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Introduction

Gender and the Public Service

Despite major efforts and some progress over the last couple of decades, women continue to be disadvantaged in comparison with men in many aspects of life, in most countries. The UNDP's Human Development Report records progress in human development according to the indicators of life expectancy, literacy, combined school enrolment and income (defined as Gross Domestic Product per capita). Since 1995 the Human Development Index (HDI) has included two gender-related indexes: the Gender-Related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM). Based on these, the 1995 Human Development Report draws "a major indictment of the continuing discrimination against women in most societies," and states that, "when the struggle for gender equality has finally succeeded, a great milestone in human progress will have been made" (UNDP, 1995).

In the GDI, a measure is constructed for the overall achievements of women and men in the three basic dimensions of the HDI – life expectancy, educational attainment and adjusted real income. The GDI exposes inequalities between women and men and can be factored into the overall HDI to indicate relative levels of gender equality in various countries. The GEM focuses on three variables that reflect women's participation in political decision-making, their access to professional opportunities, and their earning power. It seeks to determine the extent to which women – in comparison with men – have been empowered to take part in different aspects of public life. The GEM differs from GDI, whose concern is primarily with basic capabilities and standards of living. In the GEM, income is evaluated for its contribution to GDP but also to empowerment capacities.

The Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) is of particular significance to the public service because it focuses on women's and men's political participation (seats held in parliament), the percentages of administrators and managers, and professional and technical workers who are women, and the share of earned income going to women and men. Thus, although the figures used in the GEM relate not just to the public sector but to all sectors, they provide a snapshot of the gender breakdown of decision-making in various countries, which informs an understanding of how women fare relative to men within the public service itself.

Table 1 shows the GEM for selected Commonwealth countries. The higher the GEM ranking (i.e., the lower the figure in the GEM rank column) the closer the country is to gender equity in terms of empowerment as defined by the GEM. In New Zealand, the highest-ranking Commonwealth country, the percentages of women parliamentarians, administrators and managers are close to the internationally endorsed target of 30 women in decision-making positions.

However, Table 1 reveals that while in some countries women are well represented among professional and technical staff, there are fewer women than men working as parliamentarians, administrators and managers in all Commonwealth countries for which figures are available. And in terms of earned income share, the picture in most areas is of considerable bias in favour of men.

Table 1 Gender Empowerment Measure, Selected Commonwealth Countries

Country	GEM Rank	Seats Held in Parliament (% to Women)	Administrators and Managers (% Women)	Professional and Technical Workers (% Women)	Earned Income Share (% to Women)
Australia	11	20.5	43.3	25.0	39.8
The Bahamas	19	10.8	26.3	56.9	39.5
Bangladesh	76	9.1	5.1	23.1	23.1
Barbados	14	18.4	37.0	52.1	39.5
Belize	32	10.8	36.6	38.8	18.0*
Botswana	39	8.5	36.1	61.4	38.9
Cameroon	65	12.2	10.1	24.4	30.9
Canada	6	19.3	42.2	56.1	37.8
Cyprus	60	5.4	10.2	40.8	27.1
Fiji Islands	68	5.8	9.6	44.7	21.4
Guyana	33	20.0	12.8	47.5	26.4
India	86	7.3	2.3	20.5	25.7
Lesotho	41	11.2	33.4	56.6	30.3
Maldives	67	6.3	14.0	34.6	35.4
Malta	-	-	-	-	20.9
Malawi	80	5.6	4.8	34.7	42.0
Malaysia	48	10.3	11.9	44.5	30.2
Mauritius	49	7.6	14.3	41.4	25.4
Mozambique	43	25.2	11.3	20.4	41.3
New Zealand	5	29.2	32.3	47.8	38.8
Pakistan	92	3.4	3.4	20.1	20.8
Papua New Guinea	85	-	11.6	29.5	34.8
Sierra Leone	77	6.3	8.0	32.0	29.7
Singapore	47	2.5	34.3	16.1	30.7
Solomon Islands	91	2.1	2.6	27.4	40.0*
South Africa	22	23.7	17.4	46.7	30.8
Sri Lanka	70	5.3	16.9	24.5	34.5
Swaziland	61	8.4	14.5	54.3	34.9
Trinidad & Tobago	17	19.4	23.3	53.3	29.7
United Kingdom	20	7.8	33.0	43.7	35.0
Zambia	71	9.7	6.1	31.9	38.8
Zimbabwe	45	14.7	15.4	40.0	37.4

- figures not available

* to nearest whole number

Source: Human Development Report 1997 (UNDP, 1997)

Gender Mainstreaming

The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development presents 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 values of social justice, equity, democracy and respect for human rights. Within such a framework of values, women and men will work in collaboration and partnership to ensure people-centred sustainable development for all nations.”

Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995a

Gender mainstreaming is the central strategy of the Plan of Action for advancing gender equality and equity. It refers to the consistent use of a gender perspective at all stages of the development and implementation of policies, plans, programmes and projects. In terms of the public service, this would include the activities of the public service commission, the central personnel office of government, as well as personnel departments in core and sectoral ministries.

Gender mainstreaming involves simultaneously:

- ◆ bringing about institutional change to ensure the empowerment of both women and men through equal participation in decision-making on issues which affect their lives;
- ◆ analysing all government policies and practices to examine the differential impact they have on men and women; and
- ◆ providing training and capacity building to enhance gender management skills and raise the general level of gender awareness.

Mainstreaming gender differs from previous efforts to integrate women's concerns into government activities in that, rather than adding on a women's component to existing policies, plans, programmes and projects, a gender perspective informs these at all stages, and in every aspect of the decision-making process.

Scope and Objectives of this Manual

The purpose of this reference manual is to provide guidelines for mainstreaming gender in the public service of national governments.

The manual presents the main elements of the Gender Management System, which has been developed by the Commonwealth as an effective means of mainstreaming gender in national governments and in the broader civil society. It provides an overview of global and Commonwealth mandates for promoting gender equality and equity, and examines the development of theoretical approaches to the issue.

The manual examines the structures and functions of public service personnel management in the context of public service reform, and examines gender-related policy issues in personnel management. And it provides guidelines on gender analysis and proposes a number of policy interventions which governments may consider adopting, depending on particular national circumstances, to advance gender equality and equity in the public service.

This manual is designed primarily for use by Commonwealth governments that are implementing gender mainstreaming in all their policies, plans and programmes. It may also be of use to other governments, related agencies and non-governmental organisations.

The Gender Management System

The Gender Management System (GMS) is defined as:

“a network of structures, mechanisms and processes put in place within an existing organisational framework [such as a national government], to guide, plan, monitor and evaluate the process of mainstreaming gender into all areas of the organisation’s work, in order to achieve greater gender equity within the context of sustainable development.”

Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999a

The structures of the GMS include :

- ◆ a Lead Agency. This is normally the National Women’s Machinery (Women’s Bureau or Ministry of Gender/Women’s Affairs);
- ◆ a Gender Management Team, which includes representatives of the Lead Agency, other key government ministries, and civil society;
- ◆ Gender Focal Points – two or more designated senior staff members in each ministry, whose role is to promote gender mainstreaming within their ministries;
- ◆ an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee whose members are the Gender Focal Points from each ministry;
- ◆ a Commission or Council for Gender Equality; and
- ◆ a Parliamentary Gender Caucus consisting of gender-aware parliamentarians.

The mechanisms of the GMS include:

- ◆ gender analysis, which reveals how policies, plans and programmes impact differently on women and men
- ◆ a Management Information System, which communicates critical information throughout the GMS;
- ◆ gender training, which promotes gender awareness and sensitivity;
- ◆ a gender-aware Performance Appraisal System which rewards the advancement of gender equality and equity and provides sanctions against gender discrimination.

The processes of the GMS include:

- ◆ setting up GMS structures and mechanisms;
- ◆ developing and implementing a national Gender Action Plan;
- ◆ mainstreaming gender in the National Development Plan and sectoral ministries.

Public service commissions and central personnel agencies have an important role to play in setting up the structures and mechanisms of the GMS. They can work with the Lead Agency to build these structures and co-ordinate and supervise their functioning. Public service commissions and central personnel offices also have a key role in instituting a gender-aware performance appraisal system and providing gender training to members of the public service.

Public service commissions and central personnel agencies are also among the ministries affected by the national Gender Action Plan and by mainstreaming gender within their own ongoing activities.

The structures, mechanisms and processes of the GMS are examined in greater detail in Sections 3 and 4 of this manual.