The Glass Ceiling

in

Údarás na Gaeltachta

Funded by the EU under ADAPT and by Údarás Na Gaeltachta

Pat O’Connor,
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Executive Summary

This Report was undertaken as part of the diagnostic phase of the Glass Ceiling (An tSileail Ghloinne) an EU project funded under the ADAPT programme. Using documentary evidence kindly provided by the Personnel Manager and qualitative material from focus groups with roughly 80% of the women employed in the Údarás, it presents a picture of the current position of women there together with a series of recommendations as to how their contribution to a changing organisation can be maximised.

As in many State and Semi State organisations women are virtually invisible at the higher levels of the Údarás. They make up 7% of those in the top six Grades (Grade 2 and above), while constituting 89% of those in the bottom three Grades (Grade 4 and below). Initial meetings and discussions at the Údarás suggested that this pattern reflected government embargoes on the creation of posts, and hence the inadvertent perpetuation of a pattern of male authority and female subordination. This pattern was sometimes linked with the suggestion that there was very little staff turnover. However, it is clear that the pattern is more complex than these explanations imply.

Thus, for example the Údarás is far from being a static organisation. Thirty five appointments have been made since 1990, (constituting just under 30% of the total number of staff in the Údarás as of June 1996). Furthermore 16 new functions officially emerged in the past 5 years and the majority of these have been at Grade 3 or above (Personnel Dept, 1996). There is some suggestion in the documentary evidence that men have been more successful than women in using Grade 3 as a stepping up point to higher positions. Indeed even to day Grade 4 is the highest Grade reached by most women in the Údarás. Women are typically recruited at Grade 6- an exclusively female grade, although the differences in the responsibilities of those at Grades 4, 5 and 6 was by no means clear cut. There are also some suggestions in the documentary evidence that current attitudes may continue to favour
men’s promotion (these being reflected in, for example, the higher proportions of men relative to women who reach second interviews)

As the women themselves see it ‘women’s place’ in the Údarás is seen as being at the lower end of the organisation. They see Senior Management as being ‘kind of afraid of women’, and want to ‘break that wall.’ The majority of them felt that a ‘glass ceiling’ existed within the organisation i.e. that there was a top of the organisation that women could see but could not reach, and for most of them that ceiling was at Grade 3. Most of the women were interested in promotion. Overwhelmingly they thought simply in terms of moving up one or two steps in the hierarchy. Indeed the career ladder was so long for women that it was almost incredible to think of a woman getting to one of the top six posts (I.e. Grade 2 or above).

As the majority of the women in the Údarás saw it, Management was not concerned with the people within the organisation - or at least not with the women : "They are too busy to be kind". The importance of this lack of a focus on person as opposed to money management was exacerbated in their own case by their expectations as regards guidance, direction and recognition from their own Manager and/or from the Personnel Manager. These attitudes which can be regarded as quaint or inappropriate in an organisation to-day, suited Management in ways and were compatible with their perception of them as women. On the other hand however, they were unhelpful and inappropriate within an organisation where the focus was not on people management.

at the lower end of the career hierarchy was further restricted and their chances of promotion further reduced As the women perceived it, even women at Grade 4 (the highest grade at which women predominate) were not given chances to extend their role and to develop themselves within the changing context of the Údarás: "We are only qualified as
secretaries: that is what they say to us". Some of the women saw this as a complete waste. They had been doing the same jobs for years, and could do it now "with their eyes closed": They noted that: "Nobody wants to stay doing a job that they can do with their eyes closed". Yet that appeared to be what Management wanted them to do. As they saw it, the Managers did not allow - not to mention encourage- them to attend committee meetings, or to meet and get to know their contacts outside the Údarás. They noted that they used to have an opportunity to meet such contacts in an informal way at factory openings in the past, but that this had now changed.

13.18 Despite the emergence of new technology and Personal Computers on everyone's desk, there seemed to have been little freeing up of women's time at the lower grades to enable them to extend their roles in various ways. The Video Conferencing equipment, as the women perceived it, appeared to be available only to the Management, and to be unused. In addition, despite the increasing importance of social and cultural development in the re-envisioning of the Údarás, there seemed to be little utilisation of women's linguistic skills. Only one woman held the post of Community Development Worker, despite the increasing rhetorical endorsement of this sort of area in the re-envisioning of the mission of the Údarás.

13.19 Furthermore, there was no policy as regards extending the range of women's work experiences as a way of increasing their skills and remotivating them (e.g. through short-term job "swaps"). If anything, there was a suggestion that in so far as opportunities arose to "fill in" for a colleague (due to holidays etc.), such opportunities were particularly likely to be given to those on work experience, contracts etc. In this way, the position of permanent women who were overwhelming huddled, because of limited work experience.
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An tSileail Ghloine is an E.U. project funded under the ADAPT programme. It is concerned with the position of women within a changing organisational context. The project as a whole has involved a wide variety of activities. This report is only one element in the wider project and is seen as contributing to the diagnostic phase of the project. Using documentary evidence and qualitative material from focus groups, it presents a picture of the current position of women within the Údarás, together with recommendations as to how their contribution to a changing organisation can be maximised.

1.2 In looking at the position of women within the Údarás it is important to note that they are concentrated at the bottom of the hierarchy, and that they are very under-represented indeed at the top. Women make up 7% (4/59) of those at Grade 2 or above, whereas they make up 89% (31/35) of those at Grade 4 or below. Grade 3 is the only Grade where men and women are represented in any thing like equal proportions (i.e. 38% of those at this grade being women: see Table I). Grade 3 is also clearly the Grade that effectively constitutes the top for the majority (89%) of the 44 women who were permanent employees of the Údarás (November, 1996). Exceptional women can and do move above this. As of November 1996, there were four such women. They made up 9% (4/44) of all the women in the Údarás, so that even in statistical terms they must be regarded as exceptional.
1.3 It is worth noting that the salary scale bands of those at the bottom of the hierarchy are very narrow (see Table 1). The difference between the top and bottom of the salaries of those at Grade 6 is £5,009 (or 60% of the bottom point of the scale); whereas the difference in the case of a Grade 1 is £19,114 (or 80% of the bottom point of the scale). Furthermore, it is clear that there is considerable overlap in the salary scales with, for example, only a difference of £1,544 between the top of the salary scale in Grade 5 and that in Grade 6. Indeed there is a difference of only just over £10,349 between the bottom point of Grade 6 and the top point of Grade 4 - the grades where 70% (31/44) of the women are located. On the other hand, there is a difference of £25,560 between the bottom point of Grade 2 and the top point of Grade 1 - the grades where 66% (48/73) of the men are located. Thus, the absolute and relative financial implication of remaining at a particular Grade (or even a group of Grades) are considerably worse for women than for men in the Údarás.

**TABLE 1: Proportion of women at the various levels in the Údarás**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>% (n)</th>
<th>BOTTOM SALARY</th>
<th>TOP SALARY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executives</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>£50,050</td>
<td>£57,558 (excl CEO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Manager</td>
<td>33% (1)</td>
<td>£46,529</td>
<td>£53,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>0% (0)</td>
<td>£41,966</td>
<td>£46,066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>4% (1)</td>
<td>£23,983</td>
<td>£43,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>9% (2)</td>
<td>£17,537</td>
<td>£32,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>38% (9)</td>
<td>£14,334</td>
<td>£21,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>89% (17)</td>
<td>£12,085</td>
<td>£18,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>80% (8)</td>
<td>£9,701</td>
<td>£14,943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>100% (6)</td>
<td>£8,390</td>
<td>£13,399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38% (44)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.4 Initial meetings and discussions at the Údarás suggested that this pattern reflected government embargoes on the creation of posts, and hence the inadvertent perpetuation of a pattern of male authority and female subordination. This pattern was sometimes linked with the suggestion that there was very little staff turnover; that those recruited in the ’70s and ’80s (particularly women) were without University Degrees and that access to the higher posts (including Grade 3 posts) was now seen as being accessible only to those with such Degrees.

1.5 These explanations may have a certain validity. However, it is clear that the pattern is more complex than they imply. Thus, for example in contrast to the tenor of 1.4, the Údarás is far from being a static organisation. Thirty five appointments have been made since 1990, (constituting just under 30% of the total number of staff in the Údarás as of June 1996). Furthermore 16 new functions have officially emerged in the past 5 years. The majority (N=14) of these at Grade 3 or above (Personnel Dept, 1996).

1.6 It will also be shown that what limited evidence is available from documentary sources suggests that men (at Grade 3 and Grade 4) have been more successful than the women in using these Grades as a stepping up point to Grade 2 or above. It will also be shown that there are some indirect indicators that the organisation is still uncomfortable with their presence at the higher levels, as reflected in, for example, the generally higher proportions of men getting to 2nd interviews; in the relatively high numbers of women who apply for jobs at higher levels but do not present for interview etc.

1.7 It is important to recognise that the pattern has begun to change as regards the proportion of women at senior level. Thus, the past few years have seen the appointment
of two of the four women who are at Grade 2 or above in the Údarás. However, what this in fact has meant is that men have moved from a position where they made up 98% of those at this level, to one where they now make up 93% - a very limited change indeed. It is true that when one focuses specifically on the number of appointments made at Grade 2 or above over the past five years, the position is somewhat better in the sense that of the 11 new appointments made at this level, 2 went to women (i.e. 18%). Putting it the other way however even at this time, 82% of the new appointments, at this level, went to men.

1.8 It is important to recognise that a focus on gender may appear inappropriate to those at Management Level whose main concern is with, as they see it, the "top heavy" nature of the Údarás. Thus, they highlight the fact that in 1996, 50% (59/118) of the total staff of the Údarás were at Grade 2 or above. There are no doubt issues arising from this. However, it cannot obscure the fact that this pattern is extremely gender differentiated i.e. 77% (56/73) of the men but 9% (4/44) of the women being at Grade 2 or above.

1.9 The under-representation of women in Senior positions in all organisations has increasingly been seen as unacceptable by both the Government and the European Union. Thus for example, the Department of Equality and Law Reform (1994:5) described these sorts of patterns as indicating "a grave and profoundly disturbing pattern of inequality". It identified "positive action" as a key element in order "to put right the effects of past discrimination" (Dept. of Equality and Law Reform, 1994:9) and it noted that it expected such positive action programmes to increasingly feature on Management Agendas in State and Semi-State organisations. The Údarás is to be commended for having the courage and the vision to begin to tackle this issue.

1.10 At European Level, there has been a long standing commitment to equal opportunities. In part the focus on women and their position in the E.U. reflects its concern
with creating a genuine sense of citizenship, amongst both men and women. In part however, it also reflects a very real concern with economic well being: 

"The solution to economic problems depends an enhancing women's economic role. Women are a key resource that is currently under-utilised both quantitatively and qualitatively"

E.C. 1994:3

Furthermore, there is a recognition that there is a need to reassess the value of jobs traditionally performed by women, implementing gender neutral job evaluation and job classification schemes, as well as "opening all levels of seniority to women" (E.C., 1994: 42). The commitment of the E.U. to gender issues has been further underlined by the requirement that all structural funds be gender audited. Indeed, the European Social Fund Evaluation Unit (1994) recommended that the Údarás should make the development of an equality promotion strategy within grant aided companies a priority, and that it should ensure that the total financial activity of both the Údarás and such companies was gender audited

1.11 It is probably true to say that, until comparatively recently, most institutions in Ireland have been reluctant to take their lead from Europe in this area. The situation was not helped by the fact that until very recently, the interpretation of the Employment Equality Act (1977) was such as to effectively legitimate many kinds of indirect discrimination (Fourth Report of the Fourth Joint Oireachtais Committee, 1996). Such discrimination was implicit in the acceptance of criteria which were disproportionately more likely to negatively affect women than men; in assumptions that men "needed" promotion more; that they were more suited to management etc. However, the tenor of recent judgements (e.g. Nathan V Bailey Gibson EEA, 1996) and Enderby V Frenchay Health Authority (see Clarke, 1995) suggest that at National level and in the European Court of Justice, there is an increasing awareness of the need to reject what have been called "subtle and institutionalised forms of sex discrimination" (Fourth Report of the Fourth Joint Oireachtais Committee, 1996.) The importance of such judgements has been heightened by the ruling of the European Court of
Justice (in Marshall V Southampton and South-West Area Health Authority (No.2) 1993 IRLR 445: Clarke,1995) that there is no financial limit to the compensation which can be awarded. Employers thus have a very real incentive to eliminate indirect discrimination. From the viewpoint of an organisation, particularly one in receipt of substantial Government and/or E.U. funding, it is clear that there is a considerable incentive to attend to the position of women within the organisation.

1.12 It is important to note that the pattern in the Udaras, although it is extreme, is by no means a-typical. Indeed the consistency of the patterns across organisations suggest that historically specific explanations and/or those which focus on the idiosyncratic features of the Údarás are unlikely to be sufficient. Thus for example, a Report on a Survey on Equal Opportunities in the Public Sector noted that in the Health Boards:

"Women's share of jobs was greatest at the bottom of the hierarchy, accounting for 87% of clerical staff, and less at the top, where they occupied only 7% of Management and no Senior Management positions".

Department of Equality and Law Reform; 1994: 42

In the Civil Service women make up less than 5% of those at Senior Management level (i.e. at Secretary/Assistant Secretary Level: Mahon,1991). In local administration, women make up less than 3% of those at Senior Management level (i.e. at City /Co Manager; Assistant Co/City Manager; County Secretary; Finance Officer: Mahon and Dillon,1996). These same trends have appeared in a variety of other countries (Walters,1989; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1992; Canadian Government, 1990; Bulletin on Women and Employment, 1994; Mac Devitt,1996 ). The fact that similar patterns exist across a wide range of institutions outside Ireland suggest that peculiarly Irish phenomena such as the late removal of the "marriage bar"( which persisted until 1973 here, whereas it was abandoned in the 1940s in Britain) are equally unlikely to be key.
1.13 It is important to recognise that a focus on the position of women within organisations may well be viewed with considerable fear, anxiety and even hostility by men in the organisation particularly those at Middle Management level. Those at this level may feel less responsibility for the overall effectiveness of the organisation than those at Senior Level. Their fears are in a sense logical, insofar as, as they see it, their chances of promotion are considerably enhanced if some of the competition is eliminated on the grounds of gender. Nevertheless, their co-operation is critical, and can only be achieved through the efforts of Senior Management. Insofar as the project is concerned with re-envisioning the position of women within a more effective organisation, the involvement of Senior Management is very appropriate indeed. These considerations were to the forefront in the decision to seek funding under an E.U. ADAPT Programme rather than the New Opportunities For Women (N.O.W.) programme.

1.14 However since the project is concerned with the position of women within the Údarás, the undertaking of focus groups with the women employed by the Údarás, and the examination of documentary material kindly provided by the Personnel Manager, were identified as key elements in the diagnostic process. These are the elements which are described in this report.

2. THE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE
2.1 The documentary evidence is an important element in a base line gender audit of the organization. As previously mentioned (1.2.) women in the Údarás are overwhelmingly at the lower levels (Grade 4-6) while the men are predominantly at the higher levels (Grade 2 upwards to Chief Executive level). Thus of the 44 (permanent) women employees in the Údarás, 70% (31/44) are at Grade 4, 5 or 6, as compared with 4% (3/73) of the (permanent) men. Putting it the other way round, 77% (56/73) of the men in the Údarás are at Grade 2, Grade 1, Management, Deputy Chief Executive or Chief Executive Level, as compared with 9% (4/44) of the women. It is possible that to some extent these patterns reflect the fact that
historically, men's work was seen as of more value than women's work, so that they were recruited at a higher level. Thus the majority of those at Grade 2 and above are men (93%: 55/59); while the majority, 89% (31/35) of those at Grade 4 and below are women.

2.2 The overwhelming majority of the men who are at a high level in the organisation do not have responsibilities for others in the organisation and/or do not have budgets. Thus, of the 48 men who are Grade 1 or 2, less than one in five (N=9) have responsibilities of this kind. Of the two women who are at this level, one has this kind of responsibility. Thus, at the very least it is clear that the fact that men are disproportionately likely to occupy higher Grade posts does not for the most part reflect their responsibility for a budget or for staff. Women paid at this grade seem more likely to have such responsibilities, although the numbers are too small to be significant.

2.3 The Údarás is often depicted as an organisation which is tightly controlled by the Government, and particularly by the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht. It is certainly true that the total number of staff employed in the Údarás fell between 1983 and 1993 (from 154 to 108) although it rose again to 117 between 1993 and 1996. However, despite fluctuations in its total size the basic shape of the Údarás has changed very little since 1983. Thus in 1983, 47 % of all posts were at Grade 2 or above; by 1993 it had risen to 56%. By 1996 it had fallen slightly but at 51% was still above its 1983 level.

2.4 Furthermore, and in contrast to the depiction of the Údarás as a structurally static organisation, sixteen new functions linked to specific grades were created in 1994 (six of these were at Grade 1 or 2; eight at Grade 3, and two at Grade 5). Furthermore, since 1990, of the 35 new appointments made: 11 were at Grade 3 (In June 1996, there were 24 people at this Grade); and 9 were at Grade 2 (as of June '96, there were 22 people at this Grade). Hence quite clearly in term of the creation of new functions and in term of the number of
appointments made at Grade 3 and above (both in absolute and relative terms) the Údarás is far from a static organisation. It will be noted later in the Report that the women do not appear to be aware of the sheer extent of these appointments and new job functions. At any rate in so far as continuities in the gender profile of the organisation persist, it seems probable that these do not simply reflect historical factors.

2.5 In this context it is worth looking at the overall gender and internal breakdown of the appointments made since 1990. At first glance (Table 2) it appears that the appointments have been spread very evenly between men and women and across internal and external candidates.

TABLE 2 Balance of Appointments made in the Údarás by Grade Since 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>WOMEN INTERNAL</th>
<th>WOMEN EXTERNAL</th>
<th>MEN INTERNAL</th>
<th>MEN EXTERNAL</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1 and above</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Grades</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However on closer inspection it is clear that roughly three fifths of the male appointments (9/15) were at Grade 2 or above, while more than half (11/20) of the female appointments since 1990 were at Grade 4 or below. When one looks at Grade 3, the only Grade at which men and women are roughly equally represented it appears at first glance that slightly more women than men were appointed to this Grade (7 women versus 5 men). In fact however that picture conceals the fact that although women made up 89% of those at Grade 4 in
November 1996 (Table 1) only 4 of the 12 recent appointments to Grade 3 went to internal women. Despite their virtual absence from Grade 4, three of these Grade 3 posts went to internal men (leaving 2 men and 17 women at Grade 4). Furthermore even this overestimates the possibilities of promotion for internal women, since two of these four appointments of internal women since 1990 were on contract. Thus it is clear that the funnel upwards so to speak for internal women is very narrow indeed; their possibilities of promotion to a permanent Grade 3 job from Grade 4 being very much less than their male counterparts.

2.6 When one looks at those who were called but did not attend for interview it is clear that something very odd is going on. Since 1990, and indeed overwhelmingly in the 1994 - 1996 period, 23 people who were offered interviews did not present themselves. Of these, 21 were women. Furthermore, the majority of these (13/21) had applied for posts at Grade 3 or above, mainly Grade 3 (8/21). It is not clear from the documentary evidence whether these were internal candidates or not. What is clear however is that a sizeable number of women are not pursuing their applications for jobs at the higher Grades within the Údarás. One might speculate that this is because as they see it these jobs are already gone to other (male) candidates before the interview; that they lack confidence themselves or do not see the higher Grades in the Údarás as woman friendly. It is clear however that insofar as the Údarás is serious about looking at the position of women, this problem must be tackled.

2.7 Grade 3 is the only Grade where women and men are present in anything like equal proportions. In November 1996, according to Personnel, there were 9 women at that Grade, making up 38% (9/24) of those in this Grade. According to the Personnel Manager (1996) there are no differences in the titles and functions of the men and women at this Grade. However, of the women at Grade 1 or 2 none came from this grade, whereas, of the men at Grade 1 or 2, 11 came from this Grade. Thus whereas Grade 3 has been a stepping up point for 23% (11/48) of the men currently at Grade 1 or 2, it has not operated in this way for the
women. Furthermore, this arguably underestimates the importance of Grade 3 as a "stepping-up point" for the men, since (presumably) some of those men who were promoted from Grade 3 to Grade 1 and 2 have retired/ left etc.

2.8 It is possible of course that the men who were promoted from Grade 3 to Grade 1 or 2 had very different educational levels to the women who were not promoted. This seems possible since a Degree is seen (by Personnel, 1996) as necessary for those at Grade 1 and 2. In fact however as of October 96, roughly one third of those at Grade 1 and half of those at Grade 2 do not have a Degree or Degree equivalent professional qualification. Only just over half (53%; 8/15) of those men who are currently at Grade 1 or 2 and who were promoted there from Grade 3 currently have Degrees. Furthermore, it is of course possible that some of them gained these Degrees after they were promoted. In any case it is clear that a Degree does not appear to be essential for those holding a post at Grade 1 or 2 or for (male) promotion from Grade 3. Equally it does not appear that the possession of a Degree guarantees (female) promotion from Grade 3 since of those women who are currently at Grade 3, just under a quarter have Degrees.

2.9 Since Grade 3 is the only Grade in which men and women are roughly equally represented and since it appears that this grade acts more effectively as a stepping stone upwards for the men than for the women, it is worth looking in more detail at the appointments which have been made at this Grade since 1990. Of the 11 appointments made, 6 have gone to women. However, 4 of these women were appointed in three competitions where no men were interviewed or indeed applied. In those seven competitions which involved both men and women, only 2 of the 7 appointments (28%) went to women. In 3 of these 7 competitions, there was a second interview, and in each of these cases, a very much higher proportion of the male candidates than the female candidates made it to the second interview. The numbers are very small, and may reflect many factors but they are remarkably consistent: i.e. between 50-60% of the men who got a
first interview got a second one, as compared with 18% - 25% of the women. Thus, when men and women are competing for posts at this Grade, men have a considerably better chance of making it to the second interview, and ultimately of being appointed. These trends suggest that monitoring the proportions of men and women who reach first and second interviews could usefully be undertaken (differentiating of course between those competitions at Grade 3 which involve men and women, and those which involve men only or women only). Furthermore, despite the fact that in 1996 there were 32 women, but only three men at Grade 4 or below, the actual number of internal women who were appointed at Grade 3 was very similar to the number of internal men (i.e. 4 and 3 respectively). What this in fact suggests is that whereas internal women at Grade 4 or below have a roughly one in eight chance of being promoted to Grade 3 (4:31), men at these Grades have a very much better chance (3:3).

**2.10** The Personnel Department (October '96) has indicated that although a Degree is seen as desireable for those at Grade 3, in the case of internal applicants this could be waived and "the appointment made based on ability, past performance, knowledge of the job/organisation etc". It will be shown later in the report that many of the women did not appear to be aware of this caveat. As they saw it a Degree seemed to be important for women to get a Grade 3 post, whereas this did not seem to apply to men even at Grade 1 or 2. It is of course possible to explain these patterns by referring to the fact that many of the men were appointed at a time when educational levels were lower. Equally however some of the women's educational levels reflect these earlier patterns, as indeed does their position within the organisation. However whereas the past was seen as legitimating male patterns of privilege, the issue of offsetting the effects of past discrimination in the case of the women seemed to be more problematic.

**2.11** It is also important to look at recruitment into Grade 3 since it constitutes the crucial bridge between the predominantly female lower grades (Grade 4-6) and the predominantly
male higher grades (Grade 2 upwards). It is clear from the documentary evidence that roughly half of the men and women who are currently at Grade 3 were recruited at that Grade i.e. 3 of the 9 (permanent) women and 8 of the 15 (permanent) men having been recruited at Grade 3 level. The women who were promoted into this level (like the men) came from Grade 4. Personnel has estimated that there have been roughly 8 men at Grade 4 at some stage with only 2 remaining there now. There are now 17 women at Grade 4 in the Údarás. Only 5 women have ever been promoted from Grade 4 to Grade 3. This suggests that Grade 4 has been more useful as a stepping up point for men than women in the Údarás (roughly three quarters of the men but a just over a quarter of the women in Grade 4 moving up to Grade 3). Thus, it seems possible to conclude that the roughly equal proportions of men and women currently at Grade 3 reflects in fact the disproportionate promotion of men at Grade 4. Furthermore, this does not seem to be related to the educational levels of the men who were promoted from Grade 4 to Grade 3 -only one of the men as compared to none of the women had a Degree. However, if anything, overall, the educational levels of the women who had not been promoted to Grade 3, in terms of completion of Leaving Certificate were higher than the men who had been promoted (Personnel, 1996).

2.12 As previously mentioned, Grade 2 is a predominantly male Grade. This pattern has typically been explained in historical terms. In fact however 9 appointments have been made at this level since 1990. Since in 1996, there were only 22 people at this level, there have been a sufficiently large number (41% : 9/22) of recent opportunities for the profile of this Grade to change. It is striking that in five of these competitions (up to 1994) no women applied for posts at this level. This may not be unrelated to the fact that a number of these posts were in Industrial Development an area which is widely seen as a predominantly "male" area. Of the competitions at Grade 2 Level where women applied and were offered an interview (all since 1994), in only 1 case was a woman appointed. In only one of these four competitions was there a second interview, and in that case, the same patterns emerged as has already been noted at Grade 3 viz. 50% of the men but none of the women survived
to second interview (and so obviously a man was appointed). Again numbers are very small but the patterns are consistent. Indeed, it is interesting to note in this context that the competition for a post in the Ard Bhanistiocht (Senior Management) was the only one where these trends were reversed (20% of the men, as compared with 50% of the women survived to a second interview and in this case a woman was appointed). The issue of the proportion of men and women proceeding to a second interview thus seems to be important in terms of male/female outcomes, and clearly needs to be monitored (focusing obviously on mixed competition).

2.13 The Strategic Plan (Údarás, 1996) highlights the importance of the role of the Údarás in the cultural and social development of the Gaeltacht. This is consistent with the increasing recognition at National Level that the service sector in general (and tourism in particular) is likely to be the main source of employment in the future. These areas of employment are much more likely to attract women than the Industrial sector and so these changes in the mission of the Údarás offer the possibility in themselves of changing the gender profile of those at Senior Level - provided that posts in these areas are created at these levels. At present, it appears that only two of the 50 people at Grade 2 or above are exclusively concerned with Culture and Language or Artistic matters (Personnel Department, 1996). In view of the Údarás increasing concern with these matters, this seems a very small proportion indeed. It is important to monitor developments in these areas since in an organisation where women are underrepresented at Senior Level, there might well be a tendency not to develop such posts.

2.14 It is increasingly recognised that the distinctions between the responsibilities of those at Grade 5 and 6 are extremely subtle (and their pay scales virtually identical see Table 1) Furthermore, since it is women who are overwhelmingly at these Grades, their existence serves to slow down women's career progress. Thus, for example six of the eight permanent women at Grade 5 came in at Grade 6. Grade 6 them adds a further step to women's career
ladder. The distinctions between their responsibilities and those at Grade 4 also appear in certain cases to be rather subtle. Effectively this raises the issue of the amalgamation of Grades 4, 5 and 6 into a restructured Grade 4.

2.15 It is clear however that even if all of these women at Grade 4, 5, 6 were regraded as on an open scale, the issue of moving from this Grade into Grade 3 remains crucially important, and that at this point in time, this is a disproportionately female problem since most of the men at Grade 4 or below have already moved upwards. This is a particularly important issue since 73% (32/44) of the women in the Údarás are at Grade 4 or below (November, 1996). There is a perception that jobs at Grade 3 now (in contrast to the time when men were promoted) require a University Degree. In the context of the other indicators, it is not possible to exclude the possibility that such patterns reflect indirect discrimination in favour of men. The challenge for the organisation is to put in place mechanisms which will offset the effects of such past discrimination now. Clearly, recognising the tenuousness of the grading distinctions is part of that task; as is providing opportunities, including training to women to enable them to effectively compete at whatever level, for those positions which are emerging in the re-envisioning of the Údarás. Such initiatives are of course perfectly legal.

2.16 The women in the Údarás have, for the most part, been employed there for a considerable period of time. Their average length of employment overall was just under 13 years, with a range of from under a year to thirty eight years. There was little variation in the average length of employment amongst those in Grades 3, 4 and 5 (ie just under 19 years, just under 16 years and just over 15 years respectively). The lower averages in Grade 6 reflected the recruitment in the past three years of five of the six women at that level. Men have never been recruited at Grade 5 or 6, and none have ever held positions at this Grade, apart from the existing male at Grade 5 who transferred in from the Direct Building Division.
The continuance of the pattern of recruiting women at the lowest level is interesting in this context. It seems possible that it could indeed constitute indirect discrimination.

2.17 Not too surprisingly in view of their length of employment with the Udaras, roughly half of the permanent women were at the top of their scale and so got no increments. This varied between Grades, with all of those at Grade 5 being in this situation as compared with 42%–44% of those at Grade 3 and 4 respectively and 28% of those at Grade 6. This situation has potential implications as regards their motivation and highlights the need for the organisation to deal creatively with this situation. Furthermore roughly half of those who were have at the top of their scale have been there from before 1990. This situation is of course not peculiar to the women. Thus roughly one third of the men are in a similar situation. However, as previously mentioned, the situation of the men was better in the sense that they are "stuck" so to speak at a higher salary.

2.18 There is an additional feature which impinges on the paid work lives of permanent women in the Udaras viz. the existence of people employed on contract, work experience, scholarships etc. As of October 1996, there were 18 such people in the Údarás (ie broadly equivalent to 15% of the total permanent staff). Only three of the 18 were actually replacing permanent staff members who were on secondment/career breaks. They were very unevenly distributed between various Departments, with almost half of them being located in Finance. There did not appear to be any policy as regards their utilisation—either as regards their distribution or the level of work undertaken. Obviously, they constitute a potentially very flexible, docile, workforce (and one which is young, single etc). The perceived implications of these arrangements for the roughly half of the permanent female workforce in whose Departments they were will be explored later in the Report.
3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 The main body of the report deals with the themes emerging in focus groups with the women employees of the Údarás. Focus groups are recognised as an important source of data and have been used in various studies of the barriers to women's promotion (in US Civil Service; in Irish Health Boards etc.). A decision was made to restrict these groups as far as possible to women who were permanent employees of the Údarás, since promotion within the structure is likely to be particularly relevant for them. There are forty four such women in the organisation and these women were invited to participate in the focus groups. A small number of these were unavailable due to maternity leave; sickness etc. The Project Manager suggested that four women who had been on "scholarships"/work experience/contract with the organisation for an extended period of time and who in many ways considered themselves similar to the permanent employees be also invited to participate and this was agreed. Four fifths (80%; 38/47) of these women took part in eleven focus groups over three days. Quite clearly then the picture that emerges is typical of the majority of (permanent) women in the Údarás. In this context it is important to note that the women who did not participate were scattered across all the grades.

3.2 The invitation to participate in these groups was issued formally by the (external) facilitator. The legitimacy of participating in these groups and in other parts of An tSileail Ghloine was underlined in a letter from the Chief Executive to all members of the Údarás staff. The nature and purpose of the focus groups was outlined in formal and informal contacts between the Project Manager and the women employees, and the Project Manager negotiated permission for the women to attend such groups.

3.3 It was decided to keep the groups quite small (4-5 women per group). In fact the average size was 3.5, the range being from 2-4. It was also decided that such groups would be held outside the Údarás building itself. An hour was allocated to each group, and the women were informed of this time constraint when they were invited to participate. At the
end of the hour, coffee/tea was supplied, and if necessary, the conversation continued during this, for a further half an hour. In only one of the eleven groups was there a strong feeling that additional time was necessary.

3.4 A decision was made, in light of previous experience, to, as far as possible, put women at similar Grades in the same group. It was possible to do this in six of the eleven groups. These were the groups where the participants tended to contribute equally. In the other groups, it was necessary to include women at different Grades within the same group, because, for example, they had travelled from the regions together; were constrained by train times etc. In all but one group however, there was a difference of only one grade between the women participating in the group. The effect on the dynamics of this group was noticeable. Space was made to allow for each woman's contribution in all the groups and overwhelmingly this was availed of, although to varying degrees.

3.5 In order to ensure that even the quietest women had an opportunity to contribute at some level, all the women were asked to do the "two word exercise" at the end of the session i.e. to write down, anonymously, on a slip of paper what they saw as the most important barrier to women's promotion in the Údarás; and in another word, to identify the most important thing that the Údarás could do to improve the position of women there. These slips were collected and are analysed separately in this Report.

3.6 As the majority of the women are native Irish speakers, a decision was made to conduct the focus groups in Irish, and this was done in all cases. It was clear that a small number of women were unused to speaking Irish and although it slowed down the process, Irish continued to be used, with occasional words being translated into English to facilitate understanding.
3.7 The general tone of the groups was very positive. Typically, there was some initial anxiety, followed by surprise at the informality of the style (i.e. women sitting around a table talking). In one group the level of cynicism was such as to inhibit the discussion and in another shortage of time was clearly frustrating. In general however, it appeared that the women enjoyed the process. It was made clear to them that a report would be written, and that an attempt would be made to represent their collective views as faithfully as possible to those at the highest level.

3.8 Sixteen "triggers" were used to stimulate the group to discuss the issue of the barriers to women's promotion in the Údarás (see Appendix). Some of these were entirely open-ended (e.g. asking what the barriers were; asking what increased women's chances of being promoted and what reduced them; what the Údarás could do to change the fact that men made up 93% of those at Grade 2 and above; and what it could do to channel women's energy to give new life to the Údarás). In addition, a number of specific topics were explored such as, for example, women's perceived interest in promotion; their interest in courses; specific issues related to the recruitment process, to the reconciliation of work and family life, and their attitude to specific equal opportunity initiatives (such as the appointment of a Equal Opportunity Manager, the identification of targets etc.)

3.9 The material was taped. In addition, in case of technical difficulties, notes were taken during the discussion. The tapes were transcribed and thematically analysed. This process, which is quite time consuming, involves the identification of themes within each transcript, and then the distillation of these into themes transcending the individual transcripts. Each of these themes was then explored and illustrated in the report, drawing on quotations from within each transcript. The quotations that were used in the text were ticked; as were the themes that had been dealt with within each individual transcript. This process was continued until all the individual themes which had initially identified had been explored in the Report. Finally the transcripts were re-read to check that key themes or quotations had
not been omitted. Where the transcripts were incomplete because of the poor quality of the
tape, the notes taken during the focus groups were used in this process. As previously
mentioned this material is the main element in this report, and is outlined in Sections 4-12
(inclusive). These sections draw together the material from the thematic analysis, focusing
first on the structure, culture and patterns of communication in the Údarás; then looking at
the extent to which a glass ceiling is perceived to exist, and more generally at the
perspectives of many of the women; the issue of courses, procedures and working
arrangements are then addressed, followed by a discussion of the changing position of
women in the Údarás. The last substantive chapter draws together the respondents first and
last responses as regards the barriers to women's promotion. The Report concludes with a
summary and a number of recommendations.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE ÚDARÁS

4.1 The basic structure of the Údarás was seen as a barrier to women's promotion. The
women referred to the difficulties that appeared to exist as regards creating posts or
regrading them:

"They blame the embargo, the Minister, the Department of Finance, the Dept. of
Arts and Culture and the Gaeltacht for everything".

They were not sure however whether this sort of explanation was simply an excuse. It was
certainly true that difficulties as regards creating or regrading posts impacted more on the
women than on the men, because typically women went in (indeed the majority still go in )
at a lower level (i.e. at Grades 4-6). As the women understood it, given the structure of the
Údarás,

"a lot of the men had a head start when they came in to the Údarás. They came in
at management level, while a lot of women came in as secretaries".

In this situation men and women were not in the same situation, in the sense that embargoes
as regards recruitment and promotion impacted much more heavily on the women than the
men.
4.2 As the women see it, management are still generally reluctant to recruit women at Grade 2 or above in the organisation. They noted that a few women had come in at the higher grades in the past couple of years "A very few of them, still it is happening". They noted that where there were only women applying for a post, even at Grade 3, they (i.e. Management) had broken it into a number of lower grade posts. It is not clear if this is an organisational policy, and/or to what extent it is backed by the Department. To the extent to which it happens, it is certainly a way of maintaining male dominance within the organisation.

4.3 Within the context of the structure of the organisation, the issue of the regrading of posts was seen as important. It was clear that the Union had been successful in bringing about a number of individual regradings in the recent past. As the women understood it, there was still a good deal of discussion between the Union and the Management about the general appropriateness of having Grade 5 and 6 as separate grades. From the point of view of some of the women, there was no difference between the responsibilities and the skills that were needed at Grade 5 and those at Grade 6. They noted that there was talk of Grade 6 as a training grade - but they felt that did not make sense insofar as some women had been in that grade for years. Combining Grades 5 and 6 (or indeed 4-6) would make the career ladder a little shorter. It would particularly benefit women, since of those people at Grade 5 and 6, only 1 is male. Indeed, of the 35 people at Grades 4-6, only 3 are men. There was some suggestion of an "open scale" across these three grades.

"That each person would be able to, that they would have the chance, depending on their work and their development, to go to Grade 3".

4.4 The whole basis of the grading system was not clear to many of the women. It is clear that this issue has important implications for the women because the majority of them were
recruited at a time when women's work was routinely seen as of less value than men. It is clear that up to date gender neutral job evaluation systems need to be put in place, so that there can be an appropriate relationship between job responsibilities and the grade of the work done. The women thought that it was necessary:

"to look at the whole structure" "to change the whole way in which work was graded."

4.5 There was intense dissatisfaction amongst a group of the women in Grades 3-6 about the failure to regrade their particular job. Some of these had support from the Union and from their Manager: "but still nothing can be done about it ". Some of them thought that they were not getting the full story, and that the Údarás could rectify the situation if it wanted to do so. Some of these had been, as they understood it , inadvertently omitted from the list of regraded posts approved by Management in collaboration with the Union a few years earlier. The job descriptions of some of the women had effectively changed because people had left, or because of redundancy or other factors. As they saw it, they were not doing the same job as they had been doing when they came in five or ten years before. There appeared to be no process to evaluate the appropriateness of their Grade on a routine basis.

4.6. There was dissatisfaction too with the way in which the Údarás was dealing with Regional affairs. On the one hand, it was felt that with equipment such as video conferencing etc., there should be no difficulty in this area. But there were difficulties and it was thought that some of these stemmed from the attitudes of Management. As the women saw it, posts for women above Grade 3 were based in Head Office (and even if they were not really, this was the way that they were advertised). The Regional/Head Office relationship was seen as something which impacted on the career prospects of those who were in the Regions. It is recognised of course that there are difficulties in introducing video conferencing equipment because it impacts on "perks" such as travel expenses. This
is not an issue for most of the women as they have little access to these anyway. It is also of course true that there will be occasions when it will be necessary to make face-to-face contact. However, it is clear that equipment such as video conferencing could facilitate contact between Head Office and the Regions, and obviate the necessity for posts above Grade 3 to be exclusively located in Head Office.

4.7 Some of the women were also concerned about the number of women who were working in the organisation on some kind of contract, scholarship, or work experience scheme or another. This was perceived as a particularly important issue because their responsibilities, as compared with permanent staff members, were not laid down. The women felt that, given the numbers of such people involved that there should be some kind of strategic approach to the issue. As they saw it, these people affected the promotion prospects of the permanent staff (particularly the women, since it was at levels which predominantly involved women that such people were recruited):

"As long as they are there, there will be no attention paid to the problems of the permanent staff". "They are blocking the people inside, the people who want to move up".

It is obvious that people on contract, scholarships or work experience are likely to be less vociferous than permanent members of staff. Thus their very existence is a way of undermining the issues raised by women who are on the permanent staff team. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that, as some of the women noted, they were much more likely to have opportunities to go on courses, to gain work experience etc., something that was seen as less possible for permanent staff.

4.8 Some of the women highlighted the fact that these people who were mainly young had more education and confidence than the older women had:
"There is a professionalism there: they have Degrees or qualifications of some kind, and they are motivated. They want to move up".

Others thought that their most important characteristic was that they were single, so that issues related to Maternity Leave did not arise. Since most of the younger people in the Údarás are on contract, work experience or scholarships, it is difficult to know to what extent this has an impact on their relationship with the organisation. In any event, it is clear that women who are in this situation are, almost by definition, likely to be highly motivated and docile. The fact that the organisation is keen to utilise and value such women is arguably more indicative of the nature and culture of the organisation, than of the qualities of these young women themselves.

4.9 Reference was also made to the poor image of the Údarás in some of the Gaeltachtai, and the fact that it was perceived by ordinary people as being stuck in Head Office, without any real contact with the people in the area:

"They think that all the people are sitting on their backsides in Head Office, and that there is no real tie between them and the public"

It was said that there was only one Community Development Officer in the Údarás, and that person was in Kerry. It was noted that the Chief Executive was very supportive of this initiative, and suggested that there should be more of this kind of development. It is arguable however that the stress in the past on industrial development (and by implication on "men's jobs") has meant that little attention has been paid to this issue. However, the importance of cultural tourism, language and culture, and of general social and cultural development has been stressed in the Strategic Plan. The women, most of whom are native Irish speakers and are deeply embedded in their communities, are the obvious people who could undertake these roles (a topic to which we return in the section on the place of women in the organisation). Given the structure of the Údarás it is perhaps no coincidence that such developments have only recently been prioritised. It is not clear to what extent this
prioritization has been reflected in the actual structure of the organisation (i.e. in the numbers and level of posts in these areas).

4.10 As the women see it, the structure of the Údarás is such that promotional opportunities are not equally available in every departments. Thus there are sections where if you are at Grade 4 there is no career path, since the only other posts are at Grade 1. It is unthinkable to the women that a woman would go from Grade 4 to Grade 1, so as long as they remain in these department, there are effectively no promotional opportunities. If a job comes up in another area, as the women see it, as they will not have much of a chance of getting it, as they will not usually have had any experience of work in that area.

4.11 In that context, it is clear that some kind of policy as regards "jobs swaps" would be useful to women who are in permanent positions, so that they could get experience in different areas within their own department, and across departments. Obviously, these should be optional and available to people at the same Grade. Some of these opportunities will occur in the normal course of events, due to holidays, maternity leave etc. It is important that they be made available to permanent staff, and not simply to those on contract, work experience etc. Most of the women thought that such "job swaps" could be excellent for those women who were stuck in the same job, in the same office for years:

"If you are in the same job for years, you get frustrated; you lose interest as well, I am in the same job so long, I am just sick of it. You are trying to change......You are trying to do something different. You are trying not to be left in a corner doing the same thing. You are trying to move forward and to take on more responsibility....that does your brain good-as well as the pay, but there is more than the pay in question."

Given the structure of the Údarás it appears that, in the normal run of events a permanent woman does not usually get the experience of doing someone else's job (at the same Grade). Hence, often the women's work experience is narrow, and this further inhibits their
promotional prospects. It also of course affects their interest and their motivation and hence affects the organisation.

5. THE CULTURE IN THE ÚDARÁS

5.1 In the opinion of most of the women, the organizational culture in the Údarás is not helpful to women who want to move up:

"They don't want to see women moving up"; "One of the biggest barriers to women is the climate within the Údarás"

There was a strong perception that being a woman reduced women's chances of being promoted:

"If a woman and a man in our place are in for promotion, the man has a lot better chance. You can be sure of that."

Being married at all, and especially being married with children, was seen as reducing women's chances of promotion:

"If you are married and have young children that reduces your chances as well"

"I suppose it is better for a woman to be single in the first place. If you are married [the attitude would be] she would be better off staying where she is rather than be trying to go forward."

It was said that there was a kind of "old fashioned" outlook in the Údarás. Some of the women felt that it was understood that their place in the organisation was at the bottom:

"It appears that the attitude in the organisation is that women don't go beyond Grade 4, or not many of them anyway"

Some put it more gently but equally damningly:

"The way it is, it is not that the women are not appreciated but that management has no confidence in them."
5.2. Most of the women were sure that men in particular Departments would not be happy to have a woman in a Grade 3 post, not to mention one at a higher level. They noted that Third Level Education seemed to be particularly important for women, but went on to say:

"Maybe if you were a man, it would not be that important. So it is a barrier that we have skirts on us"

As previously mentioned, references were made to situations where they broke up a Grade 3 post, rather than (as it was perceived) give it to a woman who was on the permanent staff:

"If a man had been there [without a Degree] I am positive that they would not have done that."

Some of the women felt that there was "a cynical attitude towards women". There were references here and there to public ridiculing of An tSíleáil Gloine itself.

5.3 From the point of view of the women who were at the bottom, it was very difficult to move upwards because everyone knew them, and their whole image was linked with the fact that they were at a particular Grade and had typically been there for a particular length of time. In a sense, people knew too much about them. It was difficult for them to project themselves at an interview, as inevitably within a very structured organisation, it was assumed that if they were at the bottom (and especially if they were women) that was where they were suited to.

5.4 As the women in the Údarás saw it there were men in Management who thought that it was not right for a woman with children to be in paid employment at all (not to mention being in the higher grades). They referred to a specific person who had publicly said

"that every woman in the town should be at home looking after their children, and that man is at Grade 2"

It was thought that such attitudes were behind the kind of support that Management were happy to give young people:
"A lot of them think, they are at the age now, that they think, if you marry, and you have a family, that is it"

5.5 The same attitude was there when there were opportunities to fill in for other people when they went on holidays. It is possible to suggest that this was a kind of protective attitude towards women with children. As the women who referred to this saw it they would have liked to have had the experience of "filling in" in that situation, and they were happy to move to the Regions for two or three weeks. They felt confident that they would be able to sort out their family responsibilities and their home life themselves if they were given that change: but as they saw it they were not given that opportunity because they were married and had children.

"You are married. We don't want people who are married with family responsibilities".

"They are picking out young people instead of people with family responsibilities who might go on Maternity Leave."

5.6 No specific questions were asked about Maternity leave. A number of women spontaneously mentioned that they were almost afraid to go out on Maternity Leave (an attitude which contrasted dramatically with the organisations' so called "protectiveness"). Specific examples were given of hearing, quite by accident, that on their return from Maternity Leave that they were to be moved from a Grade 4 to a Grade 5 job. It was stressed that there was no question of that woman's work not being satisfactory, rather it was simply seen as a strategy "to solve another problem".

"It was a downgrading and that was the way it was seen and no-one [in Management] even told her that it was to happen"

The woman in this case was supported by the other women, and by the Union, and in the final analysis, she returned to a post at her own Grade (i.e. Grade 4). This example however was seen by the women as illustrating that they could have little confidence in Management,
particularly if they were not there to fight their own corner because they were out on Maternity Leave. It was also seen as reflecting Management's view that the place for women, particularly if they had children was at home. This was not a unique event. There were other examples of things that happened while women were out on Maternity Leave (e.g. omission from lists of people whose posts were being regraded). At the very least, such examples, which were mentioned spontaneously, suggest a lack of appreciation of women's needs. At another level, they suggest a lack of appreciation of women's legal rights.

5.7. From the point of view of the women, no procedures were written down anywhere as regards job sharing, career breaks etc. As they saw it, they had been writing to the Personnel Manager for five years about this. It appeared to them that there should be some sort of a handbook outlining these things:

"We have been looking for it, and looking for it, and looking for it. We did not get it yet."

Because there was nothing written down, as they saw it, there was as an opportunity for pressure to be put on them. Situations were mentioned where they felt threatened that if for example, they pursued regrading issues they would loose any possibility they had of continuing arrangements such as job sharing:

"If you say another word about that, I will stop the job sharing altogether."

This is of course only one side of the story. However, at the very least the absence of clearly identifiable procedures meant that job sharing, career breaks etc. could be seen as discretionary. Furthermore, people could be "encouraged" to keep their mouths closed to ensure that they got these "perks".

5.8. There were other more subtle reflections of these kinds of attitudes: For example: when women raised issues about promotion or regrading it was said:
"Don't ye have it good as it is. If ye were out in a factory, ye would not be half as well off".

There may be no intention to threaten in this case but, it is possible to suggest that it is implicit in that statement. Some women mentioned that the thing to do in this situation was to be deferential to the men

"If you want to go on a course, you don't go in ...... you don't start fighting. If you go in arguing and jumping around, you won't get anything."

5.9 The culture of the organisation also appeared to be such that (at least as perceived by the women) the focus of Training was on those with Scholarships, on work experience etc., and/or on the men who were at higher levels, as opposed to being on the women who were permanent in the organisation and at the lower levels:

"There are courses going on. There are courses put on for people who are on scholarships. They put on courses on Negotiating skills, Management courses etc. but they don't make those courses available to women who are in the Údarás."

It was said that Development officials, Regional officials etc., went on courses but that the secretaries and the other women were not asked, not being "asked", women were unwilling to push themselves in (see Section 8).

5.10 Most of the women thought that Senior Management knew about the dissatisfaction

"at the lower grades at any rate". "They know but they dont care. I am quite sure that they know but they dont do anything"."Management is the problem.Anything that they organise we are happy to help them with, but they are not happy to do anything for us"

They felt that there should be a lot more stress in the organisation on human resource development. The women felt that a Manager's most important responsibilities were as regards people, and their well being, over and above anything else. They had noticed however, that this was not the way things were:
"I suppose they think, they think well, I don't know, that they themselves are too busy"

"I think that they [i.e. the Managers] think that they have more important work to do than to be kind."

5.11 As they saw it, Management didn't take much interest in things like that:

'Nothing happens at the end of the day. Nothing ever happens at the end of the day. Nothing ever happens until the next time it comes up - the same problems come up year after year''

The perceived lack of attention to people's needs was in some cases very specific, and could be very easily rectified. The things they mentioned reflected their view of the organisation as concerned with people. They said for example, that no-one had a responsibility to provide any information to new staff about the aims of the Údarás, and the way in which their own job fitted into that. As they saw it, it was no-one's responsibility to show them even more basic things:

"Even to show a woman where the toilet is, to take her down to the canteen. These are small things. But they create confidence in people and they create an atmosphere".

As they saw it, it was no-one's responsibility to explain practical things like the fact that they could get petrol 10p cheaper once they were working at the Údarás. From the women's perspective, these things showed that there was no "co-op" in the organisation, that management had no "meas" on them. It is true to say that these are very small things and maybe Management thinks that everybody should find out these things for themselves. But from the point of view of the women:

"If the small things are right, no big deal, the atmosphere would be a lot better in the place".

5.12 This lack of attention the human side of management was reflected too in the absence of on the job training. From the point of view of the women:
"They say to you that they will make training available. People have got jobs and training? No talk about that. You sat at your desk and that's that".

Sometimes, they said, not even a typewriter was provided for a couple of months. Reference was made to the fact that in some cases, a woman was given the job, and no-one paid any more attention to her. The women noted that in most of the Departments they did not get any feedback on their performance. They felt that when women did not get that recognition, they thought that they did not have the ability to go any further. The importance of feedback was exacerbated by the fact that career paths did not appear to exist for women within the organisation: an organisation where the best place for them was seen as being the place where they were (i.e. at the bottom).

5.13 There were issues about management's ability to utilise the skills of their staff, and particularly their secretaries:

"If someone had an interest in dealing with committees or discussing things with committees, and the chance to do it, there is no real opportunity for her to do it."

They thought that it would be easy to give a chance to a woman (in Grade 3 or 4, for instance) to go with their manager to meetings, at first to simply meet the people there. This it was felt would give them confidence and the experience would be such as to generate an interest in them to go in a new direction. However, for the most part, Management did not give women these kinds of opportunities.

"The organisation is not using those skills, but to do so would take Management time. Maybe the managers should look at the usual project and the way it works out, they might allocate women to specific tasks in the structure and in my opinion the thing to do is to take women to the meetings."

This only happened however in a very small number of Departments. It appeared to the women that many of the managers did not want to give these kinds of chances to the women. There were some who did not even want women (even those at a relatively high level) to have an access to the names of "their" Departmental contacts.
5.14. As the women who were fairly high up in the organisation saw it, Management had:

"a responsibility to ensure that the women got chances, and got advice, to say look, if there is a course that it is worthwhile for you to do, to point the way to those people at Grade 6, 5 and 4"

They understood that (as will be discussed in greater detail later): many of the women were waiting for someone to say "you should do that." But it was mostly men at Management level with whom the women had contact. As has been suggested here, there was no evidence that they understood the need for such advice, support, and direction. Indeed, as is clear from this section, many of them (at least in the eyes of the women) were less than enthusiastic about women even being in paid employment. They felt that their appropriate place was at the bottom of the organisation; and they had a concept of Management which did not include a human resource development element- at least insofar as the people concerned were women. Thus organizational culture in its many facets was seen as a barrier to women's promotion.

6. COMMUNICATION AND KEEPING THE TEAM TOGETHER

6.1 From the point of view of most of the women, there was no communication in the organisation, and as they saw it, this affected the spirit in the Údarás:

"The way things are, there is no spirit here, we don't see ourselves as one big organisation, that we are working for the same objectives, for the good of the Gaeltacht, and the people of the Gaeltacht. That is missing. We cannot do our jobs well or develop ourselves or the organisation if that does not change".

They knew that Senior Management thought that the Strategic Plan had created a vision of the Údarás. From their point of view, however, although the Chief Executive went around all the departments:

"It was he who spoke all the time. We just listened. There was not even a chance to put questions to him. There was an assembly like there used to be at school at the beginning of each term."
"There is a big gap between what they think is going on and what we think is going on"

Others noted that even those who did appear to listen, did not take their opinion on board:

"They listen to you but it goes no further"."You could have a problem, and if you go to the manager, and he says 'oh yeah'. But it is his thinking in the end that counts, and his ideas".

They highlighted the fact that they had no direct input into the Plan ("did any woman have an input?"). Some of the women felt that Senior Management were kind of afraid of them: "the women are a kind of threat to them" and they wanted "to break the wall". In some cases communication was seen as being very poor between themselves and their own Manager:

"There is a glass ceiling between yourself and the boss".

6.2 The women stressed that communication was very important, that it was crucial that everyone should understand that they are working as an organisation. As they saw it, at this point in time:

"Everyone is working inside their own cocoon or little basket".

They noticed that the whole organisation did not even come together at Christmas:

"There is a party here in Galway at Christmas. That is a great chance for the Personnel Manager. I think the people from the Donegal and Kerry offices would come down to that but no-one ever invites us, or they make no attempt to ensure that we do come. I know we are far away, but these things should be looked into".

From the point of view of the women in the Regions, there needed to be a change in the ‘spirit’ of the organisation:

"It is so broken up. The organisation never comes together."

6.3 The women wanted team meetings and meetings with the Chief Executive more often than once every five years. By all accounts, the women in Galway had been to no team
meeting for four or five years, and they did not think that that was a good thing. Some of them thought that it would be a good idea to bring the whole Údarás team together, and that there should be a chance for Senior Management, Management, Regional Managers, and the whole staff in the Údarás, to spend a day or two together- to work during the day, and to have a social event in the evening. It was recognised that relationships within the teams were being fostered to different degrees in different regions. Thus for example, the women in Dingle had an opportunity to meet their Manager once a month, but that was to do with setting objectives for their own work, so that even in their case:

"There is no view of the big picture, about what the Údarás is doing".

6.4 From the point of view of the women in Galway, it would be great to meet people who were working in the Regional offices. A small number of people had got that opportunity and the women thought that it should be available more than a couple of times in a lifetime. Some had asked to go to visit the regions once or twice, but after that they lost courage, and waited to be invited to go. In the overwhelming majority of cases, no invitation came.

"I said three times one year that I wanted to go to Donegal, and I was let go once, and nothing was said since. I could not be going in every day saying: I want to go here; I want to go there"

6.5 A lot of the women thought that lack of confidence was a big obstacle for the women ("for most of them anyway"). But some other people said that you could not put all the blame on the women even for this:

"If you are in at a meeting, and maybe you say:"I think we should do (this or that) no-one listens to you. But if a man said the same thing, a lot more attention would be paid to it."

6.6 One group thought that some kind of a business suit should be available to the women as a way of enhancing their status and increasing their confidence. They said that there had
been two surveys about this a couple of years before, and that 75% of the women were in favour of it. No action was taken and cost was given as the reason for doing nothing. These women were very clear that it would give the women recognition and confidence to be dressed up and professional looking. The fact that the idea was not taken up was seen as reflecting a lack of interest in women's needs and ideas, and (an implicit) prioritising of men's interests.

6.7. Reference was made to the "social split" there was between the women who were at the bottom of the Údarás and the men who were at the top from the point of view of the Irish language. This difference in languages made for difficulties as regards communication. It also meant that they were acutely aware of the fact that the Irish in the Strategic Plan was "awful".

"It was written in English and translated into Irish. It is shameful."

"Most of us at the bottom are native speakers. And the entire Management are people who are not from the Gaeltacht".

This was seen as having many implications. Thus, for example, it was seen as important in limiting their contribution even if they were given a chance to go to meetings:

"Even if we were given an invitation. I don't know if we could speak. They [i.e. the women] would be able to speak in Irish, but I don't know if Management would be able to understand them in Irish. The people who are in Senior Management ..... from the point of view of the language ..... they are not able to do their work in Irish."

6.8. The issue of communication also came up in the area of new technology:

"They don't ask anyone about it. They give it to you whether you want it or not."

Management made no attempt as the women saw it, to find out what would be useful to them. It is also important to note that the women, although they knew of the existence of equipment such as video conferencing etc., had, as they perceived it no access to it at this
point in time. As the women saw it, it did not even occur to Management to ask what kind of new technology - if any- would be useful to them. Thus it was clear that there were a variety of issues in the general area of communication and working together as a team-and that these were very important to the women.

7. GLASS CEILING: OR DO THE WOMEN WANT TO MOVE UP?

7.1 In the literature, a lot of references are made to the existence of a "glass ceiling" in organisations (viz. a part of the organisation that women can see, but cannot reach). Most of the women in the Údarás thought that there was a "glass ceiling" there. Some of them indeed said that it was:

"double glaze", "a concrete ceiling"

Most of the women thought that the "glass ceiling" was at Grade 3:

"that is the place where they [the women] stop."

"When you look at the number of women at the lower grades, there is some kind of a ceiling keeping them there."

From the point of the figures (see Table 1) they are right because there are only four women in the Údarás higher than Grade 3: Some of the women thought that:

"If you go to Grade 4 you are doing very well indeed."

The documentary evidence confirmed this observation: Grade 4 is the highest Grade in which the majority are women. Typically, the women did not even think of going up to Grade 1 or 2 (not to mention going to the positions above this):

"That is a sort of dream....Grade 1 or 2."

Because the career ladder is so very long for women, with most of them being at Grades 4-6, they typically think of only going up to Grade 3:

"It seems to me that no-one is going to get a post higher than maybe Grade 3, well Grade 3 at most- from the Grades (5 and 6) that we are at now".

Most of them did not even know that there were higher positions than Grade 1 ("are there?"). One women had recently been appointed at Grade 2 level:
"We were not begrudging her or anything, but the fact that it happened, that she went by all the men it, was incredible".

"You only think of going to a certain point and then you stop."

7.2 It was thought that management positions were attractive at the very least, to a "couple of women,

"If you are interested in a certain career like culture or language, if you are interested in the area, it is as well for you to put yourself forward. And there is the pay;" "and there is the car. That is very important.'

Other women thought that they were attractive but that "they needed direction to obtain them":

"They[management posts] are at Grade 1 and 2 and a lot of the women are at Grade 5 and 4 and they think, well, that is too high for me."

Others noted that:

"Maybe they were not attractive when women were in with young children, but now I think maybe that they do not have that many responsibilities at home, that they have more interest in promotion."

7.3 Some said explicitly that the glass ceiling was in the minds of management:

"if there is a glass ceiling, ....it is something .... old fashioned I think is the term you'd apply to it ..... it is something intangible".

In the opinion of another woman this kind of perspective was part of:

"the mind set that comes with the middle age profile of those in the organisation; out of the culture that we are coming from. I suppose a lot of people started here in the 1960s, and at that time, it wasn't expected of a woman to be like that, and I suppose the organisation took that idea,..... because I suppose it suited people up to a point."

"I am thinking that people see just that element [i.e. that you are a woman] and they do not see that you are able to do more. Its a basic thing. You can't get over that sort of thing. They are amazed if you do anything".
"We need to break the glass ceiling. We need to get a hammer. To change them now....they are getting grey and it is hard to change them."

7.4 Some of the women thought that the glass ceiling was "made by ourselves"; that they were "kind of brain washed". They said women did not have enough confidence, that they were not shrewd enough to make opportunities for themselves (like writings to the Manager every day saying "can I go out to meetings"); or did not find out one way or another what was happening in the organisation so that they could go up in it. Other women said that women do not think of their next step in the career ladder, and that this lack of career planning reduced their chances of moving upwards and so kept the glass ceiling in existence:

"They don't see the next step. (They don't think) what are the things that I should be doing"[so as to move up].

7.5 The documentary evidence shows, that men make up 93% of those at Grade 2 or above. The women were asked what the Údarás could do to change that situation (if it wanted to do so). Most of the women were pessimistic about what could be done. They said things like "nothing", "wait"; "nothing until they go out on pension"; "leave them as they are’'; "It is necessary to wait until these men leave their posts, or until more posts are created and permission is given to women to go into them".

Some of them said that it was necessary for the women to be ready for the time when posts came up; that women should have the training and the education so that they would have a chance at that point. It was said however that if the women were ready:

"It would not please the men"

It was thought that Management should give women a chance to be ready but there was little hope that this was how things would be.
7.6 As previously mentioned a lot of the women had been employees of the Údarás for a considerable period of time, and many of them were at the top of their pay scales for a number of years. Thus, they received no increment each year. From the point of the organisation, they constitute a potential motivational problem. This is an important consideration since women make up almost two fifths (38%; 44/117) of the (permanent) employees in the organisation.

7.7 The absence of Degrees or some kind of post Leaving Cert qualification seemed to be perceived as an issue by some for promotion even to Grade 4 or 5. The women thought that if they had Degrees it would be easier for them to get a better job. Yet, as they saw it most of the men at Grade 1 and 2 did not have Degrees ("They slid into them..") but "these are messages that you get nowadays". Others noted that:

"There are difficulties after Grade 3, but I am not sure what these difficulties are. Maybe they are lacking in Degrees : maybe it is the view that you have to have a Degree to go above Grade 3, but I am not sure."

7.8 Most of the women did not think it was true to say that the women were not interested in promotion.

"Not true, not true": "Maybe there are a few people in there that are satisfied with the level they are at, and they do not want promotion but [others] want it, and they have no chance"

"It depends on the kind of person you are, and the kinds of things you want. [If that is what you want] go for it; there is nothing wrong with wanting to be a manager. There is nothing wrong with that."

Most of the women said that this was a personal thing; that not every man had this desire either; that there were women who were happy to stay where they were, and that there were women who wanted promotion.

"I think there are people that are well satisfied where they are. Some want to go on but don’t have the opportunity."
"There are people that are fine and happy with what they are getting. They are fine and satisfied to come in at 9, leave at 5, tea break at 10.30 and that's fine...[but] the men think that is the way all women are"

"We are all trying to move up and we are not able to. That is the problem we have."

Women here and there said that "we have reached a certain position"; that they had lost a lot of hope. Some said that they did not know if they could do anything at this time, until that is, the men at the top were gone but by that time they reflected:

"We will be as old as them ourselves then"

A few said that they:

"were very satisfied with the job I have and I don't want a higher one."

7.9 A small number of women, particularly the women who were fairly high up, thought that the most important barrier was women themselves. They felt that the women themselves were to blame because they did not really want promotion, (did not have enough "push" in themselves).

"If you are a go-ahead person, you will be promoted if you want that"

"I think they don't have any push. They have no "go" - they are waiting for something, they should do a degree-invest their time in something like that."

As these women saw it, "there are not that many obstacles", but they said all the same:

"It is harder if you are starting at the bottom" [i.e. women typically starting at Grade 4-6 while very few men begin at this level]

They said that this was changing and that younger women did not have any "hang ups". But they said that the older women had a different attitude. They saw these difficulties coming from the woman's role in the wider society:

"They have young children, and because of the way life is, children are a woman's responsibility, and I suppose they are tied from the point of view of travel, and most of the jobs in this organisation involve travel".
They said that there was no "differentiation between men and women in the organisation", but then they went on to say: "I think if women were wanting promotion, maybe it would be a bit harder for them." but that the organisation was open "from the point of view of young people coming in". Such young people are typically not permanent and so they were very little threat to the men running the Údarás.

7.10 Most of them were agreed, that whether or not "steps" existed for women to move up the hierarchy, these steps were not clear to most of the women:

"They don't see what the next step is. What is the thing that they should be doing now".

The most important thing as these women saw it was to foster women's confidence, and give them projects for which they would be responsible:

"If you can do that, they will go to the stars".

Typically however, they noted that this was not the approach adopted by management:

"The middle aged people in the organisation, I suppose those who are around 40 or 50 do not know how to use women's skills. They have no experience of doing it".

8. THE PERSPECTIVE OF MANY OF THE WOMEN

8.1. It was very striking that the majority of the women were depending on people, whether on their own Manager or on the Personnel Manager to give them direction as regards what courses to do and where to go in their careers. They also wanted them to tell them what kinds of jobs would be coming up so that they would be able to prepare for them. They were not used to thinking from the point of view of the organisation, and because of that, they did not understand the way things work in an organisation, and why people get promoted.
8.2 The women wanted direction from their own Manager or from the Personnel Manager:

"He (the latter) should sit down with everyone in the organisation at least once a year and that does not happen."

They wanted direction and follow up as regards the kinds of courses that it would be worth their while to do:

"They say the Personnel Manager says that everyone should do two courses on self development during the year....But no-body follows it up, and if you are working and doing your job, no-one reminds you ....[no one thinks] we planned at the beginning of the year that Mary would do an assertiveness course or whatever.... It is not right that I should have to go back to the Personnel Manager, or to my own Manager. By right, they should come down to me".

There was a certain passivity about many of the women's mind set - a kind of expectation that someone would give them direction. They did not think that they were able to: "speak up and fight on their own behalf".

"People might say as long as a boss is kind of flexible, why not. But I am thinking that we don't ask half the time ".

8.3 This kind of perspective did not only arise as regards courses. It was there as well as regards career planning:

"It is right that he [the Personnel Manager] should be looking out for me or other people, saying she is at that Grade now, what can I do to help her develop .....It is up to him to be looking out for the kinds of courses that would be suitable given the jobs we have, or organising these courses in the Údarás or in other places that would be useful to help us move on."

The women felt that they needed career guidance. They were hoping that Management would see what skills they had and would help them to develop them and this did happen in one or two Departments. To a striking degree, most of the women expected to be "asked" and to be motivated:

"Nobody ever asks you, if you want to change, if you want to go forward, if you want to do anything".
"You are not given any motivation. There are people who are quiet and maybe need a little motivation"

"There is no-one to put pressure on you. There is no kind of direction...just in case you might better yourself."

8.4 From the point of view of the women it was extremely important that they got recognition and thanks for the work they were doing:

"maybe it is as simple a thing as saying thank you in certain cases."

It was very important to them that this was done, because as well as everything else:

"It gives you hope that you have the capacity to go on and take another step"

"That you are doing a good job and that you are able to do that job well, or to do something better" [i.e. more difficult]

As the women saw it these kinds of things did not occur in most Departments:

"You never get recognition, whatever you do. No one ever says to you did a good job there."

"Nobody ever says to you, you are doing a great job or you are hopeless... It is awful...From my own perspective, I'd love if my boss said to me, you are doing a good job".

It was clear that the women were looking for recognition partly because in itself this was important to them. The women referred to the fact that it would mean a lot to them if they got a note in with their P60's every year saying

"Thank you very much for your work during the year. You have done a good job-look forward to your support in the New Year, or something like that."

If it was hand-written by the Manager in the Department it would be even better again. This happened in one or two Departments and the Managers involved were highly praised. As the women themselves said:

"It is a small thing but it is important"

8.5 It is easy to say that their pay-packet shows that the organisation is grateful for their work, but that is not how most of the women think. They stress the personal dimension. In
a way, it may be that they are clever in doing this, because as they say themselves, if they are thanked, that shows then that the Manager knows what work they are doing and:

"It gives you courage at the end of the year. [You] feel that it is appreciated; that the person values you."

"say you want a career break, or you want to job share...[if you have that kind of personal relationship] you will be able to come to some kind of an arrangement."

As the women understood it, there were no rules laid down about getting things like that. It depended on the relationship that existed between themselves and Management. In that situation, if Management were indebted to them, there was a much better chance that they would get the things they wanted. There is a certain logic to this. It shows the difficulties people without power have, and the way they try to deal with this situation. Women in their ordinary lives in their homes and communities depend on personal relationships to get a little power, and this is what these women are doing. It is arguable that in some ways Management actually encouraged this kind of view, and in a way that it suited them.

8.6 It is important to say however that recognition was also important to the women's self confidence. As they said themselves:

"If you are Grade 5 or Grade 6 or even Grade 4, nobody has any time for you... They don't think there is any good in you. Now that lowers a person's self confidence."

So they needed recognition and thanks to enhance their confidence, as well as to increase the possibility that they could if necessary give negotiate suitable work patterns such as job sharing, career breaks etc.

8.7 The women were acutely conscious of the fact Degrees were increasingly seen as important:

"Degrees are what are wanted now. You are not good enough if you do not have a Degree."
According to the Personnel Manager (October, 1996), Degrees are seen as desirable for Grade 3 posts, although it is seen as possible to waive this requirement in the case of internal staff. The women appeared to be unaware of this caveat. As they saw it, even referring to the desirability of a Degree in an advert was offputting:

"It puts you off putting in for a job. You don't have the same confidence when they are looking for things."

Some of the women were suspicious about the stress on the importance of Degrees:

"They say that there is a stress on Degrees, particularly in the Finance Department. They say that the reason is that those on scholarships are coming in from the Regional Colleges, and from the University....and as they come, I suppose the Manager sees, maybe, I don't know, that it would be worthwhile keeping them...but the young people who are coming in [are] people who have no family responsibilities. I think that is another point, maybe the biggest reason."

8.8 From the point of view of most of the women, if they were doing a satisfactory job, they did not understand why they were not being promoted:

"There were no complaints or anything like that ever. Then a job came up and they gave it to a young person who was on a contract or who was going to the Regional College."

Some of them thought that if they were doing their own job well, that they deserved promotion. They thought that

"It is not right that it should be up to a girl [to push herself in]. If she had earned it [promotion] Management should give her a chance to move on. We should not have to be begging"

"Management should notice that we are doing a good job, and should push us on."

Most of the women did not see things from the point of view of the organisation at all. They did not think about why the organisation should promote a person if they appeared willing to take on the work anyway, and without promotion.
8.9 There was a gap between the perspective of most of the women and that of management. They noted that at the interview, questions were asked that had no connection with the work they were doing. They saw this as being done to put them "in a corner". They never considered that such questions might be asked to try and find out what kind of information or experience they had over and above their existing job, which would indicate that they were a "next level" person. There was one extreme example of this kind of perspective:

"*One question that I thought was very strange was that they asked me how do you see yourself five years down the road. But no-one can know how things will be five years down the road. I thought that was really stupid. I did not understand the question at all.*"

It is fair to say that this is an extreme example and that the other women in the group understood what lay beyond that question:

"*they were trying to find out what kind of person you are; have you any objectives, or are you trying to stay the way you are*"

This example however illustrates very clearly the kind of cultural background from which the majority of the women at the lower Grades (4-6) came. They are from the local area, and they are native speakers. Within their cultural milieu, it is important to accept the life that you have and not be trying to plan or project forward: a perspective which is directly opposed to "typical" management thinking. This view, although it is an extreme one is obviously on the same continuum to those described earlier. It is possible to say that the women should not have these kinds of attitudes. But they do.

8.10 It has become almost commonplace to highlight women's lack of self confidence as a barrier to their promotion. In this study (as in the Health Board study: O'Connor, 1995 7 1996) some of the women were ambivalent about this perception, seeing women simply as "unable to put themselves across":

"*Maybe the men are better to put themselves across, that they have more confidence*"
Some were dubious about the value of this ability seeing it as

"Putting yourself across to people as wonderful even if you aren't"

Women saw themselves as lacking this skill. At the same time they felt that:

"I think everyone here knows that we can do more than we are doing. We know ourselves that we can handle more than this."

Others did feel that lack of confidence was important, although they also reflected that:

"Maybe we are making life hard for ourselves-thinking that it [Grade 3] is harder than it is; saying that it would be too hard for us.'

8.11 The majority of the women were native Irish speakers, and they were stuck inside in the office, without any official connection with those outside their own department. They wanted to have more contact with other offices; with people working in other areas; with Development meetings, but they were waiting for an invitation:

"No one ever asks us if we would like to go for a day to Donegal... to see what is going on up there.... you are talking on the phone to them very often but you would like to meet them or to see them- to see their face, and then the next time that they come on the phone, you'd know the kind of person they were."

The women did not want to be going up and down all the time (an attitude that would be very helpful since it would keep travel costs down, and would facilitate the use of the video conferencing facilities). But some of the women would very much like to undertake more responsibilities so as to develop themselves. They would have to, of course, delegate some of their existing responsibilities to other people (e.g. to those on contract, work experience etc.). To start with however, they wanted an invitation to go to these meetings. In most cases, such an invitation was not forthcoming.

8.12 Most of the women did not know what to do to increase their chances as regards promotion. They did not see a clear career path. They did not have Third Level education,
and Management said the embargo prevented the creation of new posts, or the re-grading of old ones, or indeed any kind of movement upwards by the women. They did not know whether the Údarás, the Department or the Minister was really responsible but in any event they did not know how to alter the situation, except by building a personal relationships with Management. They did notice however that sometimes Management was able to create new posts when they wanted to; and that the Minister was able to put pressure on the organisation and then "the grades come out of nowhere". The women also observed that sometimes they put obstacles in front of themselves, thinking that they did not have the right background for the job they had. They observed that this sort of thing did not seem to trouble the men at all. There was a striking passivity about many of the women. In some cases, it is clear that their attitudes (e.g. their need for recognition and gratitude) were part of an attempt to deal with a situation where their entitlements were not clearly laid out and where they needed to have a personal relationship if they were to have any chance of getting things that they might need at some stage (such as job sharing, career breaks etc.). They did not understand how organizations worked or why people got promoted. They depended on Management to effectively look after their best interests - an expectation which sat uneasily with their perception of Management as not being concerned about "people" and their well being.

9. COURSES AND OTHER KINDS OF TRAINING

9.1 A lot of the women said that they did not have enough information about the kinds of courses that were available: "we don't know what courses are on". As they understood it, a lot of brochures came in to the Personnel Manager, but they were not distributed around the various departments. Some said that this used to happen, but that the practise had stopped now for some time. Now they were mostly dependent on "word of mouth in the canteen", although:

"From time to time someone comes in and says that the team is welcome to go on this or that course. But that is one course in the year, and maybe it is not suitable."
There should be a big list of all the courses available, so that the ones you think you might like to do, you could discuss with your Manager."

As they saw it, some of the brochures were not even put up on the Notice Board.

9.2 As previously mentioned, as they saw it, in most cases neither their own Manager nor the Personnel Manager invited them to go on courses. Since they did not have enough information themselves, their dependence on such people was exacerbated. A questionnaire had been distributed (which was seen as unusual) asking them what kinds of courses would be suitable for them. But as they saw it, part of the difficulty was that they were not sure what kind of courses were there nor what kind of courses would be useful to them:

"We would need to do those sorts of courses [self confidence; negotiating skills; personal development courses] first. Then, maybe we'd know what our goals are"

"Oh training would be useful. Sure, some kind of training would be useful, but I suppose you would have to put yourself sitting down in a corner to figure out what it would be best to do"

"There is no kind of direction as regards career path or anything like that. There is nothing to give you direction."

9.3 A small number of women there said that they did not want to do any kind of training or courses:

"It is not necessary. I don't want any training. I am able to do the job I have, and I cannot go any further the way things are."

This however was not the usual opinion. A good many of the women were pessimistic however about the relationship between doing courses and promotion:

"You could have the information, but I don't know if it would make any difference to your Grade. We are learning, we are doing so many courses, but the pay is not going up. The qualifications are going up certainly."

The women still wanted to do courses from the point of view of personal development, of skills etc. It was just that they felt that it made no difference to the chance someone at Grade 5 or 6 had of moving upwards:
"People [women] that are at Grade 5 and 6 are staying there, we can't go any further. It does not matter what we do. That is a big problem in the Údarás".

9.4 Some of the women in the Regional offices thought that was easier for those at Head Office to go on courses, but that view was not shared by the women who were working there:

"Not that many courses are on at Head Office"

9.5 The women were asked what kind of training would be useful to someone at their level. Various types of courses were mentioned (see Table 3).

**TABLE 3: Type of Training perceived as useful by women at various grades**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>1. Personal Development Courses:</strong></th>
<th><strong>Grades:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self confidence/self development courses</td>
<td>Grades 5 and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training in communication</td>
<td>Grades 4, 5 and 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for interviews</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>2. Skills Development In Technology area:</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More training in typing at various levels</td>
<td>Grade 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More training in aspects of new technology</td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills training in typing (above basic level)</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>3. Management Related Skills</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courses in solving problems (without recourse to fighting)</td>
<td>Grade 3 and 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Training in how to handle people</td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>4. Other:</strong></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional development (M.B.A)</td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in Language, culture and tourism</td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is clear that the women in Grade 5 and 6 felt that courses in self confidence would be useful:

"If you do not have confidence in yourself, that is the first obstacle to promotion, even if there were no others"

There was reference by those in Grades 3-6 to more training in technology including various levels of typing. Courses in Management skills were also referred to by those in Grades 3-4. It appeared too that skills in the negotiating area would be useful to women, but they did not use this word.

9.6 Some said that they would like:

"To be able to say something [about their needs] and feel right about it, and not to feel guilty because we are fighting."

Most of the women were not even familiar with the titles of courses in the Human Resource area. Very few women mentioned business or management courses. Two women on scholarships who were in the focus groups were a lot more familiar with the titles of these sorts of courses, and with the kinds of courses which were available. It was very obvious that the women in permanent jobs were not even used to hearing the title of courses that could give them a new direction.

9.7 It was clear that a lot of the women did not know what kind of training would be useful to them. Most of them knew that they did not have "the big picture", but they did not know how to go about getting it. They said :"we don't know what we need to move up". Women here and there referred to doing courses which related to the department in which they were working , or courses that related to the direction in which the organisation was going (such as language and culture as tourism). They had not apparently however identified what kind of specific training would be useful to them to move in this direction either inside or outside the Údarás.
9.8 As previously mentioned, most of the women were interested in courses but they were waiting for an invitation from management to go on one of these courses or to say to them that it would be useful to them. They were waiting for Management to say: "can I do anything for you?" In one or two cases, this kind of direction was given on a once off basis "When I got work in the Marketing Department, my Manager said...a course came in the post and he said to me it would be worth your while to do that. It would help you in your job. That was it. We got no information about any other course or anything else that was happening"

As outlined in the previous section, it appeared not to occur to the women to watch out for such courses themselves. Rather, they typically waited (in vain) for further guidance and direction. As they saw it, there was no system in existence about people going on courses. They felt that:
"it was not right that they should have to go back to the Personnel Manager or to their own Manager and to ask them about it."

9.9 On the other hand, some of the women in particular departments thought that if they had the information, and if they asked their Manager if they could go on a course, that they would be given permission to do this. One of the women said that they had seen a few brochures ("I was lucky")and when she went to the Personnel Manager, there was no difficulty at all about going. There were particular Departments and particular Managers that the women thought would not be happy for them to go on courses. Secretaries, and some of the women at Grade 6 in particular, anticipated that it would not be easy for them to go on courses. Part of the difficulty seemed to arise because, as they saw it, there weren't that many courses being organised in the typing /technology area. However, particularly for these groups, there also seemed to be difficulties related to the fact that if they went on courses, their work would be left for them:
"We have too much to do"; "our work would be waiting for us"
"You would have a huge load of work to do when you would come back".

These sorts of attitudes come up in other organisations (O' Connor, 1995) and reflect a lack of self protective attitudes amongst the women. Until the women themselves see the value of doing courses it is arguable that their attendance needs to be encouraged by Management.

9.10 As previously indicated, there were special difficulties in the typing area and in the whole area of new technology. By all accounts, there had been day long courses dealing with basic typing skills, spreadsheets etc. As the women perceived it, there was no follow up to this, so if the women had difficulties when they tried to do things themselves they had no opportunity to have their questions answered. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that only two people appeared to be available to give advice about the new technology. It was clear that it would be useful to have someone to go round to sort out people's problems, to find out what kind of equipment would be most useful to them, in the context of what they wanted to use that equipment for. It was clear that even basic knowledge about the new technology was not common in the Údarás. For example some people thought that you could use email to contact people outside the Údarás, whereas others did not think you could do this.

9.11 There were a small number of women who indicated that they would have difficulties going on courses if these courses were not available in the Údarás itself.

"It is not easy to go away on a course, because we are tied. Well, some of us are anyway. If it was possible to put on courses here in the Údarás it would be much better, preferably to have them during the day".

Indeed, many of the kinds of course that the women were talking about were available within the Údarás, but it appeared that most of the women who were permanent did not participate in these courses (nor even had any clear information about what was going on).
9.12 The women in one group stressed the chances that women in the Údarás had of going to the Regional Technical College or to the University:

"I think that there is money available to send people to University ... there are diplomas and a lot of things in Marketing and some of them are one day per week or thereabouts, and I think people in the organisation can get day release for that."

Interestingly none of the women in the other groups referred to these possibilities. For the most part however, the difficulties revolved around information, lack of advice and women's unwillingness to be "pushy".

10 PROCEDURES AND WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

10.1 The thing that deterred the women most from going for an interview was the fact that the people that they were being interviewed by were those that they were meeting daily for five or ten years. Given the hierarchical structure of the Údarás, these people had got used to thinking of them in a particular way:

"They would be looking down on women all the time, and they would leave them there."[at the bottom].

This pre-existing perception of them was not helpful when they went into an interview. As the women saw it, there were no difficulties being interviewed by people from the outside. However,

"It was very hard to go in to all of them and to start saying who you are, and you in front of them everyday".

"If you have been in an organisation for 17 or 18 years, everyone knows what you are able to do and everything. Now with a year they are looking for C.V's and what you did and they know themselves"

10.2 Those who were on contract, scholarship or work experience were seen as having an advantage in an interview context because they were able to get experience of various kinds of work, since part of their job description frequently involved a training element. Most of the women thought that kind of experience was much more important than doing courses:
"If you have not had the experience, courses are no good."

10.3 There was a lot of talk about the way everyone would know who was going to get the job before the interview: "The jobs are filled before they go to interview a good bit of the time". It was not clear to what extent this perception was associated with the large number of women who did not present themselves for interview for posts at Grade 3 and above. The women did note that

"you'd be asking yourself, what is the good of me applying for that because it is gone"

That made many of them question the whole usefulness of the process. As they saw, it was the people who were "well in" who got the jobs; people who were able to put themselves across well - something that many of the women felt that they were not able to do. The whole importance of "having a name was stressed":

"Its amazing how quickly the story goes around the house. I think a lot of people are put down by others in the Údarás".

This is not to say that these sorts of rumours only affected women. When one reflects however that, (as outlined in Section 5) the "natural" place for women was at the bottom, it is easy to see why women who wanted promotion would be likely to be "put down".

10.4 The women thought that it would be much more satisfactory if there was a formula laid down in the interview (a procedure that has also been shown in the literature to facilitate women 's promotion)

"I think it would be right really to have a certain number of points for various things; to have a kind of formula that there would be a certain number of marks for attending the interview; for personality, education, attitude to promotion, why you are interested in the job, and all that sort of thing, and that they should be broken down."
As they saw it, this was not the way it actually happened. Questions were also raised about the weighting attached to an Irish test some had experienced, both as compared to the mark they got in Irish in the Leaving Certificate and relative to the interview itself.

**10.5** The women were very put out by the fact that people who were not successful got no feedback:

"*When jobs come up, people are just turned, turned, turned down.*"

As they saw it, if they did not get feedback, they did not know where their application was deficient, and what they needed to do to achieve a different outcome.

**10.6** Some women were unhappy about the fact that as they saw it, they were promised things at interview, but these promises were broken afterwards and there was nothing that they could do about it:

"*We would need to have a tape recorder with us*".

**10.7** Most of the women said that in their last interview, there was one woman and two men on the Board. For the most part however these people were internal, and this was not seen as being helpful.

"*I think myself that the interview board should have external people*".

"*Maybe two from outside*."*We all know the people inside and it is very difficult."

Reference was made to one interview where an outside Manager was present. This was seen as enormously helpful.

**10.8** As they perceived it, women who were married and with children were not seen in the same light by the Interview Board as those who were single:
"If you were to come into an interview, I am almost certain that there would be a bad spot or a dark spot on you if you had children. I am sure it would at present, with the attitude that there is inside there."

From the point of view of many of the women, having children is a big obstacle as regards women applying for promotion. For many of them this reflected more Management's attitudes than the actual responsibilities themselves or their influence on the women.

"Although it is not publicised, I think it was said, yes. It was not put up on the notice board, anyone with children need not apply ......"

Some women even thought that single as opposed to married women had a better chance of promotion.

"It is clear that the people [women] who are at the higher grades or in Management, they do not have family responsibilities and they are not married."

10.9 There were a small number of references to things that were said at interview that were seen as inappropriate. For example:

"Do you not have young children and how would your husband cope with the situation if you were away travelling on business."

It is possible of course that specific reference was not made to their children, but that in a context where the woman's family situation is known, and where the perceived attitude towards women with children being in paid employment is negative, simply asking if they would be able to travel is construed in a particular light. The majority stressed that the interview situation had improved, at least in that it had got more formal, and there was one woman present. Nevertheless, it was clear that other changes such as for example in the internal composition of the interview board, and in the existence of a marking schema were seen as highly desirable.

10.10 It was difficult for most of the women to understand what was meant by ways of working which would facilitate the combining of work and family responsibilities.
When the kinds of arrangements involved were described most of them thought that flexi time and job sharing in particular would be a good idea. Lots of women remembered that flexi time had been there at one time:

"We had it, but it did not suit the men, I think those who were travelling, so it was stopped."

"There was too much paperwork involved, and it was stopped."

The women did not understand why it could not be made available to those people (mostly women) who were not travelling:

"We have an hour every day for dinner, and it is so long sometimes, when you have eaten your lunch, you have half an hour left and you could be working and take that time again. You could leave early of an afternoon or at the end of the morning or something like that."

Some of the women said that flexi time would not work in their own job, because for example, that there were only two of them in the office, or because they had urgent things to do. But in the areas where it would work the general feeling was that it would be excellent to introduce it.

10.11 Most of the women were in favour of job sharing:

"If it suits a particular job, and if that person is looking for it, and if that job will be done more efficiently because of it, it should be looked into in the same way as any job ...... I would have nothing against it ".

The women noted that job sharing was available in the Údarás, but that there were difficulties getting it. Both it and flexi-time were available in other local organisations. They thought that:

"There should be no difficulty with job sharing and things like that but that it should depend on the kind of job, and the person involved, and the kind of responsibilities that were involved."

The availability of part time work was spontaneously mentioned by a number of groups as a measure which would be helpful to women and one which was particularly important where
no job sharing partner was available. One Manager had encouraged a woman to job share rather than give up paid work and this was appreciated, but it seemed to be a very unusual event. However, the women said that those who were job sharing would not get promotion:

"That is a big obstacle. If you apply for job sharing - that is the end of it"

It was said that this was not laid down, but that it was understood.

10.12 Women here and there were against job sharing:

"Because if two people are doing something and it is broken up, you are trying to get information, and one person says that the other is dealing with it, and they won't be in until 2.30; and then at half past two, the person says to you that it is the other person who had the information, and they are gone and won't be back until tomorrow."

10.13 Women in the Regions had special difficulties as regards job sharing because as they, understood it, they had been told that someone would have to come down from Head Office to job share with them. They did not understand why this was necessary. Because however, there was no written information on the conditions for job sharing that was the end of it, because no-one in Head Office was willing to do this.

10.14 As previously mentioned people were not specifically asked about Maternity Leave, since this is now a basic right. In fact however it was spontaneously mentioned by a number of groups. There was considerable anxiety about what would happen if you went on Maternity Leave: "It is not safe to go on Maternity Leave." The extent to which women were entitled to return to their old job on their return from Maternity Leave was not clear to them. Equally it was not clear if they were entitled to be kept informed of proposals to regrade posts during this period, or indeed whether they could be allocated to work at a lower grade when they returned. Such uncertainties are not helpful for women who already have quite enough to contend with during this period.
10.15 One or two women in one group mentioned that it might be useful to give more holidays to women who were performing well to motivate them if there was no other way of doing this (i.e. if promotion, bonuses etc. were not possible). This idea does not appear to have been explored to date.

10.16 Some women thought that it would be wonderful to be able to work from home, but most felt that this would not be a good idea because:

"The men would say that the women should stay at home altogether if they were there at all."

10.17 Some of the women thought that some arrangement as regards day care would be helpful for those with young children. Again however, from the point of view of women in the regions, this was seen as impractical since there would not be enough women with young children there at any one time. The issue of providing vouchers to staff to use local day-care centres was not explored, and could obviously be seen as another way of rewarding women who were doing well and/or facilitating the reconciliation of paid work and family life. In view however, of the organizational culture as regards mother's participation in paid employment, the likelihood of introducing such an initiative seems very remote indeed.

11. CHANGING THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE ÚDARÁS

11.1 It is widely recognised that new technology alters the work load of typists, who are of course predominantly women. Management now have access to P.C.'s and a wide range of new technology. If they were enabled to do even basic things on the P.C.'s there would be an opportunity for the organisation to re-deploy many of the women (if that is acceptable to those involved). From the point of view of the women in the Údarás, new technology has not yet made an impact on their work. As they see it "We are only qualified as secretaries
and that is what they say to us". Some of the women in the Údarás were interested in being involved in meetings so that they would have an opportunity to widen their role within the organisation. As they saw it however, most of the managers were not happy to give them this chance.

11.2 A small number of the women thought that it was important that they be "visible" in the organisation if they were to have any chance of moving up - a perception which is indeed widely supported by the literature. As they saw it, their absence from meetings meant that they could be effectively "left behind" in the promotional stakes. They noted that they used to get invitations to the openings of new factories etc. when they had been involved in the process as copy typists, secretaries and (effectively) as personal assistants. But for the past four or five years, they noticed that this pattern had changed, and that they no longer got these kinds of opportunities. Indeed as they saw it, Management, for the most part did not want the women to move at all:

"Management thinks that you should be always seated at your desk and that is the end of it."

Typically the women did not have the confidence to suggest changes in their job descriptions. It was clear that the energy of quite a few of the women was being wasted:

"You are able to do your job with your eyes closed. Nobody wants to stay in a job that you can do with your eyes closed. You are looking for variety or something."

'I'd like to be in at meetings. I'd like to get more involved in the job, and maybe undertake a bit of my boss's work load. I'd like to do that really. And then that the money would come with it'.

If this were to happen of course, some of their routine work would have to be left to one side and they (ie the men)"think that it is up to the women to do that".

11.3 One woman suggested that the Údarás:
"could not operate without men ....They are dealing with industry and until there are more women in industry, there are difficulties about changing this since man to man is still the norm."

There is an element of truth in this. It was interesting however that no stress was put on the need for women to be in positions of authority when issues related to community development or matters related to language and culture were involved. It is clear that old ideas and attitudes are present here and there even amongst the women viz. the idea that men should be in charge, just because they are men. However one woman suggested that a task force be put together:

"If the tourist industry is to happen, a task force needs to be put together and women need to be part of it, and to put the skills of women into it ".

11.4 As previously mentioned the creation of posts such as Community Development Workers is one obvious area in which growth might occur. In many ways that seems a very appropriate development for women in the organisation who are, predominantly native Irish speakers, and "kind of at the level of the people". By all accounts, there is only one of these so far. However, such posts would need to be created by Senior Management, because it is highly improbable that women would leave their office responsibilities without that kind of official support, particularly when it is clear that most of the Managers view their role as being inside the office every hour of the day.

11.5 There is a good deal of stress in the literature on the difficulties that women in paid employment have in getting a variety of work experiences, and the way in which that reduces their chances as regards promotion. If someone spends five or more years in one department, their skills inevitably become specialised and it is very difficult for them to have much of a chance of a job in another department. They have little knowledge about the work in that department; they are not used to working with the Manager there and he/she has no direct experience of their work. In this situation, "job swaps" between people
at the same grade (for those people who are interested in such "swaps") came be very useful.

"People should have a chance of getting into those jobs [the ones] that they are interested in doing. Maybe it is not everyone that would be interested in changing. But when you go in for an interview really, you have to be prepared.

"If you haven't got an understanding of the job, you are not going to get it .... say [after] 6 months, you'd have a knowledge of the job if you were interested in it."

Most of the women thought that kind of experience was much more important than doing courses.

11.6 The idea of "job swaps" were particularly important to women who were doing the same thing for five or ten years in Head Office. The women who were in the Regions had a different problem. In many cases, they had to do everything anyway: "I am doing everything to do with office work, as well as cleaning the floor there". It was hard however for these to utilise the advantage potentially arising from variety in work experiences, since they were based in the Regions and were less visible to Senior Management: furthermore, the highest Grade post available for women in the Regions seemed to be at Grade 3. From the point of Management, "job swaps" can appear to be very troublesome. This kind of arrangement can however motivate the work force and hence increase the effectiveness of the organisation. There is no doubt that people doing the same job year after year, without any possibility of promotion get de-motivated, and this does not help the morale or effectiveness of the organisation. Increasing women's exposure to various kinds of jobs indirectly increases the likelihood of their promotion, since it provides them with the kind of inside knowledge which is important in applying for a job in a department.

11.7 From the point of view of changing the position of women in the Údarás, much was made of the importance of changing:

"The mind of management, the mind of people up there as regards women:"
They were pessimistic however about the extent to which such hopes were realistic:

"They are there since the Údarás was founded, and they are part of the furniture if you understand me. And with their attitude and everything, you can't change them."

These attitudes were not seen as peculiar to men in the Údarás:

"I don't think any man wants to see a woman going ahead"

11.8 It was striking that, for the most part, the concept of equality with which the women were familiar was very narrow viz. equality at the level of access, rather than in terms of outcome (NESF, 1996; O'Connor, 1995). Most of the women thought that being an equal opportunities employer meant:

"that men and women have the same chance of getting a job, depending I suppose on their qualifications and personality"

"that there would be no difference between men and women and that everyone would have the same chances."

"that fair play would be got by men and women."

Even in these very limited term, as most of the women saw it:

"That is not the way it happens". "It does not happen like that." "It does not"

"We don't see that is the way it is when we are applying for jobs".

11.9 It has been widely recognised that action based on a very narrow concept of equality (i.e. in terms of access) is highly likely to be ineffective since it ignores the effect of past discrimination (NESF, 1996). It thus offers what has been described as an equal chance for people to remain unequal. Equality of access as a model seems particularly inappropriate to an organisation such as the Údarás, where, because of historical factors, women are overwhelmingly concentrated at the lower grades and men at the higher grades; with Grade 3 having been more useful as stepping up point for men than women. In this context, adhering to an access based model can be compared to giving a blind person and a sighted person entrance cards for a Library with no special facilities for poorly sighted people. No
distinction is being made between the two people; both have equal access, but it is quite clear that the outcome will be unequal.

11.10 An outcomes based approach to equal opportunity implies a commitment to various kinds of positive action to offset the effects of such historical factors. This can be seen as particularly important to those 70% (31/44) of the women who are at the lower grades in the Údarás (Grades 4-6), and whose disproportionate presence at these levels partly reflects a historically low valuation of women's work, and partly reflects those attitudes and practices which were conducive to the disproportionate promotion of men from these levels. Expecting women to reach educational levels which are higher than those of their male counterparts who have already been promoted to Grade 2 and above can be regarded as simply perpetuating the effects of past discrimination. Positive action - often referred to as affirmative action- is completely legal and has been strongly encouraged both by the E.U. and by the Government. Some of the women implicitly endorsed this outcomes based model of equal opportunity, although they were not familiar with the concept. Thus, they focused on the disproportionate presence of men at Grade 2 and above saw this as an indication that the Údarás was not an Equal Opportunities Employer.

11.11 Some of the women thought that it would be useful if there were an Equal Opportunities Manager in the Údarás:

"Maybe they would be able to look into things"; "Maybe they would give people a chance to be equal and to get justice"

"I suppose it would be handy. It would not do any harm."

It was thought to be important that women were listened to, but that was not seen as enough. It was noted that there was no woman high up in the Personnel Department: "It would be right to have a woman there". It was suggested that the Personnel Department should be extended to include someone like that, and it was suggested that that would make a difference from the point of view of understanding the position of women.
The Department of Equality and Law Reform have recognised that the identification by an organisation of itself as an Equal Opportunity Employer is only a first step:

"A practical programme of positive action is necessary to put mechanisms in place to ensure that this becomes a reality. Targets have been recognised as an important component in this situation".

The women had little familiarity with the idea of targets. Some of the women thought that targets would be useful.

"I think that something like that is necessary ..... there has to be some kind of a target".

Some thought that it would be difficult to lay down targets: "When the system is so constricted". They said however that there had to be the same kind of a plan laid down so that things would change.

As has been frequently noted in the literature, the women who were higher up in the organisation were not in favour of an Equal Opportunities Manager, nor were they in favour of having targets. A small number of them felt that the Údarás was not too bad from the point of view of Equal Opportunities; that they kept the law and that there was no obstacle to a man or a woman applying for a post:

"I don't think there is anything against women here as such"

It is reasonable in a way that they should have this view because they themselves have been promoted to a higher level than the overwhelming majority (93%) of the women, and they think that this shows that women can get ahead if they are willing to work hard, (and indeed not to marry). A very small number of them saw these sorts of initiatives as inappropriate:
"I heard someone saying about the Údarás that they have to take in so many women, and one person said, I don't have a skirt, and because of that I'm not in the running ..... Truly, you can't want that kind of situation to happen".

It is clear that this speaker has accepted the idea that the system up to now has been fair; that positive discrimination in favour of men has effectively not occurred in the past, so that the effects of past discrimination do not need to be reversed. It is widely accepted that this view is very questionable. Indeed a recent U.N. Report (1995: 29) noted that : "In no society today do women enjoy the same opportunities as men." It seems improbable that the Údarás, with its highly skewed distribution of posts should be an exception.

12. BARRIERS: FIRST and LAST RESPONSES

12.1 Most of the women in the study thought that there were barriers to women's promotion (from the point of view of someone at their grade and in their department) within the Údarás. They referred to a wide variety of different kinds of barriers. These were broadly classified into three types: structural, cultural and individual. Each of these will be briefly outlined here. It is important to note that many of the women referred to several of these kinds of barriers, and that in some cases the distinction between these types is tenuous (e.g. the lack of a Degree being seen by some women as a real individual barrier, while others saw it as a cultural barrier in so far as it was used by Management as a way of keeping women out.)

12.2 Some of the women referred to what were regarded as structural barriers, such as, for example, that there had been an embargo on job creation in the past, or that jobs at their level did not come up very often. Others referred to more fundamental issues related to the grading structure of the organisation and the effect this had on women's careers. The net effect of these structural barrier was that they disproportionately affected women's chances of reaching the higher grades because it was women who were recruited to the bottom of the hierarchy; and had no career paths upwards. References were also made to the difficulties
which had arisen as regards regrading individual jobs and these difficulties were seen as a barrier to women's promotion. Thus, it was argued that even where women were undertaking responsibilities which were above the Grade at which they were recruited it was very difficult to get their jobs regraded. Being in the Regional office was seen as a difficulty, in the sense that it militated against contact with the "higher ups" in Head Office; and was seen as reducing one's chances of doing courses etc. It also appeared that, regardless what you were doing in the Regional Office, your Grade would be no higher than Grade 3. Feelings about the appropriateness of the grading of jobs at Grade 5 and 6 were particularly widespread. However it was also clear that similar difficulties arose at other levels e.g. about the grading of Community Development Workers and the Manager of the Dublin office. It appeared that although it was difficult it was to get a Grade 5 job regraded, it was even more difficult to get one at Grade 3 or 4 regraded. It was noted that Management stressed that they were constrained as regards the creation or regrading of jobs, but there was a good deal of cynicism about this, since it appeared to the women that when they wanted to do so, they could do so. Indeed the documentary evidence suggested that there seemed to be some justification for this cynicism since 16 new functions had been created in 1994: 14 of them at Grade 3 or above. Since 70 of the 73 men, as compared with 13 out of the 44 women are at Grade 3 or above, it is arguable that the creation of these posts are most likely to benefit men. Reference was also made to the number of people who were on a temporary contracts, scholarships, work experience etc. The sheer existence of these workers was seen as militating against the promotion of permanent staff, particularly when these temporary workers were doing the higher grade work. Furthermore, it was noted that when a promotion came up, they had a far wider range of experience than the permanent staff members had.

12.3 Others referred to what one could regard as cultural barriers (O'Connor, 1996) such as for example the "climate" or set of assumptions about women which militated against their promotion within the Údarás. There was a strong perception that being a woman
reduced women's chances of promotion. Being married at all and especially being married with children was seen as something which further reduced their chances of being promoted.

It was noted that:

"It seems very important for women to have Third Level Education, and maybe if you were a man it would not be that important. So, it is a barrier that we have skirts on us."

Some suggested that a Degree seemed to be seen as particularly important in specific departments, (such as Finance). They noted that:

"The men at Grade 2 or 3 that are trying to go to Grade 1, they do not have University Degrees."

Some women suggested that the absence of Third Level qualifications was used to justify women's lack of promotion, while its presence was of no means always associated with promotion:

"with the system that is there now, women get nothing"

As the women saw it, Management, and particularly the Personnel Department was not interested in helping them to develop by, for example giving them opportunities to undertake new responsibilities, providing them with feedback on why they did not get jobs, or giving them advice or direction as regards their careers:

"They never ask you do you want to change, do you want promotion, do you want to do anything. There is a lack of interest there really."

As they saw it Management were not interested in changing the position of women in the Údarás:

"Management always think that you should be sitting at your desk and that is the end of it."

The cultural barriers then were seen as being partly rooted in a perceived attitude to women which was unhelpful as regards their promotion; and partly, in a kind of passivity which
was reflected in a heightened dependence on management for advice, direction, opportunities etc., a dependence which in a way suited Management.

12.4 At the individual level., the barriers were seen as arising from women's lack of self confidence; their personality and particularly "an inability to be able to put themselves across", as well as lack of Higher Educational qualifications in general and a Degree in particular. Lack of knowledge about the kinds of jobs that would be coming up was also seen as a barrier:

"If we knew the kinds of jobs that would be coming up, if we had some kind of an idea about the kinds of jobs that are coming up in the next 5 years, something like that, and you would be able ...... if you were interested, to develop yourself to apply for that job".

Courses were seen as, to some extent, increasing women's chances of promotion, particularly skills related courses. But it was felt that ultimately they were not the crucial factor. Furthermore, as they recognised themselves, typically their own experience was limited by the fact that they had spent a lot of their time within one section of one Department, or within one Department. Those in the Secretarial area might move between Departments, but the range of their work experience was limited and so it was difficult for them to change direction. Having a job come up in an area where you had already got some experience was seen as increasing women's chances of promotion. However, there appeared to be limits to the usefulness of even getting such experience since:

"a lot of the jobs that are coming up recently specify that Third Level qualifications are necessary, that you would need to have a Degree"

A very small number of women with young children said that going to Brussels or places like that for a week or a fortnight "would be bothersome" and that this was a barrier to them personally at this point in time. However, more limited travel was overwhelmingly not seen as an issue. Some of the women referred to the fact that as they saw it, women did not have time to think about promotion:
"They are working hard and more than 5 days a week at their work. That is an obstacle in itself"

As the women saw it, the more they did, the more they were asked to do, but still it made no difference as regards promotion. This kind of lack of self protectiveness has been shown to be characteristic of women in other organisations (O'Connor, 1996). They quite simply undertake too much work, and so have neither the time nor the space to achieve the kind of visibility which might lead to their promotion. Some women referred to "personality" as something which increased women's chances of promotion. Others referred to the importance of "getting a good name". They noted however that it was difficult however to be seen as a "next level" person if you were in the lower grades (and especially if you were a woman). There was a stress on the importance of being "well in" as a way of increasing one's chances of being promoted, and in particular getting on well with your own Manager because they "would put in a good word for you ". In a situation where your Manager did not even have a positive attitude to women being in paid employment, the difficulties of getting his support were intractable.

12.5 At the end of each session, the women in the focus groups were asked to indicate in one word what they saw as the most important barrier to women's promotion; and (in another word) the most important thing that the Údarás could do to improve the position of women in the organisation. All of the women who participated in the focus groups did this, and this material is examined in this section. Obviously, since the women literally only wrote two words down, this material needs to be located in the context of the wider discussion in the focus groups. Nevertheless, the picture that emerged is interesting.

12.6 It is clear from Table 4 that there is a good deal of diversity in their views. These views have also been classified into three main categories viz. structural, cultural and individual. These are very broad crude categories and the words actually used by the women have also been included in the table, so that a more detailed picture can be obtained.
It is clear that the obstacles which are mentioned most often as the most important barriers are cultural aspects of the organisation and individual factors (by 42% of the women in both cases). Cultural barriers include state of mind; demotivation, lack of recognition, understanding, discussion etc. Individual barriers included lack of training, of education, lack of qualifications, low self confidence and family responsibilities. It is clear from the material emerging in the focus groups that the importance that is perceived as being attached to a Degree (for internal women) reflects cultural attitudes which are inimical to their presence at higher grades, so that clearly the distinction between individual and cultural barriers is tenuous. A much smaller group (16%) referred to structural barriers in the organisation, such as, for example, issues related to vacancies, regrading, regional issues and to specific departments such as the Finance Dept. These structural obstacles are often referred to at an official level. In the eyes of the women, these are clearly not the most commonly perceived barriers to women's promotion in the Údarás.

**TABLE 4 : Percentage distribution of respondents in terms of their perception of the most important barrier to women's promotion in the Údarás**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural : Total</strong></td>
<td>16</td>
<td>(6/38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regrading/Upgrading</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance Dept.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural : Total</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>(16/38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recog/Woman/Outlook/Demotivation</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind Set/Interest</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion/Understanding</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12.7 When the women in the focus groups were asked what was the most important thing the Údarás could do to change the position of women there, the pattern was equally diverse. Cultural factors in this case were mentioned most frequently. Thus almost half of the women (47%) referred to the importance of making changes in the area of team work, open discussion, communication, recognition, motivation etc.

**TABLE 5: Percentage Distribution of respondents in terms of their perception of the most important thing the Údarás could do to change the position of women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Structural : total</strong></td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>(11/38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deal with embargo</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regrading</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigation</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change the System</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More opportunities</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Sharing</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural : Total</strong></td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>(18/38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivate</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change mind/Attitude</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of Management</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Work/Communication</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion/Listening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual : Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Training/Career Guidance</td>
<td>24% (9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self confidence/Confidence</td>
<td>13% (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More than a quarter (29%) referred to the importance of structural aspects such as regrading, providing more opportunities etc. Roughly a quarter (24%), referred to individual factors such as the provision of education, training, courses and other ways of improving women's confidence.

12.8 Thus, it is clear that training is not seen by the majority of the women as the most important thing which the Údarás can do to improve the position of the women in the organisation. It is clear that what they are envisaging are much broader cultural and structural changes within the Údarás. Such changes are indeed underway in any case. It remains only to be seen to what extent the Údarás can rise to the challenge of re-envisioning the position of women within the organisation.

13. SUMMARY

13.1 The data in this report has been drawn largely from eleven taped focus group sessions with roughly 80% of women employed in Údarás na Gaeltachta. This material has been located in the context of documentary material provided by the Personnel Manager. This documentary material clearly showed that the Údarás was a highly skewed organisation in gender terms, with men holding the overwhelming majority (93%: 55/59) of the higher positions (i.e. Grade 2 and above); and women holding the overwhelming majority (89%:31/35) of the lower positions (Grade 4 and below); with men and women being roughly equally represented only at Grade 3.
13.2 It is arguable that women's position reflects the devaluing of work by women - something which is only now being recognised as an issue. There is indirect support for this argument insofar as only a minority of the men at the higher levels have responsibilities for budgets and/or staff, so that quite clearly the higher grades are for the most part, not management grades.

13.3 Because the focus groups were concerned with the women, and because only 4 of the 44 women are at Grade 2 or above, it is not clear at what extent the grading system at the higher level is/is not seen as appropriate. It is clear however that redundancy, changes in the organisation, the introduction of new technology etc., has blurred the distinction between several of the grades. This was noted particularly in the case of Grade 5 and 6 (although some women also raised the issue in the context of Grade 4). It appears that grading has been recognised as an issue within the organisation and that the appropriateness of the grading system as a whole is being examined. Such an assessment has important implications for women.

13.4 The actual structure of the Údarás, as it exists, militates against women since typically they are still recruited at a lower level than men. There is some suggestion from the documentary evidence that the men have been more successful than women in using the Grade 3 (and indeed Grade 4 in the past) as a stepping up point than the women have. It is not clear why this has happened, but discrimination cannot be eliminated. Furthermore the currently roughly equal proportions of men and women in Grade 3 conceals the fact that the possibility of women in Grade 4-6 moving up even to this level is very low indeed. Grade 4 is the highest Grade which is reached by most women in the Údarás.

13.5 These trends can be seen to reflect the historical development of the Údarás. There are some suggestions however in the documentary evidence that current attitudes may
continue to favour men's promotion (these being reflected for example in the higher proportions of men relative to women who reach second interviews). The numbers are small, and the evidence necessarily inconclusive. However, they are compatible with the trends emerging in the focus groups as regards the culture of the Údarás.

13.6 There is a perception amongst most of the women that the organisational culture of the Údarás is not conducive to women's promotion. As they see it, "women's place" is seen for the most part, as being at Grade 4 or below. This is particularly so if the women are married and have children. Indeed, as they see it, some of Management do not think that women in this situation should be in paid employment at all - not to mention being at the higher levels of the organisation.

13.7 As most of the women see it, there is little communication or team spirit within the Údarás. They see this as a huge loss, and want to feel part of an organisation which is tied in to the development of the Gaeltacht. They stress the importance (and the general absence) of team meetings, opportunities to meet those in the regions or at Management level either in a work and/or social context. They suggest that these difficulties are exacerbated by differences in linguistic and cultural traditions. They see Senior Management as being "kind of afraid of women", and want "to break the wall".

13.8 As the majority of the women in the Údarás saw it, Management was not concerned with the people within the organisation - or at least not with the women: "They are too busy to be kind". This was a considerable source of disappointment to them. As they saw it this was reflected in a wide variety of ways (such as the absence of induction, the failure to thank them for their work etc.) The importance of this lack of a focus on person as opposed to money management was exacerbated in their own case by their expectations as regards guidance, direction and recognition from their own Manager and/or from the Personnel
Manager. These attitudes which can be regarded as quaint or inappropriate in an organisation to-day, suited Management in ways and were compatible with their perception of them as women. On the other hand however, they were unhelpful and inappropriate within an organisation where the focus was not on people management.

13.9 It was clear that in some ways, the women had little understanding of how organisations work, and why people are promoted in them. Thus, they expected to be promoted for doing their own job well. Typically, they did not stop to consider why an organisation should promote them if they were willing to undertake additional responsibilities without additional pay.

13.10 Most of the women saw recognition and thanks as being very important in increasing their self confidence, and in giving them the courage to think about tackling more difficult tasks. They were also however seen as important in increasing women's leverage within an organisation where they had little positional power. The importance of these strategies was exacerbated by the fact that despite their attempts to get one, there was no booklet outlining the basis on which job sharing, career breaks etc. were given. Women's perceived vulnerability to intimidation in this context was mentioned spontaneously. It is fair to say that the number of references were small, but they highlight the importance of clear written guidelines.

13.11 The majority of the women felt that a "glass ceiling" existed within the organisation i.e. that there was a part of the top of the organisation that women could see but could not reach. For most of them that ceiling was at Grade 3. They recognised that there were four women above this (two of them fairly recent appointments). They noted that these women were single. They also noted that there appeared to be an increasing tendency to utilise those on contract, scholarship or work experience to do higher grade work. This pattern
served to further cut off the very limited possibilities for upward movement for the 70 % (32/44) of the women at Grade 4 or below.

13.12 Most of the women were interested in promotion. Overwhelmingly, they thought in terms of simply moving up one or two steps on the hierarchy. Indeed, the career ladder was so long that it was almost incredible to think of getting to Grade 2 or above. A small number of women were not interested in promotion, either because they were satisfied with their own position or because they had simply given up hope of moving upwards.

13.13 Most of the women were interested in doing courses, although there was little optimism as regards the extent to which such courses made any difference to their possibility of being promoted. Various different types of courses were identified as being useful to women at their level (e.g. courses in personal development; communication; typing; various aspects of the new technology, management related courses etc.). It was obvious however that the women were unfamiliar with the title of courses available, and their relevance to their career prospects.

13.14 As the women saw it they needed advice and direction from their Manager and/or from the Personnel Manager as regards the kinds courses they should do, and the kind of direction that they might take. As they saw it, it was Management's job to help them to develop, to push them forward, to remind them about courses, to advise them of their suitability for them etc. The women were particularly dependent on Management for this kind of advice and direction, because many of them did not know what courses were available; and they did not really understand how the organisation was developing and where their career prospects might best lie.
13.15 The women noted that the interview system had improved, in the sense that it was now more formal, and that there was at least one woman typically on the Board. However, it was felt that it could improve further. In particular, the women thought that it would be very useful to have more of an external presence on the Interview Board, and to have a marking framework for assessing the applicants. There was also a strong feeling that they would like feedback on their performance in the interview situation so that they could improve in subsequent interviews.

13.16 The women were unfamiliar with the concept of ways of working that would facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life. Thus, for example their reaction to the idea of working from home was that it would encourage the men to say that they should stay at home altogether. Most of the women however were in favour of the idea of job sharing. There was also a good deal of support for the idea flexi-time. It was perceived to have existed in the past, but to have been dropped because it did not suit the men.

13.17 As the women perceived it, even women at Grade 4 (the highest grade at which women predominate) were not given chances to extend their role and to develop themselves within the changing context of the Údarás: "We are only qualified as secretaries: that is what they say to us". Some of the women saw this as a complete waste. They had been doing the same jobs for years, and could do it now "with their eyes closed": They noted that : "Nobody wants to stay doing a job that they can do with their eyes closed". Yet that appeared to be what Management wanted them to do. As they saw it, the Managers did not allow - not to mention encourage- them to attend committee meetings, or to meet and get to know their contacts outside the Údarás. They noted that they used to have an opportunity to meet such contacts in an informal way at factory openings in the past, but that this had now changed.
13.18 Despite the emergence of new technology and Personal Computers on everyone's desk, there seemed to have been little freeing up of women's time at the lower grades to enable them to extend their roles in various ways. The Video Conferencing equipment, as the women perceived it, appeared to be available only to the Management, and to be unused. In addition, despite the increasing importance of social and cultural development in the re-envisioning of the Údarás, there seemed to be little utilisation of women's linguistic skills. Only one woman held the post of Community Development Worker, despite the increasing rhetorical endorsement of this sort of area in the re-envisioning of the mission of the Údarás.

13.19 Furthermore, there was no policy as regards extending the range of women's work experiences as a way of increasing their skills and remotivating them (e.g. through short-term job "swaps"). If anything, there was a suggestion that in so far as opportunities arose to "fill in" for a colleague (due to holidays etc.), such opportunities were particularly likely to be given to those on work experience, contracts etc. In this way, the position of permanent women who were overwhelming huddled at the lower end of the career hierarchy was further restricted and their chances of promotion further reduced, because of limited work experience.

13.20 It was clear that in many cases the women had a very narrow concept of an equal opportunities employer i.e. one which focused simply on equality at the level of access. As many of the women saw it, even in these limited terms, equality did not exist in the Údarás. It has been widely recognised that equality at the level of access is far too narrow since it ignores the effects of past discrimination and simply provides those involved with an equal chance of being unequal. Those who had an "outcomes" concept of equality saw it as making sense of the fact that men and women in fact occupied very different positions in the Údarás. They were various views as to the extent to which an Equal Opportunities Manager and the identification of targets would be useful. Some of the women felt that
these strategies could help, while others (particularly those at the higher levels) saw them as unnecessary.

13.21 The women in the focus groups identified a wide variety of barriers to women's promotion in the Údarás (at their level and in their Department within the Údarás). These were broadly classified into three kinds viz. structural, cultural and individual. Those who referred to what have been called structural barriers saw the embargo, the absence of jobs, the grading scales, the difficulties in regrading jobs, being in the regions as well as the number of people on varying kinds of work experience, scholarships etc., as the main barriers. Those who referred to what have been called cultural barriers saw Management, and their attitudes to women (and especially mothers) in the Údarás as a barrier, (particularly the assumption that women's place was at the bottom of the structure and that a mother's place was at home) Individual barriers included the absence of Degrees, low self confidence, lack of knowledge about careers, and being too well known (within the hierarchical structure). A very small number of women said that there were no barriers.

13.22 At the very end of each focus group session, the women were asked to write down in one word what they saw as the main barrier to women's promotion, and in one word, what was the most important thing that the Údarás could do to change the position of women in the Údarás. The patterns which emerged were very similar to the broader themes which were identified. Thus, classifying these replies into these three very crude categories, cultural (42%) and individual (42%) factors were seen as the main barriers; while dealing with the culture (47%) was most often seen as the most important thing that the Údarás could do to improve the position of women.

14. RECOMMENDATIONS
14.1 It is clear that although the focus groups were exclusively concerned with the women in the Údarás, change in the position of women within the Údarás will necessitate changes at many levels i.e. in the structure of the Údarás, its overall culture and Management practises, and the behaviour and skills of the men and women within it.

14.2 Structure

That the basis for differentiating between posts at all levels in terms of their Grading be updated and clearly spelt out in a gender neutral job evaluation schema.

14.2.1. That the practice of recruiting women exclusively at Grade 5 or 6, but men above this, be terminated.

14.2.2. That Grade 5 and 6 be collapsed into a single Grade with a single payment scale.

14.2.3. That consideration be given to including Grade 4 in this new Grade (with the salary scale being suitably extended to encompass the current Grade 4 scale)

14.2.4. That a mechanism be created whereby claims concerning changes in the nature of work undertaken by particular individuals (whether on the old Grading scale or on a new schema), can be processed speedily and on a routine and objectively fair basis.

14.2.5 That the current practice of not allocating posts for women above Grade 3 to the Regions be reconsidered in view of the changing structure and vision of the Údarás.

14.2.6 That a policy as regards the utilisation of those on contract, work experience and scholarships be clearly spelt out, with clear guidelines as regards the Grade of work they can undertake.

14.2.7. That the ratio of such workers to permanent employees be agreed with the Union, and that this be monitored annually both in the Údarás as a whole and within each Department.
14.2.8 That practises such as splitting higher Grade posts into a number of lower level posts and/or making a temporary appointment when the applicants are all women, be discouraged.

14.2.9 That line management be accountable for an outcomes orientated equal opportunities policy, as part of a progressive policy of re-envisioning the role of the Údarás and effectively utilizing the staff resources in their own department.

14.2.10 That as part of such an initiative that career paths be identified for (permanent) women at Grade 4.

14.2.11 That the observation of the Personnel Department (Personal Communication: October 96) that the desirability of a Degree for appointments at Grade 3 or above could be waived in favour of ability, past performance and knowledge of the organisation be widely circulated and that it be noted that this arrangement is already well established in view of the current educational profile of the men at Grade 2 and above.

14.3 Organisational Culture and Communication

That Senior Management clearly underline the importance of the Human Resource dimension for management at all levels and in all regions, and that they provide a lead as regards challenging those aspects of organisational culture which are not helpful as regards women's promotion.

14.3.1 That this be reflected in the initiation of team meetings within and across Regions.

14.3.2 That the practise of providing all employees with a thank you note (preferably hand-written from their Manager) on an annual basis with their P60s be adopted in all Departments.

14.3.3 That Senior Management provide a lead in stressing the importance of basic courtesies in all dealings with staff e.g. thanking them routinely and praising them for their competence.
14.3.4 That at least annual individual sessions be initiated in all Departments with the purpose of providing an opportunity for all permanent employees to receive individual feedback on their performance, encouragement/direction as regards course attendance, an opportunity to discuss "job swaps" and general issues related to their career development both inside and outside the Department.

14.3.5 That line management be encouraged to look specifically at the extent to which the abilities of their staff could be more fully utilised by e.g. facilitating their attendance at Committee meetings (initially perhaps to take the minutes) with their more routine work being delegated to those on work experience, scholarships etc.

14.3.6 That line management be encouraged to facilitate their women staff making contacts with other staff in the Regions as well as with clients outside the Údarás.

14.3.7 That it be made clear to Management at all levels that negative attitudes to married women's participation in paid employment and/or assumptions that their appropriate place was at the bottom of the organisation are not acceptable and that they could leave the individual concerned open to legal proceedings.

14.3.8 That seminars and workshops specifically designed to change negative and stereotyped attitudes towards women be initiated and that attempts to tackle such attitudes come from the highest level (i.e. Senior Management). This reflects the fact that in an environment where men are not used to working with women at the same level, it is inevitable that unconscious bias, "slagging" etc. may come to the fore. Attempts to tackle this and to indicate that it is not acceptable must come from the highest level.

14.3.9 That seminar/workshop programmes specifically designed to foster positive attitudes among women to the promotion of other women be initiated so that they are supported in challenging an organisational culture which effectively encourages them to be "harder" on other women, to over conform to a stereotypical "male" culture, and to see any attempt to modify it as an invalidation of their own success.
14.3.10 That attention be paid to creating opportunities for social interaction between all those involved in the Údarás, at least on an annual basis.

14.3.11 That arrangements be put in place to ensure that an instantaneous translation service is available so that English or Irish can be used at all meetings.

14.4. Courses and other kinds of training

14.4.1 That steps are taken to ensure that women in the Údarás are both made aware of the courses available and given advice and direction as regards those which would be useful to them in the context of the changing structure of the Údarás.

14.4.2. That mechanisms be put in place to ensure that information about courses (both internal and external) is widely available to all female staff.

14.4.3. That particular attention be paid by Management to encouraging and advising women staff as regards attendance at courses which will increase their knowledge about organisations and how they work (e.g. courses on negotiating skills, on women and management, on career paths, team building etc.)

14.4.4 That information on the courses which the women themselves have identified as of interest (whether in the technological skills, personal development or Management area be widely distributed, with women being encouraged to attend such courses, and that they be provided, where necessary, with "cover" for their own job to enable them to do this.

14.4.5 That insofar as day release and/or payment of fees is available for attendance at Diploma or Degree level courses, that this information be circulated to all staff.

14.4.6. That the difficulties women have in applying for jobs which suggest that a Degree is desirable/necessary for external applicants be recognised and dealt with through appropriate courses.
14.4.7 That mechanisms be found to disseminate information about the implications of the Strategic Plan for the creation of posts in the medium and long term; and that information about courses to equip women for jobs in these areas be circulated to all women (e.g. in the tourism and community development areas).

14.4.8 That in view of the underrepresentation of women at Grade 3 and above that Line Managers be encouraged to nominate women for internal and external courses in the Management areas, and that the extent of their success in doing this be recorded in the annual equality audit (see 14.6.3).

14.4.9 That a per capita gender audit be available on an annual basis as regards expenditure on staff training (differentiating between internal and external courses) and that this also be included in the annual equality audit (see 14.6.3).

14.5. Procedures and Work Arrangements

14.5.1 That perceived improvements in the interview process be maintained and extended; that opportunities be created to extend women's work experience and that specific measures to facilitate the integration of work and family life be extended and/or introduced.

14.5.2 That for posts at Grade 3 level and above that the Interview Board consist of equal numbers of men and women and at a similar level.

14.5.3 That at least one external person be included on all interview panels, especially those involving appointments at Grade 3 or above, and particularly in the situation where both men and women are candidates.

14.5.4 That in putting together Interview Boards, preference be given to including those who have attended courses in interviewing skills and including an equality module (where an outcomes model of equality, indirect discrimination, sexual harassment, targets and other kinds of positive action has been discussed).
14.5.5 That a programme be put in place to ensure that all staff in the Údarás are exposed to such a training programme over a specific period of time (say two years) and that failure to undertake such a course will effectively disbar the person from participating in Interview Boards.

14.5.6 That it be made clear to all interviewers that considerations related to whether or not a man needs a job more or that women need Maternity Leave constitute indirect discrimination and may lead to legal proceedings.

14.5.7 That, if it does not already exist, consideration be given to the creation of a marking schema which would be used by Interview Boards to access candidates' suitability at interview, and that the details of this schema be discussed with the Union and be publicly available.

14.5.8 That men's higher probability of reaching second interviews be monitored on a regular basis, in the recognition that it could reflect indirect discriminatory processes (and that this information be included in the annual equality audit).

14.5.9 That as part of a progressive policy of staff utilisation, an anonymous questionnaire be distributed to those women who were invited but did not attend for interview for Grade 3 posts and above to ascertain the reasons for this pattern and how it can be changed.

14.5.10 That a procedural handbook be produced and circulated to all staff with their wages within an agreed period of time; that it clearly outline the conditions under which job sharing, career breaks etc. can be obtained, as well as outlining arrangements and entitlements surrounding maternity leave.

14.5.11 That this handbook state that job sharing and part-time paid employment is available to staff at all levels except in exceptional circumstances; and that it be clearly indicated such job sharing will not militate against women's chances of promotion; and that these positive facilitative attitudes be reflected in Personnel practice.
14.5.12 That consideration be given to the re-introduction of flexi time for staff who are not involved in travelling (within the parameters created by their job and the staff available in their Department).

14.5.13. That the issue of business suits for the women employees be reconsidered and assessed in the light of their wishes (rather than those of the male employees).

14.5.14 That where staff wish it, that short term job swaps between permanent women at the same Grade be introduced.

14.6. Changing the Place of Women in the Údarás

14.6.1: That attention be paid to the position, activities and skills of the women in the re-visioning of the Údarás, particularly its role in social and cultural development, and that this be underpinned by the appropriate structures and arrangements.

14.6.2 Within an organisation such as the Údarás, where men are overwhelmingly concentrated at the top of the structure and women at the bottom, the culture which sees the appropriate place for women as being at the bottom can arguably best be challenged by the appointment of an Equal Opportunities Manager. Such a person should have direct access to the Chief Executive Officer; and be responsible (with appropriate administrative support) for developing an action plan identifying targets (in conjunction with other Managers). Such targets might deal, for example, with the proportion of women at various grades that the organisation would work towards employing by the year 2000. The Equality Manager should also be involved in developing gender neutral job evaluation schemes; setting up an Equality Committee; advising individual employees on equality matters; monitoring and publishing a yearly equality audit which should be circulated to the Board etc.

14.6.3 That an annual equal audit be prepared and circulated to the Board of the Údarás, and copied to the Department of Equality and Law Reform, and the Department of Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht showing the proportion of women at each Grade; as well as monitoring the extent to which Grade 3 is effective as a stepping up point to Grade 2 and
above for women; monitoring; the proportion of women who reach second interview, and the proportion ultimately appointed in mixed competitions from Grade 3 upwards etc. Since Personnel is directly involved in these decisions it is appropriate that this task not be undertaken by staff in that area, but by an Equal Opportunities Manager (see above) with Personnel being requested by the Chief Executive to supply the relevant material within a specified period of time.

14.6.4 That the opportunities provided by the new technology as regards facilitating contact between Head Office and the Regions, and as regards reducing the volume of copy typing, be exploited to extend the scope of women's roles within the Údarás, within a context where the Grading of all posts is under review.

14.6.5 That taking into account the linguistic skills of the women in the Údarás, and their relevance to a re-envisioning of the Údarás, that particular attention be paid to encouraging women to attend meetings in the Community.

14.6.6 That the practise of inviting women staff to factory opening, and to the launch of various other Údarás initiatives be re-established, partly because such occasions provide an opportunity for women to make informal contacts and partly because given the women's linguistic fluency they are an important element in rooting the Údarás within the Gaeltacht and improving its image.

14.6.7 That positive action to offset the effects of past discrimination be seen as an important and legitimate element in improving the position of women in the Údarás.

14.6.8 That a more broadly based debate about the nature of equality be stimulated, focusing particularly on the limited nature of equality at the level of access; and the relevance of an outcomes oriented approach given the evolution of the Údarás, and the (implicit) positive discrimination in favour of men which has occurred in the past.

References


ÚDARÁS NA GAELTACHTA (1996) Strategic Plan Galway, Spiddeal


Primary Sources

Personnel Manager (1996) Documentation relating to the Documentary Evidence