

A Gender Blueprint for the Future

The pursuit of gender equality and social justice is important for development. Although progress has been made in advancing the political, social and economic rights of women, gender inequalities persist at all levels and in all countries. The promotion of equality and equity of outcomes for women and men is therefore still critical.

The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development provides the policy framework for efforts to achieve gender equality in the Commonwealth. It sets out a vision of "a world in which women and men have equal rights and opportunities at all stages of their lives to express their creativity in all fields of human endeavour, and in which women are respected and valued as equal and able partners in establishing the values of social justice, equity, democracy and respect for human rights".

Through the Gender Equality Programme, the Secretariat seeks to realise this vision, focusing on areas in which the Commonwealth has a comparative advantage. The strategic objectives of the Plan of Action include strengthening institutional capacity to integrate a gender perspective into the mainstream of all government and Secretariat activities, and focusing on the key issues of gender and macroeconomics, women's human rights, and gender in politics, peace and conflict prevention.



At a symposium in the Caribbean, participants discuss the participation of women in local politics

Gender Mainstreaming and the Gender Management Systems

The institutional strengthening of national women's machineries – be they women's bureaux, ministries responsible for women's affairs or dedicated units or officers responsible for mainstreaming gender – to enhance their capacity for gender mainstreaming is being addressed through the Gender Management System (GMS). This is a comprehensive network of structures, mechanisms and processes to ensure the effective integration of gender concerns into all government policies, plans and programmes and thus to advance gender equality and equity. This innovative approach to gender mainstreaming was developed by the Secretariat in consultation with member governments and other key stakeholders.

A series of GMS publications, including a *Gender Management System Handbook* and sector-specific resource materials, was published in mid-1999. The series, which comprises both comprehensive reference manuals and shorter, user-friendly quick guides, includes tools for gender analysis and planning, monitoring and evaluation for the use of policy-makers, senior planning officers and other government personnel, managers in public and private institutions, tertiary institutions, trainers and development workers.

A major focus of the programme is the provision of technical assistance to member governments on mainstreaming gender and establishing a GMS. By mid-1999, GMS Preparatory Missions had been undertaken in 11 countries in all regions of the Commonwealth, and further missions were in the planning stage. The Secretariat had also provided a long-term gender expert to assist the Government



of St Kitts and Nevis, the first country to pilot the GMS model.

The Plan of Action sets out a vision of a world where women and men have equal rights and opportunities at all stages of their lives

Gender Mainstreaming at the Commonwealth Secretariat

The Secretariat has adopted new strategies to ensure that all programmes and activities incorporate gender concerns. A Gender Steering Committee, consisting of divisional Directors, meets biannually to review the progress of the mainstreaming

Gender and Budget

Using conceptual tools developed by the Secretariat, the Sri Lanka Ministry of Finance successfully implemented the Commonwealth Gender Budget Initiative in 1998. Research teams and task forces were set up in five ministries: Education, Health, Agriculture and Lands, Social Services and Industrial Development. The teams carried out surveys to ascertain gender-based expenditures in 1996 for each sector. Workshops were held to review the sectoral reports and to discuss possible measures to rectify the imbalances identified.

This pilot project enabled the Government of Sri Lanka to take concrete steps towards rectifying gender imbalances created through the national budgetary process. It had the following outcomes:

- ❖ An enhanced capacity for gender-disaggregated data collation and analysis within the Ministry of Finance and key spending ministries.
- ❖ The establishment of gender-aware planning mechanisms in the allocation of resources.
- ❖ An increased understanding of gender and macroeconomic policies, and commitment to gender equality throughout government, including policy-makers and expenditure planners.
- ❖ Women's contribution to the economy was specifically referred to in the 1999 Budget Speech of Sri Lanka.
- ❖ An indication that policy-related gender imbalances would be taken into account in future policy formulation.



The allocation of resources needs to take gender considerations into account

process. Gender Focal Points – senior staff in each Division – facilitate the process at divisional level. Gender training programmes are held for programme staff and management to strengthen their capacity for gender planning and analysis. Resource materials and monitoring and evaluation tools have been developed for use by all staff.

Gender and National Budgets

The Secretariat encourages the development of gender-aware macroeconomic policies, with particular emphasis on the differential impacts of national budgets on women and men. It has developed a set of tools for producing gender-sensitive national budgets, from which requesting member governments can choose the most appropriate for their national circumstances. Five countries have received technical assistance to pilot the tools. In collaboration with AusAID, the Secretariat has developed a manual entitled *How To Do a Gender-sensitive Budget Analysis: Contemporary Research and Practice*, focusing on issues, methods and strategies for the first year of a gender-sensitive budget initiative.

Women's Human Rights

Combating violence against women and the commercial sexual exploitation and abuse of children continues to be a priority for member governments. The Secretariat has programmes on the elimination of these problems, and on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Declaration on Elimination of Violence Against Women.

In response to a recommendation made by Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs at their 1996 meeting, the Secretariat has developed a model framework based on the GMS methodology, providing a range of measures, structures and mechanisms to address violence against women in a comprehensive manner. The framework is being piloted by the Government of Mauritius, which has opted to establish a GMS in the area of human rights. A national workshop to review the model framework was held in March 1999 for representatives of ministries, organisations and

South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago. A 'good practice' guide on administrative and legislative measures to address the problem is being developed for dissemination to member governments.

Gender, Politics, Peace and Conflict Prevention

The Secretariat supports the integration of gender issues in democratisation, peace and conflict resolution activities. With the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Commonwealth Foundation,



The Secretariat assists member governments in developing strategies for achieving the target of having 30 per cent women in decision-making

NGOs. Participants agreed a draft national action plan on violence against women which will form an integral part of the national gender and development action plan.

A manual on *Guidelines for Police Training on Violence Against Women and Child Sexual Abuse* has been revised and updated. Another volume, *Advancing the Human Rights of Women: Using International Standards in Domestic Litigation*, was published in 1997. Regional and country studies were commissioned on the commercial sexual exploitation of children in Africa and Asia, and in India, Jamaica, Kenya,

it assists member governments in developing strategies for achieving the target of having 30 per cent women in decision-making in the political, public and private spheres by 2005. The 1999 publication *Women in Politics* documents the experiences of 33 Commonwealth women who have been successful in the political arena.

Symposia on gender, politics, peace, and conflict prevention and resolution for the Africa, Asia/Europe and Caribbean regions were attended by female and male parliamentarians, and representatives of regional, international and non-governmental organisations. Participants identified training as a critical strategy for overcoming barriers to women's political participation, civic leadership and engagement in conflict resolution initiatives. The final symposium in the series, for the South Pacific region, is being planned to address these issues in a pan-

Commonwealth approach, in response to the emerging trend of extreme cases of violence against women seen in recent ethnic and other conflicts.

Gender Strategies for the 21st Century

The theme of the meeting of Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs scheduled for early 2000 in New Delhi, India, is 'Advancing the Commonwealth agenda into the new millennium'. Ministers will consider strategies for gender mainstreaming; new challenges for women's human rights, political participation and peace; globalisation, gender and macroeconomic policies; and collaboration and building partnerships for enhanced sustainability in advancing gender equality. They will also consider an updated Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development (2000 – 2005).

Gender Mainstreaming: A Consultative Process

The Gender Management System (GMS) was developed through a consultative process involving governments, the Secretariat, the academic community and other stakeholders. As part of that process, a pan-Commonwealth workshop on the GMS in Malta in April 1998 brought together gender experts, Permanent Secretaries, development planners, representatives of national women's machineries and tertiary educational and training institutions, and trainers from NGOs and the private sector.

The workshop introduced the concept and methodology of the GMS, reviewed the draft GMS Handbook and other publications, facilitated the exchange of experience and good practices, and developed strategies for the implementation of GMS pilot

projects and gender training, allowing for the validation and systematic application of training tools and resource materials.

A GMS workshop in Malta

