seeking support for gender-based violence. A cynical view might be that that is one of the reasons why they chose not to ratify it. It might just be that they will get to it and it will happen, but I know there is a big push to try to make it happen, and we support that campaign.

Q54 **Mr Gavin Shuker:** You have mentioned quite a lot of different countries and models for implementation. When you talked about those countries, were there any that stood out as a good fit in terms of a model for where leadership should lie and where implementation should lie across Government, which would be a direct read-across for the UK?

Jessica Woodroffe: Germany is probably the best example. It is also useful to look at what a number of different countries have done and what the lessons are there. A number of countries have incorporated the SDGs into their national planning framework—Germany, Finland, Egypt, Montenegro, just to mention a few. That is one area the UK could learn from. A number of countries have shown leadership at the highest political level: again Germany, Finland, Egypt, Sierra Leone. Another thing we have not talked about is a gap analysis, in terms of developing the indicators, looking at where we are now and where we need to get to. Finland and Norway have both done that.

Finally, something that Germany, Norway, the Philippines and Korea have all done is this thing about stakeholder engagement. In fact, many more countries than that have done it, and it is very interesting, when you work more with resource-poor countries, how the stakeholder engagement is often much greater. That is partly because they are quite often told by their donors, including the UK, that they have to do it. That stakeholder engagement, which feeds into a lot of what the others have been saying, is very important.

If you were to pick out one country the UK can learn from, it might well be Germany. However, the principles that come out are more important; any single model is not necessarily going to transfer over, because the parliamentary system will be different.

Q55 **Mr Gavin Shuker:** I know it is very early days, but, in terms of the lessons that have already been learnt by the countries you have just mentioned, is there anything that is directly helpful to feed in at this stage of implementation, in a UK context?

Jessica Woodroffe: Can I start by going back to the millennium development goals? In some ways, we can learn more from those. There



were four things, specifically on gender. They were high-level political will, sufficient resources, the monitoring of specific targets—it was getting the indicators right for how to measure the targets—and, finally, the involvement of civil society and women’s rights organisations.

On that third one, about the indicators, going back to the conversation you were having in the previous session, one of the key things is where the indicators followed what was actually needed in order to achieve the targets, rather than following what information was already available. Obviously, that has resource implications, but that was absolutely key. You had some countries that simply went on measuring what they were already measuring, and then progress happened, according to those indicators, that did not necessarily achieve the targets.

You were asking whether the discussion around indicators was too political; in some ways it needs to be political, as well as technical, because we need to ensure that the indicators are the right things to do, in order to meet the targets. That, in some ways, is a political conversation as well as just a technical one.

Q56 Mr Gavin Shuker: To be clear, I certainly was not questioning whether it was too political. I was trying to say that there is politics in this, and it is probably better to bring it out into the open and have a mechanism to decide on that, so there is buy-in. That is really helpful on the MDGs. One of the less good aspects about the MDGs was the communication of progress that had been made, so that many people do not realise just how impressive it was. Do you think there is a read-across into this process as well?

Jessica Woodroffe: One thing that is very different is that the millennium development goals were not universal. The obligation on the UK to implement them domestically was not there in the way it is for the sustainable development goals. In that sense, the UK public had less interest in them. That communication is important. The lesson both from the MDGs and from what other countries have so far done on the SDGs suggests that committing to voluntary national reporting is going to be key. Having an annual review, with a high level of stakeholder consultation, will also be key. The Prime Minister ought to publically recommit to SDG 5, and the time to do that would be this July, when the High Level Political Forum is meeting to discuss a small number of the goals, including SDG 5. That seems to me a point at which, at the highest level, the UK could recommit. The other thing that is starting to be apparent, particularly in countries that have donors, is a recognition about funding. Those are the lessons that come out.

The other lesson that I would say comes from the MDGs and is starting to happen with the SDGs, specifically around gender equality, is gender-responsive budgeting. Mary-Ann, having involvement with the Women’s Budget Group, could talk more about that, but that has also been a key player, where there is a mechanism by which each Department’s plans can be judged according to gender equality.



Q57 Mr Gavin Shuker: Can I just widen this out? Were there specific things that other countries did that provide a good model for stakeholder engagement? So many people will come here representing NGOs and other bodies and say, "Government are awful at stakeholder engagement", but I guess there is a two-way street there. Is there a model that has worked really well?

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: We had a model for stakeholder engagement. We had a very, very good model for engagement with the women's voluntary sector. It had its weaknesses, as all models do. It was the Women's National Commission, which for 40 years was the body by which Governments engaged with the women's voluntary sector. It involved women from across the voluntary sector. It involved women from very large, nationally known groups like the WI, and very small, grassroots women's groups.

It was a mechanism, particularly with the smaller grassroots groups, for ensuring that they had direct access to Ministers and officials. Larger women's organisations may be able to employ a public affairs person, but if you have a network of small local groups from across the country, and none of them have the public affairs person, they do not know whom to contact, how to do it, how to go about it. The WNC was very good at facilitating that sort of programme of meetings. It was involved in some very innovative consultation and engagement work with women who are often described as hard to reach, but actually hard to hear groups: women who are not often heard, particularly around violence against women.

The WNC's relationships of trust with service delivery organisations, and relationships of trust with its service users, meant that it was able to help the Department of Health and the Home Office carry out consultations, including with Gypsy and Traveller women, women refugees and asylum seekers, women who otherwise would not have taken part in those consultations. You cannot start that consultation from scratch. You have to have those relationships of trust that build up over time, so people know each other. We do not have that.

People used to come from around the world to visit the WNC and find out how we did what we did. We were seen as a global example of best practice. It may not be possible to rebuild the WNC exactly as it was, for all sorts of reasons, but there is a lot about how that mechanism worked that can be learned from, and things that can be improved and new ways of engaging that can also help.

Q58 Mr Gavin Shuker: You would say the UK, but in a previous iteration.

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: We do not need to look elsewhere; we had something for 40 years that was very, very effective.

Q59 Mr Gavin Shuker: Are there any other contemporary examples people want to raise?



Sam Smethers: I would echo that; I think she is absolutely right.

Jessica Woodroffe: I would go to countries like Uganda, like Nepal, with far fewer resources than we have. They recognise that, in order to engage with civil society, you have to fund civil society. You mentioned how the harder-to-reach groups did not have the resources to engage. There is a two-way process. You cannot expect civil society to engage with you, unless you are prepared to fund them.

Sam Smethers: One of the consequences of Brexit is that women's organisations are set to lose quite a lot of European money. That is a real issue at the moment for the women's sector.

Q60 **Philip Davies:** I apologise for being late for the first session. Can I ask how important you think these sustainable development goal 5 matters are to the general public?

Sam Smethers: It is a challenge. I do not think the general public are that aware of them, so they cannot care about something they do not know about. That is one of the challenges in terms of SDG 5 as it is conceived.

Q61 **Philip Davies:** It is not necessarily just SDG 5, but the issues within SDG 5. How important do you think they are to the general public?

Dr Mary-Ann Stephenson: Take the target on ending violence against women. If you look at the proportion of women across the UK who experience domestic and sexual violence, I would say that would be a very important target for them. Take unpaid caring work. If you look at the proportion of unpaid care work that women do, both childcare and caring for older and disabled friends and relatives, and the impact that has both on their ability to engage with the workplace and their household income and chances of poverty in old age, I would have thought it would be quite important to them to have recognition and support for that sort of unpaid work.

Philip Davies: I should probably declare that I am the unpaid parliamentary spokesperson for the Campaign Against Political Correctness, at this juncture.

Jess Phillips: Was that self-appointed?

Q62 **Philip Davies:** No, it was not. The reason I ask is because the bit I do not understand is that if these matters are so important to the general public, and your accusation is that the Government are not really doing enough, pulling their weight and doing all the things they should be doing, Governments and politicians want to get elected and re-elected. That is what motivates politicians. If these things are so important, why do you think the Government are not actually doing all the things you think they should be doing, if it is so important to the public, which would presumably help them get re-elected?



Sam Smethers: There are two different ways of defining importance. One is in terms of outcomes for people, in terms of improving people's lives and what would be beneficial to society and the economy, and one is: "Here are my top three things that I care about the most". They are two different things that you are looking at.

I can give an example of one thing that crosses both. When we did a big poll of 8,000 people in January last year, one of the questions we asked was to what extent people are looking for flexibility when they are looking for a job. We asked women and men, "Are you looking for flexibility when you are looking for a job?" For both women and men, roughly seven in 10 said, yes, that is an important consideration for them; being able to work flexibly is really important when they are looking for a job. There was not a lot of gender difference, so it demonstrated there was a common agenda there. It mattered to them, and it also matters to the economy. It also matters in terms of the kind of outcomes we are focusing on here today. There are times when those two things intersect, and it is clear that you can say, "These are priorities", and there are other times when it is a priority in terms of outcomes for the economy, but people are not necessarily going to see it.

One of the challenges we have with this whole agenda is how we communicate it and how we hold Government to account, which is why our approach is to set out those indicators and targets that we did in our response, because that is one of the things I am thinking about for Fawcett: how do we go forward with the work we do? How do we bring about the changes we are trying to achieve, and how do we know we have done that? What measures are we putting in place? That is the role that I see civil society playing.

Chair: The remit of this report is to look at how well the Government are implementing their policy, because the Government pressed for SDG 5 and are asking less privileged countries to implement it, but it is not obvious how they are implementing it. I suppose that is the remit of this, rather than whether SDG 5 is a relevant thing to do, though I understand the premise of your question. What is probably being said is that there is a great deal within SDG 5 that is enormously relevant to all our constituents.

Q63 **Philip Davies:** Let me try another one, which may fall within the remit of the Committee, Chairman. I have been listening to the evidence so far, and I have been trying to grapple with the difference between a goal and a target, which I thought on the whole were the same thing. I presumed that the goals were the targets, but obviously people do not see that. Let us take one, for example: eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. Setting aside the fact that it will never be achieved, because we are never going to end all violent crime in the UK, it seems to me pretty obvious what the indicators and the targets are for ending all violence against women and girls, and yet all I have heard throughout this session is that what we need is measurements, reporting, tracking, monitoring, a



plan, an annual review, a strengthening of engagement, a national action plan, someone to take ownership, cross-departmental plans.

None of that, it seems to me, adds up to a firm policy proposal in each of these areas. The only firm policy proposal I have heard today is compulsory sex education. It probably takes a great leap of faith to think that that in itself is going to deal with all the sustainable development goals. The bit that strikes me is that none of those is going to deliver anything apart from more talking and more engagement with campaign groups. What actual policy proposals would you like to see the Government do? It is only then that we can discuss whether or not they are desirable things to do.

Sam Smethers: Can I refer you to our written evidence? We went into some detail there about specifics, in terms of what we were trying to achieve, what the indicators might be and what the outcomes might be. That might be helpful as a starting point, because I agree with you: we want specifics and tangible outcomes. That is what I am interested in as well, but in order to achieve that, you also need to do some of the joined-up thinking, which is what we have been talking about here today. There are differences between goals and targets. An aspirational goal that is a stretching goal is one thing, and targets that you set underneath that goal—more specific things—are something else. It is perfectly consistent to argue both.

I am not going to take up the Committee's time and go through the written evidence we submitted, but there are some very specific things in it.

Q64 **Philip Davies:** If the Government adopt all the policy proposals of your written evidence—

Sam Smethers: I would not say we have all the answers, but we have suggested some specifics that might be useful.

Q65 **Philip Davies:** If they were to implement those, would you be happy and walk away, or is there a never-ending list of policy proposals?

Sam Smethers: We need people who are committed to progressing equality for women and who are going to drive that agenda forward; we need the political commitment in order to drive that agenda forward, as well as the specific actions; we need to be able to hold people to account over a period of time; and we need to measure progress over a period of time, and that is what we are proposing to do. We want to work with this Committee, with Ministers and so on, in order to achieve that,

Chair: Thank you very much for your time today. What strikes me is that this is a great thing that the Government were party to establishing, and David Cameron particularly was very committed to this, and we as a Committee want to understand how the Government are now putting in place a plan to monitor the implementation of sustainable development goal 5 in the UK, and to make sure we have the international credibility



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that goes alongside a country that likes to see itself as a world leader, in terms of women's rights. Hopefully, by looking at this in some detail and producing a report, we can help in that process, which the Government are grappling with at the moment.

Thank you very much for your time and expertise today. We really are fortunate to be able to get you to give evidence to us, and I hope you will look at our report, when we publish it, with interest.