

Preface

In 1996, Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs mandated the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop the concept of the Gender Management System (GMS), a comprehensive network of structures, mechanisms and processes for bringing a gender perspective to bear in the mainstream of all government policies, programmes and projects. The success of the GMS depends upon a broad-based partnership in society in which government consults and acts co-operatively with the other key stakeholders, who include civil society and the private sector. The establishment and strengthening of gender management systems and of national women's machineries was the first of 15 government action points identified in the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development.

This reference manual has been produced to assist member governments in meeting their commitment to implementing the Plan of Action. It is hoped that it will be used by development policy-makers, planners, field staff and others, in conjunction with other publications relating to the particular national context.

The manual is intended to assist readers in using a GMS to mainstream gender in national governments. It is part of the Gender Management System Series, which provides tools and sector-specific guidelines for gender mainstreaming. This manual is intended to be used in combination with the other documents in the series, particularly the *Gender Management System Handbook*, which presents the conceptual and methodological framework of the GMS. This manual is also available in an abridged form under the title *A Quick Guide to Using Gender-Sensitive Indicators*.

The development of the GMS Series has been a collaborative effort between the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender and Youth Affairs Division and many individuals and groups. Their contributions to the thinking behind the GMS are gratefully acknowledged. In particular, I would like to thank the following: all those member governments who supported the development of the GMS and encouraged us to move the project forward; participants at the first GMS meeting in Britain in February 1997 and at the GMS Workshop in Malta in April 1998, who provided invaluable conceptual input and feedback; and the Steering Committee on the Plan of Action (SCOPA). I am also most grateful to: the consultants who worked on the manual, including Tony Beck, University of British Columbia, Canada, who wrote the text, and Daniel Woolford, Consultant Editor of the GMS Series, who revised and edited it for publication; and the staff of the Gender Affairs Department, Gender and Youth Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, particularly Ms Eleni Stamiris, former Director of the Division, who took the lead in formulating the GMS concept and mobilising the various stakeholders in its development, Dr Judith May-Parker who provided substantive editorial input, and Dr Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen, Project Co-ordinator of the GMS Series, who guided the project through to publication.

We hope that this resource series will be of genuine use to you in your efforts to mainstream gender.

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