

RESEARCHING WOMEN IN RURAL SCOTLAND

**Report of Conference organised by the Scottish Executive
Inverness, 1 June 2001**

Compiled and edited by
Elaine Samuel
on behalf of the Scottish Executive

Scottish Executive Central Research Unit
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication is a report of a conference held in Inverness on 1 June 2001 and organised on behalf of the Scottish Executive to promote research on and by rural women in Scotland. The report could not have been completed without the contributions and assistance of the many people who gave so generously of their time at every stage in the organisation of the conference. They include the following:

Organising caucus

Gill M. Clark	Department of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh
Hilary Lawson	Workers Educational Association/Women@Work, Inverness
Philomena de Lima	Inverness College, UHI
Natasha Mauthner	Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, U. of Aberdeen
Gillian Munro	Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, U. of Aberdeen

Plenary speakers and chairs

Gill M. Clark	Department of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh
Hilary Lawson	Workers Educational Association/Women@Work, Inverness
Philomena de Lima	Inverness College
Natasha Mauthner	Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, U. of Aberdeen
Gillian Munro	Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, U. of Aberdeen
Sue Richards	Women in Rural Industries, Federal Government of Australia
Yvonne Strachan	Scottish Executive Equality Unit

Workshop facilitators

Gill M. Clark	Department of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh
Philomena de Lima	Inverness College, UHI
Natasha Mauthner	Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, U. of Aberdeen
Gillian Munro	Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, U. of Aberdeen

Note-takers

Esther Breitenbach	Women's and Equality Unit, Cabinet Office
Iain Dewar	Scottish Executive Rural Affairs
Rachel Edgar	Scottish Executive Equality Unit
Sue Richards	Women in Rural Industries, Federal Government of Australia

Venue

Staff of the Highland Hospice's Netley Centre

Thanks are also due to all conference participants for the contribution of their time, for the long distances that many travelled, for their input into the plenary forum and workshop discussions, and for their encouragement and enthusiasm throughout. In the preparation of material for publication, every effort has been taken to ensure that the report is an accurate reflection of the contribution of all participants to conference proceedings. It is hoped that this is the case, and that this report will now provide an opportunity to continue the discussions that commenced at the conference.

Elaine Samuel

Research Consultant, Scottish Executive Equality Unit and Central Research Unit

August 2001

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Background

This report describes the proceedings of a conference that was organised in partnership with Workers Educational Association/Women@Work Inverness on behalf of the Scottish Executive Equality Unit and the Scottish Executive Central Research Unit. The conference was held at the Highland Hospice's Netley Education Centre in Inverness on 1 June 2001.

The conference was organised to promote research on women and gender issues in rural Scotland. The importance of research to inform and support the process of mainstreaming equality was acknowledged in the Scottish Executive's Equality Strategy document *Working Together for Equality*. (Scottish Executive: November 2000). The conference was part of a wider consultation exercise undertaken by the Scottish Executive Equality Unit with community and equality groups to identify their needs, interests and concerns.

This conference on women in rural Scotland was organised with the following aims:

- To establish baseline research on women in rural areas in Scotland;
- To identify gaps in the information available;
- To make women visible in the policy process;
- To identify policy related research needs;
- To identify these information gaps and needs by consulting with rural men and women, organisations, academics, policy makers and other key informants with an interest in rural areas;
- To establish a research and consultation database and network of women in rural Scotland;
- To produce a research agenda on women in rural areas that may be taken up by local individuals and groups, academics and government.

The conference was intended for a wide variety of people living in the north of Scotland: those who could contribute towards the identification of information gaps and research needs; those who use that data to inform policy and practice; as well as those with an interest in conducting, commissioning and funding research on women in rural Scotland. The conference was organised to provide an opportunity for an exchange of views and information between a diverse range of participants with a common interest in research on women and gender issues in rural Scotland. It was hoped that the conference would also provide a starting point from which a broader range of participants could be identified for subsequent consultations with rural women both in the north of Scotland and elsewhere in Scotland.

Conference Preparation

In her capacity as Research Consultant to the Scottish Executive, Esther Breitenbach had initiated preparation for a research conference on women in rural areas in 1999-2000. Elaine Samuel took up the contact established with Hilary Lawson of the Women @Work project, Workers' Educational Institute, Inverness. Hilary was instrumental in convening a meeting of interested parties who advised on the focus, venue and timing of the conference, as well as on those from the north of Scotland who might be invited to participate in it. As a result, Gill Clark, Philomena de Lima, Natasha Mauthner and Gillian Munro were invited to make presentations at the conference. They not only agreed to do so but also helped to convene a meeting at the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, University of Aberdeen, at which the final details of the conference were worked out.

One of the main aims of the conference was to establish a women in rural Scotland research and consultation database and network. Over 150 invitations were sent out, using information and contacts from many sources. Those invited were asked to send copies of the invitation to interested parties and this was responsible for broadening the constituencies represented at the conference and building upon the already existing database.

The conference built on a number of previous conferences and reports addressing the needs of women in rural areas, including a conference organised by the Equal Opportunities Commission in Inverness in 1993 (*Equal Opportunities for Rural Women in Scotland*), a conference held in Aviemore in 1995 (*Women in Rural Areas: The issues and potential solutions*) and the policy briefing document *Rural Women: Gender Relations & Socio-Economic Change* (Clark, GM, 1997). This briefing had been commissioned by Rural Forum Scotland to take forward women's issues arising from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation Rural Poverty and Disadvantage study undertaken by the University of Aberdeen in 1993-4 (see Shucksmith, DM, Chapman, P. and Clark, GM, *Rural Scotland Today. The Best of Both Worlds?* Aldershot: Avebury 1996). *Rural Women: Gender Relations & Socio-Economic Change* provides the only contemporary overview of rural women's issues in Scotland and remains one of the few pieces of work that addressed current gender issues in rural Scotland. It was therefore used to brief conference participants and sent out to all those intending to participate in the conference.

Some financial help was available to those who found it difficult to meet the costs of attending the conference, due to distance or special needs. Participants were also offered organisational help with pooling private transportation and the costs of travel, and these offers were readily taken up.

Structure of Conference

The conference opened with an Introductory Plenary Session and Forum, which was intended to set the context of the conference and open the debate to all participants. Yvonne Strachan, Scottish Executive Equality Unit, began by setting the policy context of the conference within the Scottish Executive's Equality Strategy. This was followed by presentations on four broad topics for research on women in rural areas, given by Gill Clark, Gillian Munro, Philomena de Lima and Natasha Mauthner. The discussion was then opened to all participants. Following lunch, Sue Richards, Head of the Women in Rural Industries Section of the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry addressed the conference and presented a view of recent achievements by and for women in rural Australia. This was

followed by four workshops, which were organised around the four research presentations given at the Introductory Plenary Session. To focus the discussion on research related matters, Gill Clark, Gillian Munro, Philomena de Lima and Natasha Mauthner also facilitated the workshops. Workshops were selected by participants prior to the conference and workshop participants were asked to prioritise the main issues for research raised at each of the workshops. These were fed back to conference by posting them up for display at the end of the day. The conference was brought to a close by concluding remarks from Yvonne Strachan. The conference programme is reproduced below in full.

WOMEN IN RURAL SCOTLAND RESEARCH CONFERENCE
Netley Centre, The Highland Hospice, Inverness on 1 June 2001

10.30-11 AM	COFFEE AND REGISTRATION
11 AM	INTRODUCTORY PLENARY SESSION AND FORUM
Chairs Elaine Samuel Hilary Lawson	University of Edinburgh and Scottish Executive Equality Unit Workers Educational Association, Inverness
Speakers Yvonne Strachan Scottish Executive	Presentations The Scottish Executive Equality Strategy
Gill Clark U. of Edinburgh	Researching Rural Women: The Scottish Context
Gillian Munro U. of Aberdeen	Women in Scotland's Rural Economy
Philomena de Lima Inverness College	Challenging Poverty: Women in Rural Scotland
Natasha Mauthner U. of Aberdeen	Women, Family and Community in Rural Life
12.45 PM	LUNCH
1.45 PM	A VIEW FROM THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE
Speaker Sue Richards	Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Chair Yvonne Strachan	Scottish Executive Equality Unit
2.30 PM	WORKSHOPS
Facilitators Gill Clark	Topics Informing policy makers & service providers: Evidence-based research
Gillian Munro	Women in Scotland's Rural Economy
Philomena de Lima	Challenging Poverty: Women in Rural Scotland
Natasha Mauthner	Women, Family and Community in Rural Life
3.30 PM	CONCLUDING PLENARY SESSION
Chair	Yvonne Strachan Scottish Executive Equality Unit

Contributors and Contributions

Just over 150 persons were invited to the conference. They included MSPs, academics (researchers and teachers), feminist and rural activists, local and central government policy makers, researchers and statisticians, businesswomen and independent researchers, NGO officials and researchers. Because the number of participants was limited by the size of the venue, the conference was restricted to the first 55 persons accepting the invitation. The invitation generated an enthusiastic response and a significant number of people, though unable to attend the conference, requested that they receive a report of conference proceedings and be added to any database supporting research and consultation with women in rural Scotland that may come out of the conference. They have been included in the database that accompanies this report.

The Introductory Plenary Session and Forum was chaired by Elaine Samuel and Hilary Lawson, representing the Scottish Executive and Women@Work, Workers Educational Association, Inverness respectively. Elaine introduced the speakers and Hilary moderated the subsequent discussion from the floor. The session opened with Yvonne Strachan who looked at the policy context within which the conference was being held. Yvonne is Head of the Scottish Executive Equality Unit and has been in post since September 1999, when the Equality Unit was first established to mainstream equality and promote equal opportunities within the Executive and beyond.

Dr. Gill Clark then provided an overview of research on women in rural Scotland and sketched the research context of the conference. Gill is a social anthropologist affiliated to the University of Edinburgh and has carried out research in Scotland on rural poverty and disadvantage. She is the author of the Rural Forum Scotland policy briefing on women in rural Scotland and she recently spent 15 months in Australia researching its groundbreaking policies with respect to rural women.

Dr. Gillian Munro went on to review what research had been undertaken on women in Scotland's rural economy and stressed the value of listening to women in order to understand the structures impacting on them. Gillian is a social anthropologist at the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, University of Aberdeen and her Ph.D. *"I'm nae eese for nithin bit scapin pans!": An ethnography of the lives of young married women in a fishing community in the north east of Scotland* was awarded the Michaelis Jenna Ratcliff prize for its contribution to folklore in Britain and Ireland.

Philomena de Lima then examined the 'female face' of rural poverty in Scotland and highlighted its multi-dimensional aspects. Philomena is a sociologist who works as a lecturer and researcher at Inverness College. She has lived and worked for over 20 years in rural areas - for much of that time she has lived on a working croft - and has been involved in women's research and women's issues over the same period of time. Philomena recently authored the first study of minority ethnic communities in rural areas of Scotland.

Finally, Dr. Natasha Mauthner presented findings from a recent study on women's experiences of work, family and community in rural areas in England and Scotland, and discussed their implications for the conduct of research on rural women. Natasha's background is in sociology and psychology and one of her long standing research interests concerns women's health and mental health issues. She is Deputy Director and Senior Research Fellow at the Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, University of Aberdeen.

The afternoon plenary session was chaired by Yvonne Strachan who introduced Sue Richards, Head of the 'Women in Rural Industries' Section of the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Sue was invited to chart the achievements of the Women in Rural Industries Section in promoting rural women's issues in Australia. The Section was established in July 1995 to improve the status of rural women by gaining greater recognition of women's role in primary industry, to increase the participation of women in the policy making process and to develop closer consultation with women. She described the obstacles that the Section faced and the solutions that the Section found, in partnership with rural women, to break down these obstacles. Sue was able to attend the conference because she was in Europe to liaise with the Spanish Government regarding the Third International Women in Agriculture Conference, planned to take place in Madrid in 2002.

Following the workshops, Yvonne Strachan thanked all participants for raising the concerns of women in the north of Scotland as well as for their contributions to the Conference and to the setting up of a research agenda on women in rural Scotland. She concluded by expressing her hope that this dialogue be continued with rural women in other venues and areas of Scotland.

The Report: Structure and Aims

This report of conference proceedings is structured around the four key research topics that informed the presentations and workshops: evidence based research and rural women; women in Scotland's rural economy; women and poverty in rural Scotland; women, family and community in rural life. This introduction is followed by presentations and workshop discussions around each of the four key research topics, in turn. Presentations were assembled from speakers' notes and audiotapes, and all speakers were given the opportunity to edit their material in preparation for publication. The proceedings of workshops were submitted by note-takers and edited; though every effort was taken to remain true to the spirit and substance of their material. The report reflects the stylistic variations of the different presentations as well as the workshops. For each of the four research topics, key points fed back by workshop participants to the plenary session follow the record of workshop discussions. Points raised during plenary sessions by discussants from the floor have been included in the appropriate workshop sections.

This report, and the database accompanying it, provides an opportunity for those with a policy and research interest in women in rural Scotland to engage with and respond to research issues raised at the conference. It is hoped that this opportunity to continue the dialogue will be taken not only by the Scottish Executive and conference participants but also by all those with an interest in ensuring that policies impacting on women in rural Scotland are informed by the best possible data.

TOPIC 1: EVIDENCE BASED RESEARCH AND RURAL WOMEN

PLENARY SESSION

SETTING THE CONTEXT: INFORMING POLICY MAKERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Gill M. Clark

Department of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh

1. Rural Women and Evidence Based Research: key research milestones

Milestones in rural women's research in Scotland over the past 10 years (between 1991 and 2001) are represented by the following illustrative list of publications and events (presented in chronological order).

Mann, L. (1991) *Women Returners to The Labour Market in Ross and Cromarty*, Research Report to Ross and Cromarty District Council, February 1991.

Mann, L. (1993) *Public Policy and Participation in the Highlands with particular reference to the role of women*. Research report to Bariaail, the Centre for Highlands and Islands Policy Studies.

Palmer, J. (1991) *Childcare in Rural Communities, Scotland in Europe*, Edinburgh: HMSO.

Equal Opportunities Commission (1993) *Report on Equal Opportunities for Rural Women in Scotland*. A one-day conference organised by the Equal Opportunities Commission, held at the Caledonian Hotel, Inverness on Friday 29th October 1993, Glasgow: Equal Opportunities Commission Scotland.

Braithwaite, M. (1993) *Women in the Rural Economy: Summary Report of a study on the economic role and situation of women in rural areas of the European Community*, Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, Equal Opportunities Unit (DG V/A.3).

Business Information Source (1995) *Women in Rural Areas: The issues and potential solutions. Conference proceedings*. Aviemore, 4th & 5th April 1995, Inverness: The Carrefour for the Highlands and Islands - Business Information Source.

Chapman, P. and Lloyd, S. (Eds.) (1996) *Women and Access in Rural Areas*. Avebury: Aldershot

Clark, G.M. (1997) *Rural Women: Gender Relations and Socio-economic Change. A Rural Forum Policy Briefing*. Perth: Rural Forum (Scotland).

Engender and Governance of Scotland Forum (2000) *Gender Audit 2000 Putting Scottish Women in The Picture*. Edinburgh: Engender and Governance of Scotland Forum.

Mauthner, N., McKee, L. and Strell, M. (2001) *Women and Family Life in Rural Communities*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation

In addition, the Women in Scotland Consultative Forum Consultation Process, which commenced in 1998, represented an opportunity for rural women to participate in a wider process of consultation led by the then Scottish Office, and later the Scottish Executive. The Gender and Rural Transformations in Europe; Past, Present and Future Prospects Conference, held in Wageningen in 1999, offered a further opportunity for research liaison in Europe on rural women's issues. This seminar in Inverness represents the most recent research event to focus on women and gender issues in rural Scotland.

2. Scotland and the International Rural Women's Movement

The lobbying skills and activism of the rural women's movement in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the USA and elsewhere provide valuable lessons for policy makers, practitioners and women in Scotland's rural communities. For example, the rural women's movement in Australia has enabled women to claim their right to visibility in the rural economy and empowered them to use women's ways of working to contribute to the development of sustainable futures for rural communities. The dynamism of the movement, and the success of women's commodity groups in Australia's primary industries, offer examples of best practice for women with an interest in supporting rural women who wish to defend the interests of their families and communities.

The achievements of the international rural women's movement include:

Rural Women's Networks: There are of particular significance in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA. The networks have promoted networking, activism and organisation in support of rural women's interests.

World Rural Women's Day: World Rural Women's Day (October 15th) is celebrated in many other countries. In Australia, for example, local and national World Rural Women's Day events have been held, supported by individuals ranging from members of the local community to the Prime Minister.

International Conference on Women in Agriculture: The first International Conference on Women in Agriculture held in Melbourne 1994 was the largest ever agriculture conference to be held in Australia. This was followed by a second conference hosted by the United States Federal Government in Washington in 1998 at which the Australian Government sponsored 100 farm women as delegates. A third conference is planned for Madrid in October 2002 and women in agriculture from throughout the world are expected to attend. For example, over 200 women working in agriculture are planning to make the journey to the conference from Australia.

Rural Women's Academic and Policy Literature: There is an extensive literature on rural women's issues across the world, dominated by academic literature from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States detailing the experiences of women in rural communities in the developed world. For a number of reasons, very little has been written on women's experiences of life and work in rural Scotland.

3. Future Research Opportunities

A variety of sources of funding are available to researchers who wish to investigate rural women's issues and concerns in Scotland. Some of these are listed below, with some indication as to the type of project for which each source of funding may be most suitable.

Policy Research Funded by government and government agencies, this is often short term, very focused research, providing information on particular issues for policy makers. The research has to be highly policy relevant, and often delivered in very short time scales. Existing policy research, however, also provides valuable data sets which researchers could use to generate more information on gender issues. For example, the Scottish Household Survey may be able to provide more information about women in rural households.

Economic and Social Research Council Funding (ESRC) Providing longer term funding (ranging from 8 months to 3-4 years) for academic research projects, the ESRC favours policy-relevant research, but also funds 'blue sky' academic research. Research applications to the ESRC could therefore range from quantitative research focusing on the economic contribution of women to the tourist industry, to qualitative research designed to explore issues of culture and identity facing women in rural areas.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) Research funding is available under themes identified by the JRF on an annual basis. The JRF was the lead supporter of the 1993-4 University of Aberdeen Study of Rural Poverty and Disadvantage in Scotland and Natasha Mauthner's recent study (mentioned later in these proceedings) favours research projects that contribute to an understanding of social inequalities and support social justice.

European Union Research Funding: Research funding is available for 'transnational' (involving three or more EU countries) European projects. Funding may be obtained for action research or academic projects, and is usually designated by the EU under particular themes or initiatives.

4. Future Directions and Future Challenges

Rural women's networks and organisations have worked effectively with research funders, policy makers and practitioners in countries throughout the world. Rural women's networks have been set up to develop research interests and/or simply to facilitate and improve the dissemination of information.

Women in rural Scotland have the potential to organise as a group to represent the issues of women and their families to policy makers and others in Scotland. Key issues to be addressed facing women in rural Scotland may include the changing role of women in the rural economy, women's role as carers, and the particular issues that arise in rural areas for women facing domestic violence or abuse. At very least, women in rural Scotland network could disseminate information about possible sources of research and other project funding.

This Inverness seminar represents an opportunity for women to consider how they can work together to support a sustainable future for women and their families in rural Scotland.

WORKSHOP

EVIDENCE BASED RESEARCH: INFORMING POLICY MAKERS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Gill M. Clark	Dept. of Social Anthropology, U. of Edinburgh (Facilitator)
Esther Breitenbach	Women's and Equality Unit, Cabinet Office (Note-taker)
Veronica Adamson	Glenaffric Ltd.
Helen Betts-Brown	Rural Development, SCVO
Maggie Bochel	Planning Department, Highland Council
Edna Cameron	UHI Millennium Institute
Ann Darlington	National Children's Homes
Sheila MacGregor	Moray Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise
Emer McCarry	Northern Constabulary
Ann McKay	Arts, Culture and Media, Inverness College
Ann Meikle	Fair Play, Scotland
Diane Norris	Domestic Abuse Forum
Jane Plenderleith	Glenaffric Ltd.
Frances Powell	Moray Voluntary Service Organisation
Yvonne Strachan	Scottish Executive Equality Unit
Jenny Tizard	University of Highlands and Islands

Workshop participants engaged in a broad ranging discussion which emphasised the need for more gender specific data about life in rural areas, while also stressing the need to use existing data better. The need for small area data was mentioned. It was pointed out that a recent Scottish Executive report on rural poverty and social inclusion had commented on information needs and made recommendations. The recommendations were currently being reviewed by the Scottish Household Survey.

Participants agreed that evidence-based research had an important role to play in improving the situation of women in rural communities in Scotland. Because policy and service provision may make different impacts on women and men in rural areas, policy makers and service providers should be encouraged to engage with gender proofing.

Some of the themes discussed in the workshop were not about research as such, but were clearly felt to be important in relation to research, amongst other things. These included representation of women's views in the research process, the need for women to be consulted and the desirability for women to generate their own priorities.

Four substantive key research themes were identified. They are set out below, together with bullet points identifying priorities and issues for research under these four broad thematic headings. In addition, workshop participants raised many issues as to the processes appropriate for researching women in rural Scotland and these follow the four thematic discussions.

1. Women in Business and Women's Work

Women in Business and Women's Work was identified as a research theme which would raise the visibility of women in rural policy, by quantifying the importance of women's work to primary industries, tourism, and Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in rural areas. There

is a lack of information about gender and business in rural areas, as well as wider employment issues. A need to understand the extent of women's unpaid work in rural communities was also highlighted, and the business and work of raising families and volunteering was identified as work that was often devalued.

Research Priorities

1.1 Research to provide qualitative and quantitative data to women's experiences of doing business in rural communities.

1.2 Research to quantify and understand women's contribution to the rural economy, and experience of work in a rural context.

Research Issues and Research Options

- A need to survey women in business with a view to sharing experiences and establishing networks: women in rural areas are doing business, and perhaps doing business in different (and better?) ways to men.
- Home working: research to identify positive and negative experiences of home working. Research could share experiences of women's entrepreneurial use of the Internet and e-business; and conversely the exploitative nature of some types of home working.
- Action research with positive and worthwhile outcomes for research participants is essential for this research theme.
- 'Recognition of Prior Learning': research to identify ways in which 'prior learning' and women's work experiences in the home can be made meaningful in the market place. For example, can research translate and/or package women's experience of homemaking and caring into skills that are attractive in the labour market?
- Research to quantify the amount of work carried out by women on a voluntary basis; and to identify the training and support needs of women carrying out unpaid work, particularly as carers.
- Research to expose poverty in employment in rural areas, and to increase our understanding of women who have multiple jobs.
- Research to understand older women's experience of work as well as current emphasis on needs of younger women balancing the care of small children with work demands.
- Action research to raise awareness amongst women themselves and policy makers of women's roles in family business, particularly primary industries, in rural communities.
- Forward-looking research to consider the future role of women's work and women's business and to consider ways in which to capitalise on existing women's business networks.

2. Rural Women in the Rural Policy Process

Research on women in the rural policy process was discussed in the context of how and when women were consulted on rural policy issues, and whether existing processes took account of the needs of women. It was stressed that gender issues need to be part of the community planning process. The issue of representation and training for representation was raised. The importance of engaging with the policy process at an early stage was also raised. Consultation was essentially about what women choose to do rather than what could be imposed on them. It was pointed out that consultation exercises in Australia with rural women, for example, were about what choices they wished to make. Distinctions were made between the need for research, the need for consultation, and the need for research on consultation.

Research Priorities

2.1 Research to explore consulting with rural women; or to explore ways in which existing process could engage with gender proofing, and women's perspectives.

2.2 Research to explore whether current data sets on rural areas are adequate to provide evidence-based data on women (and men) in rural areas on issues such as health, housing and income.

2.3 Research to provide women-generated priorities for policy and development in rural communities.

Research Issues and Research Options

- How do we currently consult with women living and working in rural communities? Does Community Planning and Community Appraisal take account of gender?
- Are there existing data from the Community Planning and Community Appraisal process which could be analysed to provide data about women in rural areas?
- Research to explore women's participation in representative rural bodies
- Research to explore barriers (attitudinal, cultural, or geographical) to women's participation in rural civic organisations and wider boards, for example boards of Local Enterprise Companies.
- Research to explore whether current priorities for research and development in rural areas reflect priorities of women as well as men.
- Research to identify the priorities of women in different communities of interest, for example women in agriculture, hotel workers, or older women.
- Research that would aim to consult with women must provide benefits to participants and the possibility of future action (such as establishment of network and increased opportunities).

3. Rural Women's Solutions to Domestic Violence and Invisible Issues

Research was required to make visible domestic violence, mental health and stress issues for women in rural communities.

Research Priorities

3.1 Research to identify the extent of domestic violence and other 'sensitive' research issues in rural communities.

3.2 Action research to identify ways in which service providers can work with women to deal with domestic violence and other sensitive issues in rural communities.

3.3 Research to identify women's access to services across rural areas, particularly in relation to specific issues, such as domestic violence, about which it was difficult to be open in small rural communities.

Research Issues

- Domestic violence is a 'hidden' or 'invisible' issue for women in rural communities, and women encounter problems in raising the issue for discussion, and dealing with incidents of domestic violence. Issues may remain hidden while their potential for 'shaming' remains.
- Alcoholism is an issue in many parts of rural Scotland and anecdotal data suggests that domestic violence is linked to male alcohol abuse.
- Research to consider why male perpetrators engage with domestic violence in rural communities, as well as how women cope with it, would be helpful.
- Services providers and communities living in rural areas are reluctant to 'own' or deal with issues relating to how families cope with domestic violence.
- Other sensitive issues, particularly linked to women's mental health, depression and post-natal depression in a rural context, require further investigation.

4. Older Women in Rural Areas

The issues facing older women in rural communities were recurrent themes throughout the workshop and in earlier sessions, and workshop participants highlighted older women as a key research theme.

Research Priorities

4.1 Research to make visible issues that have a particular impact on older women in rural communities.

4.2 Research to understand older women's contribution to rural communities, particularly as carers.

Research Issues

- The research community does not prioritise older women, as a focus of study.
- Increased understanding of gender differences in the experience of ageing in a rural community would be helpful. Gender differences in the needs of older people in rural communities should be investigated.

5. The Research Process

Another recurrent theme throughout the workshop was the place of women in the research process. It was suggested that women in rural areas should be involved in every stage of the research process: in setting research priorities; in identifying the mechanisms that might be developed for gathering data in rural communities; and in data collection.

There was substantial agreement as to the goal of research; it should have visible and tangible outcomes for women in rural areas and/or provide a foundation for action. There was also agreement as to the kind of data required: for small area data and data charting long-term processes of change. The workshop acknowledged difficulties involved in providing these data, such as economies of scale (small area data) and funding cycles (long-term processes of change).

KEY RESEARCH ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY WORKSHOP

The following four themes for research were identified as matters of priority:

- 1. Women in business and work** in rural areas of Scotland
- 2. The place of rural women in the policy process**, including the mechanisms by which rural women can participate in generating their own priorities
- 3. 'Invisible' issues** (such as domestic violence and mental health)
- 4. Older women** in rural areas

TOPIC 2: WOMEN IN SCOTLAND'S RURAL ECONOMY

PLENARY SESSION

RESEARCHING WOMEN IN SCOTLAND'S RURAL ECONOMY

Gillian Munro

Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research, University of Aberdeen

Disaggregating women's economic lives from other aspects of their day-to-day lives is very difficult, and, it must be said, only useful in certain circumstances. Economics are part of what we call 'culture', where economics, social structures and everyday practices are intimately connected. Rural women each have very different social and economic lives and needs from one another, yet their lives are in many ways interconnected, just as rural women's lives are connected to those of rural men, rural lives are connected to non-rural lives, and all rural areas are not the same. Gender is only one of a number of research foci through which we as individuals, researchers, policy makers and research funders can work towards a better quality of life for all, by providing an equality of opportunity and choice.

The fact that so little research has been done of either a quantitative or qualitative nature on rural women's lives in Scotland is quite remarkable. It is equally remarkable that, of the research materials and information produced on rural areas, such as government statistics, a gender breakdown is most usually unavailable. Of the research work that has been published, moreover, it is generally at least three or more years out of date. Nor am I aware of a rural focused network or campaign that facilitates rural women in informing researchers or policy makers as to what they feel the key development issues are. This is why this particular Scottish Executive Equality Unit initiative, a conference organised to consult with rural men and women on their research needs and priorities, is so welcome and necessary.

Of all the issues relating to rural woman's lives, employment and training are perhaps the most researched areas. What has been done is laid out in the Rural Forum Policy Briefing on Rural Women, *Gender Relations and Socio-Economic Change 1997*, which was received by all Conference participants, and the Scottish Executive's *Equality Strategy 2000*. You will probably also have seen Engender's annually produced Gender Audits, the last of which was produced in 2000, and which has one section specifically about rural women and research. While issues relating to rural woman's lives, employment and training may be the most researched areas, the main conclusion drawn from these reviews is unequivocal and depressing: there is virtually no academic work on rural women and the economy in Scotland; and there has been little applied research or consultancy work specifically directed on issues of rural women and the economy in Scotland in the past two to three years.

Previous research has raised the following gender-related employment issues as particularly pertaining to rural areas. Research has reported the prevalence among rural women of the following:

- low pay
- low status jobs
- poor working conditions
- lower economic activity rates
- over-representation in certain sectors which are frequently low status
- lack of career structure and promotional opportunity

- lack of employment rights and lack of information on employment rights
- significant unemployment levels including high unemployment among well-qualified women
- poor access to local, affordable and appropriate forms of training
- high out-migration of women for educational and employment opportunities
- low confidence
- seasonal jobs
- lack of appropriate female role models in employment and business
- limited access to informal business networks
- few single sex training sessions
- migration
- tension where better qualified women have moved in to the area to compete for jobs
- perceived restricted access to business capital and land
- persistent low female business start-up rates
- lower growth rates among female-owned businesses
- lower ambition among female business owners.

All of these issues may be aggravated to varying degrees by a multitude of factors such as a lack of suitable transport to employment; low population density and restricted opportunities, a lack of appropriate and affordable forms of child care, local prescriptive social structures/institutions and prescriptive gender roles, discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, and so on.

The task facing this Conference organised today on behalf of the Scottish Executive Equality Unit is to consult with men and women living in rural Scotland as to research issues and research priorities. This information is required to inform and prioritise policy. Research is now needed to explain how gender differences in economic rural life have been generated and how they are sustained. In the past few months, I have been involved in rural research fieldwork in Skye and what many of the women have told me vividly illuminates these processes. I conclude with quotes excerpted from interviews with women who commented on the informal but very real pressures on them to conform to particular gendered and rigid conceptions of what women and men should do in the house and in the workplace:

1. Margaret: *I think on Skye in particular, it's almost as if career women (and I'm making a terribly sweeping assumption) but they're kind of - not humoured - but again there is a very strong male-female pecking order, even in the work situation, so that you will eventually want to marry and settle down and have children. So you're just killing time until that. There is a kind of light weakness associated with career women. And certainly, people like my mother's generation, I know that lots of ladies her age around the community didn't understand why she worked, and particularly because she had four children. She used to have a lady who would come in and help her. And I remember this woman saying, "Well, could you not just not work and do it yourself - do your own housework?" Mum was quite taken aback.*

Interviewer: *You're working full-time. And you have got two children who are in the Academy. If you decided you were going to get somebody in to do your housework, how would that be seen?*

Margaret: *Absolutely decadent. And it's something I've thought about. I remember saying to my husband one day; "I'm going to discretely ask for somebody to do my ironing". I would pay somebody to do my ironing because I hate it. There's a gap in the market at the moment. If somebody set up a service to all these career women who are too busy to do their*

ironing- If you come in from work at six o'clock at night, the last thing you want, sort of thing, is scrubbing the toilet. But he said, 'Oh no you can't'. And certainly, if ever I did that, it would be seen as absolutely - 'Who does she think she is?' Men here would think, "Who does she think she is? Stuck up little madam!"

The second quote illustrates that even when women do become business leaders, their integration into wider business networks of sociability and exchange continues to be problematic:

2. Fiona: *There's the Round Table, the Masonics, there's the Rotary, and all of these groups are still men. Whether they say they'll take women and the fact that they don't is the turning point. And I think there is still a lot of -particularly because most of these are town based where most of the businesses are - there is still a lot of the male-dominated businesses. And although women have done considerably better, I think, for the last few years, it's not in private business, I would say on the whole. It's more in the agency positions, where they have risen through... But I would say in private business it's still men, whether it's their own business and they've got the confidence to do it where women don't, or whether it's that they've been promoted within a private business.*

The Rotary, they will take women, but in fact they've never because it's an invited thing and they haven't invited any women to join. Not that I would want to be part of an organisation like that, I would have absolutely no interest in it.

These brief excerpts suggest that many women continue to make work and social/family life decisions in an environment, at work and at home, which constricts their choices. Further research is required that can clearly show when and how women meet these pressures. On this foundation, policy recommendations and actions can then be taken that support equal opportunities for women, and for men, in rural areas.

WORKSHOP

WOMEN IN SCOTLAND'S RURAL ECONOMY

Gillian Munro	University of Aberdeen (Facilitator)
Sue Richards	Rural Industries, Government of Australia (Note-taker)
Helena Harcourt	University of Highlands and Islands
Adrian Kitson	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Hilary Lawson	Worker's Educational Association, Inverness
Ann Macinnes	ASH Scotland/WEA Inverness
Anna Mackay	Ross & Cromarty Enterprise
Carolyn Maniukiewicz	Aberdeen Enterprise Trust
Sandra McGaughey	Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise
Margaret McPhail	Get Real Guidance, Inverness College
Sheila Nairn	Kentra
Deidre Steven	Highland Councillor
Suzanna Stone	Activist
Sue Warner	Scottish Executive Equality Unit

The following key issues for research were raised at the workshop:

1. Barriers to Access

Research on barriers to access must be based on a clear identification of need and what communities and rural women, themselves, want access to.

Workshop participants suggested data should be produced to illustrate and understand some of the following, all of which had an impact on how women accessed Scotland's rural economy:

- confidence levels
- lack of advice and support
- appropriate and accessible training based on articulated needs and interests
- community capacity building
- finance, particularly for women wishing to start small businesses
- transport
- training

2. Technological changes and research on rural women

Workshop participants agreed that recent technological changes had not only altered working practices but had opened wide windows of opportunity for women in rural Scotland, particularly in relation to small business. Research was needed to document these changes and to understand their potential for women in rural areas.

3. Doing research: Rural women and networking

Workshop participants agreed women and communities must be enabled to feed back policy and research issues on a continuous basis via the creation of policy and research networks. One-day events were inadequate for the purpose and networks need to be inclusive, with no key players should be left out.

The role which new technology can play in facilitating networking, communication and consultation on policy and research, particularly amongst rural women, must also be considered.

4. The uses of research: Sharing good practice

Research and information could help rural women by being:

- Empowering: by helping women to evaluate what has been done and achieved, and by helping them to develop expertise at the local level.
- Inspirational: good news stories, which encourage women to succeed, need to be circulated and trumpeted.

KEY RESEARCH ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY WORKSHOP

The following four themes for research were identified as matters of priority:

- 1. Identifying the barriers to employment**
- 2. Recognising the implications of technological change**
- 3. Doing research: the need for networking and inclusiveness**
- 4. Disseminating research: the need to share good practice for empowering and inspiring rural women**

TOPIC 3: WOMEN AND POVERTY IN RURAL SCOTLAND

PLENARY SESSION

CHALLENGING POVERTY: WOMEN IN RURAL SCOTLAND

Philomena de Lima, Inverness College, UHI

1. The Context of Research

Introduction

There is a vast body of literature on poverty and social exclusion/inclusion. Although much of this is urban based, there is growing research on poverty and social exclusion/inclusion in rural areas. (See, for example, Shucksmith, M., Chapman, P., Clark, GM *et al.*, (1996), Chapman P., Phimister, E. *et al* (1998), Shucksmith, M. (2000a and 2000b). These studies highlight a number of issues relating to rural areas and poverty, including:

- The invisibility and dispersed nature of rural poverty
- Discrepancies between subjective perceptions and definitions, including 'official definitions' of poverty
- Vulnerability of specific groups to poverty:
 - Older people living alone (of which women tend to be predominant);
 - Self-employed people;
 - People detached from the labour market;
 - Single parent households, in particular, those headed by women
- Low take-up of benefits in rural areas
- Low pay
- Restricted labour market opportunities
- Spells of low income tend to be shorter for men in rural areas compared with urban areas

Research and Poverty: Implications for women

The research on poverty has three main implications in relation to women.

1. Invisibility of women's poverty: Focusing on the household

Firstly, much of the research, including many of the above findings, however, is 'gender blind'. One of the reasons for this lack of attention, amongst both academic and policy related researchers, to gendered patterns of poverty is due to the focus of research on 'the household'. In this context, poverty has tended to be defined in relation to the financial resources of the household or to the family as a unit rather than considering what goes on within households. As a result, women's poverty remains invisible and hidden (Glendinning, C. and Miller, J., 1992). However, whilst it is important to recognise that changes are taking place (for example, more disaggregated statistics are now available), there is still some way to go with regard to interpreting the data and relating the data to the experiences of women.

2. *Definitional issues*

Secondly, it is important to note that the commissioning and interpretation of research on poverty in rural areas cannot be understood without some involvement in broader definitional issues around poverty and social exclusion. Definitions of poverty and social exclusion are highly contested. In this presentation, both terms will be used to include material poverty as well as the broader issue of 'denial of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights and a relative view of living standards and opportunities', (cited in Brown, U. *et al* 1999:4)

3. *Rural change*

Lastly, poverty and rural women's poverty in particular, have to be understood in the context of a broad spectrum of changes currently taking place in rural areas together with commonly held beliefs about rural areas which appear resistant to change.

Demographic trends

- The increasing predominance of older age groups and the higher proportion of women in these groups
- An increase in single parent households, mainly headed by women

Labour market issues and changes

- The impact of global changes: rural areas are going through fundamental and rapid changes and these changes may have a differing impact on men and women
- The changing position and roles of women linked to increased involvement in the wage economy: their high involvement in part-time work and occupational segregation (with women mainly in the service/public sector)
- Limited work opportunities: the predominance of small businesses, service sector and tourism
- Low pay;
- Poor access to training opportunities
- Reliance on networks to get into work, and non-unionisation of the rural workforce

The 'Rural Idyll': cultural assumptions and values

- Powerful images of the rural as homogenous and a 'good place to live' are embedded in popular culture. Evidence suggests that this ideology continues to endure and has a powerful influence on the way in which rural life is perceived and, at times, experienced
- Being 'independent' is also seen as a characteristic of rural dwellers. This can mean that individuals are reluctant to access welfare services and benefits

- Gender based assumptions and stereotypes can exert a powerful and constraining influence in women's lives in relation to work and occupational choices.

(See: Shucksmith, M, Chapman, Clark, GM et.al (1996); Chapman, Phimister, E *et al*, (1998); Shucksmith, M. (2000a and 2000b), Goldsmith, J. (1996); and NCVO (1996)).

2. 'Poverty has a female face'

The evidence

Some groups are more vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion than others are. Although, the 'feminisation of poverty' is not a new phenomenon, it has tended to remain 'invisible' in so-called mainstream analysis, as already mentioned above. There is strong evidence to suggest, however, that poverty does have a female face:

- Single pensioner and lone parent households are the two main household groupings that have the highest risk of poverty. They are predominantly female
- Lone parents: households headed by a female are over-represented amongst those households experiencing poverty. For example, 50% of all households receiving income at or below income support level are female while only 30% of all households are headed by a female, (based on Scottish House Condition Survey, 1997, cited in Scott, G. *et al*, (2000:ii)
- The persistence of the 'pay gap'
- Lack of access to affordable and flexible childcare
- Benefit traps: the impact of changes in benefits (such as working families tax credit and child care tax credit) have the potential risk of reinforcing poverty (see: Clark, S. *et al* (2000); Brown, U. *et al*. (1999); Myers, F. and Brown, A. (1997); Glendinning, C. and Miller, J. (1992).

Whilst these issues apply to urban and rural women, the nature and degree of poverty and social exclusion experienced by women is intensified by factors such as age, rurality, ethnicity and disability, (Clark, GM (1997), Goldsmith, J. (1996), NCVO, (1996), NCVO, (2000).

What are the main causes of poverty?

Amongst the factors identified, albeit mainly though not solely in the context of research undertaken in urban areas, are the following:

Labour market issues

- Economic dependence and restricted access to the labour market: women as 'secondary workers'
- Deregulation of the labour market
- Occupational segregation and nature of employment (e.g. part-time, poorly paid and poor access to progression)

- Glass ceiling in employment
- Stereotyping in work
- Poor access to vocational training through employment;
- Stereotyping in relation to choices of courses in further and higher education
- Poor access to networks, (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2001).

Low and unequal pay

- Women continue to earn less than men: on average 73% of men's weekly income
- In rural areas, poverty amongst women is closely related to 'poverty in employment amongst men

Take-up and impact of welfare benefits

- Shifting boundaries between private and public provision
- Accessibility of information and advice due to location and distance
- Stigma and independence. Combined with the fear of stigma in small communities, the avoidance of what is perceived to be a 'culture of dependency' appears to be highly relevant in the rural context
- Pensioners. Whilst all pensioners tend to be over-represented at the bottom of the income distribution, those households with a single female are most likely to be found there (see Scott, G. *et al*, (2000): i-ii). This can be attributed to the nature of women's participation in the labour market and their eligibility for pensions. In rural areas, women are over-represented amongst pensioners and there is a high reliance on state pensions

Unequal distribution of family income within household

- Research shows that women usually have less access to the family income than men do and tend to use it to meet the needs of children and other members of the families rather than on themselves.

'Time poverty'

This refers to the fact that women have less personal and social time and is due to:

- Unequal distribution of responsibilities with regard to child care and domestic labour within households;
- Women on low incomes are likely to spend more time on managing household tasks due to their inability to purchase services or buy goods that could reduce the time spent on domestic work.

Health

- Stress of managing resources in a low-income situation affects the quality of life for many women who put the needs of their family before theirs

Lack of access to all services, including:

- Poor access to public and affordable transport. Young women take driving tests later than young men do. Elderly women are disadvantaged in terms of car use, for example, 50% of men of 65 years and over own their own car compared to 9% women, and this is especially a problem for those living alone (GHS, 1991, cited in Shucksmith, M. (2000a), 26). More generally, data suggest that 51% of female car/van/lorry travel is as a passenger rather than a driver, compared to 15% male car travel (Scottish Executive, 2000:8)
- Lack of access to affordable housing is affected by: the extent to which women may be economically dependent on men; consequences of marital breakdown, homelessness and housing for single parents makes access to housing even more difficult especially since in rural areas there is a marked shortage of affordable housing
- Access to childcare: Despite the many changes in child care provision, access, flexibility and cost of childcare are still identified as problems

Cultural assumptions and stereotypes about 'gender appropriate behaviour'

- Stereotypes of good mother/housewife can act as a form of social control; women's aspirations are perceived as second place to men's; lack of access to relevant and appropriate networks all serve to disadvantage women, (Allan, M. (2000). This may be especially problematic for women in rural areas.

In addition to the factors identified above, women's contribution to the economy in rural areas may be particularly undervalued. Women in employment are underpaid or unpaid and their contribution to the economy may go unrecognised as 'helper-spouses' of farmers, hoteliers, clergy, doctors, etc. Women may be partly responsible for their difficulties in accessing business advice or credit. Women constitute the higher proportion of single parents, the elderly and the low paid. They are more reliant on seasonal employment and heavily reliant on state pensions and services. Their poverty is aggravated by higher costs of fuel and food and more traditional attitudes to women and their 'place' (Goldsmith J, 1996).

3. So is there a typical 'poor rural woman'?

Some scenarios are presented to demonstrate the multi-dimensional experience of rural women. They are based on my research and work with rural women, and I have changed the names in all cases.

Theresa is a single parent, with two children (13 and 15 years of age) from a previous marriage. She works full time as an administrator in a small retail food company. She needs to have a car, as there is no public transport where she lives. Her pay is about £7,000 a year. It isn't enough to live on and her ex-husband is not paying up for the children and she is getting no-where. She can't even rely on the Children's Support Agency as they appear to be under-resourced to follow people like her ex-husband. So her only alternative is to take on extra work, such as some home help to supplement her income. How will she ever get out of the trap?

Marian has lived in the same village all her life. She is 70 and never married as she stayed behind to look after her elderly parents. No close family live locally. She cannot drive and there is no public transport where she lives. She lives in an old house and relies on an open fire to keep warm. She gets a basic state pension, but doesn't seek extra financial support because she doesn't feel right about it. She relies heavily on a number of other local people (who are also ageing) to take her shopping, etc. The local area is changing and there are many unfamiliar faces.

Rachel is 17 and does not get on with her parents. They are threatening to throw her out. She would like to be independent, but the lack of housing is a problem; she lives in a small rural community but there are no affordable houses for young people like her. There are empty council houses where she lives but she has the impression that it is easier to get on the housing list if she was pregnant. She sleeps rough here and there and with friends. She would like to move away or get to College, but getting there is a problem

Sara is 29 and has moved into a rural community because of her partner's job. She has a Ph.D. in Geophysics. She is overqualified for most of the work that is locally available and the work opportunities are limited. Even when there have been one or two opportunities, it would appear that strong personal networks and stereotypes as to the type of work that women should do means that she is unlikely to get a job which uses her qualifications.

Rana is a Pakistani woman. She has spent most of her time helping her husband in the shop which is operating at the margins of profitability ...not that her contribution is ever recognised. With changes in shopping patterns and the growth of supermarkets, the business is precarious. Rana would like to work outside the family business, but doesn't know where to start. She also fears that her accent (she feels that she could do with some help with English) and the way in which she dresses will count against her.

In conclusion, the little research and evidence on rural poverty that is available suggests that rural women are amongst one of the groups that are most at risk of poverty. Whilst it is acknowledged that rurality, age, disability, type of household and ethnicity may all have varying impacts, the ways in which these factors interact and impact on rural women's lives is unclear. The need for a gendered analysis of poverty, which takes into account the multiplicity of roles that women play, issues of rurality, sexual preferences, ethnicity and disability, is critical for helping to make sense of women's experience of poverty and for developing relevant policies.

4. Some Key Questions

The following are some of the key questions that research needs to address to understand how poverty and social exclusion impact on rural women's lives:

- What are the contributory factors that make rural women vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion?
- What is the duration of poverty amongst rural women?
- What is the impact of government policies (general as well as rural specific policies) on rural women?
- What policies are required to combat poverty and social exclusion for rural women?
- In all of the above areas, what are the similarities and differences between rural and urban women and rural women and rural men? What are the policy implications of these differences?
- Finally and most importantly, there is the crucial issue of how age, disability, sexual preferences and ethnicity interact with inequalities arising out of gender in a rural context.

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WORKSHOP

CHALLENGING POVERTY: WOMEN IN RURAL SCOTLAND

Philomena de Lima	Inverness College (Facilitator)
Rachel Edgar	Scottish Executive Equality Unit (Notetaker)
Jane Bennett	Inverness CAB
Liz MacDonald	Councillor, Highland Council
Peggy MacNab	ABE Office
Sally Watson	Lews Castle College
Sandra Gray Mitchell	Ross-shire Women's Aid
Susan Knox	Scottish Executive Rural Policy Team
Wilma Kelt	Dingwall Community Centre

Workshop participants discussed three key areas for future research:

- 1. Comparative research**, both between urban and rural areas and within rural areas, to develop on existing anecdotal evidence and existing urban studies;
- 2. Pathways to poverty**
 - Are pathways to poverty different for women in rural areas compared with men in rural areas and with men and women in urban areas? For example, is duration and stage of entry similar?
 - If women escape poverty, what strategies do they use and which are successful?
 - What are the consequences of poverty for rural women?
- 3. What is work in a rural context?** How do these definitions impact on women? Research is required to establish the extent of the formal and informal economy and to measure paid employment, other paid work and unpaid work.

A number of specific topics were also discussed:

1. Specific problems facing **single parents** (and especially women) in rural areas, including:
 - transport
 - higher basic living costs, especially food
 - housing, particularly problems with the location of available housing and the poor quality of available council housing
 - access to the labour market
 - access to child care

It was also recognised that many women in rural areas have partners who work away from home, and therefore also face some of these problems.

2. Poverty amongst **older people**, with particular concerns being raised that widowers may be given more help/encouragement to access services and benefits than widows
3. Changing patterns of **social cohesion** in different types of rural communities

4. **Barriers to accessing advice** in rural areas, in particular, difficulties faced in maintaining anonymity and confidentiality when accessing advice on more sensitive issues like sexual health, debt or benefits
5. **Women's role and involvement in community activities** compared with urban areas
6. **Changing patterns of migration in rural communities.** Are families moving to live in rural areas more likely to have better paid jobs? Are these families and individuals likely to be involved in community activities? Do women migrate to follow their husband's work or vice versa? What does the status of these women depend on?
7. What are the **jobs** in rural areas **and who gets them**? What **training development** is there for people who live in rural areas to allow them to gain the necessary qualifications/experience for the available jobs? How many jobs are low paid? How does the glass ceiling affect women in rural areas?
8. What are **women's caring responsibilities** in rural areas? How many women face **double caring** responsibilities? What expectations are there on women to take on caring responsibilities and how do these differ from the experiences of women in urban areas? To what extent do women choose to take on caring responsibilities? In what ways is this choice limited?
9. What are the **routes to social inclusion** in rural areas? How do policy makers ensure that paid employment is not the only route to social inclusion?

KEY RESEARCH ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY WORKSHOP

The following three themes for research were identified as matters of priority:

1. **The need for more comparative research on poverty-** both between rural areas and between rural and urban areas
2. **Pathways into and through poverty,** and how they may differ between rural and urban areas
3. **Definitions of work in rural settings** and the implications of these definitions **for the feminisation of poverty** in rural areas

TOPIC 4: WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN RURAL LIFE

PLENARY SESSION

WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN RURAL LIFE

**Natasha Mauthner, Arkleton Centre for Rural Development Research
University of Aberdeen**

1. Introduction: The Diversity of Experience

My presentation today is based on recent empirical work carried out with colleagues at the University of Aberdeen (Mauthner N., McKee L. and Strell M. (2001) *Work and Family Life in Rural Communities*, York: York Publishing Services). This study looked at gender, work and family life in three rural communities, two in Scotland and one in Northern England. In this presentation, I want to flag up some of the key issues identified by the research. They are not intended as an exhaustive list of the issues faced by women in their family and community lives, however, and I am very conscious of the fact that they are just the tip of the iceberg. Rather, I am using them in this presentation as a way of initiating a discussion which I hope can be broadened and expanded in the afternoon workshop by eliciting your own experiences and knowledge. This, after all, is the aim of today's Conference.

My presentation will focus on the benefits as well as the 'downsides' of living in a rural area for women's family and community lives. Women's experiences are diverse and may depend on the type of rural community they live in, whether they are single or partnered, teenage or 'older' mothers, local women or 'incomers'. Their experiences will also depend on: their social class background and level of income; their ethnic origin; whether there is disability in the family; the extent and strength of social networks and support; their access to transport; their occupational background; their level of education, skills and experience.

It is critical to acknowledge this diversity both between rural communities and amongst rural women and their families. The challenge we face as researchers, policy-makers and practitioners is capturing, representing and acknowledging this diversity in the research and policy process, as well as in the implementation of policy.

2. Research and Policy Background

The economic and social fragility and disadvantage of rural areas in Britain has been a major focus of rural research and policy in Scotland and the UK, heightened by the recent outbreak of foot and mouth disease.

The challenges of balancing the demands of paid work with domestic, family and community commitments have also figured prominently on recent research and policy agendas. The changing nature of work and the increasing numbers of women in the labour market has prompted this. Thus, for example, *The Work-Life Balance Campaign*, launched in March 2000, promotes employment policies and practices designed to help employees achieve a better work-home balance. *The Working Time Directive (Fairness at Work, 1998)* aims to curtail the culture and practice of long working hours. The recent Green Paper on *Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice* (2000) recognises the potential work-family benefits

of flexible working patterns and encourages businesses to offer employees more flexibility. The right to work part-time has also been under Government discussion.

3. Women and Paid Work

Our study of three village communities in England and Scotland raised the following issues in relation to women and paid work:

i. Women's attitudes to paid work vary between women and across the life cycle. Some women choose to withdraw from the labour market. This is especially common amongst women with young children who then gradually increase their involvement as their children get older. It is important not to devalue the work that these women do and the choices these women make.

ii. Other women would like to be in paid work but are constrained by a range of factors. Barriers to employment include:

- a lack of local employment opportunities, especially well-paid part or full-time jobs and local part-time jobs which fit in with school hours
- 'word of mouth' recruitment strategies which can disadvantage 'incomers', women living on the periphery of villages and other groups
- lack of up to date skills, expertise, relevant work experience or confidence for those who have had a career break
- a lack of suitable child care
- a lack of transport
- household issues such as: men's multiple jobs; unpaid work in the family business; lack of support from partner; caring for disabled or ill child/relative

iii. Reasons for mothers taking on paid work Women see motherhood as a job in itself, around which paid work has to be fitted. Those who take on paid work value its personal, social and financial rewards. Some mothers would rather not work but, because they are single mothers or have partners who are unemployed or on low, insecure or intermittent incomes, they have no choice but to take up paid work.

iv. Part-time and full-time jobs Part-time work is popular because, compared to full time work, it can be more easily combined with raising a family. However, part-time jobs tend to be low paid, casual, insecure, below women's levels of skills and qualifications and, in some cases, have to be combined to earn an acceptable income. Well paid, full-time jobs, and especially professional jobs, are often difficult to find locally and women tend to have to travel to larger centres for this kind of work.

v. Employment re-training for women in rural areas Women seeking to return to paid work after a period of child rearing can experience a loss of skills and confidence. Schemes which provide training and development opportunities are particularly valuable for women at

these transition points. However, their uptake and value are dependent on access, cost, child-care provision, timing, and relevance to local labour market opportunities.

4. Paid Work, Domestic Work and Child-care: Family and gender divisions

Amongst the key findings of the research are the following:

- Men are still mostly the principal breadwinners while women are mainly responsible for domestic work and childcare.
- However, just as many women have absorbed paid work as part of the 'new motherhood', many men have absorbed child care and child-rearing as part of the 'new fatherhood', without giving up their own breadwinner perception or role.
- While men's involvement in domestic housework remains marginal, many men are actively and directly involved in looking after their children. This is partly facilitated by the nature and structure of rural work which, though insecure for many, also has in-built flexibility. This makes it particularly 'family-friendly' (e.g. working shifts; working close to home; taking on casual, multiple or seasonal jobs; working for small firms with sympathetic employers and colleagues; having autonomy over the hours and/or place of work; being able to take children to their workplace; and self-employment).
- Our findings underlined the importance of considering men in any research on this broad area since women's involvement in the labour market could be facilitated as well as constrained by the paid work and household roles of men.

5. Children: Child care and pre-school groups in rural areas

The main issue highlighted by our research on child care concerns the viability and sustainability of formal child care services (including nurseries, childminders, and out of school care) due to the small numbers of children in a given area, common patterns of packaging formal with informal care, seasonal variations in usage and parental preferences for flexible and *ad hoc* usage. The challenge for childcare providers is how to accommodate variation in parental demand and flexibility of usage without incurring financial losses.

Amongst the research findings on childcare in rural areas were the following:

- The popularity of informal child care by family and friends and child care within the household (by mothers, fathers and older siblings) compared with formal child care (childminders, registered nurseries, nannies) outside the household
- The quality, affordability, availability and accessibility of childcare continues to be an issue for families living in rural areas (J. Nelson [2000] *Taking Stock: Childcare in Rural Scotland*, Edinburgh: Children in Scotland). Nevertheless, there has been an increase in the provision of formal child care in many areas and it has been greatly valued by parents

- One of the key issues stressed by parents has been the need for flexible child care that takes into account their flexible working patterns and is itself available on a flexible basis
- Our research found that pre-school groups are important for those mothers active within them in terms of building their self confidence and providing them with access to community support networks. They also give parents greater choice in terms of child care options and were felt to be important for the children. Nevertheless, the research found that pre-school groups in some rural communities struggle to keep viable. Even though the cost is relatively low, many parents find it hard to afford them and the establishment of nursery education has threatened some of these groups.

6. Community

Practical and moral support

- There is a perceived familiarity and caring nature of rural communities. People living in rural communities generally praised and valued the benefits of living within small communities and particularly the practical and moral support that they derived
- Rural communities are characterised by a tradition of helping each other out in everyday situations such as child care; DIY; gardening; transport; shopping; etc and in crisis situations e.g. illness; bereavement. Also many communities were pulling together to raise funds for new community initiatives or projects such as a play park; a village hall; a heritage centre; an after-school club.

The importance of community infrastructure

- Community infrastructure is particularly important for mothers with children who rely on local facilities such as schools, pre-school groups, child care provision, a play area or play park, the library, the youth club, uniformed organisations, sports clubs, health services
- Marked differences were noted between communities that had seen consistent improvements and investments and those that had not. For example, the most dynamic community in our research had a new play park, a new co-op and a newly set up after-school club
- A common complaint across rural communities, however, is the lack of social activities for teenage children

Gender differences in community work

- Many parents involve themselves, on a voluntary basis, in the running of child-related organisations and sports clubs moving from one organisation to another depending on the age and stage of their children (e.g. PTA; play group committee; after-school club committee; Brownies; Scouts; School Board; Football Club).
- Women are more likely than men to be involved in child-related community activities. However, men and women tend to be equally involved in wider community activities and organisations with men predominating in sports clubs, the fire brigade and web clubs and women predominating in community development issues and fund-raising.
- The increasing number of women in the labour market has implications for the community involvement of women, in particular, and for community in general.

Lack of privacy

- Lack of privacy is a real issue for women experiencing emotional problems such as postnatal depression, marital problems, domestic violence and abuse. The problem faced by these women is how to access support in a safe and confidential way within the context of small rural communities where people are more visible, contacts are high and gossip is common.

7. Qualities of rural life

Overall, rural communities provide both advantages and disadvantages for women, children and families.

Advantages of rural life for families and children

- Freedom, safety and independence for young children (a perception that children in rural areas are protected from strangers and other risks associated with urban living e.g. drugs and crime)
- Access to the countryside and outdoor pursuits
- Neighbourliness, trust and community spirit
- Networks of reciprocal help and support
- Proximity of kin for some
- High quality schools and health services

Disadvantages of rural life for families and children

- Lack of activities for teenage children. In some areas parents linked this to drug and alcohol problems amongst teenagers
- Cost and time-tabling of public transport
- Restricted employment opportunities
- Limited (re)training opportunities
- Limited child care provision
- Restricted access to specialist health services
- Lack of privacy and anonymity especially for those experiencing emotional and psychological problems

8. Towards a research agenda on women in rural Scotland

In conclusion, I want to raise three critical points in relation to the task of drawing up a research agenda on women in rural Scotland:

- The importance of working in partnership with rural communities
- The need to encourage and facilitate people in rural communities to 'speak out'- and to speak more openly - about the difficulties and challenges they face, particularly where their emotional and psychological problems are concerned
- The importance of maintaining a focus on women in rural areas but, at the same time considering, men and gender more generally. This, as illustrated above in relation to women's paid employment, is vital to our understanding of the position and experiences of women.

WORKSHOP

WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN RURAL LIFE

Natasha Mauthner	University of Aberdeen (facilitator)
Iain Dewar	Scottish Executive Rural Affairs (note-taker)
Marlyn Barr	Moray College
Carola Bell	
Kath Jaffrey	Family First
Liz McCaffrey	Women's Aid
Gaynor McKernan	Parents First
Joyce Macrae	Scottish Women's Rural Institutes
Julia Nelson	Children in Scotland
Theresa Swayne	Ross & Cromarty Enterprise
Christine Whitelaw	Highland Council, Department of Planning

Aim of workshop: To discuss issues relating to women, family and community life and to draw up three research proposals.

Research Proposal 1. The support needs of carers in rural areas needs research

The workshop started on a positive note with a suggestion that the experiences of some people living in rural areas had built up resilience amongst the community and an ability to cope with practical problems. Despite this resilience, it was nevertheless important to distinguish between what was acceptable and what was not acceptable in terms of service provision. Carers are a case in point. Their needs are likely to go unnoticed, partly because of the resilience generated by rural life.

Ageing carers

The needs of carers were also raised because, with younger members of family moving away from rural areas to find employment, an ageing population was playing a significant role in looking after one another. The problem of supporting elderly carers was considered to be particularly acute in rural areas due to the distances involved in travelling to sources of service provision. Social work provision was thought to be frequently insufficient and the decreasing extent of assistance now offered by district nurses and home helps was accentuating the problem. It was suggested that greater provision of sheltered housing in rural areas would help as this would bring elderly people together, helping to foster a sense of community as well as making service provision easier. More information is needed to ageing carers to inform policy and practice.

Child care

Geographical spread and lack of service provision in rural areas were also having a negative social effect with relation to childcare, or the lack of it. Children were not getting to see other children before or outside school and young mothers were not getting opportunities to network. The need for childcare for mothers working from home also needs to be examined.

Informal childcare provision is likely to play a more significant role in rural areas than in urban areas although extended family may now be playing a decreasing role in the provision of childcare. While the new regulation of childcare legislation might help to provide national

standards and offer greater child protection measures, it may be having an adverse effect on the level of childcare provision in rural areas. Consideration was given to providing childcare at home as it might overcome travelling problems and might mean less upheaval for children, however, there are obvious resource implications. These issues require further examination.

Research Proposal 2: Consider how information on support services is provided and if it can be accessed in trust and in confidence.

The discussion moved on to choices for rural women and on their difficulties in accessing information about services in rural areas. Information needed to be provided in a discrete and confidential manner to reflect the need for maintaining privacy and confidentiality in rural communities. Research was needed to suggest good practice.

Research Proposal 3: Consider how marginalised groups can be accessed and encouraged to use the support services on offer, and on how they may best be supported.

The group then considered people in rural communities whom it was considered most difficult to access and who might be most in need of support services. This included women suffering domestic violence; women in relationships with alcoholic or drug dependent men; and women reliant on alcohol or drugs. Whilst people in the community might know who needed these support services, it was recognised that there was still a problem in accessing these people, getting them to come forward and in knowing how best to support them. Research was needed to suggest good practice.

Demographic issues

The workshop also held a broader discussion around the impact on rural communities of the greater geographical spread of families. It was suggested that 2001 Census results are likely to provide useful information on the demographics of rural communities. So, for example, the return rate of young people to rural communities after further education or a period of time in urban centres may be having an impact on rural communities. It was also possible that men staying behind in rural areas to work in primary industries were generating a gender imbalance. An understanding of the changes in family and community in rural areas is likely to be enhanced by interrogation of Census information as it emerges.

KEY RESEARCH ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY WORKSHOP

The following three themes for research were identified as matters of priority:

1. Carers in Rural Areas

Who are they, what are their needs and how may they be supported?

2. Service Provision: Issues of Confidentiality

How may information and community support be accessed in rural areas whilst confidentiality and privacy are preserved?

3. Hidden and Marginalised Women

Who are these women?

How are their experiences to be accessed?

How are these women to be supported?

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