

**World Communion of Reformed Churches
Survey re' Women and Girls in Rural Areas**

Response of the Church of Scotland
Presbytery of Gordon

Dear Mr. Koenig,

Please find below the response of the Church of Scotland Presbytery of Gordon to the above survey.

As Convener of the Presbytery's Mission and Discipleship Committee I have been asked to co-ordinate this response. In so doing I have received invaluable assistance from Anne Campbell, our Vice-convenor for Ecumenical Affairs.

Your final question invites us to **share other thoughts** with you. We believe it is best to tackle this question first because our thoughts colour the rest of our responses. Compared to most other parts of the world we believe we live in a very privileged society. There are many opportunities available to the people of Scotland – of both genders - that are denied to many people in the rest of the world. Chief among these privileges are freedom and free education for all.

As a society we attempt to remove every barrier to suitably qualified people gaining access to jobs and services of their choosing. There are still some issues for disabled people and occasionally race can be an issue.

How are women working and /or organising to address hunger and poverty?

Most of the work in this field is undertaken by government agencies, charitable institutions and trade unions: all of who would employ workers of both genders. There are, however, some examples of women organising to address poverty and hunger. One is the Scottish Women's Rural Institute. One of its founding principles was education about nutrition, and they have an annual charitable campaign, very often for the developing world. Every branch of the SWRI contributes to 'Pennies for Friendship' that is donated to the work of the Associated Country Women of the World. Another organisation is the Soroptimists International Association. They work to 'improve the lives and status of women and girls through education, empowerment or enabling opportunities.' There is also the Business and Professional Women's Federation. This was 'founded on the vision of achieving workplace equality, right to vote and equal pay.' The Girl Guides Association has as its purpose to help girls develop their own potential, with a strong emphasis on service to the community, national and international. In Scotland women are well represented on Christian Aid committees, and the current head of Christian Aid Scotland is a woman.

What helps women better address hunger and poverty?

What hinders women from addressing hunger and poverty?

A major factor is education, or the lack of it. As indicated above, in Scotland the opportunity to receive free education is open to all but various factors can influence the extent to which this opportunity is taken up. Such factors can include family and peer pressures; personal expectations, based on the experience of family members and other people in the community or socio-economic group; and pressure to leave education early to start to earn money.

What does good development look like in your community?

What does bad development look like in your community?

The destruction, or preservation, of our natural heritage is seen by many as determining whether or not a development is good or bad. Within our Presbytery and its immediate surrounds such contentious issues include the development of Donald Trump's golf course (backed by Aberdeenshire Council) and a proposal to develop a landfill site on Deeside (opposed by Aberdeenshire Council). In recent years most housing developments have had to include a proportion of 'affordable housing', allowing people on lower incomes to purchase, rent or part purchase / part rent houses. On the borders of our Presbytery there is a development that had in its original plan a church, schools, a shopping centre, a medical practice and some green spaces including a tiny site of Special Scientific Interest. To many people this is an example of good development.

How do women who are empowered act in your community?

Most women in Scotland live and act on a par with men. For nearly 60 years our head of State has been a woman. We have had a female Prime Minister, a female Speaker of the House of Commons; a female Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament; a female Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; many Church of Scotland Presbyteries have had female Moderators and female conveners of Business Committees. Women have been Provosts and Leaders of City and Shire Councils. A few women have been appointed to the post of Chief Constable in police areas. Many women have been Headteachers of Primary Schools and Secondary Schools. A number of women have held important teaching and administrative posts in Universities and Colleges. In the field of business a large number of women have reached the top of their professions and fields of expertise, although there remains a slight concern about the so-called 'glass ceiling'. This is a perceived barrier preventing women reaching the very top in business and professions simply because they are women.

On behalf of the Presbytery of Gordon I hope that the above information is useful to you.

Yours in Christ,
Douglas G. McNab
[New Machar Parish Church
Charity Number SCO 24017]

Presbytery of Gordon, **Scottish Charity No SC004982**

The Presbytery of Gordon is a component element of The Church of Scotland,

Scottish Charity No SC011353