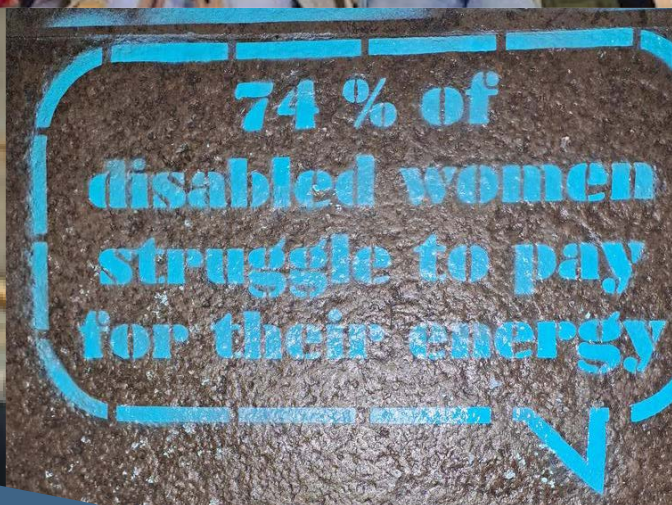
2024

MAKING RIGHTS REAL

A year of Making Rights Real



Introduction

We are known for:

- Our commitment to the meaningful and inclusive participation of people who most need change, using a friendly and accessible approach.
- Our fearlessness and ambition for practical and impactful change, by holding power to account.
- Using our skills and expertise at the service of people who most need change.

Making Rights Real was established in July 2020 as a grassroots' human rights organisation for Scotland with a big vision - human rights for all! Since forming we have worked alongside over 400 people. They tell us our work has had a transformational impact upon their lives.

Based on core human rights values of dignity and respect, all our work is underpinned by the principles of a human rights based approach.

We do this by delivering education, empowerment and capacity building sessions on human rights; art, theatre and creative activities to build confidence and promote wellbeing; and supporting community groups to amplify their voices and to increase their participation in decisions that matter to them.

The people we work alongside tell us our work has directly impacted upon their lives - improving wellbeing, increasing confidence, increasing social connection and increasing knowledge about human rights and confidence relating to claiming human rights in their own lives.

We are incredibly proud of what our small team has achieved, walking side by side with communities who are living with human rights violations, and being led by what is most important to them.

This report highlights our work over the last calendar year, from January to December 2024.

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Gender Based Budgeting

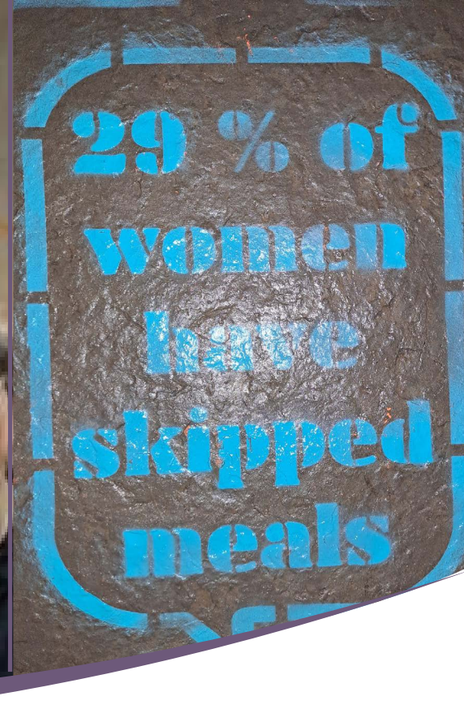
In 2023 we worked together with Fa’side Women and Girls Group and The Scottish Women’s Budget Group to use gender budgeting tools to look at how the current cost of living crisis is impacting the human rights of women and girls in East Lothian. The report *The cost of living crisis - I think about it all the time* was launched on December 11th 2023 and was delivered in person to East Lothian Council elected members and the Scottish Cabinet, along with chalk pavement art work highlighting poverty as a human rights issue facing women and girls.

Intergenerational work has been so life changing for me and my family, my mum participates in the group and so does my grandmother and it brings so many communities together and so many more issues can be tackled when we work together.

Charley,
Group Member

There is still a lot of work to be done, and a lot of barriers to be broken down so that gender inequality is addressed at the table where decisions are made. Intergenerational working needs to be at the core of what we do. It’s the heart of our organisation, of our group, and without that we wouldn’t be where we are today.

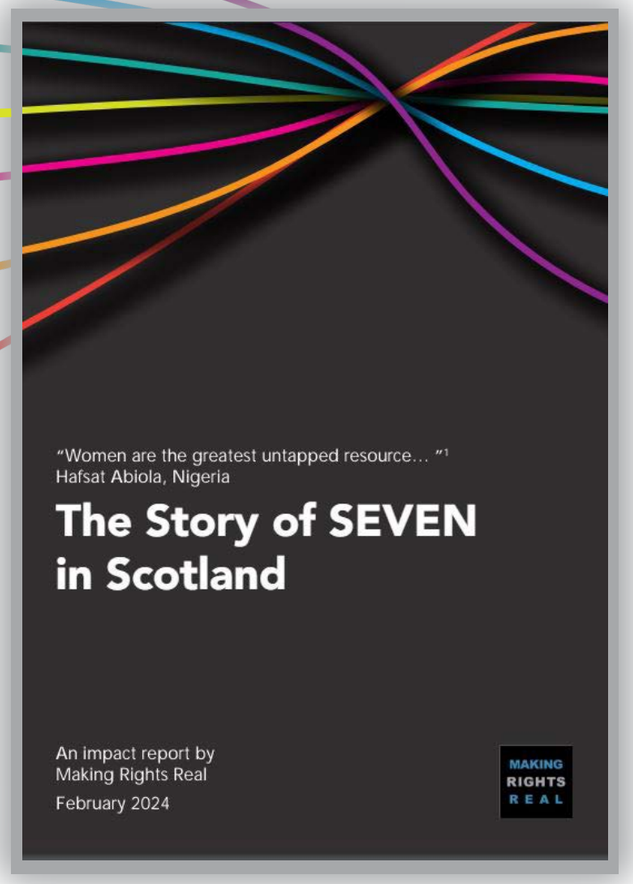
Katie McFarlane
Founding Member



In 2024:

- We continued to work alongside Fa’side Women and Girls Group to use their shocking findings to advocate for change, meeting with East Lothian Council to discuss how the local authority can embed the principles of gender based budgeting into their work and working together to respond to the East Lothian Poverty Action plan.
- Our report was discussed in the Scottish Parliament in cross-party working groups on transport and poverty.
- We became nationally recognised award winners! Fa’side Women and Girls group received the Valuing Generational Inclusion and Diversity Prize at the Generations Working Together awards for their cost-of-living project, delivered jointly with Making Rights Real and Scottish Women’s Budget Group. Generations Working together produced a great video about the project and award.
- We celebrated the award at a community event in October!
- We employed Heather from Scottish Women’s Budget Group, an expert in Gender Based Budgeting, and Loreen Pardoe, an expert in intergenerational working, to work with Fa’side Women and Girl’s Group on advancing gender based budgeting with the support of the Women’s Fund for Scotland and the National Lottery Community Fund.

Meeting with East Lothian Council Labour Group members



The play SEVEN is a piece of documentary theatre that tells the true stories of seven women who bravely fought for the well-being of women, families, and children around the globe.

In 2022, using the PANEL principles, Making Rights Real brought SEVEN to Scotland. We delivered three community workshops in Fife, Perth and Kinross and Edinburgh, using the script and story of SEVEN to talk about human rights in Scotland. Women from across Scotland performed at the Scottish premiere of the play at the Scottish Parliament in December 2022 and at Dunfermline Carnegie Hall in September 2023.

If we don't stand up for all rights then who will?

MRR SEVEN
Cast member

Sometimes you can feel too small or you can feel that actually the suffering is too great but actually these women show that you can keep going.

MRR SEVEN
Cast member

In February 2024 we held a creative workshop with globally renowned SEVEN playwright, Catherine Filloux where cast members watched her new one woman play "How to Eat an Orange" and were invited to write poetry and improvise.

On International Women's Day, March 8th 2024, 45 people attended our online event where we launched an impact report "The Story of SEVEN in Scotland". This report highlighted the profound impact the project had on the lives of the women who took part.

Our evaluation survey, conducted with cast members, highlighted:

100% wanted the project to continue

93.8% reported their networks had increased

93.8% reported their wellbeing had improved

100% said their human rights knowledge had increased

93.8% reported this enhanced knowledge connected to their lives

87.5% of women reported feeling more confident

100% felt more socially connected as a result of being part of the project

I have
met a lovely bunch of women
that have brought me to changing
my whole life. I don't look back anymore
because if I look back I just get depressed
and now I have to look forward and now
every day's a challenge and every day I'm
getting stronger and stronger.

MRR SEVEN
Cast member

The
feeling of community,
solidarity and friendship that has been
built between the cast, our director, and
the fantastic team from Making Rights Real, is
something I have rarely experienced within either
dramatic or activist projects, which can often be
drowned in internal competition or conflict. I carry the
experience of SEVEN close to my heart and have
watched my castmates do the
same.

MRR SEVEN
Cast member

While the SEVEN project has come to an end, the cast want to continue to meet and engage with Making Rights Real. We held an informal online get together in November 2024 and another is planned for February 2025, so watch this space for what these mighty women do next!

So much injustice
Is this all too big to change?
Not for brave women.

- Haiku written at February 2024 workshop

Light the Sparks

> Knowledge is the first step to claiming human rights. But this is just the beginning of the journey. At the start of the course, participants didn't think human rights were for them. But we talked about how human rights belongs to everyone and can be a powerful tool for carers and disabled people experiencing rights violations. By the end of the course, they were framing social care issues as human rights violations.

Shubhanna Hussain
Partnership Development Officer
Coalition of Carers in Scotland

Making Rights Real works alongside communities experiencing human rights issues, especially those who have been marginalised by laws, policies, practices or public authorities. We support communities to use the power of human rights to mobilise for economic and social change.

Empowering unpaid carers to name and claim their rights

In spring 2024 in partnership with Coalition of Carers in Scotland we delivered our course 'Human Rights and Unpaid Carers' to carers centre workers who provide advice, advocacy and practical support to unpaid carers all over Scotland. This is the 2nd time we have delivered this 3-session, 9-hour course.

Discussions showed that unpaid carers regularly experience violations of their rights. Some were so serious as to be potential breaches of the Human Rights Act 1998, the Equality Act 2010 and health and education legislation. Rights breaches are compounded by systemic barriers to accessing legal advice and representation and there are inadequate referral routes to solicitors or advice services, even in the most serious cases.

Casework examples were based on participants' own experiences, so the course content was tailored to be directly applicable. The content also included human rights legislation, PANEL principles, sharing experiences and exploring how they could embed a human rights based approach in their organisations.

At the end of the course:

100% 100% of participants said they wanted to continue developing their human rights knowledge and practice to better identify and challenge rights violations.

100% 100% of participants said they felt fairly or very confident talking about human rights after the training.

A first step in closing the accountability gap is empowering unpaid carers to use human rights language confidently to advocate for themselves and to have support to challenge bad decisions.

You can read a blog about what we learned delivering this course on our website.

Addressing Housing Rights Violations: Cables Wynd House

In 2024, we continued to provide bespoke human rights support to the Cables Wynd House Residents Group, who have faced long-term housing rights breaches, providing human rights legal information, support with human rights monitoring and capacity building, delivering in-person and online training and collaborating on sections of their upcoming human rights monitoring report which will launch in January 2025.

In 2022 and 2024, the group, supported by Inspiring Leith, conducted action research on housing conditions.

Key findings included:

- **Housing rights violations** including mould, pests, and outstanding repairs.
- **Lift issues:**
  - 58% of residents experienced moderate to major disruptions.
  - 6.7% of residents were housebound due to non-functional lifts.
  - In June 2024, one lift was out of action for over a month, disproportionately impacting disabled residents.

In June 2024, tenants spoke at the full Council meeting, their first public experience of holding the duty bearer to account. A motion to invest in lift repairs was passed unanimously by Edinburgh City Council. The powerful deputation received a round of applause from elected representatives. We were delighted to be invited by the group to be part of this delegation, and to have supported residents to raise these issues.

In December 2024 the group shared their experiences of using human rights to organise their community at our Human Rights Day event, co-organised by the Human Rights Consortium Scotland, MRR, JustRight Scotland, and Amnesty.

We have worked closely in partnership with Inspiring Leith's Link Up Development Worker Hannah Kitchen Kirby to deliver this work. Hannah completed her student placement with MRR three years ago and has taken the power of human rights activism to support and grow a really powerful and dedicated housing rights group. You can read Hannah's blog about this journey on our website.

> Partnering with a new Scottish organisation, Making Rights Real (MRR), gave residents and workers an excellent framework for discovering and communicating the priorities of the wider community. MRR helped guide us through the detailed steps in taking a human rights approach and also link us to public bodies it felt difficult to approach on our own.
>
> **Hannah Kitchen Kirby**
>
> Excerpt from *Strength, Friendships, Rights and Change: Using Human Rights Based Approaches alongside Assets Based Community Development at Cables Wynd House, Scotland,* Practice Insights Magazine, IACD, Issue 22.

North Highland Women's Wellbeing Hub

We have continued working with North Highland Women's Wellbeing Hub, a determined group of activists in Caithness, who are calling out NHS Highland for breaching their right to adequate maternity and gynaecological services.

We have supported them to frame their experiences as human rights violations. Making Rights Real's Lorraine Barrie was invited to deliver a presentation at the Hub's event in June 2024 on the Right to Accessible Healthcare, alongside the Scottish Women's Convention.

> You made us into human rights defenders. So grateful for your help and support.
>
> **North Highland Women's Wellbeing Hub activist**

The shocking real life impacts on women being denied their rights featured of STV News this year, and was documented in the Scottish Human Rights Commission's (SHRC) Spotlight project examining economic, social and cultural rights in the Highlands.

In 2025, we will host an online event on the human right to healthcare with North Highland Women's Wellbeing Hub and Scottish Women's Convention.

Travellers' Rights

Travellers in Scotland face significant longstanding human rights issues. Over many generations, communities have experienced deeply entrenched racism and discrimination, poor access to services and human rights violations.

This year we have worked alongside Mangin' Manishes and RAJPOT (voluntary organisations run by and for Travellers), residents of Double Dykes in Perth, Bobbin Mill in Pitlochry, and Tarvit Mill in Cupar to support action to address current human rights breaches.

In February 2024 we contributed to the Human Rights Consortium written contribution to the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights for states parties under review, highlighting shocking findings from the action research carried out by the residents of Double Dykes.

87.5% of survey respondents experienced direct verbal abuse

37.5% reported ongoing bullying

The following resident testimonials highlight the distressing consequences of such discrimination:

> I am always getting verbally abused, at times getting looks from the settled community making you feel (terrible). I feel anxious.

> I have been to a tenants' meeting where a tenant from a local area has turned and said we are here because of "the dirty Travellers".

> Have had racism all my life – it is not as bad now.

In July 2024, we submitted evidence to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination highlighting the human rights breaches at these sites and the experiences of members of the community.

We initiated meetings with University of Glasgow School of Law to explore a partnership around unmet legal support for Gypsy Travellers in Scotland. As we have supported Gypsy Traveller communities we have found that there are few opportunities open for legal redress for the community.

Tarvit Mill, Cupar, Fife

A community of over 100 Gypsy Travellers at Tarvit Mill, a local authority site in Fife, face human rights violations due to poor accommodation. They are advocating for themselves and organising about the way that they have been treated throughout the development of their site - which has left families in poor quality temporary accommodation for over a year. For 18 months, we have worked alongside residents by raising awareness of the issues they face, attending meetings with duty bearers, and exploring avenues for change.

In May 2024, residents instructed Making Rights Real to escalate concerns to the Scottish Housing Regulator, Scottish Human Rights Commission, Fife Council, the Minister for Equalities and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The Regulator investigated the concerns. It found Fife Council had failed to meet its obligations under the Scottish Social Housing Charter and that the decant site did not meet the Scottish Government's Minimum Site Standards.

Thanks very much for your help and hope you can come to our meetings regular… We have the housing regulator coming [soon]. All these things make a tremendous difference.

Resident

A woman from the back of the meeting stood up and said to the leader of the council "you are breaching our human rights here". One of the residents told him that they were going to report their housing conditions to the United Nations. This is grassroots human rights activism in action.

MRR worker

More details on this landmark decision are available in Scottish Housing News and Travellers Times.

Residents' complaints spark damning investigation into Fife Council-run Gypsy/Traveller site

18 November 2024

In July, Fife Council's leader apologised to residents. Home loss and disturbance payments have now been offered and were redevelopment work has accelerated, Residents have reported that work onsite is now moving at a quick pace, and they are more confident they will be able to move into new accommodation by April 2026 as promised.

Photo from Travellers Times, Nov 8, 2024

Bobbin Mill in Pitlochry, Perth and Kinross

Gypsy Travellers at Bobbin Mill, a former Tinker Experiment site in Pitlochry, have long endured poor-quality accommodation from the local authority. Last year, we supported residents in conducting participatory action research to document human rights breaches and enable grassroots human rights monitoring.

This year we highlighted the findings from their human rights monitoring in a submission to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee's Concluding Observations included specific mention of the failure of the Scottish Government in the "Tinker Experiments":

> "54. The Committee recommends that the State party, including the government of Scotland, adopt all measures necessary to tackle the causes and legacy of forced assimilation faced by Gypsy and Traveller communities and ensure that members of these communities are able to participate in all initiatives in this regard."
>
> - UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 2024 Concluding Observations.

One year after community members wrote to the CEO of Perth and Kinross Council about the inadequate heating in the chalets, new stoves were installed.

In 2024 we continued to work alongside the community to explore avenues to tell the story of the Tinker Experiments and raise public awareness of the horrific treatment of the community. We began exploratory work with RAJPOT (an arts and human rights organisation based at Bobbin Mill) to develop ideas to support their campaign for justice and redress for the 'Tinker Experiments' with an exhibition and have convened meetings with Historic Environment Scotland, the Universities of Stirling and Napier, the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh University and the Oxford XR Lab to develop this project. We are seeking funding to develop this further.

In 2024 we also hosted meetings with Bobbin Mill and Double Dykes building connections with indigenous communities in Taos Pueblo, New Mexico, through Dr. Holly Scheib.

Double Dykes Traveller Site, Perth and Kinross

We have worked alongside residents of Double Dykes Traveller Site in Perth and Kinross for three years to support them to name and claim their rights.

In 2024, following the publication of their 2023 report, *Our Human Rights Matter*, we continued supporting the community in monitoring the local authority's response to identified human rights violations.

In March, we delivered training on racism and discrimination, a topic requested by residents. The discussion uncovered discrimination in multiple areas of life, such as accessing goods and services, education and healthcare.

Making Rights Real supported participatory action research to inform a second human rights monitoring report, launched in December at an event attended by 30 people, including community members and the former Chair of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

This report is a comparison of the results from human rights surveys and interviews carried out by residents at Double Dykes Travellers site in Perth in September 2022 and summer 2024, providing insight into the progressive realisation of human rights and living conditions in the community over time.

The report highlights that the Double Dykes Travellers' site remains plagued by inadequate housing conditions despite some incremental improvements.

The 2024 survey revealed:

Mould and Damp

83% of respondents reported these issues, slightly reduced from 87.5% in 2022, but still far above acceptable levels.

Sewage and Drainage

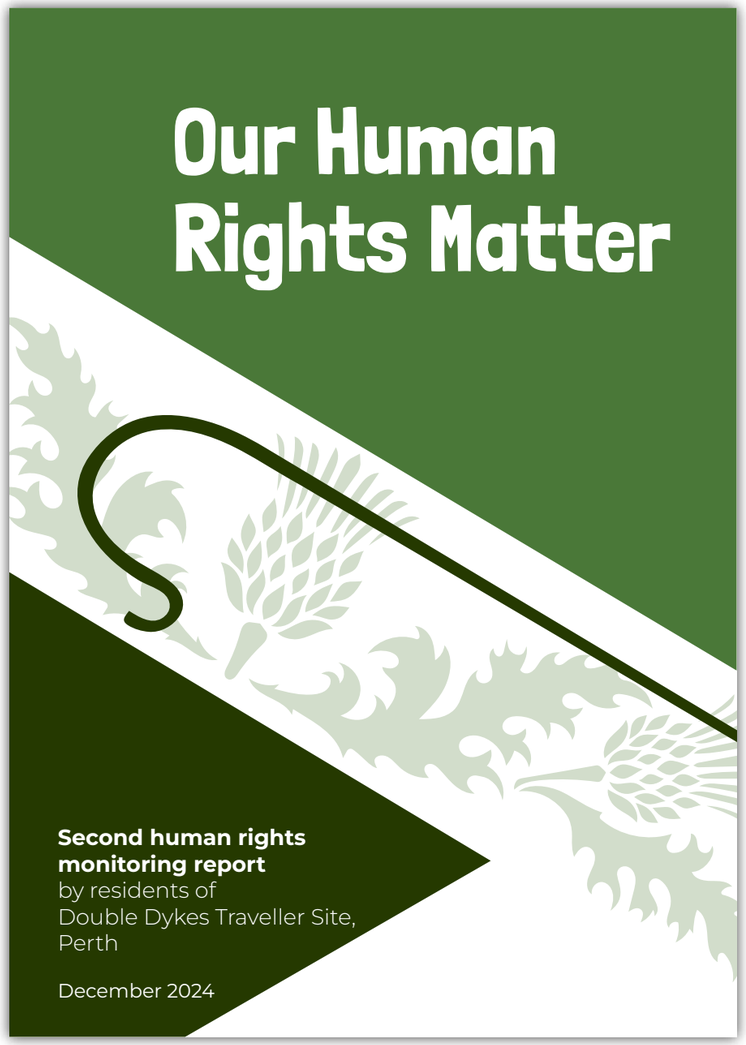
of households were affected by persistent problems.

Infestations

of households were affected as mice and rats remain pervasive.

Heating Issues

Increased from 50% in 2022 to 83% in 2024.



We will continue to work alongside the community to challenge the human rights breaches they face.

In 2024 we also worked with the group to record a podcast addressing the challenges they face, with the first episode set for release next year—stay tuned!

Sharing our Practice & Expertise

It's been a very busy year but we have been grateful to get the opportunity to share what we do widely.

This year we have:

Spoken at 20+ events and conferences

Delivered training to over 100 people

100

Supervised 3 students on placement

Worked in partnership with 4 universities

Clare has spoken about Making Rights Real's work to human rights defenders in Ireland, London and Chile!

Clare was selected to attend a global convening in Chile to share our practice and learn about creative approaches to critical dialogue as part of an Atlantic Institute programme for social change leaders.

Making change across Scotland

In September 2022, Historic Environment Scotland hosted our big human rights picnic. Our people gave them the challenge to make historic places more accessible. In 2024, Historic Environment Scotland announced free access to their sites one Sunday a month as a result of meeting with our groups!

Democracy Matters

In March 2024 we held a joint event with the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) to bring together 50 human rights defenders we are working alongside, from all over Scotland, to respond to the Scottish Government's consultation on Democracy Matters.

Our event and response focussed on how a rights based approach could be transformative if used in democratic processes in Scotland.

> I love attending human rights events. They broaden my knowledge every time.
>
> **Democracy Matters Attendee**

> Thanks as always to Making Rights Real – no one else is operating in this way and it's incredibly needed and refreshing!
>
> **Democracy Matters Attendee**

Wellbeing and activism

Human rights work can be tough. Our approach to staff wellbeing is integral to us being a human rights based employer. As we aim to live and breathe the human rights values of dignity and respect in our daily actions and work, taking care of ourselves must be central to our flourishing as individuals and as an organisation.

Staff and volunteer wellbeing day at Edinburgh Festival August 2024

In practice this means striving to have strong values-led terms and conditions and practices, flexible working as standard, access to free counselling services, generous annual leave entitlement, learning opportunities and resources set aside for staff wellbeing days.

We are striving in Making Rights Real to make rest part of our human rights activism.

Volunteers/Placements

We supervised Maria Pirvu, a human rights masters student from the University of Edinburgh, who completed her dissertation with us, on the topic "Scottish Gypsy Travellers and their rights: Exploring the added benefits of a human-rights based approach to Scottish policy underpinned by ICERD". Maria's dissertation was awarded 90% - an exceptionally high grade!

Read her blog and factsheet *Empowering Gypsy Travellers Through Rights-Based Policy: Lessons from My Dissertation* by Maria Pirvu on our website.

"I would like to thank you so much for your support and Making Rights Real for giving me this opportunity. Without you, I wouldn't have achieved this, and I'm so proud and happy with the work that we've produced!"

We are continuing to supervise a law student from the University of Glasgow, who has undertaken research work for us on the right to healthcare and unpaid carer's rights.

In 2024, we hosted Janis Wilson, a Community Development Masters student at the University of Glasgow. Janis is an incredible practitioner who supported Fa'side Women and Girls Group in their International Women's Day events and co-facilitated our Democracy Matters conference. Janis was awarded a Masters with distinction – an inspiring achievement.

"Rest is a revolutionary act. It enables us to refresh and acknowledge our own power as activists for human rights change.

- Clare MacGillivray, Director, Making Rights Real

We are incredibly proud of the work our small but mighty team has achieved this year.

Next year we will continue to stand alongside marginalised communities in Scotland to support them to name and claim their rights and to improve their lives.

Thank you to our funders:

CORRA FOUNDATION
voice • power • change

Independent Human Rights Fund for Scotland
Supporting people and communities to power social change and secure justice

Women's Fund for Scotland
Inspiring Women

John Ellerman Foundation

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Keep in touch and find out more about our work:

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