

Scottish Government Review of National Outcomes: Call for Evidence

June 2023

Introduction

The Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG) is an independent analysis and campaign group that aims to promote gender analysis in public policy and public finance decisions through budgetary processes. SWBG brings together a wide range of women from across Scotland who have an interest in women's equality and want to achieve better gender equality in our society. We have focused on encouraging active gender analysis in the Scottish Budget process since 2000.

Below is our response to questions in the Review of National Outcomes: call for evidence.

Scotland's National Performance Framework and 11 National Outcomes are an important marker to set out a vision to measure Scotland's progress beyond economic measurements such as GDP. Building and developing these through time will support how Scotland can measure what it values in society and the economy. Our response highlights ways in which gender equality can be better reflected through the National Outcomes and value better placed in areas that are highly gendered.

Are there any changes to the current set of 11 National Outcomes that you would propose? If so, in summary, what would these be?

Scotland's National Performance Framework currently has 11 national outcomes that are to be aligned with the international Sustainable Development Goals framework and its 17 goals (United Nations 2023). The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the international policy framework containing 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), includes aims to eradicate poverty (SDG1), take action on climate change (SDG13), and an overarching objective of achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (SDG5). Achieving SDG5 on gender

equality is integral to agenda 2030 as all other goals and targets depend on the realisation of this goal.

Scotland's National Outcomes include goals on tackling poverty to share opportunities and wealth equally, living in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient, and safe; protecting and fulfilling human rights and living free from discrimination (Scottish Government 2021). In the current NPF, there is an absence of targets, indicators, or monitoring relevant to achieving gender equality. Unfortunately, there is no way to determine Scotland's progress towards achieving gender equality through the NPF as this objective is not currently being monitored within the national outcomes. As there is no target on gender equality in the NPF framework, this suggests a lack of alignment between Scotland's National Outcomes and the overall aims of the SDG framework. The absence of targets and indicators on progress towards gender equality, and women and girl's empowerment, indicates a lack of progress towards international standards and obligations in the current NPF. It also suggests challenges to gender mainstreaming across all policies and decision-making processes in Scotland.

Gender mainstreaming accounts for the gender dimension of policies to ensure equal outcomes for all. The aim is to produce gender responsive content (EIGE 2021). Mainstreaming gender is internationally accepted as the most practical means to achieve gender equality, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Paris Agreement (2015) contain actions for members states to include gender mainstreaming in all policies and programmes (UN Women 2020).

Effective gender mainstreaming requires the use of qualitative and quantitative gender-sensitive data in all policy areas, as without gender-sensitive data, the capacity of policy and legislation to treat women fairly and realise gender equality is undermined (Engender 2022). The lack of progress on gender responsive outcomes and indicators in the NPF is a missed opportunity to move Scotland closer to achieving substantive gender equality in Scotland. The Scottish Government should include gender-sensitive/responsive targets, indicators, and data in the NPF and National Outcomes. Better alignment of the NPF and the SDGs is needed to enable effective implementation of Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development in Scotland and meet international obligations and achieve meaningful progress on delivery of the National Outcomes.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council is calling on national governments to give meaning to the commitment of 'leaving no one behind' that underpins both the SDG framework and Scotland's NPF by focusing particularly on advancing the rights of women and girls by strengthening action to advance gender equality (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2023). Successful delivery of the SDGs must

be a central focus for national policy and domestic budgets as governments are urged to strengthen national capacity, accountability, and public institutions to deliver on the SDGs.

As progress globally on SDG5 indicates, unfortunately women and girls are being left behind. The Scottish Government cannot be successful in effective implementation of the SDG framework through the NPF without outcomes and monitoring on action to achieve gender equality. Political leadership from national governments is urgently required to dismantle systemic barriers to achieve gender equality.

Are there new National Outcomes that should be included in the National Performance Framework, if so, why should they be included?

As part of the coalition campaign, 'A Scotland that Cares', we join 60+ organisations in calling for a new, dedicated National Outcome for care and carers in Scotland. The aim of this is to end the invisibility of care in the National Outcomes.

The importance of care within our society lies in the fact that everyone needs care at some point in their life. Therefore, implementing a new National Outcome on care will invest and benefit everyone in Scotland who needs care at a specific time in their life. A new National Outcome on care would encompass all forms of care from adults to children, to paid or unpaid care work, to reflect the diverse lived experience of many in Scotland.

The care sector in Scotland has continually been undervalued and underinvested, and this reflects in the current state of an underpaid, diminished workforce facing increasing pressures from Covid-19 and current rising costs. This critical state is in part due to the invisibility of care built from a gender bias of a female-dominated sector as at least 80% of the social care workforce are women (Scottish Government 2022). Therefore, investing and valuing care also translates to investing and valuing women's jobs. Our recent research output, 'Towards a Transformative Universal Adult Social Care Support Service for Scotland', calls for better pay for care workers and working conditions as well as quality training to reach similar levels of qualifications present in Nordic countries (SWBG 2023). By creating local jobs and paying care workers an average £15.20 per hour, the return on this investment would relieve informal needs further and eliminate unmet needs as well as valuing women's work (SWBG 2023).

Unpaid care is currently saving the Scottish Government £12.8 billion per year (Hayes & Hamilton 2023). In comparison, unpaid carers, the majority of which are women, are facing increasing economic and health issues whilst their work continues

to be invisible and unrewarded. Unpaid care is highly gendered as care is often perceived as a role taken on by women due to entrenched social norms and stereotypes. Women are more likely to be poor and have lower levels of wealth largely due to caring responsibilities. Our 'Women, Work and Wealth in Scotland's changing economy 2022' report found that of all people who are economically inactive due to caring responsibilities, 80% are women (SWBG 2022). Greater investment in the care sector would also reduce the reliance on unpaid care and provide more choice in when care is provided by friends and family. If we measure what we value, a new National Outcome on Care will fully recognise the work and lives of unpaid carers, in the hope for carers to receive recognition, rest and recompense.

Unpaid work for women also includes childcare. Women's poverty and insecurity is intimately linked to child poverty (Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Poverty 2023). Our Women's Survey 2022 found that 25.47% of respondents with childcare needs had reduced their hours and 11.80% gave up paid employment due to childcare costs with 51.25% noting that childcare had impacted on their financial wellbeing (SWBG 2022). A new National Outcome on care will acknowledge the disproportionate economic impact of childcare, both paid and unpaid. This National Outcome may also help in the Scottish Government's desire to improve childcare provision, including equal access to fair work, increasing social security such as the Scottish Child Payment and closing the childcare gap towards a more quality, accessible childcare guarantee.

To deliver on the likes of enhanced wellbeing and reduced inequalities, care must become a new National Outcome to ensure that everyone in Scotland who cares and experiences care can live their lives with dignity and feel valued by their society. Until care is fully valued, action and investment are less likely. Implementing a new National Outcome on care is what can be achieved now to make people's lives better in Scotland.

Currently, the National Outcomes are designed to describe a vision of a Scotland we want to see, which the National Performance Framework aims to set out. The upcoming Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill should strengthen the duties of ministers around the National Outcomes. One of these duties would be the requirement for National Outcome Delivery Plans and Annual Progress Reports. By ensuring that Ministers lay before Parliament time-bound delivery plans for each national outcome, the National Performance Framework can become a roadmap rather than just a vision of the Scotland we want to see.

Are there any changes you would propose to the wider National Performance Framework on set of National Indicators?

The existing 81 indicators used in the NPF to determine the Scottish Government's progress towards SDG implementation contain only 2 indicators that relate specifically to women. The NPF is not well gendered and as a result it is possible that progress towards the NPF outcomes will be made in a way that entrenches women's inequality (Engender 2022). The National Performance Framework and set of indicators should be better aligned with the overall SDG framework as there is currently no direct read across of the NPF with SDG5 on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, this would work to challenge existing shortfalls on gender inequality within the indicators.

Gender inequality is an enduring issue, and the Scottish Government should lead by example and take steps to make Scotland gender competent (NACWG 2023). A good starting point would be scaling up its work on gender mainstreaming to enable delivery of positive outcomes for women and girls, and publish data that is gender-sensitive and sex disaggregated. Collecting and using equalities data is a requirement of both domestic (Public Sector Equality Duty 2010) and international obligations (UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women–CEDAW). The Commission on the Status of Women at its 60th session called upon national states to support and institutionalise gender-responsive budgeting and tracking across all sectors of public expenditure and close gaps in resourcing for gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (SDG Metadata 2023). Gender budget analysis (GBA) is a methodology that mainstreams gender equality as a decision-making factor in budgeting processes. It weighs up the impact of spending decisions on women and girls, men and boys, and the inequalities between them (Engender 2022). Scotland's NACWG recommends integrating an intersectional gender budget analysis and adequate resourcing to enable the collection and analysis of robust intersectional data into the budget process as inadequate financing hinders implementation of gender-responsive policies (SDG Metadata 2023).

Ultimately, gender equality will not be achieved without significant financial commitment, and alignment between policy making and resource allocation is vital. (Engender 2020). To improve the overall NPF and indicators, the Scottish Government should develop appropriate budget tracking and monitoring systems. Budget tracking and monitoring would help see how budget decisions align with the NPF and the outcomes that have been identified as a measure of what Scotland values. As currently, tracking budget spending when the budget has already been delivered is a crucial step that isn't available in Scotland due to a serious lack of available public information (SWBG 2022).

SWBG (2022) recommends tracking the impact of budget spend against the agreed national outcomes, all budget spend should seek to maximise potential for realising rights of the population in Scotland as is the purpose of delivering against the NPF (SWBG 2022). SWBG (2022) believes that the Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement (EFSBS) should act as a way of documenting the analysis that informs the budget decisions. Providing a clear relationship between decisions in the budget and aligning with progress towards the NPF as well as Scotland's nationally agreed outcomes. This would be a useful step also in aligning the NPF with the overall aims of the SDG framework on achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls.

This would be in line with the Sustainable Development Goals which should guide national policies such as the NPF and long-term national development planning and national budgets need to be aligned with the SDGs (United Nations 2023). Sustainable Development Goal (SDG5, Target 5.c: adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls at all levels), indicator 5.c.1 seeks to measure efforts of government to track budget allocation for gender equality throughout the public management cycle and to make these publicly available (SDG Metadata 2023). Indicator 5.c.1 of the SDG monitoring framework links national budgeting systems with the implementation of policies for gender equality and women's empowerment. This indicator aims to encourage national governments to develop appropriate budget tracking and monitoring systems to commit to making information about allocations for gender equality readily available to the public (SDG Metadata 2023).

What impacts do the current National Outcomes have on your work?

The Scottish Women's Budget Group promotes gender budgeting at both a local and national level in Scotland. The principle aim of gender budgeting is to integrate intersectional gender analysis into economic policy, through this process raising awareness of different impacts of women and men of publicly funded policies and programmes and challenging the assumption that budgets are 'gender blind'. Gender analysis of the policy and resource allocation process in the budget means examining how budgetary allocations affect the economic and social opportunities of women and men, and restructuring revenue and spending decisions to eliminate unequal gendered outcomes (O'Hagan 2017).

However, there is currently a lack of connection between the National Performance Framework (NPF) and the National Outcomes with the Scottish Budget. The 2023/34 Budget Document noted that "The Scottish Budget directs spend in a way that promotes the 11 outcomes of the NPF and its overall purpose" (Scottish Government

2022). For 2 years, each portfolio has included tables for 'intended contribution to the national outcomes'. However, the high-level and theoretical nature of these could lead to implementation gaps and a lack of clarity with an inability to scrutinise as there is little on how each budget decision contributes to said outcome.

SWBG recommends that the EFSBS joins up particularly with the NPF to demonstrate how budget decisions are being made that contribute to Scotland's nationally agreed outcomes. Conducting gender budgeting within a wider human rights budget approach allows for analysis to consider progressive realisation of human rights and tackling inequality. A further part of the analysis process is the monitoring and evaluation of budget decisions as they are delivered. The ambition would be that this connection would serve to support greater measurement and evaluation into the impact of budget decisions on addressing equality and human rights issues.

Furthermore, participation is a key principle for gender budgeting. The Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill should make it a legal requirement for meaningful public engagement on the National Outcomes. This participation would have to be meaningful by ensuring views are heard and listened to. The Scottish population needs to feel that information is created for their engagement and people need to understand how the government makes decisions about what it prioritises, such as the National Outcomes, and why. This meaningful participation could be done through funding to particular organisations to reach out to key stakeholders, examples such as the work of Inclusion Scotland People led policy panel supporting consideration of the National Care Service is just one option that could be considered. Working with intermediary organisations can also ensure that particular efforts are made to hear from those who are marginalised, such as disabled women, carers, and women from ethnic minority communities.

What are the main obstacles and barriers in the further implementation of the National Outcomes?

There are different obstacles and barriers in the further implementation of the National Outcomes, from the ongoing effect of the austerity policies introduced in 2010, to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on communities, and the current cost-of-living crisis.

A wealth of evidence shows that austerity has led to increasing child poverty rates (Social Mobility Commission, 2020), higher poverty rates amongst women and growing health inequalities (Fawcett Society 2012; Marmot et al 2020). In Scotland, research published in 2022 found that life expectancy had stalled prior to the pandemic, with austerity being one of the key contributors to this and other societal

problems (McCartney et al 2022). The effects of UK welfare reform have also affected social care provision, eroding the lives of disabled people. In their 2016 report, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities found that 'grave or systematic violations of disabled persons' rights had taken place' due to the austerity agenda pursued by the Government since 2010 (Abreu 2022).

A first step to achieving the 11 outcomes included in the National Performance Framework is to reverse these trends. This requires increasing public revenues to fund quality public services, particularly care (including preventative services), higher funding allocations for local authorities and a fit-for-purpose social security system. Furthermore, it requires the application of robust intersectional gender-budgeting analysis to ensure that revenue allocations help tackle gender inequalities at every step of the decision-making process. However, while governments prioritise fiscal stability over public investment, it is unclear how Scotland will be able to make any further progress towards said outcomes, and/or in meeting the framework's purposes, particularly in relation to reducing inequalities and giving equal importance to 'economic, environmental, and social progress' (purpose number 5).

In addition to the effects of austerity, the challenges arising from the Covid-19 pandemic and the current cost-of-living crisis are adding pressure to Scotland's public sector. Critically, this is happening at a time when demand for public services is on the rise. The lack of National Indicators' data beyond 2020 prevents us from estimating the extent to which the pandemic has deterred progress towards the National Outcomes. However, as research and evidence has demonstrated the deep impact of Covid-19 on disabled people, single mothers, and women from ethnic minority communities amongst other collectives, it can be assumed that any progress towards them has, at best, slowed down (Finch & Tinson 2022; Harkins & Jain 2021; OPFS 2021). Furthermore, inflationary pressures have hugely disrupted the economic recovery. Firstly, because inflation is prompting tightening across budgets. Secondly, because price increases are eroding people's incomes. The former has an immediate impact on citizens, particularly women, as users of public services, as recipients of social security payments and as public sector employees. The latter affects people's ability to pay their bills, especially in the case of those in low incomes. According to the Office for National Statistics' latest bulletin on 'Public opinions and social trends', 23% of adults in Great Britain reported borrowing more money or used more credit in the period between 19th April and 1st May 2023 compared to the same time last year (ONS 2023). In Scotland, the Trussell Trust's latest report published in April 2023 shows that the demand for food banks has hit a record level in the last 12 months (Trussell Trust 2023). In line with this, data from the SWBG Women's Survey 2023 shows that 23% of women who responded are taking on more debt. This figure rises to 40% for single parents. Furthermore, 41% of women stated that they are using their savings.

The complexity of the current economic climate compounded with the underlying effects of austerity suggests that the scale of the problem may call for extraordinary efforts if Scotland is to fully implement any of the 11 National Outcomes. Yet, any approach to policy development and policy monitoring must take into consideration pre-existing inequalities, identifying those at the sharpest end of the cost-of-living crisis. Research highlights that women are more likely to be poor, have lower levels of savings and wealth and are less able to increase paid work than men due to caring responsibilities. Particularly, women from Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black ethnic groups, disabled women, single parents, survivors of abuse, unpaid carers and women with no recourse to public funds experience higher poverty rates (Women's Budget Group 2022). To further implement the National Outcomes, particularly those set for communities, fair work and business, human rights, and poverty, it is essential to use up-to-date, gender disaggregated data that can feed into the policy process, from policy design to monitoring. Additionally, an intersectional approach to gender budget analysis is crucial to understand the impacts of budget allocations and fiscal policy more generally on those most vulnerable to the effects of the current crisis. This would allow for the application of corrective measures that can reverse some of the most worrying trends on gender inequality, thus helping in reducing inequalities and giving equal importance to 'economic, environmental, and social progress'.

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