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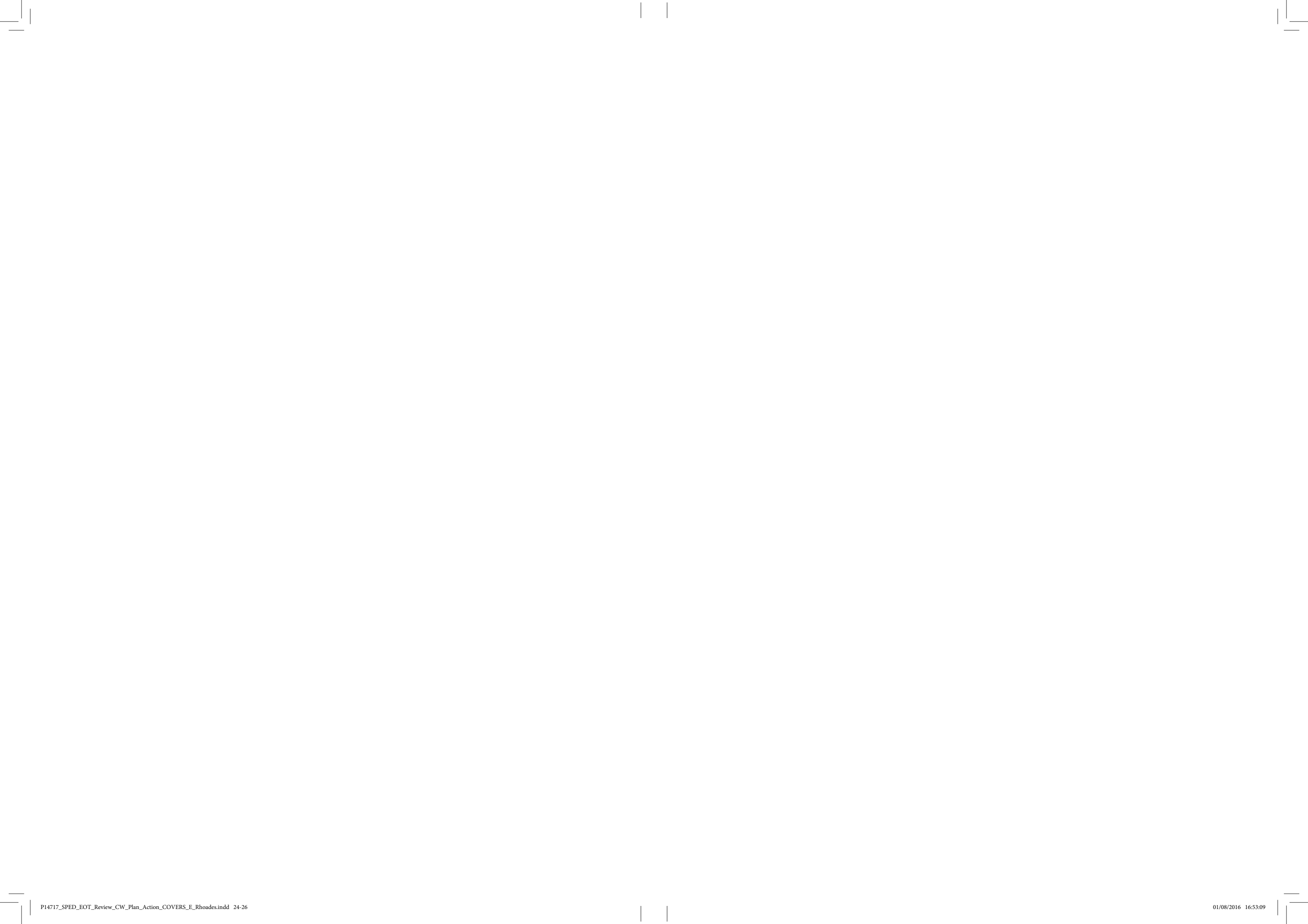
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End of Term Review of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015

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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Commonwealth Secretariat has commissioned this End of Term Review (ETR) of the Commonwealth Plan of Action (PoA) for Gender Equality 2005–2015 to assess the strategies/actions taken by the member governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other organisations in the implementation and in the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of the PoA. The purpose was to define the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth since 2005 and to propose both strategic and operational recommendations that would facilitate the implementation of Commonwealth gender priorities in the post-2015 development agenda. The Commonwealth Secretariat contracted Public Administration International (PAI), UK, to carry out the ETR. This report constitutes the evaluators' final report.

Background

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 provides the framework within which the Commonwealth contributes to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment.

The PoA sets out to ensure that a gender perspective is included in policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. The plan covers four critical areas:

i.   gender, democracy, peace and conflict;

ii.   gender, human rights and law;

iii. gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment;

iv.   gender and HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

A further important aspect of the PoA is implementation. According to the document, implementation is envisaged across four key areas:

Partnerships: This involves collaboration between the Commonwealth Secretariat, member governments and other partners such as international organisations and civil society organisations (CSOs). Men, boys and young people are also essential partners in achieving gender equality.

Knowledge, information and capacity building: Generating and sharing information are key aspects to implementing the PoA. At the request of member governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat would undertake policy advisory missions such as in the areas of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and gender-based violence and offer gender training and capacity-building support.

Resources: Adequate levels of financial, human and technological resources were deemed essential for the effective implementation of the PoA.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation: Reporting on the implementation of the PoA was to be supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat. The Commonwealth women's affairs ministers were to review the progress made and constraints faced by member governments and the Secretariat in implementing the PoA.

Approach

The approach to the ETR and the methods used included meetings with key Commonwealth Secretariat staff; review and research of all pertinent records and data related to the implementation of the gender PoA by the member countries, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other organisations; questionnaire surveys and phone/Skype interviews with relevant stakeholders associated with the PoA; and establishing a set of nine quantitative indicators and eight qualitative indicators against which progress should be measured. Proxy indicators were to be used where data are unavailable. The full list of quantitative and qualitative indicators is available in Section 3.5 ('Monitoring Framework and the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group – CGPMG'); As part of the review, the consultants carried out a meta-analysis of available data to present an analysis of trends in gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth from 2005 to 2015; field visits to seven selected countries (in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean) to hold face-to-face interviews; and the use of case studies, which were developed by the Commonwealth Secretariat as part of under a separate consultancy , as examples of 'good practice' . These demonstrated significant change using the Gender at Work theory of change model and incorporated the Country Action and Results Submissions collected by the Commonwealth Secretariat for the ETR process.

The key research questions were:

1.   What was the progress on the implementation of the PoA for Gender Equality 2005–2015?

2.   How adequate were the monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms?

3.   What best practices, trends and lessons learned can be identified?

Findings

The PoA encouraged including a gender perspective at the national, regional and international levels. It was an important framework for working towards gender equality and women's empowerment within the Commonwealth.

Trends analysis

Overall, there have been significant steps forward in several of the critical areas since the baseline year of 2004, most notably in policy and legal reforms. Over the 10-year life-cycle of the PoA, important and effective measures associated with the four critical areas of the PoA have been undertaken within Commonwealth member countries. This evaluation outlines initiatives that address the four critical areas of the PoA and are aimed at addressing gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth. A few examples are increases in the overall number of women in leadership roles; the adoption of legislation to protect against domestic violence; innovative work on GRB; efforts to encourage women entrepreneurs; the production of relevant gender-related publications; and increased levels of women accessing antiretroviral (ARV) drugs. The majority of survey respondents reported either significant or moderate progress against the nine quantitative indicators, with the most progress on the existence of laws addressing violence against women (critical area 2/indicator 4; Table 4.1). Yet there is great variation within and between regions, making comparison and assessment of overall progress difficult. In addition, data availability is limited for several Commonwealth countries, particularly the Pacific small island states. Despite this progress, women face major barriers such as a lack

of implementation of laws pertaining to gender equality, for example laws on violence against women; exclusion from formal decision-making and employment; obstacles to accessing services; and discriminatory norms and social institutions.

Implementing the PoA

Partnerships

The role of the Secretariat in building partnerships has emerged as a critical theme during the ETR. The Commonwealth Secretariat has engaged in various activities and connected with several partners throughout the life-cycle of the PoA. Important partnerships have also been developed by other Commonwealth partners such as, inter alia, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network. There is great willingness to engage with the Commonwealth and with the Commonwealth Secretariat. The key is a need to foster new and effective ways in which these partnerships can be forged.

Knowledge, information, capacity building and resources

The evaluators have found a need to develop comprehensive lists of partnerships and knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives associated with gender equality and women's empowerment. This includes creating detailed information on follow-up procedures to determine the impact of projects and publications on implementing the PoA and how much money has been allocated to carry out the implementation of the PoA. Without access to accurate data on resources requested, allocated and spent, it was difficult to monitor the impact of programmes. This, in turn, has affected the nature of the recommendations within the final report; for instance, how adequate staffing and other resources can be ensured in a post-2015 Commonwealth framework.

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

Monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the implementation of the PoA have been difficult throughout its life-cycle. The ETR report has been able to outline what has changed in terms of the quantitative indicators within the four critical areas but not what has caused the changes. As the ETR Reporting Framework (2013) developed for this review correctly predicted, the ETR will not be able to provide direct linkages between 'results and indicators and what member countries and the Secretariat were proposing to do'. Thus, the evaluators have been able to outline what has changed in terms of the quantitative indicators within the four critical areas but not what has caused the changes. The country action and results submissions (from which the case studies emerged) used the Gender at Work model with its theory of change format, and this has provided deeper analysis in terms of what has caused changes within Commonwealth countries. Examples from these case studies, which have been highlighted within the ETR report, have proved to be an important tool to build on the information gathered in the trends analysis.

Challenges and lessons learned

Efforts to implement the PoA over the past 10 years have encountered a number of obstacles and challenges. These can be summarised as:

Lack of accountability: Although the PoA provides a useful structure for working towards gender equality, it is not a plan of action with binding policies or enforceable mechanisms. This limits its effectiveness, as stakeholders are not required to undertake any of the actions outlined in the PoA, and there are no sanctions for failing to support gender equality across the Commonwealth's critical areas.

Lack of targets: For progress to be measured and monitored, a clear framework that outlines targets and indicators is necessary. Apart from the objective of attaining 30 per cent representation of women in the political, public and private spheres, no other target was set in the PoA. This has resulted in a lack of clarity about what the PoA was trying to achieve and prevented the different stakeholders from developing a strategic plan with detailed activities that would enable them to achieve or contribute to shared goals.

Lack of focus: The four critical areas include 53 calls for action to be undertaken by Commonwealth governments and 31 calls for action to be undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat. These were too numerous and at times too broad. The result has been an inability to carry out, implement or evaluate and monitor all of these provisions.

Lack of flexibility: A 10-year plan was too long and the PoA was not flexible enough to address shifting priorities or developing issues. This includes not being able to incorporate emerging and changing issues such as, inter alia, the importance of climate change (especially for island member countries and other Commonwealth countries that are vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters); the impact of natural disasters on women, who must continue to take care of children and/or family members under these conditions; a more integrated approach to women's health issues, which involves communicable and non-communicable diseases and prevention considerations; and the global economic crisis that began in 2008.

Lack of awareness: Unless national women's machineries (NWMs) and other Commonwealth partners had made direct contact with the Commonwealth Secretariat on the subject of the PoA, the majority of individuals or organisations were not aware of the PoA.

Lack of resources: No financial or other resources were specifically allocated for the overall implementation of the PoA.

Lack of monitoring, evaluation and accountability: In the absence of a robust results framework, it has not been possible to effectively monitor and evaluate or undertake accountability measures in relation to what has been done and how any changes have come about, or why changes did not occur as expected in terms of implementing the PoA within the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Secretariat over the 10-year period.

Recommendations

The findings of the ETR clearly indicate that a new Commonwealth 10-year plan of action for gender equality and women's empowerment is not the best option. The evaluation study makes 10 strategic and operational recommendations for the Commonwealth's post-2015 gender equality and women's empowerment framework. The main recommendation is for the Commonwealth to align itself with the recently agreed (September 2015) United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 5, 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', and its nine targets. By aligning itself with the UN's SDG 5 and its targets, the Commonwealth would not become just another stakeholder undertaking gender equality work. Rather, thanks to the Commonwealth's unique history and structural make-up as an intergovernmental organisation, it would contribute by emphasising its niche areas of comparative advantage, such as its innovative work on GRB, violence against women and legislative reform, and its capacity to monitor elections. Given this, the Commonwealth should play to its strength and focus its post-2015 framework on a selection from the nine UN SDG 5 targets.

Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired immune deficiency syndrome
ART	Antiretroviral therapy
ARTEMIS	Activity Results Tracking and Expenditure Management Information System
ARV	Antiretroviral
AU	African Union
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CBW	Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief executive officer
CGPMG	Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CIWil	Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership
CLGF	Commonwealth Local Government Forum
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil society organisation
DFID	Department for International Development
DHS	Demographic and health survey
ELECAM	Elections Cameroon
ETR	End of Term Review
FGM	Female genital mutilation
FGM/C	Female genital mutilation/cutting
FPTP	First past the post
GATI	Gender and Trade Initiative
GBRW	Global Board Ready Women
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross domestic product
G&T	Gender and Trade
GRB	Gender-responsive budgeting
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
IACGBV	Integrated Approach to Combating Gender-Based Violence
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPU	International Parliamentary Union
LGBT	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender
MAP	Male Advocacy Programme
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOU	Memorandum of understanding
MP	Member of Parliament
MSPVAW	Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women

MTR	Mid-Term Review
MWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
NAP	National action plan
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NWM	National women's machinery
NWTF	Nigerian Women's Trust Fund
OCC	One-Stop Crisis Centre
OECD	Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation
PAI	Public Administration International
PIFS	Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat
PMIS	Programme Management Information System
PoA	Plan of Action
PR	Proportional representation
PWW	Progress of the World's Women
RBM	Results-based management
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SIGI	Social Institutions and Gender Index
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SOFCAR	Society for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPED	Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
TB	Tuberculosis
ToR	Term of reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNDB	United Nations Development Business
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNSCR	UN Security Council Resolution
UNW	United Nations Women
VAW	Violence against women
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WAMM	Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Contents

1. Introduction

The Commonwealth Secretariat has commissioned this End of Term Review (ETR) of the Commonwealth Plan of Action (PoA) for Gender Equality 2005–2015 to assess the strategies/actions taken by the member governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other organisations in implementing the PoA and in its monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The purpose was to define the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth since 2005 and to propose both strategic and operational recommendations that would facilitate the implementation of Commonwealth gender priorities in the post-2015 development agenda.

The Commonwealth Secretariat contracted Public Administration International (PAI), UK, to carry out the study. The team consisted of a team leader with expertise in gender, human rights and law; an M&E expert with experience of gender, democracy, peace and conflict; PAI's Director as overall project director providing quality assurance; and one of PAI's international project managers with expertise in M&E, finance and administrative support.

This Final Report presents the results from the evaluation carried out from July to December 2015.

The remainder of this chapter describes briefly the background of the Commonwealth's PoA and sets out the scope and the focus of the ETR.

The rest of the report explains the methodology and approach used (Chapter 2); introduces the PoA, its institutional structures and monitoring framework (Chapter 3); presents the key findings from the ETR's activities (Chapter 4); presents challenges and lessons learned (Chapter 5); and outlines recommendations and the way forward (Chapter 6).

1.1 Background

The PoA provides the framework within which the Commonwealth contributes to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It is aligned with global frameworks, and reinforces the Commonwealth's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in the United Nations (UN) Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and UN Security Council resolutions. The PoA was conceptualised in 2004, approved at the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Meeting in Fiji (2004) and endorsed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government during their biennial meeting in Malta (2005).

The PoA sets out to ensure that a gender perspective is included in policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. The plan covers four critical areas:

i. gender, democracy, peace and conflict;

ii. gender, human rights and law;

iii. gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment;

iv. gender and HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome).

As part of the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the PoA, the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) was established in 2005 as the principal institutional mechanism to monitor and implement the PoA. It meets annually and in conjunction with the National Women's Machineries (NWMs) Meetings. The CGPMG is currently made up of a rotating core of 26 members, 21 from NWMs and 5 (soon to be expanded to 6) from civil society organisations (CSOs). There is an Executive Committee to assist the Chair of the CGPMG in 'the co-ordination of the group and delivery of its role and responsibilities'.[1] This is made up of the current Chair, immediate past Chair, Head of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Section, CGPMG NWM subregional spokespersons and CGPMG CSO representative. In 2014, a technical subgroup was created to provide guidance on the ETR process of the PoA. A strategic review of the performance, governance and accountability of the CGPMG was carried out during 2013/14, and in March 2014 members agreed to shift the focus of the group from monitoring to accountability.

In 2009, under the supervision of the CGPMG, the Commonwealth Secretariat embarked on a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of the PoA covering the five-year period 2005–2010. The aim of

the MTR was to assess progress made by both Commonwealth countries and the Secretariat in implementing the PoA's key recommendations and identifying persistent challenges and gaps. Priority issues requiring attention were highlighted. One of the critical aspects pinpointed during the MTR was its overambition in aiming to gather data for over 100 indicators.

In 2012, a baseline assessment report on the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in Commonwealth member countries was produced, and 2004 was identified as the PoA baseline year. The Executive Committee of the CGPMG met in June 2012 to consider the baseline report and, based on data availability, agreed on a revised set of nine quantitative indicators supported by eight qualitative indicators to guide monitoring and reporting on the PoA in case studies and country action and results submissions. Country action and results submission reports outline the actions taken by member countries in advancing gender equality goals in their countries as well as the results of those actions. From this report, the nine quantitative and eight qualitative indicators used in this final report were developed.

To facilitate the ETR process, a framework for the ETR report was produced in February 2013, using a gender analysis and the results-based management (RBM) approach. The framework assessed (i) the implementation of the PoA, (ii) the monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms for the PoA, including the role of the CGPMG, and (iii) case studies and country profile reports. It highlighted that information for a number of the quantitative indicators may not be fully available and proposed that the ETR provide an analysis of trends broadly in the areas defined by the nine indicators and a macro-level analysis of change using the *Gender at Work* model, provided in the terms of reference (ToRs).

1.2 Scope of the End of Term Review

The review period covers the life-cycle of the PoA between 2005 and 2015. It comprises a review of strategies/actions taken by the member governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat in implementing the PoA. Based on the ETR findings, the study is to propose both strategic and operational changes that would facilitate the implementation of Commonwealth gender

equality and gender-mainstreaming priorities and suggest mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Based on the scope of work, the three main research questions that generated the information needed to deliver the tasks outlined in the ToRs (Annex 1) were:

1. What was the progress on the implementation of the PoA for Gender Equality 2005–2015?

2. How adequate were the monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms?

3. What best practices, trends and lessons learned can be identified?

1.3 Focus of the End of Term Review

The overall purpose of the ETR is to assess the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth since 2005. The aim is to define the policies, practices and mechanisms that have been successfully used to implement the PoA and to recommend lessons and strategic priorities for the future in relation to gender equality and gender-mainstreaming issues within the Commonwealth. The final report also includes 'best practice' examples associated with the PoA's four critical areas and undertaken by Commonwealth countries and the Secretariat.

As specified in the ToRs, the ETR will:

- review and research all pertinent records and data related to the implementation of the Gender PoA by the member countries, the Secretariat and other organisations;

- assess the gender-sensitive impact survey of the relevant stakeholders associated with the PoA;

- assess the meta-analysis of available data to present trends in gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth from 2005 to 2015;

- assess the interviews with relevant Secretariat staff (past and present) in units and divisions associated with the implementation of the PoA, the interviews with selected stakeholders (governments, programme partners,

collaborating institutions) and the interviews with project beneficiaries (engaged in the implementation of the PoA);

- draw upon case studies taken from the country action report submissions currently being documented by the Secretariat under a separate consultancy, and the results from the gender-sensitive impact survey, interviews and field visits to identify and document 'best practices' in the implementation of the PoA by the member governments, the Secretariat and other organisations;

- identify challenges and lessons in the implementation of the PoA from 2005 to 2015 and recommend strategic and operational recommendations that would facilitate the implementation of Commonwealth gender priorities in the post-2015 development agenda and suggest mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

2. Methodology and Approach

2.1 Approach and phases in data collection

2.1.1 ETR framework

In responding to the ToRs, the evaluators used the following tools, which were designed and approved by the CGPMG to achieve the specific objectives of the review:

- A set of nine quantitative indicators and eight qualitative indicators against which progress should be measured. Proxy indicators were to be used, where data were unavailable. The full list of quantitative and qualitative indicators is available in Box 3.1, 'Monitoring framework and the CGPMG'.

- A framework for the ETR report, produced in February 2013 and approved by the CGPMG in 2015. This was done using a gender analysis and the RBM approach. The framework assessed (i) the implementation of the PoA, (ii) the monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms for the PoA, including the role of the CGPMG, and (iii) case studies and country profile reports. It highlighted that information for a number of the quantitative indicators may not be fully available and proposed that the ETR provide an analysis of trends broadly in the areas defined by the nine indicators and a macro-level analysis of change using the Gender at Work theory of change model as depicted in Figure 2.1.

- A case study model and template.

- A framework to identify examples of good practice in PoA M&E.

Originally, the Commonwealth Gender Accountability Framework was part of the approved set of tools. Its aim was to monitor the methodology, commitment levels, investments and transformative results around women's and men's consciousness, access to resources and opportunities, informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices, and formal laws, policies and accountability. The Gender Accountability Framework was supposed to be used by the CGPMG to assess country-level progress on PoA implementation and to provide constructive feedback to member countries. The framework had been endorsed for the ETR of the PoA. However, because of constraints faced by the CGPMG in implementing this framework, it has not been used within the ETR process. The details of these constraints have been outlined in Section 4.7, 'Implementing the Plan of Action: monitoring, evaluation and reporting'.

Figure 2.1 Gender at Work model[2]
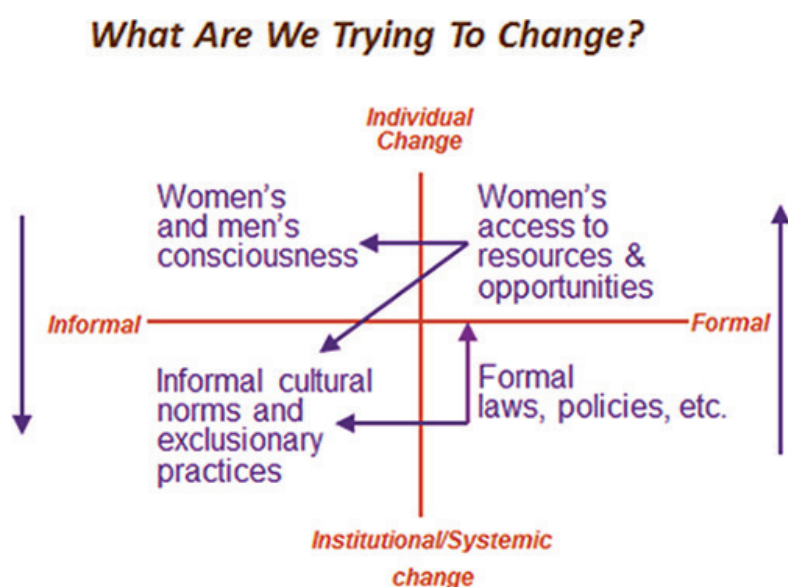
The evaluators used the following methods for information collection, analysis and feedback during the study:

- They reviewed and researched of all pertinent records and data related to the implementation of the Gender PoA by the member countries, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other organisations.

- They prepared, organised and co-ordinated a brief but focused gender-sensitive impact survey of the relevant stakeholders associated with the PoA.

- They designed and conducted a meta-analysis of available data to present trends in gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth from 2005 to 2015.

- They conducted interviews with relevant Commonwealth Secretariat staff (past and present) in sections and divisions associated with the implementation of the PoA.

- They conducted interviews with selected stakeholders (governments, programme partners, collaborating institutions) and with project beneficiaries (engaged in the implementation of the PoA), through field visits and electronically/by telephone/Skype.

- They used the case studies, which were developed for the Commonwealth Secretariat under a separate consultancy, as examples of good practice. These demonstrated significant change using the Gender at Work theory of change model and incorporated the country action and results submissions collected by the Commonwealth Secretariat for the ETR process.

- They analysed key findings from the gender-sensitive impact survey, interviews and field visits in order to identify and document how the PoA was implemented by the member governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat and other organisations.

2.1.2 Approach and phases in data collection

The final report is based on an assessment of key questions developed in conjunction with the criteria set out in the TORs. Please see Annex 3 for the full list of questions addressed during the ETR.

The review questions focused on:

- how much progress has been made towards implementing the PoA outcomes in the four critical areas across the Commonwealth member countries;

- the impact of the Commonwealth Secretariat's support (and that of other partner organisations) on progress in advancing the gender equality and women's empowerment goals in the PoA;

- the relevance of the M&E processes set up for the PoA, including the role of the CGPMG in monitoring, evaluating and reporting;

- understanding factors that have enabled implementation of the PoA and what factors have presented challenges across the Commonwealth countries;

- identification of best practices, trends and lessons learned.

The ETR included documentary reviews, in-person/telephone interviews, questionnaire surveys, meta-analysis of data and field visits to selected Commonwealth countries. Three different online questionnaires were designed to target the following groups:

- NWMs and CGPMG members (12 responses received);

- experts, partners and Commonwealth Family of Organisations, including individuals who had contributed to Commonwealth Secretariat publications, who had carried out research in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment and who had presented papers at Commonwealth meetings (15 responses received);

- CSOs (3 responses received).

Accordingly, the total number of responses received from the online questionnaires was 30.

Samples and analysis of these questionnaires are attached in Annex 4.

Furthermore, 28 follow-up contacts were made during phase III of the ETR (see below) in an attempt to increase the level of responses from the online questionnaires. An additional six respondents agreed to speak with the evaluators over the

telephone or submitted a questionnaire, and their relevant comments have been added within the final report.

Face-to-face and telephone interviews with Commonwealth Secretariat staff (current and former) were conducted and guided by a one-page questionnaire:

- Commonwealth Secretariat staff (current and former) (19 individuals interviewed).

The staff questionnaire can be found in Annex 3 and the list of individuals interviewed can be found in Annex 5. The answers have not been listed, to ensure the anonymity of respondents, since some of the information was given in confidence or off the record. However, the essence of key responses has been incorporated within the body of this report.

The ETR was carried out in four phases: phase I, inception phase; phase II, interviews with Commonwealth Secretariat staff, questionnaire design and meta-analysis; phase III, field visits, follow-up conversations via Skype and email with Commonwealth Secretariat staff, and further information gathering through questionnaire surveys and document review; phase IV, synthesis and reporting.

Activities carried out in phase I included:

- Briefing meeting and initial interviews with staff of the Commonwealth Secretariat (please see Annex 5 for a list of individuals interviewed).

- Desk review and documentary analysis for the PoA (please see bibliography for a list of documents consulted).

- Identification of stakeholders to be interviewed and of interview questions for the electronic and staff surveys. The targeted electronic questionnaires for the NWMs/CGPMG members, experts, partners and Commonwealth Family of Organisations and CSOs were developed based on the areas identified in 'Implementing the PoA' and covered key areas of progress, ongoing challenges and obstacles and notable good practices.

Phase II activities consisted of:

- design and issue of questionnaires for NWMs/CGPMG members, experts, partners and Commonwealth Family of Organisations, CSOs and staff members;

- face-to-face interviews conducted with current Commonwealth Secretariat staff members;

- the extraction of quantitative data from various sources and analysis of qualitative data from the case studies as part of the meta-analysis to present trends in gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth from 2005 to 2015.

Phase III involved:

- Field visits to conduct face-to-face interviews with government officials, independent associations and CSO representatives. These were to Bangladesh, Cameroon, Rwanda, St Lucia, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Trinidad and Tobago (please see Annex 2 for the field visit reports and Annex 5 for the list of individuals/representatives who participated).

- Follow-up contact with NWMs/CGPMG members, experts, partners and Commonwealth Family of Organisations, CSOs and staff members, in an attempt to increase the response rates. This was especially pertinent for the online surveys, for which, although the deadline for submissions was extended, the response rates were extremely low (please see Annex 4 for a breakdown of the online responses received and Annex 5 for a list of individuals consulted by telephone).

- Additional documentation was reviewed (please see bibliography for a list of documents consulted) and results of the surveys were analysed and checked against evidence collected during the country visits.

In phase IV, the evaluators finalised the analysis of information gathered throughout the ETR, synthesised the information and drafted this report.

2.2 Limitations

- The scope of the ETR was large, covering 53 countries and a 10-year period, according to nine quantitative and eight qualitative indicators, across four critical areas. The review was both externally and internally focused, and has generated a vast amount of information that required analysis. The time-frame of six months to complete the final report was tight given the scope of what needed to be covered.

- It has been a challenge during the ETR to gather information on a comprehensive list of partnerships; knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives undertaken; and resources allocated by the Commonwealth Secretariat and directly related to the PoA. The literature review has revealed several publicly available and gender-related publications but these are not always linked to the PoA. Information has been provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat but a comprehensive list and overview covering the 10-year period of the PoA were not available.

- The lack of reliable, comparative data across the Commonwealth countries, and indeed globally, was a major challenge in carrying out the trends analysis of progress in women's empowerment and gender equality. National statistical offices often lack the resources, capacity or technical expertise to collect data on an ongoing basis, and gender-related measures have historically not been prioritised. A number of recent initiatives have been launched to address these challenges, such as Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) and Data2x. However, the lack of publicly available data (even with the use of proxy indicators) from the baseline year of 2004 and throughout the PoA time period of 2005–2015 was a major challenge in carrying out the trends analysis.

- On the field visits, the consultant was not able to attend the Rwanda trip or a morning session during the St Lucia visit because bad weather resulted in flight cancellations. The Commonwealth Secretariat staff members who were present during these field trips participated in the meetings and took notes. Please see these notes in Annex 2.

- Some of the field trips were very formal in their meeting structures, which meant that follow-up questions or discussions were not always possible or productive. Unfortunately, the evaluators were not able to meet any women or girls who had benefited from a programme or project directly associated with the implementation of the PoA.

- Although the number of consultancy days was increased during the ETR period, the total number of days available was still limited, particularly in the light of the very substantial amount of documentation to review and the limited time-frame. Despite this, the evaluators conducted a thorough review of the documents and data gathered for the final report.

3. The Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015

3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the origins of the PoA, why it was developed, its critical areas of action, and the structures and mechanisms associated with implementing it. It discusses the institutional structures and the monitoring framework established to monitor the PoA. Furthermore, it outlines reports pertaining to the evaluation of the PoA, such as the MTR.

3.2 Objectives of the Plan of Action

In 1995, as part of the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fourth UN World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, the *Plan of Action* on Gender and Development was presented. At its core was a mandate for Commonwealth member governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat to mainstream gender equality issues. One key feature of the plan was the movement from understanding development issues through the concept of 'women in development' to the broader notion of 'gender and development'. The plan was updated in 2000 to reflect international changes in relation to gender equality.[3]

The PoA under review (2005–2015) was conceptualised in 2004, approved at the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Meeting in Fiji (2004) and endorsed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government during their biennial meeting in Malta (2005). The Commonwealth Foundation co-ordinated civil society participation in the process of developing the PoA. A number of Commonwealth associations contributed to the development of the PoA, including the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network and the Commonwealth Women's NGO Network. The PoA is informed by the Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome Document (2000), the UN's MDGs and international documents such as the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and

relevant UN Security Council resolutions, including Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. It was also linked to the Beijing+10 Global Review.[4]

The PoA sets out to ensure that a gender perspective is included in policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels. Critically, the PoA provides a structure for working towards gender equality but it does not include binding policies or enforceable mechanisms.[5] Apart from the objective of attaining 30 per cent of women's representation in the political, public and private spheres, no other target was set in the PoA.

3.3 Critical areas for implementation

Four critical areas for action were identified:[6]

i.   **Gender, democracy, peace and conflict**

The Commonwealth considers democracy a fundamental value for all its citizens – women, men, younger and older persons – to enjoy. Member countries were encouraged to achieve a target of no fewer than 30 per cent representation of women in the political, public and private sectors. The importance of women's participation in democracy and peace processes was also highlighted.

ii. **Gender, human rights and law**

The Commonwealth re-affirmed its commitment to providing a rights-based approach in all areas of its work, including gender equality. Women and girls experience different forms of discrimination, and customary and religious laws, practices and traditions often have a greater impact on women and girls. Gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, the issue of land and property rights, etc. all have a bearing on women and girls being able to enjoy their human rights.

iii. **Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment**

Poverty is not only based on low or no income; it also derives from a lack of access to political, economic, social, natural and cultural opportunities.

Gender inequalities not only cause poverty for women but also exacerbate the impact of poverty on women. Also, women's contributions to the economy through unpaid work are not factored into economic analysis. Enhancing women's capabilities is crucial to alleviating poverty and increasing women's economic empowerment.

iv. **Gender and HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome**)

HIV/AIDS must be understood within the framework of sexual and reproductive health. Gender inequality lies at the heart of women's and girls' vulnerability and exacerbates the impact of HIV/AIDS. Gender-based violence, particularly rape, is a cause and consequence of HIV transmission. Gender inequalities and power imbalances result in women and girls being unable to negotiate safe sex or to refuse sex. This leads to their being susceptible to contracting HIV and developing AIDS.

3.4 Current institutional structures

The 53 Commonwealth governments implement programmes and activities related to the PoA at the national and local levels. In conjunction with them, four main institutional structures and processes currently exist that are involved in the overall implementation and monitoring of the PoA. These are the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meetings (WAMM), the NWM Meetings and the CGPMG.[7]

3.4.1 Commonwealth Secretariat

Headed by the Secretary-General, the Secretariat is currently made up of 12 units and divisions covering strategic programme areas[8] and other corporate sections such as the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division (SPED). The Gender Section is not a unit or a division per se but it was moved into the Office of the Secretary-General in 2014 to ensure greater visibility and deeper influence.

The Secretariat has undertaken several initiatives in implementing the PoA as linked to a twin-track approach to gender equality and gender mainstreaming. For instance, as part of its effort to institutionalise the principles of gender mainstreaming – which is a measure outlined in the PoA – the Secretariat developed a *Gender Equality Policy* in 2012. The overall goal of this policy is to support gender equality and women's empowerment in member countries through the Secretariat's programmes of assistance. The policy also aims to promote gender equality and mainstreaming in its internal systems and programmes of assistance.[9] An implementation and reporting framework for the Gender Equality Framework was developed in 2012.[10]

The Commonwealth Secretariat has also committed itself to gender equality and mainstreaming in its most recent *Commonwealth Strategic Plan (2013/14–2016/17)*. Six strategic outcomes are listed: democracy, public institutions, social development, youth, development (pan-Commonwealth) and development (small states and vulnerable states). Gender is not specifically noted in all these strategic outcomes but it is mentioned in the description of the social development outcome under the heading of 'Gender Equality and the empowerment of women effectively mainstreamed into member state policies, framework and programmes and Secretariat's projects'. Gender is also noted in relation to, inter alia, human resources and achieving 'gender balance' within the Secretariat. Even though the Strategic Plan covered the last two years of the PoA (2013–2015), crucially the PoA was not mentioned in the Strategic Plan. In contrast, the Youth Plan of Action (2007–2015) is noted within the youth strategic outcome.

In the Secretariat's first *Annual Results Report (2013/2014)* of the Strategic Plan (2013/14–2016/17), the successes and challenges faced by implementing the Gender Equality Policy were noted, but the implementation of the PoA was not included. Gender-mainstreaming guidelines were produced, which are intended to provide staff with an understanding the concept of gender, gender mainstreaming and how gender analysis can be used in project design and to help deliver outcomes in the Gender Equality Policy, the Strategic Plan and Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2013 priorities. Challenges in implementing the Gender Equality Policy are linked to internal structural changes at the Commonwealth Secretariat, including voluntary retirement and the reform of staff structures. Within the social development outcome (health, education and gender), progress was indicated in terms of, inter alia, a regional colloquium for

Women as Agents of Change, the production of an illustrative trends analysis linked to the ETR for the PoA and discussions with the World Bank from the NWM meeting (2013) surrounding women's enterprise and development.[11]

3.4.2 Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meetings and national women's machineries

In the implementation section, the PoA states that the women's affairs ministers will meet periodically to discuss progress made and constraints faced in implementing the PoA, share experiences, make recommendations and consider new and emerging gender issues. At 10WAMM (Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2013), a three-year overview of the PoA activities and results in the four critical areas was presented. In turn, budgetary resources (2010–2013) allocated to the Gender Section were outlined. The total for this period was £1,332,085. Extra funding (£39,000 in 2010/2011 and £64,000 in 2011/2012) was allocated for other events/programmes.[12] The next WAMM (11) will take place in Samoa (September 2016).

The NWMs meet annually. Heads of NWMs discussed a first draft of the PoA at their meetings in 2003 and 2004. They have also contributed to the implementation of PoA's critical areas. For instance, the 2014 meeting focused on 'Women's economic empowerment and the post-2015 development agenda'. In 2015, the theme was 'Women's political leadership within Beijing+20 and post-2015 development agenda'.[13]

3.5 Monitoring framework and the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG)

3.5.1 CGPMG

The CGPMG was established in 2005 as the principal institutional mechanism to monitor and implement the PoA. It meets annually, in conjunction with the NWM meetings. The CGPMG is currently made up of a rotating core of 26 members, 21 from NWMs and 5 (soon to be expanded to 6) from CSOs. There is an Executive Committee to assist the Chair of the CGPMG in 'the co-ordination of the group and delivery of its role and responsibilities'.[14] This is made up of the current

Chair, immediate past Chair, Head of Gender Section, CGPMG NWM subregional spokespersons and CGPMG CSO representative. The Committee has met twice, in 2012 and 2014. There have also been subregional meetings (the Pacific in 2013 and South Africa in 2014). In 2014 a technical subgroup was created to provide guidance on the ETR process of the PoA.

During its life-cycle, reviews of the PoA have been undertaken. In 2007 an M&E framework for the PoA was adopted. Aims within the M&E framework included assessing how the Commonwealth Secretariat's programmes have contributed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in member countries, identifying challenges to achieving PoA aims, and addressing strategic issues and emerging issues within the four critical areas of concern.

Attached to this framework, an MTR was undertaken covering the period 2007–2009. The review framework process was led by the Gender Section and involved the CGPMG and consultants. The revised report was published in 2011.[15] The main purpose of the MTR was to assess the extent to which member countries and the Commonwealth Secretariat's programmes, strategies and actions, as well as internal management practices, achieved the PoA's overall goal of advancing gender equality.

A few examples of the MTR report's conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned are:

- The CGPMG must play a more active role in the M&E process for the 2010–2015 review period.

- Immediate attention must be given to creating and articulating a clear set of targets and indicators for the four critical themes based on the existing PoA.

- A clear implementation strategy for 2010–2015 should be immediately articulated in a way that facilitates harmonisation of the implementation process with other international, regional and national processes intended to evaluate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment, rights and dignity.

- The Commonwealth Secretariat must immediately, and especially over the next five years expand the capacity of the Gender

Section with the technical and administrative personnel required to manage the M&E process.

- Countries should now have a better appreciation of data needs to inform a review of the PoA and should therefore ensure that statistical units and sectors start regularly gathering data on indicators for monitoring over the 2010–2015 period.

- The PoA needs to be reissued in the light of the recommendations and findings of this review.

- Lastly, one of the critical aspects from the MTR was the PoA's overambition in aiming to gather data for over 100 indicators. In 2012, a baseline report was commissioned to determine a baseline and review PoA indicators to ascertain for which indicators data are available and for which they are not. On the basis of this report, the baseline year of 2004 was agreed and eventually the nine quantitative and eight qualitative indicators, listed in Box 3.1, were developed for use in the ETR report.[16]

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Box 3.1 Monitoring framework and the CGPMG

Quantitative indicators

i. **Gender, democracy, peace and conflict**

Outcome: Women's equal and effective participation in leadership and peace processes realised.

Indicators:

1. Proportion of seats held by women in parliament and local government

2. Proportion of managerial decision-making positions occupied by women in the public and private sectors

3. Existence and/or implementation of national action plans (NAPs) on UN Security Council Resolution 1325

ii. **Gender, human rights and law**

Outcome: Laws and customs protecting women's rights advanced. Indicators:

4. Existence of laws addressing violence against women – domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape/defilement and sex trade

5. Evidence of customary laws codified

iii. **Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment**

Outcome: Women's access to economic resources increased.

Indicators:

6. Existence of laws promoting women's ownership of land and other assets

7. Proportion of national women-owned and -managed enterprises

8. Proportion of women enterprises accessing credit

iv. **Gender and HIV/AIDS**

Outcome: Services and support for women and HIV/AIDS carers strengthened.

Indicator:

9. Proportion of women accessing antiretrovirals (ARVs), counselling and testing

Qualitative indicators

1. **Institutional mechanisms and structures**: What institutional mechanisms and structures exist to support and progress gender equality?

2. **Financial and technical resources**: What financial and technical resources within the national budget are allocated for gender mainstreaming?

3. **Legislative and policy frameworks**: What legal, policy and regulatory frameworks exist to drive change?

4. **Socio-cultural context**: Describe the existing socio-cultural contexts that impact on gender equality.

5. **Engagement with women and CSOs**: Describe the mechanisms that exist at all levels to facilitate government engagement with CSOs and stakeholders. How effective are these mechanisms?

6. **Issues and challenges**: Political, economic, sociological and technological analysis; administrative, political and resource constraints. What issues are being addressed? What challenges are being encountered? How are they addressed?

7. **Lessons learned and way forward**: What support and gaps exist? Describe the initiatives that work, and the contexts in which they work, including actors involved.

8. **Case studies**: Significant change stories.

4. Key Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter incorporates the main findings from the activities undertaken for the ETR of the PoA. The purpose is to determine what progress has been made on implementing the PoA's four critical areas, set against the nine quantitative indicators and utilising the four implementation sections of the PoA (partnerships; knowledge, information and capacity building; resources; monitoring, evaluation and reporting). Information is taken from the trends analysis, the online questionnaire results, Commonwealth Secretariat staff (current and former) interviews, a literature review, country field visits and good practice examples from the country case studies. These case studies were developed as a separate consultancy using the Gender at Work model and are being incorporated in this ETR to identify common trends, challenges and lessons learned. The main questions to be answered are what was the progress on the implementation of the PoA; what were the best practices, trends and lessons learned that can be identified; and how adequate were the monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms?

4.2 Trends in women's empowerment and equality in Commonwealth Countries

The PoA calls on member countries and the Commonwealth Secretariat to monitor progress against specific objectives and critical priority actions across four areas. M&E of the progress made from 2005 to 2015 is important to ensure that achievements against commitments are documented, factors driving any progress are identified, and lessons are learned to inform future Commonwealth actions in the area of women's empowerment and gender equality. Following a baseline assessment carried out in 2012, the CGPMG identified and agreed upon a number of quantitative and qualitative indicators, and agreed 2004 as the baseline year against which progress is to be measured.

To measure progress, this section draws on datasets from regional and international databases, particularly the World Bank's Gender Data Portal, which pulls together and documents over 100 indicators related to gender equality and development. In addition to the nine quantitative indicators that have been agreed (see Table 4.1), this report also includes a number of proxy indicators that provide additional information and insight into progress in the critical areas. The lack of reliable, comparative data across the Commonwealth countries, and indeed globally, is a major challenge in carrying out a trends analysis of progress in women's empowerment and gender equality. National statistical offices often lack the resources, capacity or technical expertise to collect data on an ongoing basis, and gender-related measures have historically not been prioritised. A number of recent initiatives have been launched to address these challenges, such as EDGE and Data2x. However, the lack of publicly available data from the baseline year of 2004 and throughout the PoA time period of 2005–2015 is a major challenge in carrying out this trends analysis. The data used within this section were extracted from information that was publicly available and comparable across Commonwealth member countries during the time of research and writing for the ETR (July to November 2015).

Table 4.1 Overview of indicators and data series used

Critical area	Indicators	Data series used
I: gender, democracy, peace and conflict	1. Proportion of seats held by women in parliament and local government	Share of female parliamentarians (IPU)
		Share of female ministerial positions (IPU)
		Share of female representatives at local government level (Commonwealth Local Government Forum - CLGF)
		Percentage share of female mayors (UN Women)
	2. Proportion of managerial decision-making positions occupied by women in the public and private sectors	Percentage share of female legislators, senior officials and managers (ILO and World Bank)
	3. Existence and/or implementation of national action plans (NAPs) on UN Security Council Resolution 1325	Police and troops contributed to UN peacekeeping missions, sex-disaggregated (UN)
II: gender, human rights and law	4. Existence of laws addressing violence against women – domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape/defilement and sex trade	Legislation and criminal penalties for domestic violence, by region (Women, Business and the Law)
		Legislation and criminal penalties for sexual harassment, by region (Women, Business and the Law)
		Number of countries that criminalise marital rape, by region (Women, Business and the Law)
		Number of countries where child marriage is void or prohibited, by region (Women, Business and the Law)
		Extent of women's legal protection from rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment (SIGI 2014)
		Prevalence of physical violence against women by intimate partner, % (DHS)
		Prevalence of sexual violence against women by intimate partner, % (DHS)
	5. Evidence of customary laws codified	Countries where customary law is recognized as a valid source of law under the Constitution (Women, Business and the Law)
		Countries where customary law remains valid even where it violates constitutional provision on non-discrimination or equality (Women, Business and the Law)

Critical area	Indicators	Data series used
III: gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment	6. Existence of laws promoting women's ownership of land and other assets	Restricted access to resources and assets (SIGI 2014)
		Women and men's equal and secure access to land (use, control and ownership) (SIGI 2014)
	7. Proportion of national women-owned and -managed enterprises	Percentage of firms with female ownership, latest years (World Bank Gender Data Portal, ILO, World Bank Enterprise Survey)
		Share of women in top management positions, latest years (World Bank Gender Data Portal)
	8. Proportion of women enterprises accessing credit	Borrowed to start, operate or expand a farm or business, female and male (World Bank Gender Data Portal)
		Saved to start, operate or expand a farm or business, female and male (World Bank Gender Data Portal)
		Access to credit (SIGI 2012)
IV: gender and HIV/AIDS	9. Proportion of women accessing ARVs, counselling and testing services	Prevalence of females living with HIV aged 15–24 (UNICEF)
		Percentage of women and men receiving ARVs in individual countries(2004 and in 2014) (World Bank Data Base)
		Percentage of pregnant women living with HIV who are receiving ARV medicines – African Region (Global AIDS Response Progress Reporting –WHO/UNICEF/UNAIDS)
		Percentage of pregnant women living with HIV who are receiving ARV medicines – Commonwealth (World Bank Data Base)
		Estimated percentage of HIV testing and counselling coverage among pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries (Global AIDS Response Programme – WHO/UNICEF/UNAIDS)

DHS, Demographic and Health Surveys; ILO, International Labour Organization; IPU, International Parliamentary Union; SIGI, Social Institutions and Gender Index; UNAIDS, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS; UNICEF, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund; WHO, World Health Organization.

4.3 Critical areas

4.3.1 Gender, democracy, peace and conflict

Democracy is a fundamental Commonwealth value, so Commonwealth countries continue to work on strengthening democratic systems of government and accountability measures and on increasing women's representation. Globally, a lack of gender balance in decision-making positions in the political, public and private sectors persists. Global statistics reveal that women continue to be under-represented in national parliaments, where, on average, only 22.6 per cent of seats are occupied by women.[17] The representation of women among cabinet ministers averages 17 per cent, and most of the portfolios allocated to women are within the social sectors, such as education, welfare and the family. Thirteen elected Heads of State in the world are women, and only 12 are Heads of Government. The situation is similar at the level of

Box 4.1 Key facts and figures

(taken from the text and sources listed in the section below) on gender, democracy, peace and conflict in the Commonwealth

- The average percentage of female parliamentarians across the Commonwealth countries has grown from 13.6 per cent in 2004 to 18.5 per cent in 2015. Rwanda has the world's highest percentage of female parliamentarians, currently at 63.8 per cent.

- Cameroon has shown the greatest increase in women's representation in the national parliament, up by 22.2 per cent since 2004. Eight of the top ten performers, in terms of percentage increase between the baseline year of 2004 and 2015, are from the African region.

- In 2014, 65 per cent of women in uniformed police units or serving as un-uniformed community police officers and 45 per cent of female troops in UN peace-keeping missions were from Commonwealth countries.

local government: women are under-represented among elected councillors in all regions of the world.[18] Commonwealth countries have aimed to increase women's representation in political processes through the adoption and implementation of quotas and affirmative action measures.

Women's leadership and active participation in decision-making is critical for peace, sustainable development and good governance. The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) drew attention to the important role of women in decision-making positions, and the Commonwealth's Platform of Action on Gender Equality specifically calls on governments to introduce measures to promote at least 30 per cent representation of women in the political, public and private sectors by 2015.

Box 4.2 Nigerian Women's Trust Fund (NWTF) to Strengthen Women's Political Participation

NWTF is a multi-stakeholder initiative backed by the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development (MWASD), and a coalition of civil society, private sector and international development agency partners, including UN Women.

### Women's and men's consciousness

In Nigeria, there is a pervasive view that women's place is not in politics, but in the community and the home. It works across the country to expand women's political participation in the National Assembly and state legislatures, supporting women to step up and represent a population that is 49 per cent female. By opening up a space for women in politics, NWTF seeks to: a) alter perceptions of the appropriateness of women as politicians; and b) generate confidence in their capacity to exercise leadership within political parties and in local and federal governing bodies.

On the importance of male allies

'*We emphasise the fact that women cannot do it alone. They need the support of men. That's why we are engaging the male political leaders to see how they can help to create better, inclusive policies within their parties... We know that this is a big task, because of the kind of society in which we find ourselves, where traditional, religious beliefs tend to say otherwise. But we intend to go ahead to do as much as we can. To see our parties create more policies to enable women to participate more effectively*.' Anthony Abu, NWTF

Nigeria, Country Case Study. Commonwealth Secretariat. 2015.

Figure 4.1 Regional trends in women's political participation (at national level)

Proportion of seats held by women in lower or single houses of parliament, 2005-2015
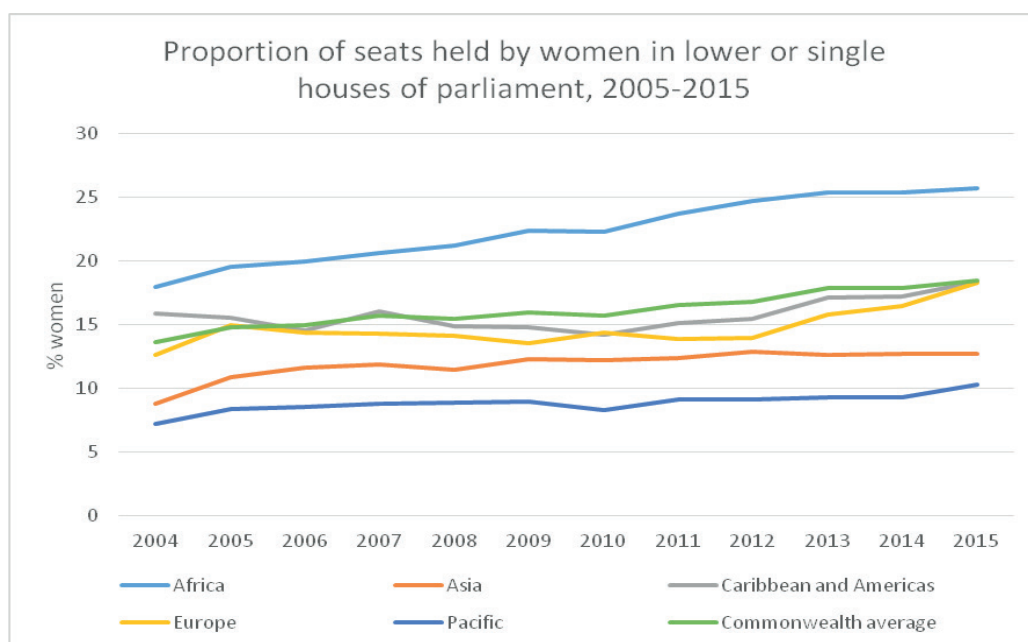
Sources: World Bank Gender Data Portal and IPU, Women in Politics: 2015, accessed 14 September 2015.

Progress against the commitments within this critical area of the PoA is to be measured against three indicators:

1. proportion of seats held by women in parliament and local government;

2. proportion of managerial decision-making positions occupied by women in the public and private sectors;

3. existence and/or implementation of NAPs on UN Security Council Resolution 1325.

Obstacles to women's participation include gender stereotypes; conflict between family and work demands; the lack of an enabling political environment (formal and informal) – especially at the candidate nomination stage; inadequate funding to support female candidates; absence of special measures/quotas; low literacy levels; lack of job security in politics; absence of female role models; and lack of training for political participation.

The field visits conducted in the Caribbean (St Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago) for the ETR brought out an important factor in relation to changing men's and women's consciousness (Gender at Work model). For example, creating leadership training opportunities for men and women would provide an enabling environment for both genders to work together with the aim of attaining effective leadership positions for women within political, public and private sectors. The overall consensus amongst those who participated in the discussions during the ETR visit (including government and CSO representatives) was that, while concentrating on numbers such as the 30 per cent quota target is still vital, obstacles to women's participation will not be overcome unless both genders work together and receive relevant training.

From the online survey questionnaires conducted for the ETR, one respondent commented on ensuring 'preparedness' for women in their country: 'In the area of women in decision-making progress has been achieved by sharing information and strategies for change, and ensuring women's preparedness to engage in a male-dominated environment.'

A similar approach can be seen in Box 4.2, which highlights efforts in Nigeria to include both women and men in the process of working together to increase the level of women's participation in leadership roles.

Figure 4.2 Comparison of the percentage of female parliamentarians in Commonwealth countries, 2004–2015
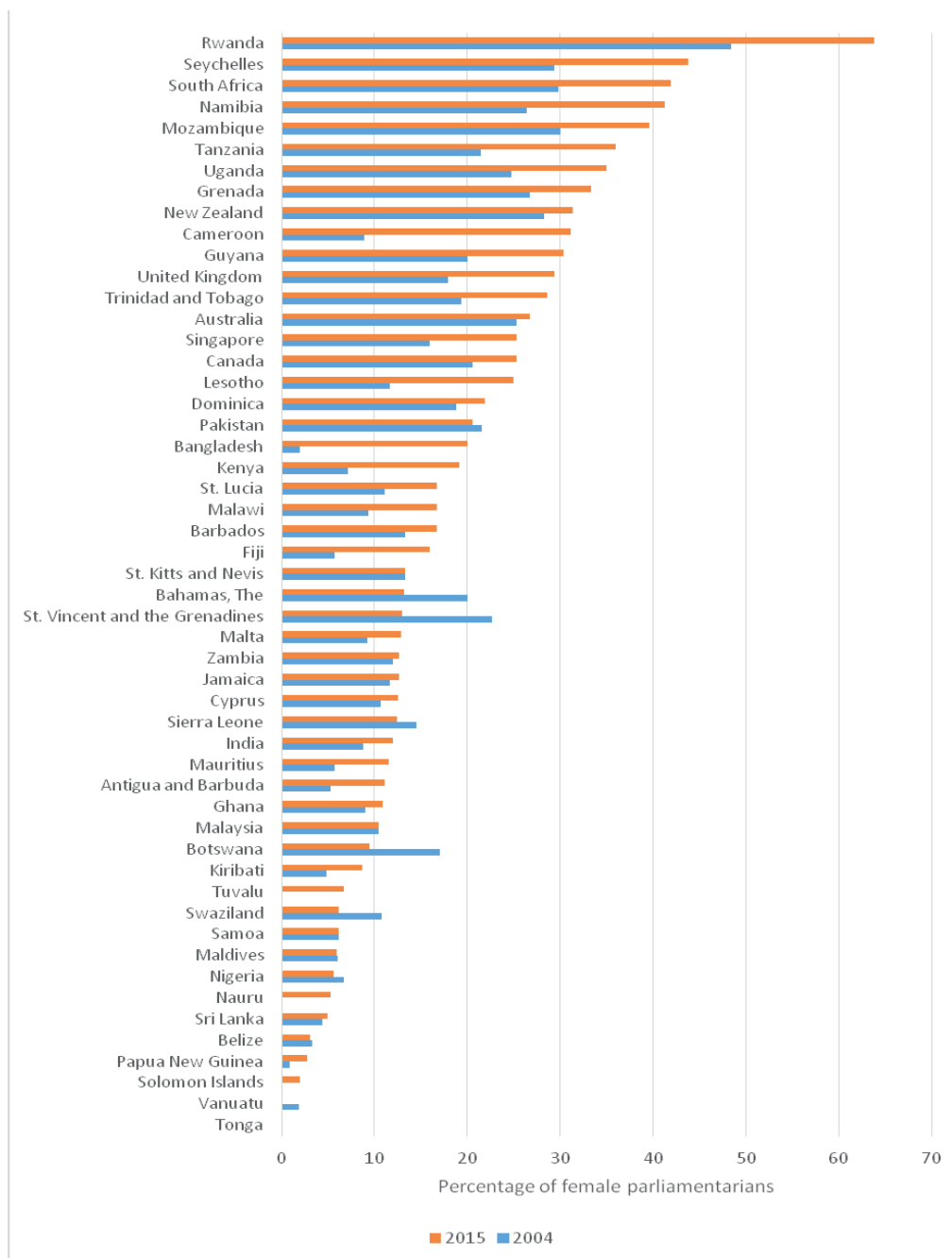
Source: IPU data.

Indicator 1: Proportion of seats held by women in parliament and local government

Data on the number of female parliamentarians have been regularly collected and documented by the International Parliamentary Union (IPU), are widely publicly available and cover the full period under consideration in this paper.[19] Data on women's participation in local government are, however, less reliable.

b.   Women in national parliaments

Over the past decade, women's political representation has moved up the political agenda as one of the key MDG indicators for gender equality, and the number of female parliamentarians has garnered particular attention. Some of the main barriers that women have had to overcome to increase their representation and engagement within parliaments are institutional discrimination, particularly in relation to party politics; discriminatory cultural practices and norms; gender-specific barriers to access; a lack of training and financial support; and exclusion from formal and informal power networks.

There has been a steady increase in the number of women represented in national parliaments during the PoA time period. Figure 4.1 shows regional trends: the African region has shown the greatest increase, of 7.8 percentage points (from 17.9 per cent to 25.7 per cent), while female parliamentarians in the Caribbean and the Americas

have increased by only 2.5 percentage points (from 15.9 per cent to 18.4 per cent) over the past 10 years. This is against a Commonwealth average of 18.5 per cent of parliamentarians being female, slightly below the global average of 22.1 per cent in 2015 (IPU, Women in Politics: 2015).

Overall, the majority of Commonwealth countries have increased their percentage of female parliamentarians during the past 10 years and since the baseline year of 2004 (see Figure 4.2). Only 11 out of the 53 Commonwealth countries recorded a decrease on their 2004 level, with countries in the African region showing the most growth over time.

While maintaining the high levels of women's representation is important, it is also interesting to look at which countries have performed best in each region in terms of percentage change from 2004 to 2015, and those that have experienced the greatest decrease or slowest growth (see Figure 4.3). Indeed, looking at only regional trends and averages can hide the significant differences within regions, which also point to the vast range of challenges and opportunities facing the Commonwealth Secretariat in targeting its support for increased women's political representation. Cameroon has demonstrated the greatest increase in the numbers of women in parliament from 2004 to 2015 among Commonwealth countries: from only 8.9 per cent in 2004, they are now 31.1 per cent of Members of Parliament (MPs), representing an impressive increase of 22.2 percentage points and just over the 30 per cent target.

Figure 4.3 Examples of women's representation in parliament across the Commonwealth regions, 2004–2015 (percentage points)
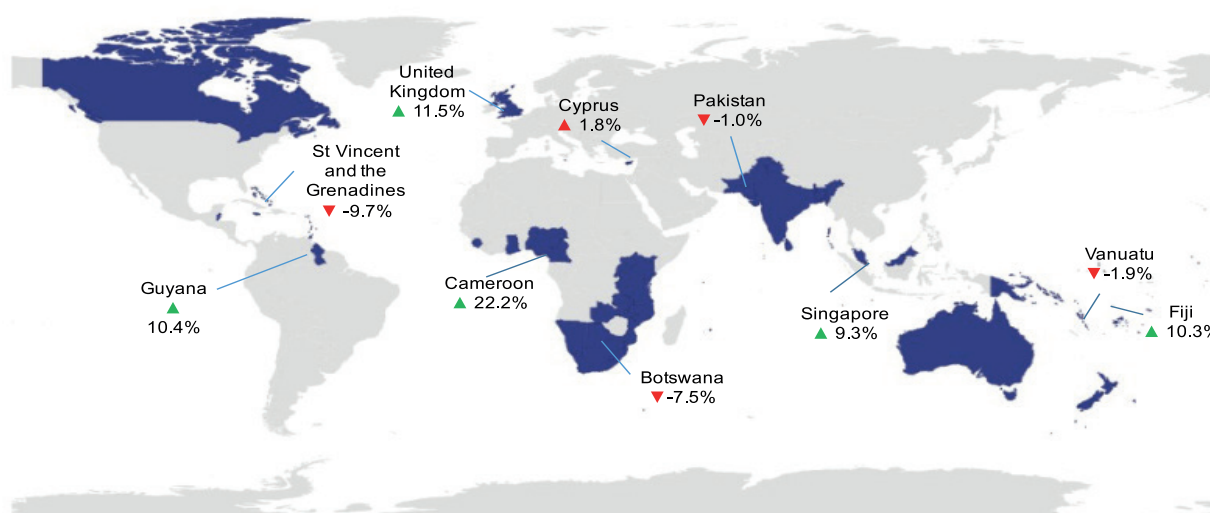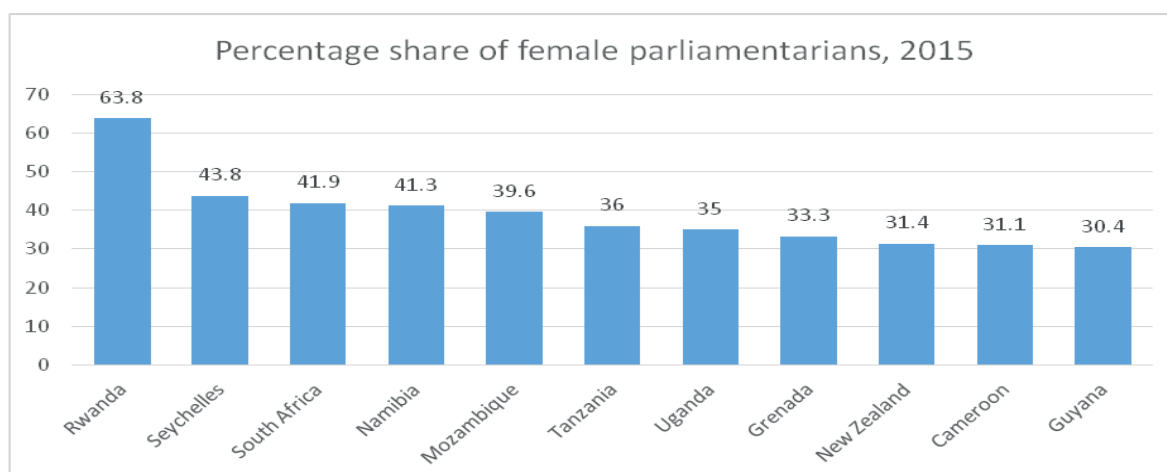
Figure 4.4 Commonwealth countries achieving the 30 per cent target in 2015

Percentage share of female parliamentarians, 2015

Source: IPU data.

Data available from 1 September 2015 indicate that 11 of the 53 Commonwealth member countries have achieved the 30 per cent target for women in political leadership (see Figure 4.4). This is a particularly notable achievement for the Commonwealth given that in 2004 only two countries (Rwanda and Mozambique) had achieved this level of representation. It is also important to note that, in October 2015, Canada's newly elected government appointed a diverse Cabinet including 15 female MPs, occupying 50 per cent of the Cabinet positions.

Recent research has shown that temporary special measures such as quotas can play an important role in breaking down the barriers to access for women and increasing the likelihood of reaching the 'critical mass' of 30 per cent women parliamentarians, which is also a target of the Commonwealth.[20] Quotas can also act as a fast-track solution to increasing representation, instead of waiting for the impact of social and educational opportunities to translate into more gender equality in the long term. They appear to have had a slightly more positive impact in countries with proportional representation systems than in those that have a majoritarian ('first past the post', FPTP) electoral system (see Table 4.2). However, quotas are only a means to an end, and can at times lead to the perception that women elected by quota are not legitimate or credible officials. Quotas therefore need to be coupled with additional measures to ensure that women representatives have the financial resources and technical skills necessary to stand as candidates and can bring influence to

these positions, along with broader efforts to challenge and change discriminatory institutions and practices. Indeed, the majority of Commonwealth countries that have reached 30 per cent representation apply some kind of quota, either voluntary or legislative, at the national level, which is likely to have contributed, at least in part, to the high rates of female representation. Seychelles, Grenada and New Zealand are the only Commonwealth countries with over 30 per cent female parliamentarians that do not have any kind of quota system.

Table 4.2 Top 10 performers, percentage increase of female parliamentarians, 2004–2015[22]

Country	2004	2015	Percentage change
Cameroon	8.9	31.1	22.2
Rwanda	48.4	63.8	15.4
Namibia	26.4	41.3	14.9
Tanzania	21.4	36	14.6
Seychelles	29.4	43.8	14.4
Lesotho	11.7	25	13.3
South Africa	29.8	41.9	12.1
Kenya	7.1	19.1	12.0
United Kingdom	17.9	29.4	11.5
Guyana	20	30.4	10.4

Source: IPU.

Figure 4.5 Percentage of female ministers in the Commonwealth regions from 2005–2015
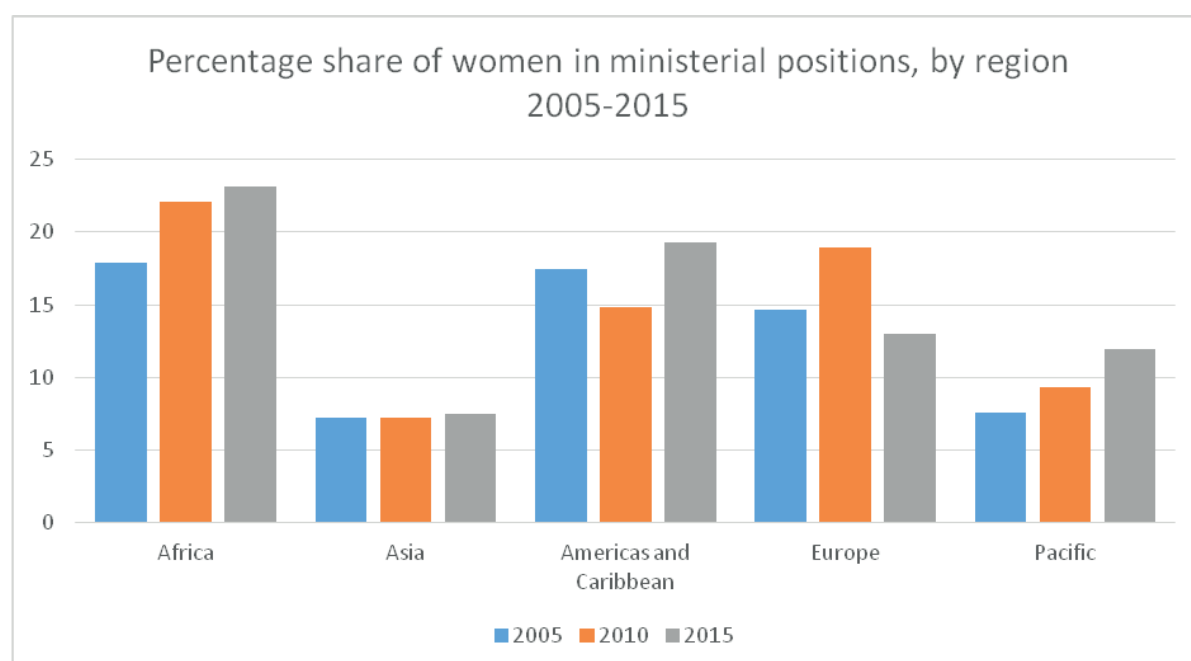
Sources: IPU and World Bank Gender Data Portal.

As Table 4.2 shows, eight of the top ten performers in percentage increase between 2004 and 2015 are from the African region, in line with the overall higher than average rates of female parliamentarians found in these countries. One explanation for this relatively high rate of representation is that post-conflict contexts offer an opportunity to transform state institutions, and several African countries have used the opportunity of redrafting their constitutions or electoral laws to incorporate gender quotas.[21] On the other hand, several Pacific island nations have struggled to get women into parliament and Tonga currently has no female representatives in parliament.

During the field visit to Cameroon, the electoral process and efforts undertaken to increase the participation of women were discussed at the ministerial level and with Elections Cameroon (ELECAM). The electoral mechanisms of Cameroon include two legislative instruments: the 1972 Constitution (amended in 1998 and 2008) and the Electoral Code (2012). Cameroon currently has a voluntary system of quotas for women to be placed

Table 4.3 Top 10 performers in percentages of female ministers, 2005 and 2015

Rank	Country	% female ministers, 2005	Country	% female ministers, 2015
1	South Africa	41.4	Grenada	46.2
2	Grenada	40.0	South Africa	41.7
3	Rwanda	35.7	Rwanda	35.5
4	Barbados	29.4	New Zealand	33.3
5	UK	28.6	Tanzania	32.3
6	Lesotho	27.8	Canada	30.8
7	Bahamas	26.7	Kenya	30.0
8	Botswana	26.7	Uganda	29.6
9	Zambia	25.0	Guyana	29.4
10	Uganda	23.4	Mozambique	28.6

Sources: IPU and World Bank Gender Data Portal.

by political parties onto electoral lists.[23] After the election of 2013, 31.1 per cent of representatives in the National Assembly were women. Women make up 20 per cent of the Senate, but not all Senators are elected.[24] Although an important step, the voluntary quotas for political party electoral lists are not enough. A quota provision of at least 30 per cent representation for women is viewed as essential to ensure the advancement of women at all levels of elected positions. Greater involvement of women in national and municipal sectors in terms of candidates, election officials and registered voters are additional factors that would enhance gender equality. ELECAM also mentioned the 'gender sensitive' nature of its electoral reforms and the implications of having a 50 per cent quota on electoral lists within Cameroon's electoral process.[25]

As part of the implementation of the PoA, the Commonwealth Secretariat commissioned an *Illustrative Trends Analysis on Women's Political Development in the Commonwealth* (2004–2013). One interesting area of analysis from this report is that results from Commonwealth countries confirm global data whereby women have a slightly greater advantage under the proportional representation (PR) or 'list' electoral system than under the first FPTP or 'constituency' system. The reason given is that, under the latter system, the focus is on the political party and its policies rather than on the individual candidate in question. This helps women to at least 'get their foot in the door' in the face of existing prejudices against women in leadership roles, which hinder access to, for instance, elected representative positions. Furthermore, women have a better chance of being elected when a PR system includes a quota. The report goes on to demonstrate that slightly more women are elected in the 8 Commonwealth countries with a PR system (22.7 per cent) than in the 33 Commonwealth countries with an FPTP system (19.6 per cent). However, women's representation is highest in the 7 Commonwealth countries with a mixed electoral system (26.2 per cent).

It is now widely recognised that numbers alone cannot transform gender inequalities in political leadership. What really matters is the quality of engagement and extent of influence that women decision-makers have within government. One useful indicator of women's power within government and parliament is the number of women in ministerial-level positions. As Figure 4.5 shows, with the exception of Europe, all Commonwealth regions have increased the number of women ministers.

Notably, South Africa, Grenada and Rwanda have succeeded in maintaining high numbers of female ministers over the last 10 years, as indicated in Table 4.3. However, the nature of the portfolios of these women ministers is also important to take into account when drawing conclusions about the impact of female MPs in parliament. Given the tendency to assign female ministers to issues such as social affairs or culture, rather than the more high-profile portfolios such as defence, economy or foreign affairs, they may not be able to influence 'hard' politics.[26] The growing trend of introducing quotas for women must also be considered a key factor driving the increase in numbers of female ministers and parliamentarians, although the long-term impact of these strategies and their ability to translate representation into effective participation remains a subject of debate.

c. Women in local government

Local government is closer to most people's daily lives, and measuring and understanding women's engagement and participation in this level of decision-making is critical. Some countries have adopted quotas at the subnational level and this has had some impact, but most of the obstacles to women's participation in national-level politics apply to the local level as well. There are currently no reliable data series that track women's representation in local government from the baseline year of 2004 through to the end of the PoA in 2015. While it is possible to obtain data from individual countries, it is difficult to compare and identify regional trends given the gaps and patchy nature of the available information and the diversity of forms of local government structures.

Figure 4.6 uses the most recently available data from Commonwealth countries to show the percentage of female representatives in local government. Data are available for only 36 out of the 53 Commonwealth countries and, like the situation in national parliaments, there is wide variation both across and within regions. Overall, the Commonwealth average is 20.7 per cent, which is slightly higher than for female representatives at the national level. The countries highlighted in green in Figure 4.6 are those that have surpassed the 30 per cent threshold of female representation at the local level. Three of the five top-performing

Figure 4.6 Comparing female representation in local government across Commonwealth regions
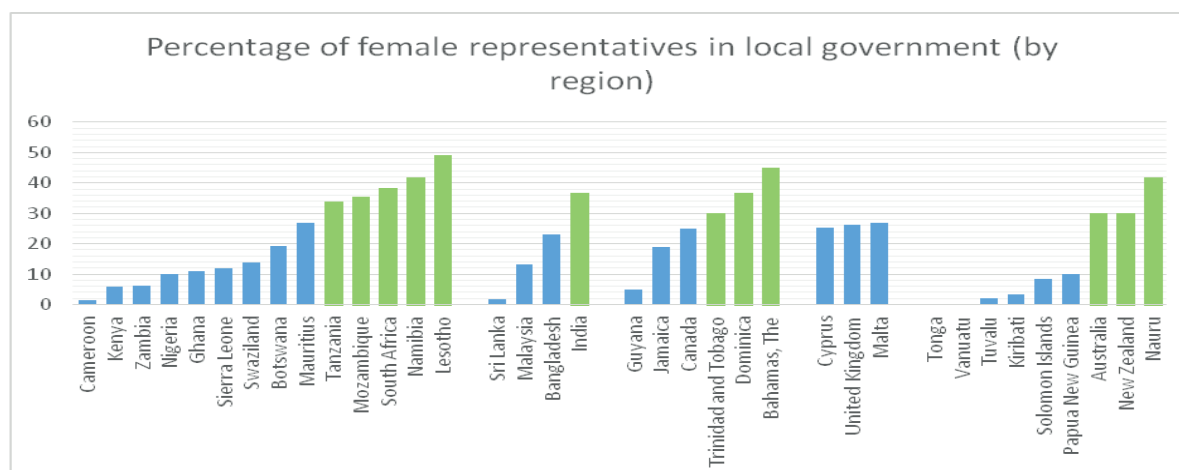
Source: Commonwealth Local Government Forum. Data taken from most recently available dataset of each country.

countries are in Africa (South Africa, Namibia and Lesotho), all of which also are among the top ten performers at the national level. Nauru presents an interesting case, where 41 per cent of local government officials are women, yet no women at all are represented at the national level.

Figure 4.7 shows the average percentage of women among mayors during the period 2003–2009, although data are available for only 15 out of the 53 Commonwealth countries, so it is not possible to compare the levels across regions. Research shows that it has proven easier for women to take on roles as councillors at the regional and local levels, rather than as mayors, among whom the numbers of women remain relatively low.[27]

As the *Trends Analysis* (2004–2013) confirms, in countries where the proportion of women elected is lower at local than national level (11 countries), one reason may be that quotas had been applied at national but not local level. The report goes on to add that in 11 Commonwealth countries representation of women at local level is similar to that at national level, and in many of those countries voluntary quotas typically apply at both levels.

Indicator 2: Proportion of managerial decision-making positions occupied by women in the public and private sectors

Globally, women are poorly represented in leadership positions within the private sector, and significant obstacles remain to increasing their share in decision-making. Recent research has

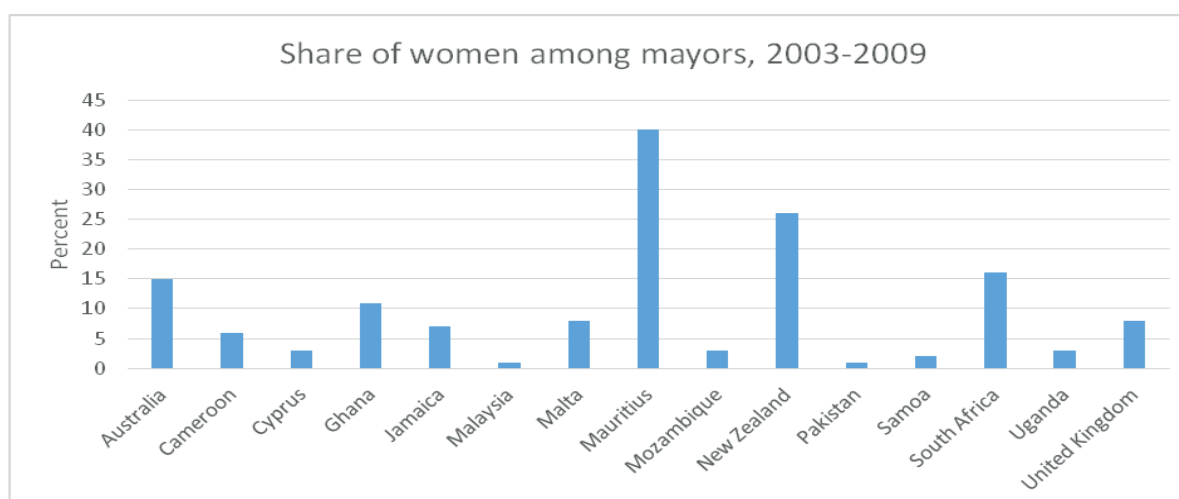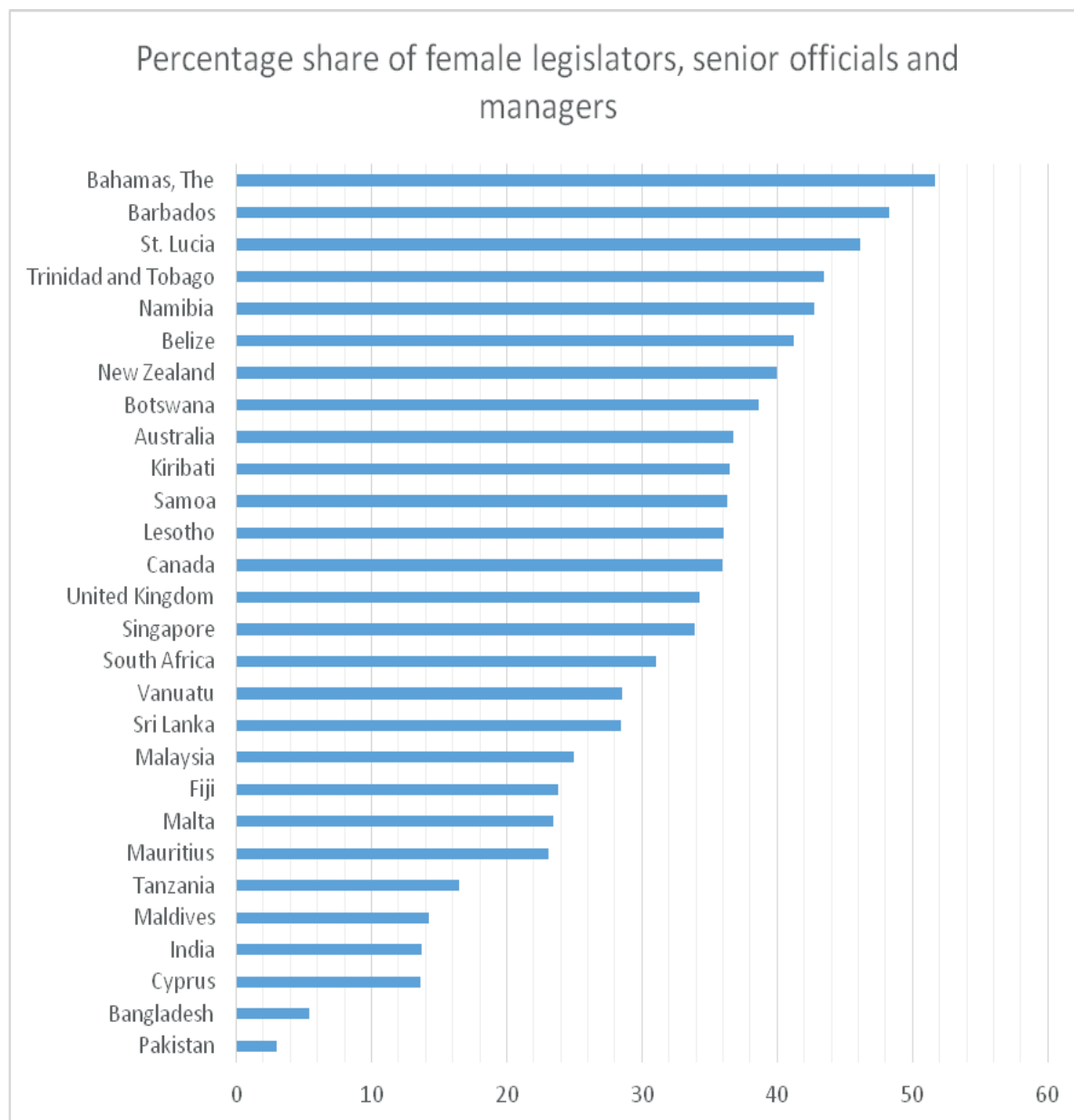## Figure 4.7 Percentage of women among mayors, 2003–2009

Figure 4.8 Representation of women in decision-making positions in the public and private spheres

Percentage share of female legislators, senior officials and managers

Country	
Bahamas, The	~52
Barbados	~48
St. Lucia	~46
Trinidad and Tobago	~43
Namibia	~43
Belize	~41
New Zealand	~40
Botswana	~39
Australia	~37
Kiribati	~37
Samoa	~36
Lesotho	~36
Canada	~36
United Kingdom	~34
Singapore	~34
South Africa	~31
Vanuatu	~29
Sri Lanka	~28
Malaysia	~25
Fiji	~24
Malta	~23
Mauritius	~23
Tanzania	~17
Maldives	~14
India	~14
Cyprus	~14
Bangladesh	~5
Pakistan	~3

Sources: ILO and World Bank Gender Data Portal. Data from most recently available dataset of each country, ranging from 2004 to 2013.

pointed to the need for new ways of working in both the private and public spheres and more investment in human capital and diversity, and there is growing evidence of the positive impact that women's leadership and decision-making styles can have on growth, equity and corporate profits.[28] Although it is not specific to the Commonwealth, research by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on Latin America and the Caribbean found that, in 1998, 5 per cent of executive leaders at the subnational level were women, and that this rose to 11 per cent in 2012, demonstrating a positive, albeit relatively slow, upward trend.[29]

Data are lacking in this area, with only 28 of the 53 Commonwealth countries reporting against the indicator of the percentage of legislators, senior officials and managers who are female, which is a proxy for the proportion of managerial decision-making positions occupied by women in the public

Figure 4.9 Examples of the percentages of female decision-makers, by region

United Kingdom
34.3%

Cyprus
13.6%

Pakistan
3%

Canada
36%

The Bahamas
51.6%

Tanzania
16.5%

Singapore
33.9%

Fiji
23.8%

Regional averages:

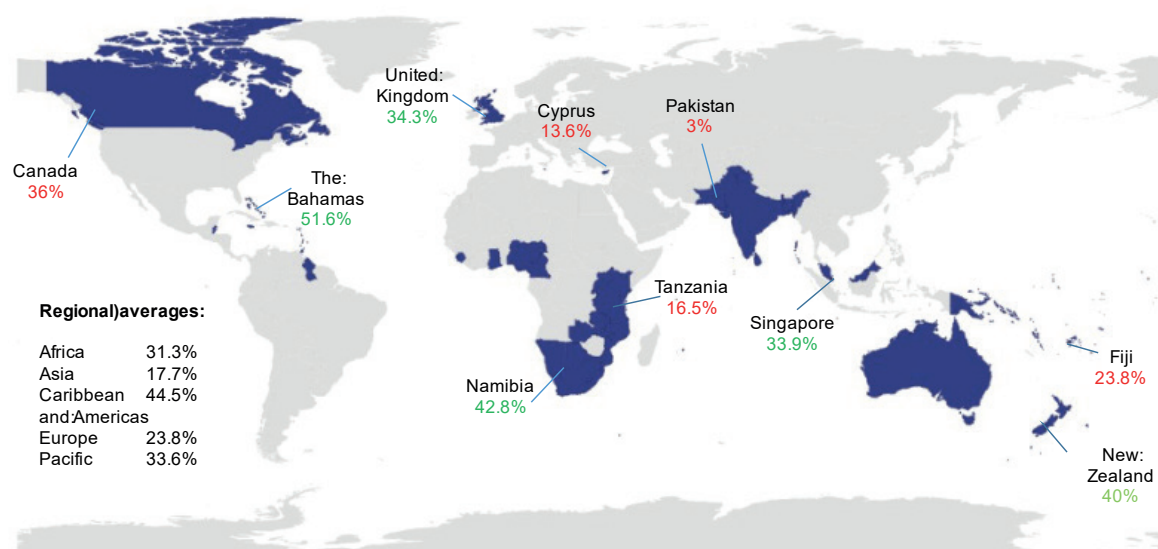|	
Africa	31.3%
Asia	17.7%
Caribbean and Americas	44.5%
Europe	23.8%
Pacific	33.6%

Namibia
42.8%

New Zealand
40%

Sources: ILO and World Bank Gender Data Portal. Data from most recently available dataset of each country, ranging from 2004 to 2013.

and private sectors. As Figure 4.8 shows, the numbers range from 51.6 per cent in the Bahamas to only 3 per cent in Pakistan.

Figure 4.9 further illustrates the wide variations evident among regions, highlighting that several countries still have some way to go in breaking down the barriers to increased decision-making roles for women across both the public and private spheres.[30] The best-performing region is the Caribbean and America, where five countries (The Bahamas, Barbados, St Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, and Belize) all report that more than 40 per cent of these positions are held by women.

There is still much to be done to enhance women's leadership in state-owned enterprises and in the private sector, where women's representation remains below 20 per cent in many Commonwealth countries. As a result of an undertaking in the PoA, the Commonwealth Secretariat has produced *The Status of Women in Leadership across the Commonwealth in Political and Civil Service in State-Owned Enterprises and Private Sector Corporate Boards* (2015). Critically, the numbers of women on private sector corporate boards remains low in many countries. Increasing the numbers of women on such boards is vital, since this 'leads to increased productivity, competitiveness and ethical performance as women leaders bring a complementary skillset and alternative ways of working into the boardroom'.[31]

Furthermore, the report goes on to urge Commonwealth governments, monitoring bodies from the public and private sectors, and civil society to work together to gather and disseminate data in the future. This is linked overall to the issue of available data for quantitative indicators 1 and 2 of the ETR. Not only is this relevant to increasing the numbers of women in leadership roles in political, public and private sectors but data collection and dissemination also touch upon cross-sectional issues, such as increasing the economic empowerment of women, ensuring more sustainable and inclusive development and business practices, and leading to increased socio-economic development across the Commonwealth.

An earlier Commonwealth Secretariat publication, *Impact of Women's Political Leadership on Democracy and Development: Case Studies from the Commonwealth* (2013), also touches upon similar themes associated with increasing and changing leadership roles for women.

During the staff (current and past) interviews conducted for the ETR of the PoA, two initiatives linked to women and leadership were highlighted as examples of successful projects. One was 'Women Agents of Change', which promoted women and girls within the Commonwealth as agents of change throughout 2011. This included celebrating individuals whose work has made

Box 4.3 Theory of change (New Zealand)

The Government of New Zealand has a long and vibrant history of promoting gender equality. As the first country where women won the right to vote, it has since championed the participation of women across all levels of society and has been rated one of the best places to work as a woman. In spite of key advances in the workforce, women continue to be under-represented in management and leadership roles. As of 2012, women held 14.75 per cent of private sector directorships. Based on current trends, the New Zealand Census of Women's Participation estimates another 35 years before boardroom equality is reached.[34]

Theory of change: The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) has championed efforts to increase women's management and leadership positions, focussing on addressing 'pipeline' challenges in two main areas – women on private sector boards and supporting the government target of 45 per cent of women on state sector boards. For MWA, stronger gender balance is not just a goal onto itself, but has long-lasting and countrywide impacts for organisational performance and productivity. Basing its theory of change on the growing body of international evidence demonstrating the economic value of increasing gender diversity, MWA asserts that more women in leadership will bring diverse views to the decision-making table. This correlates to better decision-making and organisational performance, as well as stronger connections to clients, stakeholders and investors.

New Zealand, Country Case Study. Commonwealth Secretariat. 2015.

a positive difference to the lives of others and emphasising the Commonwealth message that by 'investing in women and girls we can accelerate social, economic and political progress in our member states'. A series of events were conducted including focusing on the importance of effective land rights for women, which the Commonwealth highlighted in a *USA Today* supplement celebrating the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day.[32] The other initiative was to establish links between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Caribbean Institute for Women in Leadership (CIWil). which produces research, documentation, analysis, training and advocacy to advance women's 'transformational leadership and increase the number of women in politics, leadership and decision-making at all levels in the Caribbean'.[33]

From the ETR survey questionnaire, a CSO representative provided the following indicators for Swaziland:

- private corporations management: 21 per cent women, 79 per cent men;

- boards of directors: 19 per cent women, 81 per cent men;

- chief executives (CEOs): 20 per cent women, 80 per cent men.

The example from New Zealand (Box 4.3) offers an understanding of why it is so important to increase the numbers of women represented on private sector and state sector boards.

Indicator 3: Existence and/or implementation of NAPs on UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (UNSCR 1325) in October 2000, there has been increasing global recognition of the important roles that women play in peace and security and the need to ensure that gender-differentiated needs are addressed in all aspects of conflict prevention, peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction. Since UNSCR 1325, six follow-up resolutions have been adopted by the UN Security Council, and other regional and international organisations have also developed their own policies and programmes to support the integration of women's rights and gender equality into their peace and security work. The Commonwealth's PoA specifically calls on governments to implement and monitor the provisions of UNSCR 1325 (and its successor resolutions), in part through the adoption and implementation of NAPs on UNSCR 1325. NAPs are an important strategy for prioritising actions in

Table 4.4 Existence and implementation of NAPs in the Commonwealth

| Country	Year adopted	Dedicated budget	M&E plan	CSO engagement
Australia	2012	No	Yes	Consultations in developing the plan. Ongoing engagement with the government's Women, Peace and Security Inter-Departmental Working Group
Canada	2010	No	Yes	Consultations in developing the plan. Ongoing engagement with the Women, Peace and Security Network – Canada, including for the MTR process
Ghana	2012	Yes, not public	Yes	Consultations and validation in developing the plan
Kenya	2015 (to be released)	n/a	n/a	
Nigeria	2013	Budget needs are identified, but the NAP is not costed	Yes	Consultations in developing the plan. Ongoing engagement with the National Steering Committee
New Zealand	2015	No	Yes	Civil society consulted during a public workshop as well as contributing comments to the draft NAP. Government working group will invite public submissions and hold a parallel consultative caucus with civil society on an annual basis to feed into reporting on the NAP
Rwanda	2009	Yes	Yes	Consultations in developing the plan. Membership of the Steering Committee
Sierra Leone	2010	Yes	Yes	Helped initiate and held consultations during the development of the plan. Ongoing role in monitoring with National Steering Committee
Uganda	2008	No	Yes	Consultations in developing the plan. Implementing partners in various activities
United Kingdom	2014	No	Yes	Consultations and validation in developing the plan in UK and conflict-affected countries

n/a, not available.

relation to UNSCR 1325 at the national level, and can be a valuable mechanism for generating political support and financial resources.

As Table 4.4 shows, as of November 2015, only 10 of the 53 member countries had adopted a NAP, indicating that there is still some way to go before Commonwealth countries fully integrate gender, peace and security issues into their national agendas. Two of the main criticisms of NAPs are that the plans often fail to incorporate M&E mechanisms, which makes measuring progress and impact difficult, and few have the necessary financial resources to actually implement the activities that they identify. Nine of the ten existing NAPs (Kenya's is not yet publicly available) do have clear M&E plans. However, fewer than half have a specified and dedicated budget attached to their NAP. This has obvious consequences for implementation. The 15th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, in October 2015, provided an opportunity to generate momentum and galvanise support for these issues, and more Commonwealth countries may be expected to adopt their own NAPs in the years ahead.

Figure 4.10 Female police officers and peace-keeping troops contributed by Commonwealth countries, December 2014
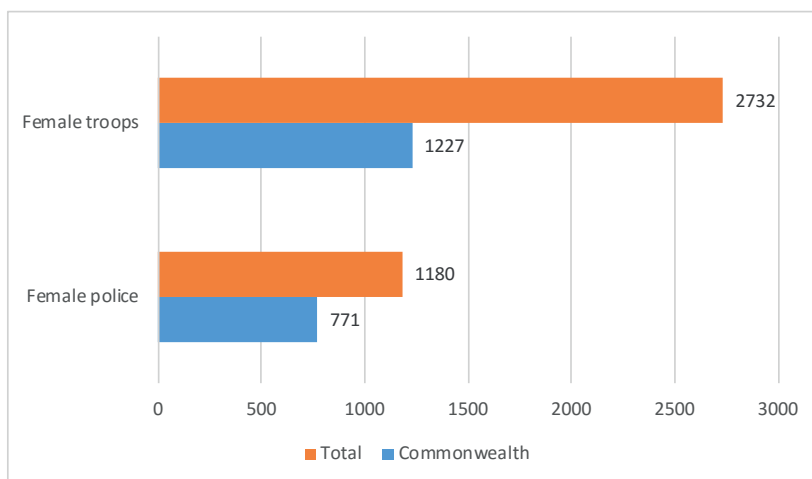
Although the extent of adoption and implementation of NAPs among Commonwealth countries is quite small, they have made major contributions in the area of gender, peace and security in other ways. For example, several Commonwealth countries are among the leading contributors of female peace-keepers to UN peace-keeping missions, and many women across the region have actively engaged in peace negotiations through either women's organisations or formal official channels. Women from Commonwealth countries do make an important contribution to UN peace-keeping missions. Specifically, in December 2014, 65 per cent of women in uniformed police units or serving as un-uniformed community police officers and 45 per cent of female troops in UN peace-keeping missions were from Commonwealth countries (Figure 4.10).[35]

A finding from the Commonwealth Secretariat staff interviews emphasised the role of the Commonwealth in the area of conflict resolution via the 'Good Offices' of its Secretary-General. This is an option whereby the Secretary-General uses his/her influence to try to defuse political tensions and prevent conflict by helping people to resolve their differences through dialogue, persuasion and moral authority'. Unfortunately, during the ETR for the PoA, no documentation could be found directly linking the Good Offices of the Commonwealth Secretariat to the issue of gender, peace and conflict. [36] However, during the field visit to Solomon Islands, a CSO representative mentioned the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was established to address the internal situation

in Solomon Islands (1998–2003) and started work in 2010. Through it, regional workshops have been held to ensure the effective participation of women in this stage of the process.[37]

Influenced by the PoA, the Commonwealth Secretariat produced an information brief entitled *Gender, Peace and Security: Commonwealth Women Keeping the Peace* (2012). Beyond stating numbers of women from the Commonwealth who have served as a result of UNSCR 1325, the brief emphasises the importance of follow-up resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889 and 1920) that address the role of women in leadership positions in peace-making, peace-keeping, conflict and sexual violence prevention in conflict situations. A further Commonwealth Secretariat publication, *Gender Peace and Security: Women's Advocacy and Conflict Resolution* (2012), offers an assessment of Commonwealth governments' efforts to implement NAPs under Resolution 1325. In its recommendations, the book emphasises that establishing NAPs alone does not address key barriers to the participation of women in conflict resolution and peace-building processes. These include, for instance, cultural norms that insist that women should stay at home during post-conflict periods and that their roles should remain within the private sphere.

Box 4.4 Key facts and figures (taken from the text and sources listed in the section below) on gender, human rights and law

- Recent global prevalence figures indicate that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

- It is estimated that over the next decade 140 million girls under the age of 18 years will be forced to marry and that half of these girls live in Commonwealth member countries.

- Most Commonwealth regions have adopted some kind of legislation on domestic violence (all countries in the Asia, Europe and Pacific regions for which data are available), but the record on enforcing criminal penalties for domestic violence is much poorer.

- Of the 46 Commonwealth countries for which there is information, 20 recognise customary law as a valid source of law under the constitution. Of these, customary law remains valid in 12 even where it is in violation of non-discrimination or equality provisions.

Conclusion

Overall, while the Commonwealth member countries have in general made important strides in increasing women's representation in national politics and in some cases in local government as well, more needs to be done to ensure that women's voices are heard in democratic institutions, in peace and conflict processes and in the private sector. In looking forward beyond 2015, a number of critical factors must be fostered to support increased leadership and decision-making by women, such as creating more gender-sensitive legal frameworks and generating increased political will.[38] Indeed, there is still a long way to go, as pointed out by the UN report on Beijing+20: 'Despite the steady increase in women's political representation and participation in parliaments, women remain significantly under-represented at the highest levels of political participation as well as across the public and private sectors.'[39]

4.3.2 Gender, human rights and the law

The second critical area of focus for the PoA is on human rights and law: in particular, how the Commonwealth commits itself to supporting the advancement of laws and customs that protect women's rights. States are most often the duty bearers and guarantors of women's rights and, as such, they have an important role to play in ensuring the substantive equality of women and girls, although they may not always have the capacity or the willingness to do so. As part of the implementation of the PoA, Commonwealth countries should support the adoption and implementation of gender-sensitive laws, practices and mechanisms across a range of areas relating to women's human rights. Progress with the commitments in this critical area of the PoA is to be measured against two indicators:

- existence of laws addressing violence against women (e.g. domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape/defilement and sex trade);

- evidence of customary laws codified.

The Commonwealth is committed to utilising a rights-based approach in all areas of its work, and many member countries have endorsed and ratified international human rights instruments. However, the lack of a gender perspective in national laws in many countries continues to hamper progress made in the implementation of international treaties such as CEDAW.

Beyond civil and political rights, the effective upholding of the remaining five categories of human rights – economic, social and cultural rights – has an impact on women and girls. For instance, during the field visit to Bangladesh, women business leaders pointed out that women's economic empowerment, through initiatives such as collateral-free loans to encourage women entrepreneurs, was juxtaposed with property and inheritance laws in which women may not enjoy full and equal rights.

Although much progress has been made in improving and strengthening the de jure or legal environment for women's human rights over the

past decades, the de facto reality for women and girls in many countries around the world remains one of inequality. Discrimination against women persists, and violence against women (VAW) in particular remains widespread; the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced it in some forms during their lifetime.[40] Issues affecting women's human rights, such as early marriage, harmful cultural practices or inheritance rights, are often perceived to be private matters and are frequently mediated at the family or community level with little involvement of formal state institutions. This makes regulating and enforcing laws particularly challenging. Furthermore, measuring and monitoring change in this area is complicated by the lack of documentation of customary laws and practices and the difficulty in challenging deeply ingrained attitudes and practices, which are often closely tied (or perceived to be) into the cultural identity of society. However, accelerating the adoption of gender-sensitive legal frameworks is vital, as they provide a framework from which citizens can lobby and advocate for women's rights and can promote governmental accountability.

Indicator 4: Existence of laws addressing violence against women (e.g. domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape/defilement and sex trade)

Violence against women persists across all countries and contexts in a myriad of different forms, ranging from domestic violence to sexual harassment in the workplace and sex-selective abortions. It is widely recognised that measuring the incidence and prevalence of VAW or the existence and implementation of laws to prevent and respond to it is extremely difficult. To do so would require large-scale investment in resources and capacity-building, and the gradual accumulation of data over time for monitoring progress. However, the resources and political will necessary to tackle this endemic global challenge are also lacking, which means that, to date, such investments have not been made. For example, VAW was not explicitly addressed or included within the MDGs, and has been called the 'missing MDG'.[41] The failure to prioritise this issue – or recognise its impact on the attainment of other health, education and economic goals – has had far-reaching consequences for the priorities of governments and the funding choices made by donors over the

past decade. In contrast, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 21st century address VAW. SDG 5 (Gender Equality) sets a target to 'Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.' [42]

Reporting cases of VAW is a particular problem in developing countries. The majority of cases of VAW go unreported. There are several reasons for this, but one particularly widespread challenge relates to customary practices. Issues relating to VAW are frequently resolved at the family or community level in collaboration with community, traditional or religious leaders rather than through the courts, even in countries where there are laws banning such offences. Socio-economic factors can also impede women's ability to seek redress for these crimes; many women are economically dependent on the perpetrators or lack the time or financial resources to travel to police stations or courts to report these crimes to the authorities. The lack of services such as shelters also means that women and girls often have to return home to abusive situations, and the community-level stigma associated with reporting these crimes can also contribute to the difficulties faced by survivors. Nevertheless, over the past decade there has been some progress in terms of raising the profile of VAW on the international agenda, particularly in conflict-affected contexts, and many governments are beginning to recognise that more needs to be done. The fact that VAW has been included in the PoA indicates an important commitment in Commonwealth countries to addressing the challenges it presents, and is a vital dimension of the fight for gender equality.

During the field visit to Bangladesh, a police officer working on the issue of VAW noted that, even when legislation such as Bangladesh's Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act of 2012 is enforced, women can find themselves in extremely vulnerable positions when they return home after reporting to the police an intimate partner or relative for domestic violence. One reason given is the perceived stigma caused within the family or community by taking beyond the private sphere information pertaining to VAW. A representative from a CSO working on VAW in St Lucia added that the economic implications of a woman (with or without children) having to leave the domestic home are considerable, especially in areas where short-term and longer-term shelters are not

Box 4.5 Theory of change (Bangladesh)

Domestic violence is the most prevalent form of VAW.[43] The Bangladesh VAW Survey 2011 identified that 87 per cent of currently married women have experienced physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence by their current husband.[44] Further, the survey indicates that 82 per cent of women have experienced psychological violence, 65 per cent have been physically abused (which includes attacks by acid, knife or burning), 53 per cent have faced economic violence (which includes demands for dowry) and 36 per cent have faced sexual violence at some point in their life.[45] Occurrences of domestic violence are higher in rural areas (80.98 per cent) than in urban areas (19.02 per cent).[46]

On one hand, women are largely unaware of their rights;[47] on the other, those who muster the courage to seek help are often left to struggle with an unwilling and unhelpful institution.[48] To counter this, the government initiated the Multi-Sectoral Programme on Violence against Women (MSPVAW). The major components of the MSPVAW are (1) eight One-Stop Crisis Centres (OCCs) in medical college hospitals; (2) forty One-Stop Crisis Cells at district general hospitals and twenty at upazila (subdistrict) health complexes; (3) a National Forensic DNA Profiling Laboratory in Dhaka and seven divisional DNA screening laboratories at medical college hospitals; (4) a National Trauma Counselling Centre in Dhaka; (5) a National Helpline (10921) Centre for Violence against Women and Children; (6) a National Database on Violence against Women and Children; and (7) a National Centre on Gender-based Violence in Dhaka.

Theory of change

The commitment of the Government of Bangladesh to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) has provided the impetus for a number of specially focused laws and policies, and the creation of the MSPVAW programme to help balance the legal framework with practical structures to support victims of violence and address the social institutions and discriminatory norms that have a negative impact on women and girls in Bangladesh. One of the key elements of the MSPVAW is the creation of OCCs within tertiary-level medical college hospitals. OCCs are meant to make access to support services easier for women and children who have been subjected to physical and sexual violence, by integrating various services within a single facility. The idea for the OCC stemmed from the realisation that VAWG survivors face tremendous physical, emotional and psychological trauma, and that they are often victimised further while accessing services. By providing medical, police and legal services at one location, OCCs ensure that females are not revictimised, but instead find it easy to seek the required protection and rehabilitation services, and to facilitate their recovery and reintegration.

Bangladesh, Country Case Study. Commonwealth Secretariat. 2015.

available or are overstretched by the numbers of women needing their services. In addition, some jurisdictions (including St Lucia) still require survivors of domestic violence to formally press charges. If this does not occur, the police are unable to prosecute because of the way that criminal justice laws are formulated.

As part of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) strategy to develop multisector partnerships, in 2001 the Government of Bangladesh started One-stop Crisis Centres (OCCs), which house doctors, nurses, counsellors, lawyers and police officers, for women who have suffered violence. During the ETR visit to the Crisis Centre in Dhaka, workers emphasised that locating the facility in a hospital where a myriad of health services are provided made women feel more comfortable and anonymous, rather than having to walk into a police station. Please see Box 4.5 for more information on the multisector programme in Bangladesh.

Figure 4.11 Legislation and criminal penalties for various forms of VAW, by Commonwealth region[51]

a

Legislation and criminal penalties for domestic violence, by region

Legislation   Criminal penalties

b

Legislation and criminal penalties for sexual harassment, by region

Legislation   Criminal penalties

c

Number of countries that criminalise marital rape, by region

Yes   No

d

Number of countries where child marriage is void or prohibited, by region

Yes   No
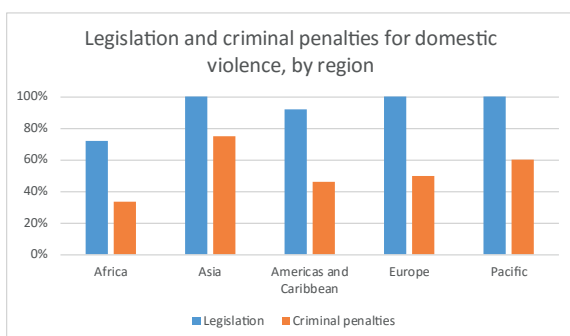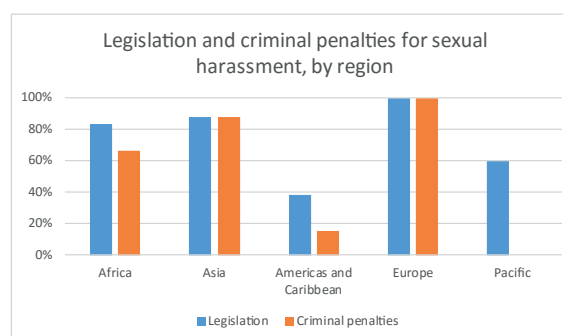
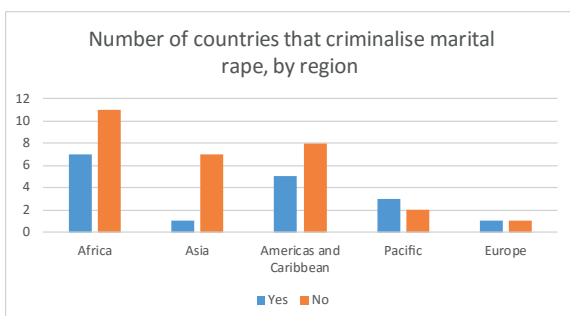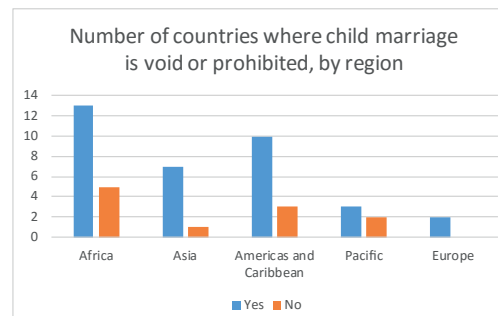Over the past decade there has been some progress in raising the profile of VAW on the international agenda, particularly in conflict-affected contexts, and many governments are beginning to recognise that more needs to be done. The fact that VAW has been included in the PoA indicates an important commitment in Commonwealth countries to addressing the challenges it presents, and is a vital dimension of the fight for gender equality. From the survey questionnaires conducted through the ETR, respondents indicated that the most notable progress within indicator 4 is on the existence of laws addressing VAW. This reflects the advances that have been made in many countries across the Commonwealth, and indeed globally, to adopt new legislation or revise existing laws to offer women better protection from violence. However, while this is important, many respondents later indicated that implementation is sorely lacking and additional efforts need to be made to ensure that these new laws are enforced, survivors have access to the services they need and perpetrators are brought to justice.

Citing the MTR of the PoA (2011), which highlighted the importance of strengthening jurisprudence of equality on VAW, the Commonwealth Secretariat held a forum in Botswana in 2012, which resulted in a Judicial Resource Guide on Violence against Women in East Africa. The aim of the guide is to disseminate case law and other technical information. This demonstrates how the Commonwealth Secretariat has taken a recommendation from a report linked to the PoA, translated it into concrete undertakings within member countries and produced a resource guide that can be used regionally and duplicated or adapted to fit within other regions of the Commonwealth.[49] The World Bank collects data, which cover 46 Commonwealth countries, on the

Box 4.6 Theory of change (Trinidad and Tobago)

Provisional figures from the Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service indicate that, between 1 January 2004 and 28 February 2014, 15,312 reports of domestic violence were received. Offences ranged from psychological abuse to murder. 'Assault by beating' and 'threats' constituted the greatest number of reports, 7,404 and 4,871 respectively.[56] On average, over the last 10 years, there were between 17 and 35 cases a year in which a woman was killed in domestic violence.[57]

The real extent to which domestic violence is perpetrated is unknown because of the fragmented nature of data collection and collation, and the unavailability of sex-disaggregated data. Despite the overwhelming indicative statistics, Trinidad and Tobago has limited national data on the prevalence and nature of, and responses to, gender-based violence (GBV); instead it relies heavily on international studies, sources and police databases.[58]

Theory of change

The development of a Central Registry on Domestic Violence was considered necessary to address the issue of fragmented data collection and the lack of co-ordinated initiatives around VAW. The availability of exact data on domestic violence was expected:

- to identify groups at risk and promote a greater understanding of the extent, causes and consequences of VAW, and the mechanisms necessary to reduce it;

- to inform policy development, institutional arrangements, programme design and strategies for effective public education and behaviour change;

- to assist in obtaining profiles of victims; and

- to monitor the effectiveness of violence prevention and intervention activities.

Social institutions and discriminatory norms

Women's access to resources and opportunities

The initiative creates an information resource accessible by government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and plays a vital role in the formulation of policies to tackle domestic violence. One of the objectives is to develop interventions and programmes based on the data, which would help create access to certain services and initiatives such as counselling, initiating legal proceedings and offering protection to victims.

Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices

The key objective of the registry is to reduce the incidents of domestic violence.[59] Thus it aims to bring about a change in the current culture of VAW.

Women's and men's consciousness

It was noticed during the pilot project that police officers were more proactive in treating domestic violence as a criminal matter.

Formal laws, policies and accountability

existence of legislation about various types of VAW. Figure 4.11 shows the proportion of countries in each region that have adopted legislation, and how many of those enforce criminal penalties for any violations. As illustrated in Figure 4.11a, most regions have adopted some kinds of legislation on domestic violence (all countries in the Asia, Europe and Pacific regions for which data are available), but the record on enforcing criminal penalties for domestic violence is much poorer. The African

region is the weakest in terms of legislation and criminal penalties for this form of violence, and this is reflected in the higher number (45.6 per cent) of women in Africa reporting sexual and/or physical intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence.[50] As Figure 4.11b shows, a smaller percentage of countries in each region have legislation against sexual harassment. Whereas none of the countries in the Pacific covered by the data have criminal penalties for sexual harassment, in Asia and Europe all of them do. Out of the 46 countries with data, 29 do not criminalise marital rape, with the Maldives the only country out of the eight in the Asian region to do so (see Figure 4.11c). There are still 11 Commonwealth countries that do not prohibit child marriage, the majority of which are in Africa (see Figure 4.11d).

The scarcity of data on VAW-related legislation makes it difficult to assess a trend over time, particularly since the existence of legislation does not mean that it is respected or implemented. Unfortunately, the data used in Figure 4.11 are not collected annually, so it is not possible to measure year-on-year progress in these areas.

Child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage are an issue the Commonwealth Secretariat and member governments have been addressing. The Commonwealth's *Kigali Declaration* (2015) reinforces the goal of preventing and eliminating child marriage, early marriage and forced marriage. It is estimated that over the next 10 years 140 million girls under the age of 18 years will be forced to marry and that half of these girls live in Commonwealth member countries.[52] There is also concern that these types of marriages negatively affect the right to freedom from violence and exploitation. During the field visit to Trinidad and Tobago, the complexities surrounding this topic were discussed at both ministerial and CSO levels. Participants often spoke of the unique mix of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds that make up Trinidad and Tobago and some of the challenges faced.[53] For example, the legal age for marriage in Trinidad and Tobago is 18 years but there are exceptions on religious grounds. There are four official marriage options, with varying minimum ages for females: civil marriage (18 years), Hindu marriage (16 years), Muslim marriage (12 years) and Orisa marriage (16 years).[54]

In an attempt to address how data linked to VAW is gathered, one of the projects presented during the Trinidad and Tobago field visit was the forthcoming Central Registry on Domestic Violence , which would enable various stakeholders to use a secure protocol to enter details and access information pertaining to domestic violence reports, cases, services provided, follow-up measures, etc. It is hoped the registry will be available at the beginning of 2016.[55] Box 4.6 outlines this registry in more detail.

Demographic and health surveys (DHSs) are widely used nationally representative household surveys that provide data in the areas of population, health and nutrition. One of the modules of the DHS is focused on gender and domestic violence and, for countries where data are available, it can provide an important insight into these issues. Figures 4.12 and 4.13 show the prevalence of physical and sexual VAW by intimate partners for the most recent year for those Commonwealth countries with available data. Overall, the limited data that exist suggest that intimate partner violence – which the majority of women experience – persists at a high level in many Commonwealth regions. As can be seen in the charts, the Pacific region exhibits particularly high levels of intimate partner violence.

The Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation's (OECD's) Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) provides a more qualitative and nuanced assessment of laws relating to VAW, scoring countries on a scale of 0 to 1. The index looks at laws on rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment. The results for the 24 Commonwealth countries for which data are available are in Table 4.5. The majority of countries have some legislation in place to protect against all three types of violence, but it is either inadequate or poorly implemented. VAW is also measured in the two subsequent updates of SIGI released in 2014. A comparison of the data for 24 Commonwealth countries reveals that four countries showed an improvement in rape legislation, eight showed an improvement in domestic violence legislation and only three showed an improvement in sexual harassment legislation.[61]

While measuring and monitoring the adoption of specific laws, policies and frameworks is vital, it is also important to remember that it is not just about

Figure 4.12 Prevalence of physical violence against women by intimate partner (%), latest year available
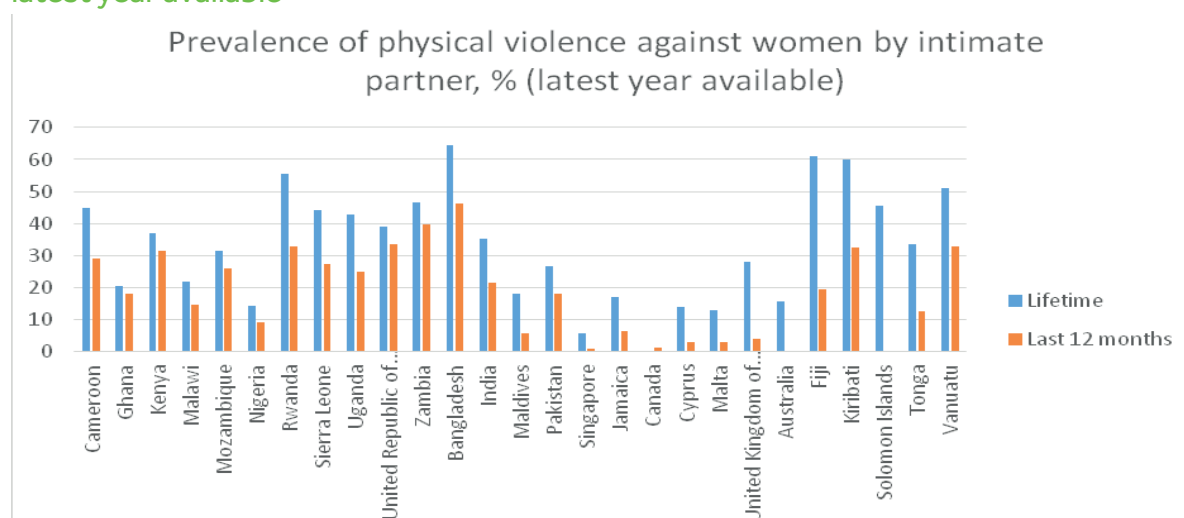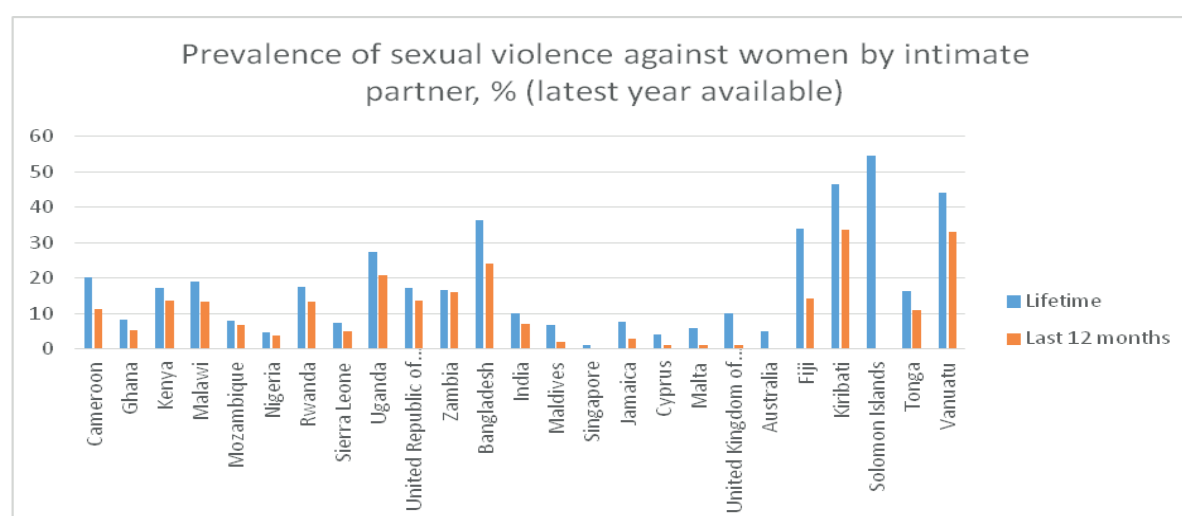

Figure 4.13 Prevalence of sexual violence against women by intimate partner (%), latest year available

progress in terms of laws and criminal penalties for perpetrators, but also about providing services and adequate responses to the needs of survivors.

Box 4.7 highlights the use of male advocates as agents of change to address GBV in the Pacific region.

Indicator 5: Evidence of customary laws codified

The second indicator used to measure progress in critical area 2 of the PoA is the codification of customary laws. Customary laws are important because they are often more meaningful than formal laws for people's daily lives in many countries. They can be particularly important in regulating or mediating family or domestic issues, which are often seen to be beyond the purview of the state. As pointed out in the PoA, 'Customary and religious laws, practices and traditions often have greater significance and value for people in their daily lives than the established statutory and constitutional laws in a country.' [63] Indeed, customary law can define family relationships, entitlements, and access to resources and informal justice mechanisms in many countries. Particularly across Africa and Asia, customary laws are most commonly used to mediate family or community disputes. However, gender roles, patriarchal structures and discriminatory practices mean that women are very often disadvantaged by customary law, and therefore stand to gain from its codification.

Table 4.5 Extent of women's legal protection from rape, domestic and sexual harassment[62]

Extent of legislation (based on a scale from 0 to 1)	Rape	Domestic violence	Sexual harassment
0: there is specific legislation in place	Lesotho	Mauritius, Singapore	Fiji, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Zambia
0.25: there is specific legislation in place, but there are widespread reported problems with implementation	Bangladesh, Fiji, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Mozambique, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago	Bangladesh, Botswana, Fiji, Ghana, India, Jamaica, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, Uganda	Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, South Africa, Uganda
0.5: there is general legislation in place, or specific legislation is inadequate (e.g. rape laws do not criminalise marital rape)	Botswana, Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Zambia	Nigeria	India, Malawi, Singapore
0.75: legislation is being planned, drafted or reviewed or existing legislation is highly inadequate		Lesotho, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Zambia	Ghana
1: no legislation		Cameroon, Kenya, Tanzania	Jamaica, Lesotho, Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago

The PoA calls for action in relation to the codification of customary laws, specifically that member governments should 'Codify positive customary laws that protect women as a process of reviewing the existing laws to ensure that all laws are in conformity with both international and domestic human rights obligations.'[64] If these laws are codified, there is a greater likelihood that they will be drawn into line with and be respectful of international human rights standards, including women's rights. However, the diversity of customary laws, practices and traditions can make codification into a nationally recognised body of customary law difficult, and, even where this can be done, raising the awareness of the public and ensuring implementation becomes a further challenge.

An example from the field visit to Samoa, in relation to customary law and how this can affect women, is a proposed amendment to the Village Fono Act (1990). The amendment aims to ensure that village council decisions or punishments are in line with the Constitution of Samoa, which guarantees men and women equality before the law and has provisions prohibiting discrimination based on sex.[65] Some participants during the field visit meetings felt this would be an important step for women, especially in relation to, for instance, domestic violence. According to the police representative who attended one of the sessions, there is a need to balance punishments under formal laws with punishments passed by village councils. With support from UN Women, the Samoa Law Reform Commission has been in the process of conducting a legislation compliance review of CEDAW

Table 4.6 Recognition of customary law in Commonwealth countries

Countries where customary law is recognised as a valid source of law under the constitution	Countries where customary law remains valid even where it violates constitutional provisions on non-discrimination or equality
Bangladesh, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia	Bangladesh, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda

legislation since January 2015.[66] A representative of the recently created National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), which is based in the Office of the Samoan Ombudsman, outlined that rights of women in Samoa are more often associated with policy and cultural considerations than with legislative changes. That is, cultural norms are utilised as a way to justify and bolster the notion of human rights.

The first *State of Human Rights Report* for Samoa was published in 2015. From the survey conducted for this report, three interrelated issues surfaced that are 'related to women's rights: (1) tackling gender role stereotyping; (2) recognising the unequal participation in political and economic life; and (3) preventing high rates of violence against women.' As the report goes on to state, 'While the human rights system – laws, policies, and conventions – can be used to hold Samoa accountable for obligations undertaken pursuant to treaties, laws can only go so far. Change has to be felt in the culture as well as the legal code.'[67] In turn, the *Women: Matai and Leadership Survey* (2015) examines women's attitudes towards political participation opportunities and traditional leadership roles in Samoa.[68]

Obtaining any kind of cross-country data on customary laws as they relate to women's rights is particularly difficult, as the lack of codification means that these laws are rarely documented or recorded and their diverse nature would make comparison across countries almost impossible. According to data collected by the World Bank as part of its 'Women, Business and the Law' research, of the 46 Commonwealth countries for which there is information, 20 recognise customary law as a valid source of law under the constitution (see Table 4.6). The overwhelming majority of these are in Africa (15 out of the 18 African Commonwealth countries) and Asia (four out of the eight Asian Commonwealth countries) regions. Customary

law remains valid in 12 of these 20 countries even where it is in violation of non-discrimination or equality provisions.

Conclusion

There are many reasons for countries failing to fully implement critical area 2 of the PoA, and they vary from country to country. However, across the Commonwealth regions, some of the most common factors appear to be the lack of political will; jurisdictional issues; a lack of awareness across all levels of the justice system; a lack of enforcement capacity within the security sector; traditional or customary legal systems that perpetuate and reinforce discrimination against women; women's lack of awareness and legal literacy about their rights and options for accessing justice; limited existence of investment in human and financial resources to monitor and enforce the protection of women's rights at the national, local and community levels; and a lack of knowledge about violations of women's rights due to a failure to invest in and utilise evidence-based data collection.

The lack of regular and comparable data over the past 10 years against the two indicators in this critical area makes it difficult to identify any clear regional trends, or even to measure progress at the national level. Furthermore, although laws are essential to provide a basis from which to demand equality, their existence alone does not mean that they will be implemented. To achieve real and substantive change, it is also necessary to reduce women's socio-economic disadvantage; address stereotyping and stigma that can exacerbate and lead to violence against women; and strengthen women's agency, voice and participation.[69]

The recently adopted SDGs and Agenda 2030 present an important opportunity for Commonwealth countries to move forward with addressing VAW and discriminatory customary practices (see Box 4.8). Although the international

Box 4.7 Pacific Women's Network Male Advocacy Programme

Informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices

In many countries around the world, including in the Pacific region, GBV is part of the systematic control of women by their partners and family members. Many officers in the justice system, including police, lawyers, magistrates, judges and court staff, share the values and views of their communities – including acceptance of VAWG (Ellsberg, M. et al, 2011, *Violence against women in Melanesia and Timor-Leste: progress made since the 2008 Office of Development Effectiveness report*, International Centre for Research on Women http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/Violence-against-women-in-Melanesia-Timor-Leste-AusAID.pdf). Police and community members encourage women to reconcile cases of domestic violence, rather than pursue a formal complaint, to avoid social disruption to the family and community. In the absence of strong legal systems, customary law plays an important role in addressing VAWG; perpetrators often go unpunished in the region because of such practices at the community level. Members of the Pacific Women's Network envisaged that harnessing the support of male advocates within formal and informal institutions – such as the police, TuraganiKoro (village headman), youth groups and faith-based organisations – could change attitudes towards discussing the issue of VAWG in public. This would effectively challenge existing cultural norms that consider men to be dominant, and address other exclusionary practices that dissuade women from reporting VAWG and seeking help.

Women's and men's consciousness

The values and attitudes of men and women are identified as significant barriers to gender equality in the Pacific region. Women's lack of agency – or their lack of belief in their own self-worth and ability – limits both what they choose to do and what they expect of others. It was expected that, by engaging more men in dialogue on issues of violence and abuse, change could be brought to the mindsets of people and constructive attitudes could be shaped; this in turn would help eliminate violence and the threat of violence.

Strategies

The Male Advocacy Programme (MAP) was started by the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre (FWCC) in 2002 and developed over the years, using cases of best practice from around the world and adapting these to the Pacific context. MAP encourages men to become agents for change and positive non-violent role models in their communities by teaching other men about gender roles, gender equality and masculinity, and advocating non-violent behaviour.

Pacific Region ETR Case Study. 2015. Commonwealth Secretariat.

community has yet to agree on indicators for measuring progress against the SDGs, the five proposed indicators would encourage Commonwealth countries to begin collecting data and monitoring progress in these areas.

4.3.3 Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment

The third critical area within the PoA focuses on poverty eradication and women's economic empowerment, both of which are vital dimensions in the pursuit of gender equality and sustainable development. According to recent research by McKinsey, if women were equal participants with men in the economy, this could add as much as US$28 trillion or 26 per cent to the annual global gross domestic product (GDP) of the world economy by 2025.[70] The same report finds that even if countries only matched the rate of improvement of the best-performing countries in their region then this could add $12 trillion to the global economy in the next 10 years. Indeed, it is being increasingly recognised that women's skills and talents are essential for successful businesses, economic growth and society as a whole. [71] However, levels of economic inequality are

Box 4.8 SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Several elements of SDG 5 relate specifically to critical area 2 of the Commonwealth PoA.

Agreed targets:

- Target 5.1: End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

- Target 5.2: Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

- Target 5.3: Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM)

Proposed indicators:

- Indicator 5.1.1: Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex

- Indicator 5.2.1: Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls (aged 15–49) subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the last 12 months

- Indicator 5.2.2: Proportion of women and girls (aged 15–49) subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner, since age 15

- Indicator 5.3.1: Percentage of women aged 20–24 who were married or in a union before age 18 (i.e. child marriage)

- Indicator 5.3.2: Percentage of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), by age group (for relevant countries only)

rising between and within countries, and poverty and vulnerability have specific impacts on women and girls, whose opportunities for economic empowerment are often limited.

As pointed out in the PoA, 'gender inequality causes and exacerbates the impact of poverty on women, who globally account for about 70 per cent of those living in poverty.'[72] It is not possible to definitively determine the number of women and girls living in poverty, since it is measured at the household level; however, given the gender inequalities in earnings, social protection, access to assets and other areas, it is likely that the number is higher than that of men.[73] Based on research published in 2015, UN Women reports that women are more likely to live in poverty in 41 out of the 75 countries for which they have data, 13 of which are Commonwealth countries, mainly in the African region [74] Furthermore, according to that research, 'unequal outcomes for women in the labour market are the biggest contributor to their overall socio-economic disadvantage'.[75]

Overall, in terms of economic participation and opportunity, women continue to face inequality in earned income, wealth, time use and social security.[76] The third critical area in the PoA seeks to address some of these challenges and recognises the need to target women's economic empowerment at the micro, meso and macro levels. In particular, the PoA focuses on strengthening women's access to and control over productive resources and supporting an enabling environment for women's economic participation. The indicators used in the PoA to measure progress in this area are as follows:

1. Existence of laws promoting women's ownership of land and other assets;

2. Proportion of national women-owned and -managed enterprises;

3. Proportion of women enterprises accessing credit.

Globally, female participation in the labour force remains stubbornly low. Overall, rates are beginning to stagnate and the gap between men and women persists, particularly when looking at type of

Figure 4.14 Comparing male and female labour force participation rates across Commonwealth regions, 2004–2013
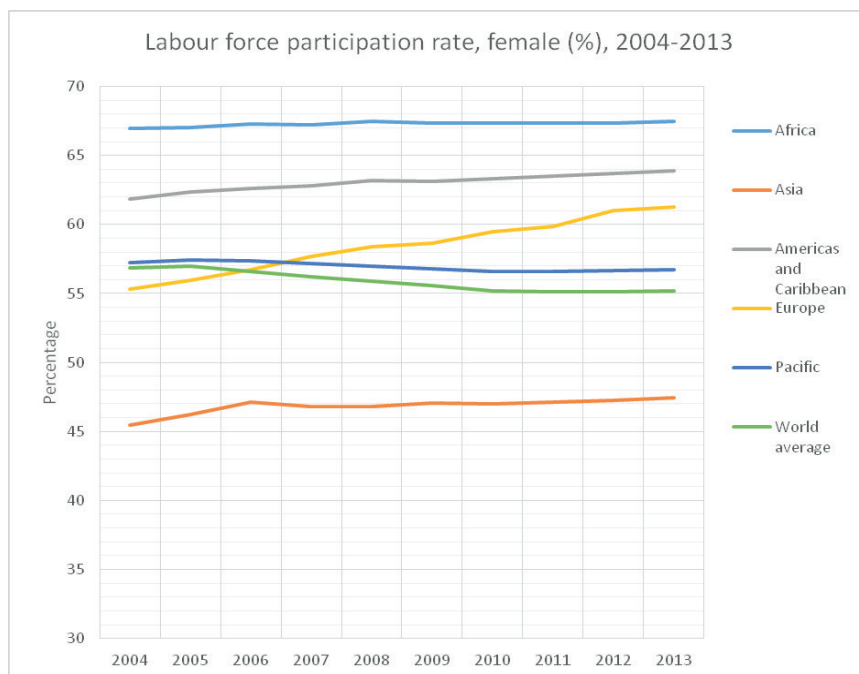
Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

Figure 4.15 Comparing male and female labour force participation rates across Commonwealth countries, 2013
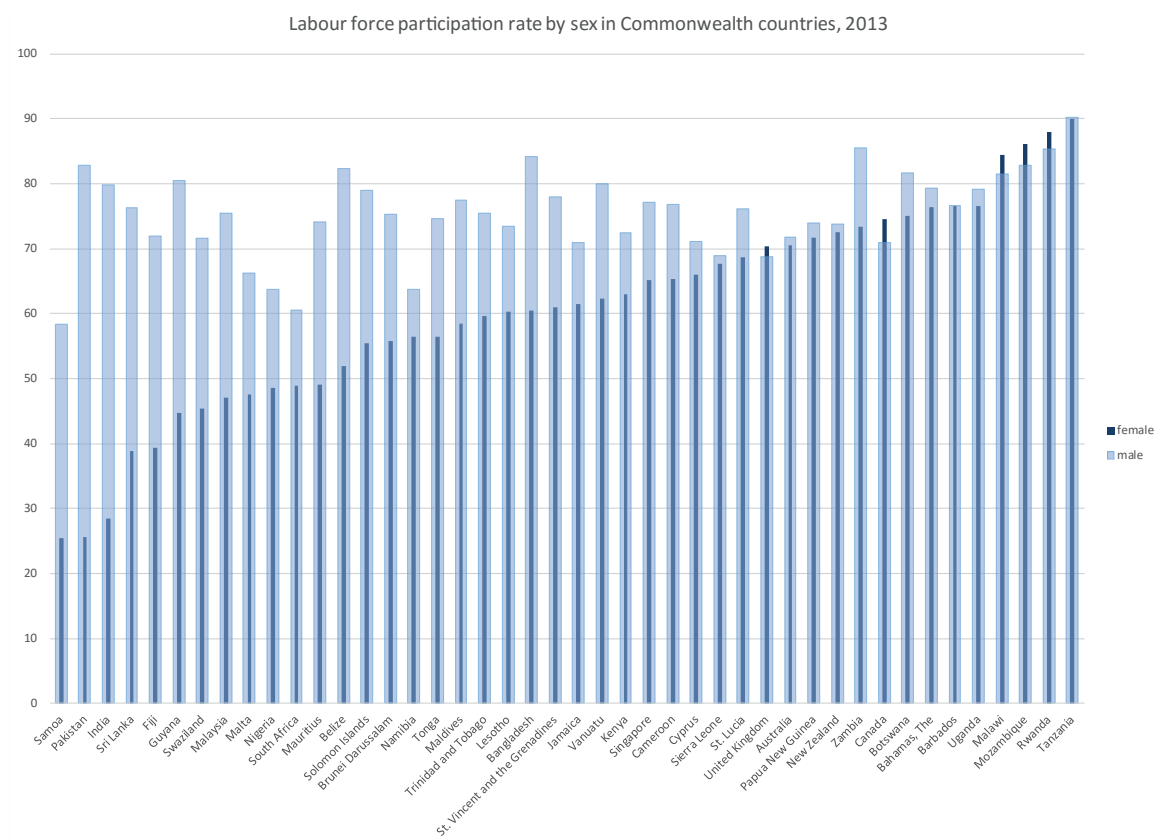
Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

Figure 4.16 Country-level comparisons of economic participation and opportunity[80]

United Kingdom
0.7140 (46th)

The Bahamas
0.8223 (5th)

Malta
0.5686
(116th)

Pakistan
0.3094
(141st)

Guyana
0.5652 (117th)

Malawi
0.8298 (3rd)

Singapore
0.7899
(18th)

Fiji
0.5065
(125th)

Mauritius
0.5507
(121st)

Australia
0.8010 (14th)

employment. Commonwealth countries are no exception, and Figure 4.14 compares the female labour participation rates between 2004 and 2013, broken down by Commonwealth regions. Women in the African region have the highest labour force participation rate throughout the period, reaching an average of 67.5 per cent in 2013, more than 10 percentage points above the global average.[77]

Figure 4.15 compares male and female labour force participation rates in 2013. The five highest participation rates for both men and women are again in African countries, with Asian and Pacific region Commonwealth countries falling in the bottom five.
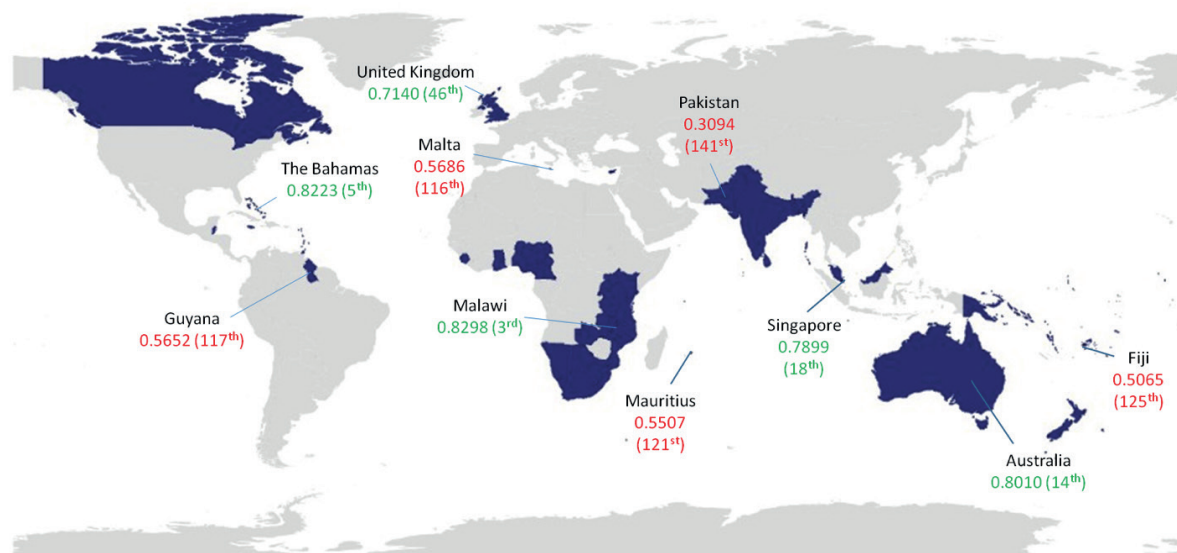
Occupational segregation also remains a major obstacle to women's opportunities to engage in the labour market, with more women than men tending to have low-paid, poor-quality jobs. Women make up more than two thirds of contributing family workers, who are workers in family businesses who receive no pay; this demonstrates the importance of looking at the quality and nature of employment, not just the participation rate.[78] Included in women's basic human rights is the right to a good job with fair pay and safe working conditions, yet this right is far from being realised in many Commonwealth countries. Despite doing more work than men when unpaid domestic and care work is counted, women earn consistently less, and it will be decades before the global gender pay gap closes.

As emphasised in the PoA, creating an enabling environment to address the feminisation of both labour and poverty is vital. While it is challenging to measure this, the World Economic Forum's subindex on Economic Participation and Opportunity, which is part of its overall Gender Gap Index, offers a useful proxy.[79] Two Commonwealth countries, Malawi and the Bahamas, rank within the top five of the subindex, and Figure 4.16 highlights the top and bottom performers against this measure in the different Commonwealth regions. The highest-performing European country, the United Kingdom, is significantly lower than the highest performing country from the other regions, in 46th place out of a total 145 countries ranked.

Indicator 6: Existence of laws promoting women's ownership of land and other assets

Strengthening women's rights over access to, use of and ownership of land can have an important multiplier effect across other areas of socio-economic development. According to research by Landesa, women who own land are one eighth as likely to experience domestic violence, have children who are two thirds as likely to be severely underweight, and are likely to devote more of their budget to education.[81]

Where women have strong property and inheritance rights, women also have up to 35 per cent greater individual savings and earn up to 3.8 times more income than in countries where this is not the case.[82] Furthermore, according to UN Women, 'Increasing women's ownership and control

> **Box 4.9 Key facts and figures (taken from the text and sources listed in the section below) on gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment**
>
> - Laws guaranteeing the same rights to own, use and control land for men and women are present in only 23 per cent of Commonwealth countries for which data are available, and rights and access vary widely across Commonwealth regions.
>
> - The overall average of female ownership among firms across the Commonwealth is 36.2 per cent.
>
> - Countries from the Caribbean region have markedly higher levels of female representation than other regions, with both the Bahamas (33.2 per cent) and St Vincent and the Grenadines (38.6 per cent) above the 30 per cent threshold.

over agricultural assets and productive resources is likely to have a positive impact on food security and livelihood sustainability for the whole household.'[83] However, each country context differs and, as for the other PoA indicators, the lack of longitudinal data makes it difficult to identify general trends on the nature of the discrimination against women in the ownership of land and other assets across the different Commonwealth countries.

The importance of updating legislation in relation to land rights was emphasised during a telephone interview, conducted for the ETR, with an expert who had worked on the Commonwealth Secretariat's *Handbook on Women's Land Rights* for Kenya.[84] The expert also noted Kenya's efforts to revise and consolidate existing laws on this topic

with the introduction of, *inter alia*, the Land Registration Act (2012). One area, which will help women, since they often do not formally own land, addresses marital situations whereby one spouse is not on the title deed but has contributed to 'the productivity, upkeep or improvement of the land', with the effect that the contributing spouse(s) "… shall be deemed to have acquired an ownership interest in the land.'[85]

In the office of Cameroon's Attorney General the *Handbook on Women's Land Rights* was used as a basis to conduct national legal reforms and to enhance the judiciary's capacity in relation to women's land rights.[86] Furthermore, Cameroonian government officials who participated in one of the meetings held for the ETR field visit noted that,

Figure 4.17 Discrimination in women's access to resources and assets
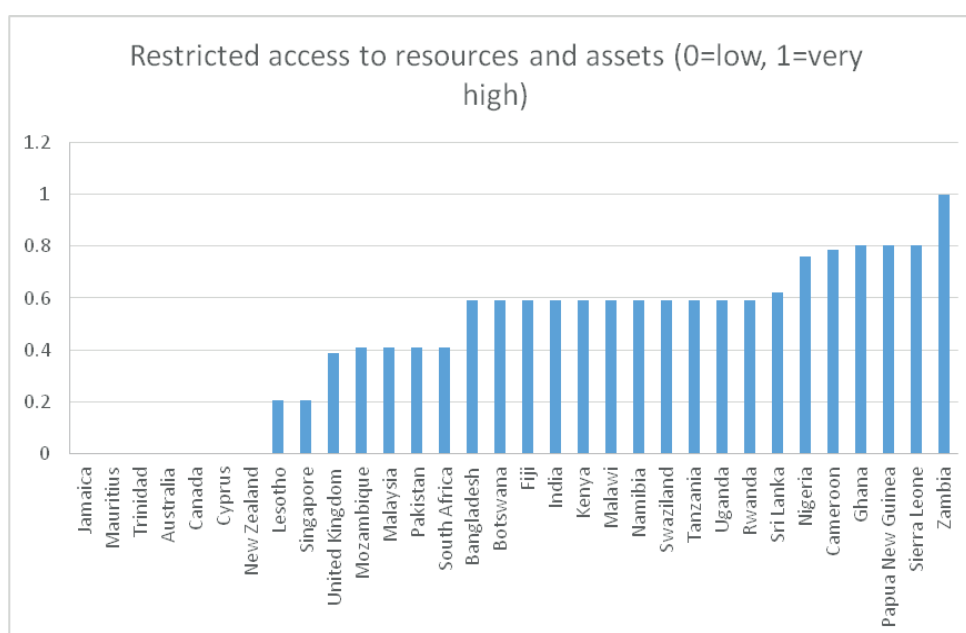
Source: Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014 (OECD Development Centre).

Box 4.10 Women's land rights handbook: Cameroon

Cameroon is a former German colony, and a former British and French mandate. This has created a legacy of a bi-jural legal system in the country. Civil law is applied in French-speaking Cameroon, while the common law applies in English-speaking Cameroon. This is accompanied by customary law. Muslim law is regarded as customary law, and there are more than 250 ethnic groups in the country with diverse customs. Written law does not overtly discriminate against women with regard to the ownership of land. In fact, the Constitution guarantees ownership for all. In its preamble, it provides: "Ownership shall mean the right guaranteed every person by law to use, enjoy and dispose of property. No person shall be deprived thereof, save for public purpose and subject to the payment of compensation under conditions determined by law."

Recent studies have shown that cultural and attitudinal influences have created a perennial discriminatory land policy in Cameroon, restricting women's access to land. Women own 9.6 per cent of all land tenure and men own 86.6 per cent of land tenure. In spite of the important contribution that women make towards agricultural production, food security and household management incomes in Cameroon, women's formal claims to land remain weak and vulnerable as land becomes increasingly scarce.
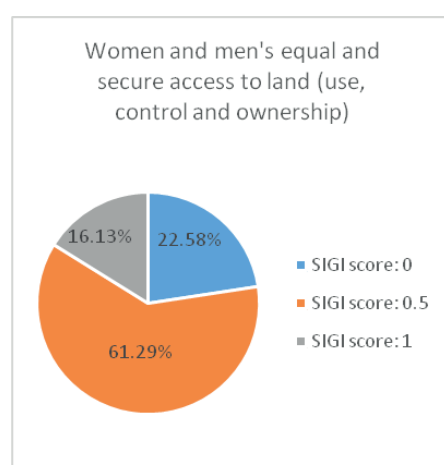
Handbook on Women's Land Rights (Cameroon). Commonwealth Secretariat. 2013.

The handbook also includes, inter alia, a French/English 'Application for Land Certificate' (Annex 2) and case law examples.

before the process of researching and ultimately producing the *Handbook on Women's Land Rights* (Cameroon), the issue of land rights for women and access to these rights was not spoken about openly because of traditional sensitivities. The handbook for Cameroon, produced by the Commonwealth Secretariat, has been translated into French and some local languages and the process of claiming land rights has been promoted on the radio.[87]

From 2006 to 2010, as part of the PoA, the Commonwealth Secretariat conducted a series of regional workshops and training sessions to address the issue of women's rights, culture and the law. These were held in Cameroon, Namibia, Kenya and Sierra Leone and the result was a legal handbook for each jurisdiction. Women caught between culture and the law as this relates to land rights were an important focus of the handbooks. Box 4.10 gives

Figure 4.18 Equality of secure access to land

Women and men's equal and secure access to land (use, control and ownership)

- SIGI score: 0 — 22.58%
- SIGI score: 0.5 — 61.29%
- SIGI score: 1 — 16.13%

SIGI score	Countries
0	Jamaica, Mauritius, Tanzania, Cyprus, Australia, Canada, New Zealand
0.5	Bangladesh, Botswana, Cameroon, Fiji, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Singapore, South Africa, Swaziland, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom
1	Ghana, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Uganda

Source: Social Institutions and Gender Index 2014.

Figure 4.19 Firms with female ownership in Commonwealth countries

Percentage of firms with female ownership, latest years (2006-2013)

Sources: World Bank Gender Data Portal, ILO, World Bank Enterprise surveys.
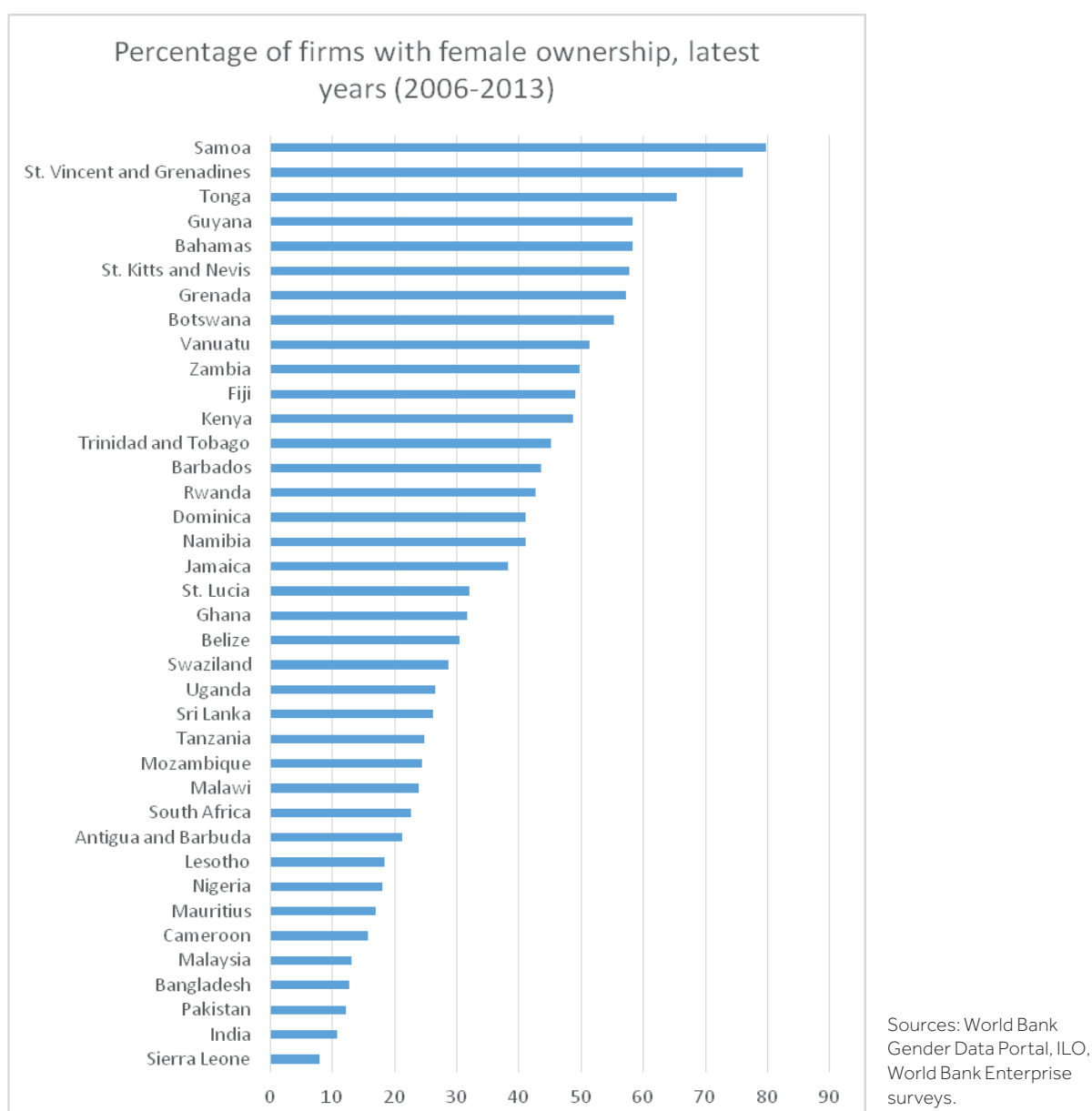
a short overview of how, for Cameroon, the issue of land rights for women is intertwined with customary, civil and common law.

The OECD's SIGI captures and measures the formal and informal laws, attitudes and practices that restrict women's and girls' access to rights, justice and empowerment opportunities.[88] Using data from the 2014 SIGI subindex 'restricted resources and assets', Figure 4.17 shows that there is significant variation across the 32 Commonwealth countries for which there are data.

More specifically, when it comes to women's and men's equal and secure access to land, more than half of the countries score 0.5 on SIGI's scale. This means that, while women have the same legal rights as men to own, use and control land, there are some customary, traditional or religious practices that discriminate against them (see Figure 4.18).[89] Laws guaranteeing the same rights to own, use and control land for men and women are present in only 23 per cent of countries.

Figure 4.20 Share of women in top management positions across Commonwealth regions, latest years (2007–2014)
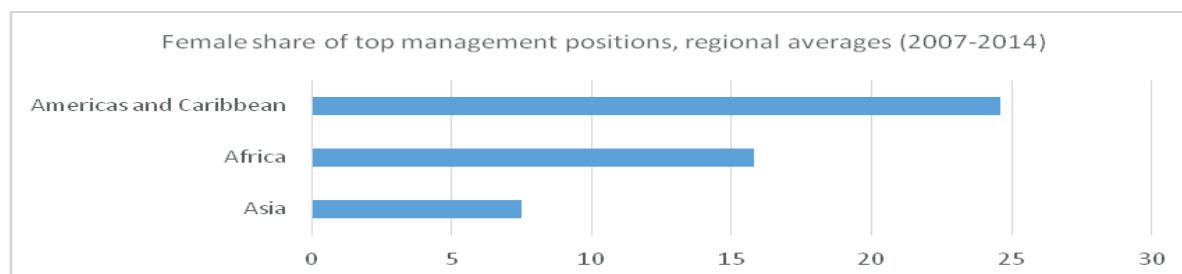
Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

Indicator 7: Proportion of national women-owned and -managed enterprises

There has been growing interest in the impact of female ownership and representation on the performance and profits of companies. Research on *Fortune* 500 companies from 2004 to 2008 found that companies that had more than three women on their boards for at least four to five years outperformed less diverse companies by 84 per cent on return on sales, 60 per cent on return on invested capital and 46 per cent on return on equity.[90] In looking at companies across the world (with the exception of Africa), Credit Suisse found that companies with at least one female board member outperformed others by 26 per cent in share price performance.[91]

Although less is known about women's roles and impact on business and corporations in developing countries, a 2012 survey by the ILO in developing countries found that just over 20 per cent of CEOs were women, usually in middle-sized to large national companies as opposed to publicly traded or global companies.[92] It is a similar picture when looking at the levels of female representation on company boards, with the same ILO survey finding that only 13 per cent of boards had a female

Figure 4.21 Share of women in top management positions across Commonwealth Countries, latest years (2007–2014)

Sources: World Bank Gender Data Portal, ILO, World Bank Enterprise surveys.

Figure 4.22 Proportions of women and men who borrowed money to start, operate or expand a farm or business in 2014

Borrowed to start, operate, or expand a farm or business, female (% age 15+) and male (% age 15+), 2014
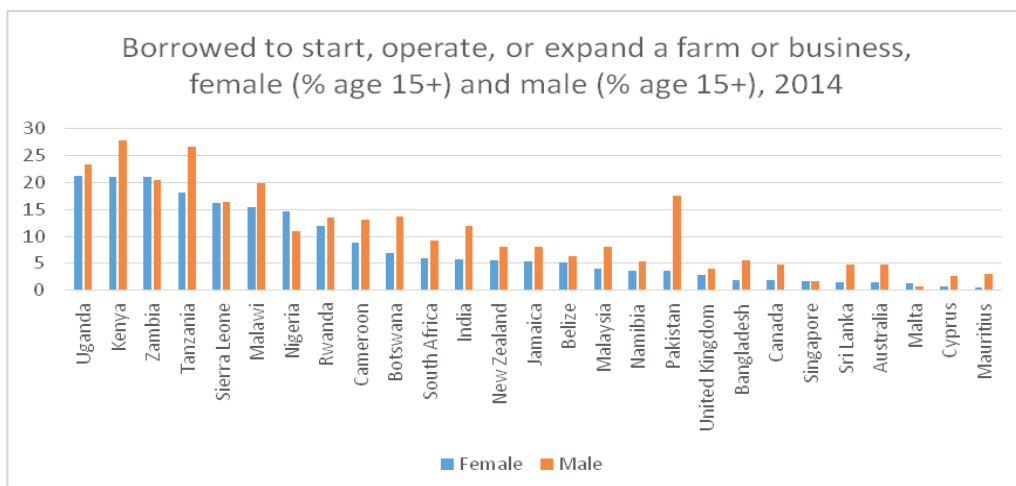
Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal, accessed November 2015.

president, and 30 per cent of companies surveyed had no women on their boards at all. Recently, noting the impact of quotas on women's political representation, there have been moves in some countries to impose similar measures to increase the number of women serving on boards, with Norway leading the way. Quotas are not the only solution, however, and companies can increase the numbers of women serving on boards through measures such as gender diversity policies, voluntary targets or codes of conduct.[93]

Data are limited on the extent of female ownership among firms. Figure 4.19 shows the range of female ownership across the Commonwealth for those countries for which there are data.[94] Overall, the average is 36.2 per cent. The highest reported level of ownership is in Samoa, which reported 79.8 per cent in 2009, with a slightly higher percentage of female ownership in small firms (81.3 per cent) than in middle-sized firms (76.3 per cent). Interestingly, in St Vincent and Grenadines, which reported 76

Figure 4.23 Proportion of women and men who saved money to start, operate or expand a farm or business in 2014

Saved to start, operate, or expand a farm or business, female (% age 15+) and male (% age 15+), 2014
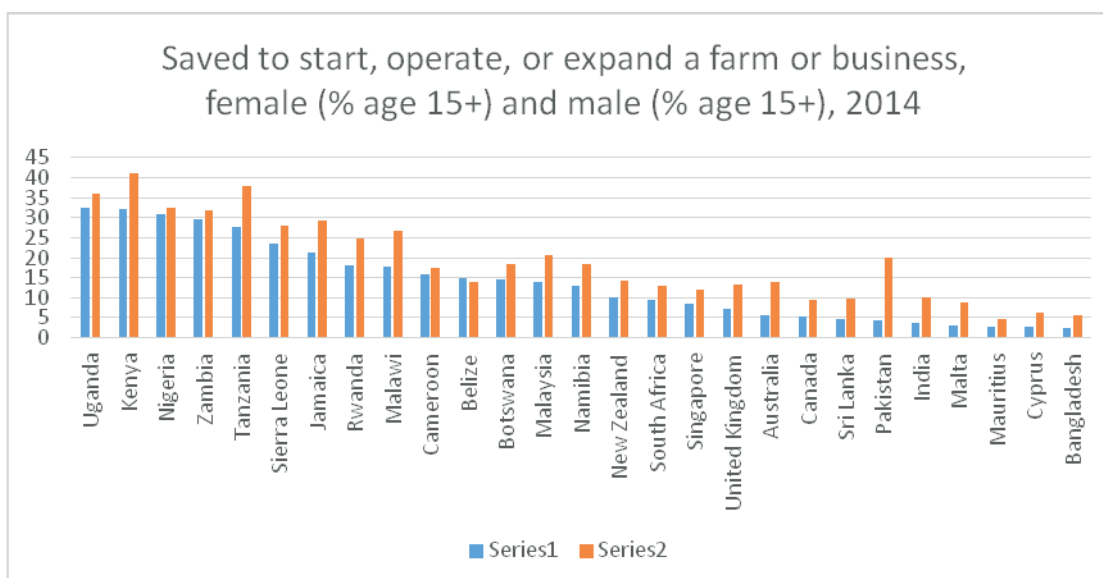
Source: World Bank Gender Data Portal.

per cent female participation in ownership in 2010, 100 per cent of the large firms (of more than 100 employees) reported female ownership.

There are similar limitations in the data for the proportion of women in top management positions, with not all countries reporting against this indicator consistently over time. As illustrated in Figures 4.20 and 4.21, countries from the Caribbean region have markedly higher levels of female representation than other regions, with both the Bahamas (33.2 per cent) and St Vincent and the Grenadines (38.6 per cent) above the 30 per cent threshold.[95] However, women's roles in corporate settings are often constrained and they are unlikely to reach the highest levels of the business world. Recent research by the ILO has found that 5 per cent or fewer of the world's largest corporations have female CEOs. [96] .

### Indicator 8: Proportion of women enterprises accessing credit

In developing countries in particular, women are often primarily engaged in work in the informal sector, which means that support for women's entrepreneurship is particularly important. Measuring this can be difficult, but looking at gender-differentiated rates of access to credit is one way of assessing the extent to which women are able to obtain the capital necessary to set up, run and expand their own businesses. Although the research does not cover many Commonwealth countries, recent findings by Goldman Sachs reveal that loan rejection rates are higher for women-owned formal small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and that the credit gap per enterprise is much higher in the formal sector than in the informal sector for women-owned SMEs.[97]

There is no cross-country dataset that collects information about the number of women enterprises accessing credit, but by looking at a range of proxy indicators linked to access to credit and savings rates it is possible to make some general statements against this indicator.

Figures 4.22 and 4.23 compare the proportions of women and men who borrowed and saved money to start, operate or expand a farm or business in 2014. Of the 27 Commonwealth countries for which there are data, the proportion of women borrowing exceeds that of men in only four (Zambia, Nigeria, Singapore and Malta). For saving to start, operate or expand a farm or business, Belize is the only country where the proportion of women saving exceeds that of men, and even then it is only by less than 1 percentage point. Interestingly, with the exception of Jamaica, which has the seventh-highest rate of female saving, the 10 countries showing the highest rates of female borrowing and saving are all in Africa. Although it is not possible to determine the reasons behind the varying levels, the high use of microcredit savings and loans schemes in Africa could be a factor. The lack of data over time means that it is not possible to assess whether or not women's ability to save or access credit to support their business development has increased from 2005 to 2015. However, it is clear that, overall, men are more able or more inclined to save and borrow money for business reasons than women are.

Figure 4.24 Women's access to credit as measured by Social Institutions and Gender Index 2012
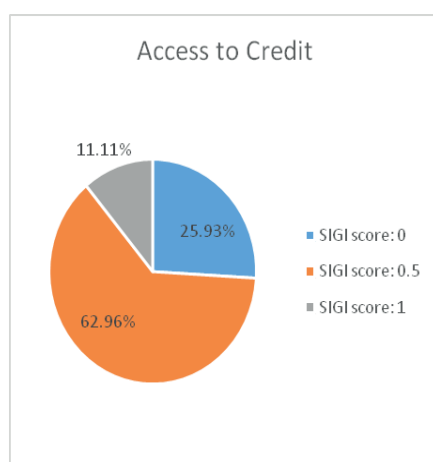
SIGI score	Countries
0	Fiji, Jamaica, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mauritius, Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago
0.5	Bangladesh, Botswana, Ghana, India, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia
1	Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda

Box 4.11 Theory of change (Self-Employed Women's Association Bank)

Shantaben isn't sure how old she is, but knows she was born not long after Ghandi died in 1948. Her father was a textile mill employee ... Her mother also worked as a head-loader and Shantaben, prohibited from studying beyond 1st standard, she joined the family business at a young age. (At 18 she went to live with her husband. Her husband became seriously ill and coupled with financial issues this resulted in Shantaben having to get work on a construction site.) ... but her parents intervened ... they convinced her to come back to the textile market, where the wages and the working conditions are improving. Back then, Shantaben says, she was lost. She didn't have anyone who could give her guidance ... Her mother had become a SEWA member, and it didn't take long for Shantaben to see the value in that. It was through SEWA, she says, that she was educated, receiving an array of training in financial planning and legal issues ... Today, Shantaben is one of 60 women whom SEWA has prepared as leaders in the textile market – 'Now I know I have SEWA's backing and I have confidence. Previously, I was afraid to speak my mind.' Now (Shantaben insists) she was in charge of her household and took her own decisions.

Monitoring and Evaluating the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2005–2015): An illustrative case study – SEWA Bank. Commonwealth Secretariat. 2013. p. 18.

Although it is not focused on women's enterprises specifically, and rather deals with the individual level, another source of data on women's access to credit can be found in the OECD's SIGI 2012. The 2012 edition of SIGI provides a measure of women's access to bank loans and other forms of credit, with data on 27 Commonwealth countries. As shown in Figure 4.24, in nearly 63 per cent of those countries, women have the right to access only some kinds of credit (e.g. only through microcredit), or they have rights but in practice they face discrimination in accessing credit. This highlights the need for continued efforts to enhance women's ability to access the credit necessary for building and sustaining businesses that can be a vital source of income for them and their families, particularly from banks and other bodies in the financial sector.

Access to affordable credit for women and mechanisms in place to help women ask for such credit was a recurring theme within several of the field visits, brought up by representatives of government ministries, women in business associations and CSOs who participated in the sessions (including in Bangladesh, St Lucia, Samoa, and Trinidad and Tobago). The needs of rural and urban women, access to collateral-free and low interest rate loans, job creation, developing women's investment funds, credit guarantee schemes, encouraging women entrepreneurs through mentoring programmes, and developing markets where products can be sold were a few of the issues affecting women's economic empowerment on the ground.[98]

One way to assist women who wish to access credit and other financial services has been the creation of dedicated desks for women at almost all banks in Bangladesh (public and private).[99] Because of cultural sensitivities, entering an institution such as a bank requires special measures so that women feel comfortable in asking for and processing credit requests. In addition, many women do not have access to physical banking facilities, so 'mobile banking' initiatives – which can include online payment schemes – are an important development in encouraging women's economic development.[100]

In Samoa, approximately 34 per cent of village businesses are owned by women. Most of these are small shops.[101] In contrast, a higher proportion of businesses in urban areas are owned or managed by women. Economic empowerment initiatives have been developed, such as microfinance schemes whereby loans are set at a 20 per cent flat rate and 10 per cent of income must be saved; collateral-free relief schemes; building capacity; and training in understanding climate change/natural disaster realities that can affect businesses. One example of such a cross-cutting initiative is the effort to revive the Samoan traditional Fine Mats process, through which mats are woven by women. These mats, called *ie sae*, are used in important ceremonies, and the weaving revival project offers opportunities for the transfer of skills, economic empowerment and the preservation of cultural practices.[102]

> ## Box 4.12 Key facts and figures (taken from the text and sources listed in the section below) on gender and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome
>
> - It is estimated that 36.9 million people are living with HIV worldwide and that new HIV infections have fallen by 35 per cent since 2000. Around 17.4 million people living with HIV are women.[107]
>
> - Of the 26 Commonwealth countries where data are available, all have significantly increased the percentage of women (and men) receiving ARVs since 2004. In these, the average percentage of women receiving ARV therapies was below 3 per cent in 2004 and this figure increased to 43 per cent in 2014.
>
> - It was announced in July 2015 that the target in MDG 6 of 15 million people on life-saving treatment for HIV by 2015 had been achieved nine months ahead of schedule.

As part of the M&E of the PoA, the Commonwealth Secretariat produced *Monitoring and Evaluating the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2005–2015): An Illustrative Case Study – SEWA Bank*. Although the idea of SEWA began in 1972 and the bank was established in 1974, so it is not directly linked to the *implementation* of the PoA, it does clearly demonstrate how critical areas such as women's economic empowerment are relevant and understood as priorities to be taken forward within the Commonwealth. SEWA (the Self-Employed Women's Association) first began in Ahmedabad (Gujarat, India) as a trade union for a variety of low-income working women in the city. Two years later, in 1974, the SEWA Bank was founded to give women access to 'reliable sources of working capital'. It is registered as an 'urban co-operative bank', meaning there are limitations to operating in rural areas and the bank cannot go beyond the state of Gujarat.[103] Overall, and following the *Gender at Work* model, SEWA's theory of change is rooted in the provision of financial products for self-employed women in Gujarat who faced discrimination and barriers to improving their daily lives and breaking cycles of poverty. The rationale is that women are able to earn more, achieve personal empowerment by ending a dependence on 'middlemen and traders', gain professional advancement through the development of skills and education, etc.[104] Critically, what has been the effect of the SEWA Bank and its holistic approach to women's economic empowerment? Box 4.11 outlines the story of Shanta Bababahi Bhalerao, who is a head-loader in Ahmedabad's textile market.

Conclusion

Although there are very few data to draw on to measure progress against the three indicators in this critical area of the PoA, it is possible to see the inequalities that persist in the economic sphere. For example, even where laws exist promoting women's rights to access, use and own land and other property, they still may face significant obstacles in doing so. They may be unaware of their rights, administrative procedures may be lacking, pressure from family and community members may result in them ceding their rights to men, and they may also face barriers to markets or lack of access to the seeds, tools and expertise that they need to use the land that they own effectively. In terms of access to credit, women are still unable to hold bank accounts in their own name or to access loans from formal financial services. Sometimes this can be because of the challenges they face in accruing the capital necessary to act as a guarantee against loans, which severely limits their ability to establish and grow businesses, even SMEs.

When it comes to women's leadership in firms, women continue to face major challenges and inequalities that prevent them from working their way up the corporate ladder. These include a double workload due to their domestic responsibilities; gender norms that can make it difficult for them to pursue careers in formal employment; a lack of education to provide them with the necessary skills and training (particularly in the poorer Commonwealth member countries); gender bias in career paths; and a lack of access to 'old boys' networks and mentoring opportunities that can

Figure 4.25 Prevalence of HIV in females aged 15–24 (%)
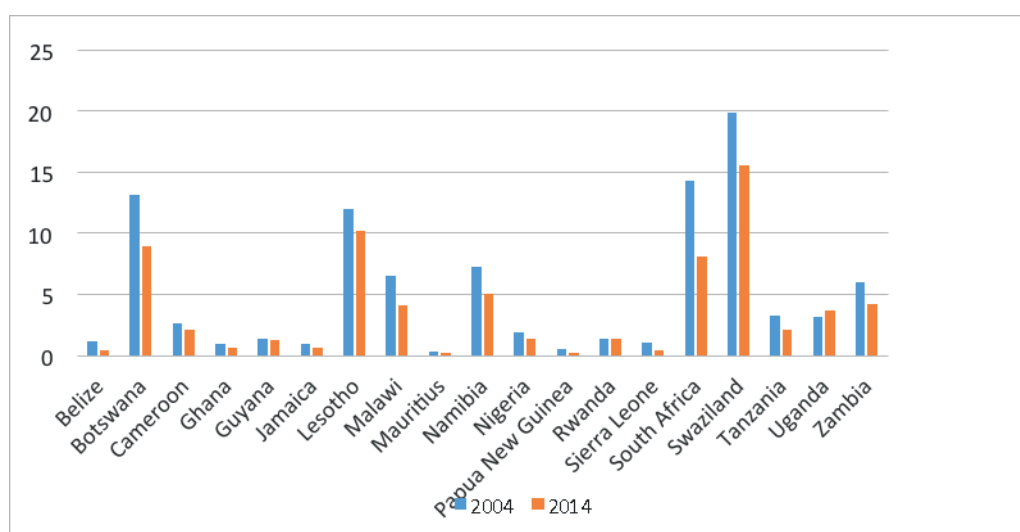
Source: Children and AIDS. Statistical Update. UNICEF. 2015.

be essential for career advancement. Together, these challenges mean that few women are rising into the top echelons and are able to manage and own businesses. While economic challenges vary throughout the Commonwealth regions, with developing countries facing particular issues related to poverty, it is clear that in all countries much work remains to be done before women are truly economically empowered.
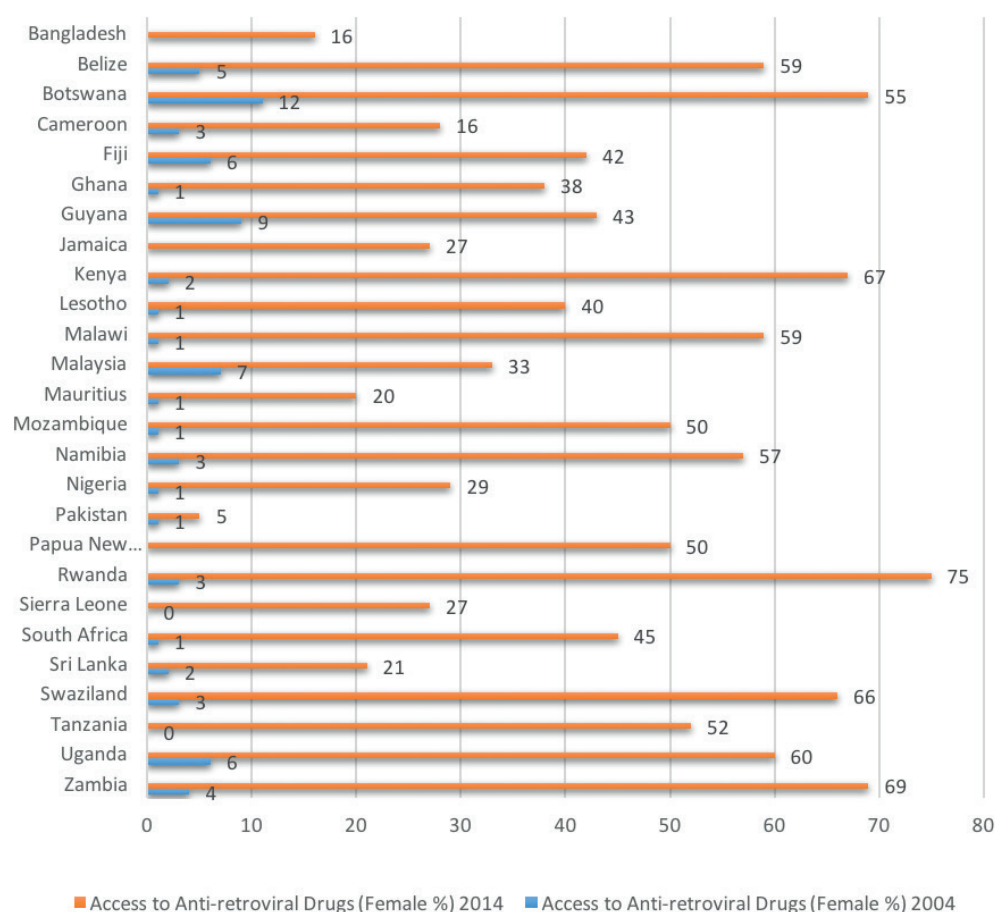
4.3.4 Gender and HIV/AIDS

Gender inequality based on entrenched and discriminatory social norms has long been recognised as a powerful driver of the global HIV pandemic, and the critical area of HIV/AIDS must be understood within this broader context.[105] Women and girls bear the highest burden of HIV globally, and this is driven in large part by their political, legal, social and economic disempowerment. Established discriminatory gender relations and male promiscuity can leave women and girls vulnerable to GBV and put them at an increased risk of HIV infections. In particular, forced sexual encounters and partner violence raise the risk of HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies. The connections between GBV and HIV/AIDS are important to consider. In 2012, 37 per cent of women living with HIV worldwide were thought to have been physically assaulted by intimate partners or others.[106]

Early and forced marriage can also increase a girl's risk of HIV infection, especially when married to an older husband. This is because of their inability to negotiate safe sex and the health risks posed by early sexual activity. One third of girls around the world are married before they turn 18, and one in every nine girls is married before her 15th birthday.[108] As noted in section 4.3.2 above, it is estimated that over the next decade 140 million girls under the age of 18 years will be forced to marry and that half of these girls live in Commonwealth member countries.[109] Eleven Commonwealth countries (most of which are in Africa) do not prohibit early marriage. Furthermore, adolescent girls and young women account for a disproportionate number of new infections among young people and the number of young people living with HIV. In 2013, nearly 60 per cent of all new HIV cases among young people aged 15–24 were adolescent girls and young women. Globally, 15 per cent of females living with HIV are aged 15–24 and 80 per cent live in sub-Saharan Africa.[110]

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), half of adolescents (10–19 years old) living with HIV can be found in only six countries, all of which are in the Commonwealth (South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, India, Mozambique and Tanzania).[111] Although it utilises a different age bracket from the above statistics, Figure 4.25 outlines the data for the percentages of females aged 15–24 living with HIV in 20 Commonwealth countries in 2004 and 2014.

Figure 4.26 Access to ARVs (females), 2004 and 2014

Bangladesh — 16
Belize — 59 | 5
Botswana — 55 | 12
Cameroon — 16 | 3
Fiji — 42 | 6
Ghana — 38 | 1
Guyana — 43 | 9
Jamaica — 27
Kenya — 67 | 2
Lesotho — 40 | 1
Malawi — 59 | 1
Malaysia — 33 | 7
Mauritius — 20 | 1
Mozambique — 50 | 1
Namibia — 57 | 3
Nigeria — 29 | 1
Pakistan — 5 | 1
Papua New... — 50
Rwanda — 75 | 3
Sierra Leone — 27 | 0
South Africa — 45 | 1
Sri Lanka — 21 | 2
Swaziland — 66 | 3
Tanzania — 52 | 0
Uganda — 60 | 6
Zambia — 69 | 4

■ Access to Anti-retroviral Drugs (Female %) 2014   ■ Access to Anti-retroviral Drugs (Female %) 2004

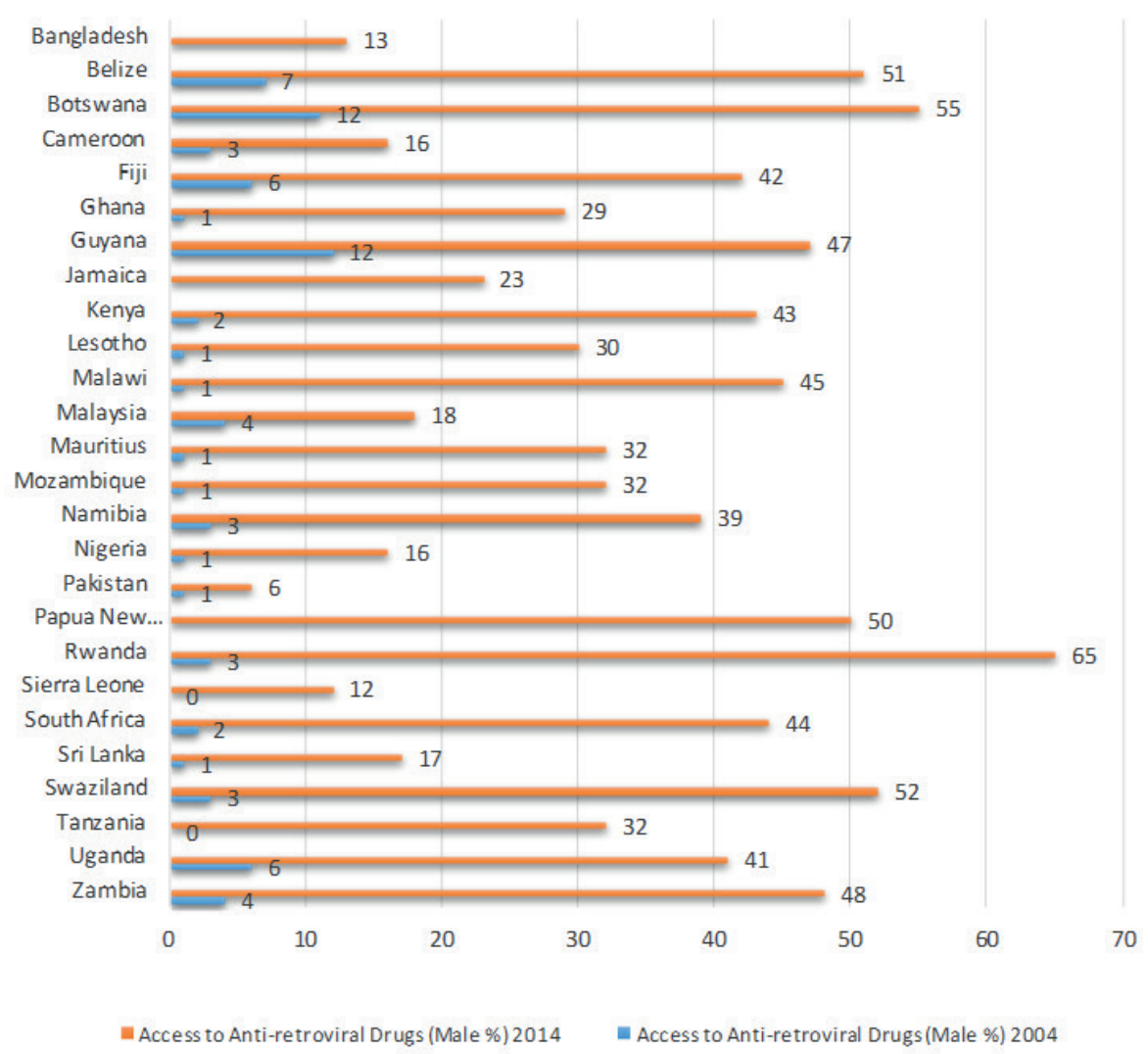Sources: UNAIDS estimates; World Bank database.

All countries have reduced the prevalence in this category since 2004, except for Uganda, where there was a slight increase from 3.1 per cent to 3.7 per cent.

From 2014 data, it is estimated that 36.9 million people are living with HIV worldwide and new HIV infections have fallen by 35 per cent since 2000. Around 17.4 million of the population living with HIV are women. It is estimated that currently only 51 per cent of people with HIV know their status. In 2014, approximately 150 million children and adults in 129 low- and middle-income countries received HIV-testing services. As of March 2015, 15 million people living with HIV were accessing antiretroviral therapy (ART) (up from 13.6 million in June 2014). In 2014, 73 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV had access to ARV medicines to prevent the transmission of HIV to their babies.[112]

Indicator 9: Proportion of women accessing antiretrovirals, counselling and testing services

A broader and holistic ART process which can include access to and ensuring that people continue to take ARVs , which can also incorporate strategies such as proper nutrition, understanding HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health issues, psychological support, palliative care 'and caring of the care-givers' of people living with HIV/AIDS, can have a powerful 'prevention benefit' in the fight against HIV. Even within a standard understanding of ART, which involves combining ARVs, the process not only improves the health of individuals but can also reduce the risk of transmitting the infection to others. In South Africa, a study in a rural part of the country demonstrated that the rate of infection fell by 17 per cent for every 10 per cent increase in the number of people receiving ART.[113]

Figure 4.27 Access to ARVs (males), 2004 and 2014

Sources: UNAIDS estimates; World Bank database.

The importance of ARVs as part of a multi-sectoral ART process can be found in the Commonwealth Secretariat's publication Who Cares? The Economics of Dignity (2011). The study focuses on unpaid carers who deliver care services to those living with HIV/AIDS. Underlying the research is a rights-based approach that emphasises dignity as an inalienable human right. The role of the carer is undertaken not only by women but also, for instance, by gay and transgender men and women caring for their partners and by girls who have been taken out of school to care for a parent or parents living with HIV/AIDS. Dignity must apply not only to the person living with HIV/AIDS but also to unpaid carers.[114]

The importance of providing ARVs[115] must not be underestimated and is crucial to the global HIV/AIDS response, since this strategy saves lives, prevents new HIV infections, prevents illness, saves money and promotes development. Evidence shows that people living with HIV on ARTs can have life expectancies comparable to the general population and therefore can contribute economically and in other ways.[116] It was announced in July 2015 that the AIDS target in MDG 6, of 15 million people on life-saving HIV treatment by 2015, was achieved nine months ahead of schedule.[117]

Reliable, consistent and available data covering a variety of issues linked to HIV/AIDS, and to women in particular, are still lacking. In an attempt to address the lack of data, a recent global review, as part of a multi-stakeholder project called Key

Box 4.13 Integrated Approach to Combating Gender-Based Violence, Botswana

Botswana has the second highest HIV prevalence in the world, at 25.4 per cent of its population aged between 15 and 49 years (2012 data). The Botswana AIDS Impact Survey VI (BAIS IV) AIDS indicator study (Government of Botswana 2013) showed a strong gender disparity in HIV prevalence, with women at 21 per cent compared with men at 4 per cent. According to the 2012 Gender Based Violence Indicator Study, women in Botswana who experience gender-based violence (GBV) are 50 per cent more likely to be infected with HIV than women in non-violent relationships. More than two-thirds of females in Botswana have experienced some form of GBV in their lifetime, and 62 per cent reported being victims of intimate partner violence. In 2001, Botswana adopted an Integrated Approach to Combating Gender Based Violence (IACGBV or Integrated Approach) as a key strategy espoused by the Commonwealth for its elimination. In the Botswana context, it was important that the IACGBV address HIV/AIDS, given the mounting evidence showing that these two epidemics intertwine and intensify each other.

Lessons learned and the way forward

Through its various strategies, Botswana has contributed to knowledge building on integrated approaches to dealing with GBV and HIV/AIDS. The reflections of the national gender machinery provide important practical lessons on both the challenges and ways forward in attempting to put into practice the aspiration of working in an integrated and co-ordinated way to address these issues:

- National Women's Machineries (NWMs) have important knowledge and skill sets that are crucial to integrated approaches to GBV, but they rarely have the resources to direct these processes as effectively as they would wish. Implementing integrated approaches requires NWMs to engage other stakeholders with relevant skills and experience to build capacity or support the process.

- Creating think tanks and multidisciplinary teams, though costly, can help to remedy the absence of models that are specific to the context and realities of each country situation. This also enables the broadest sectoral engagement as possible to support fully integrated approaches.

- Complex issues require multi-dimensional, well-designed and well-funded development programmes. This requires nimble programme management and monitoring with an ongoing assessment of progress, being prepared to adjust programmes when necessary, and a willingness to address significant issues as they emerge.

- As new, unanticipated issues emerge, these need to be prioritised by key stakeholders, keeping in mind the overall scope of the original plan.

- Changes in GBV and HIV, and the gender-related social norms that underpin their prevalence, are not achievable within the timeframe of a typical programme framework. Short-term outcomes like those described in this case study may be intermediate steps along the way and can contribute to an understanding of how change happens in social norms and behaviours related to GBV.

Botswana ETR Case Study. 2015. Commonwealth Secretariat.

Figure 4.28 Percentage of pregnant women living with HIV receiving ARV medicines, African region, 2013
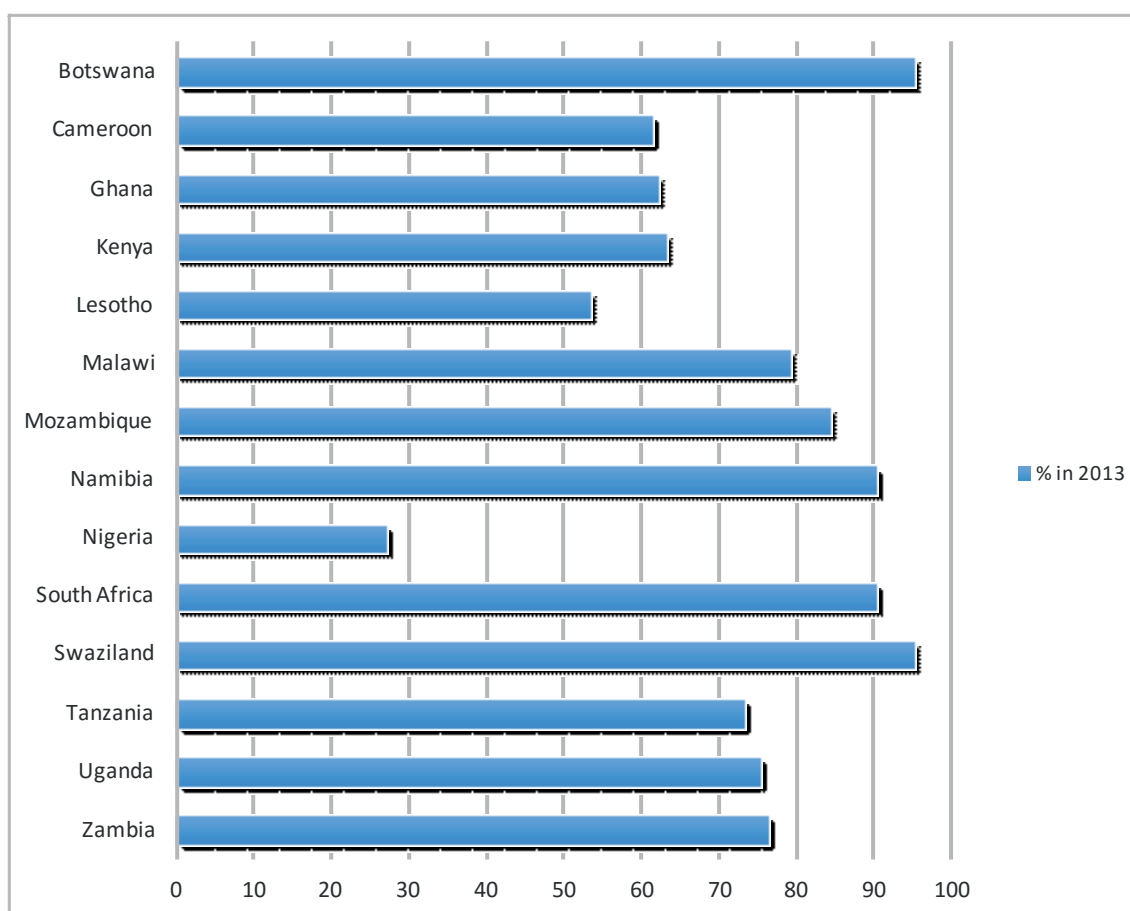
Source: Global AIDS Response Progress Reporting (WHO/UNICEF/UNAIDS).[122]

Barriers to Women's Access to HIV Treatment: Making 'Fast-Track' a Reality, has studied care and treatment access globally for women living with HIV. Issues examined included 'coverage and access' to programmes and the 'availability, affordability, acceptability and quality' of ART access. An important challenge is that data on the rates of 'inititiation and retention on ART' are not usually disaggregated by 'age and sex/gender' and critically are not 'comprehensive for women who are not pregnant or breastfeeding'.[118] This reality has, in turn, affected the gathering of data for indicator 9 (Proportion of women accessing ARVs, counselling and testing services).

Although not complete, data on the numbers and percentages of individuals and men/women accessing ARVs have been collected for several years and by several organisations such as UNAIDS, the WHO and the World Bank. Not all Commonwealth countries are included in general datasets pertaining to HIV/AIDS, which makes reporting on trends from 2004 to 2015 difficult. For instance, data on the number of women accessing ARVs are available for only 26 Commonwealth countries. Figures 4.26 and 4.27 indicate the percentages of women and men receiving ARVs in individual countries in 2004 and in 2014.[119]

All Commonwealth countries listed in Figures 4.26 and 4.27 have significantly increased the percentage of women (and men) receiving ARVs since 2004. Although not all regions are covered and only 26 countries are listed, the average percentage of women receiving ARV therapies was below 3 per cent in 2004 and increasing to 43 per cent in 2014. Globally, more women than men receive ARV therapies. According to the WHO, data were gathered showing a total female–male ratio of 59 per cent to 41 per cent.[120] The Commonwealth countries in 2014 follow this pattern, with an average female–male ratio of 43 per cent (female) to just over 34 per cent (male).

Figure 4.29 Percentage of pregnant women living with HIV receiving ARV medicines
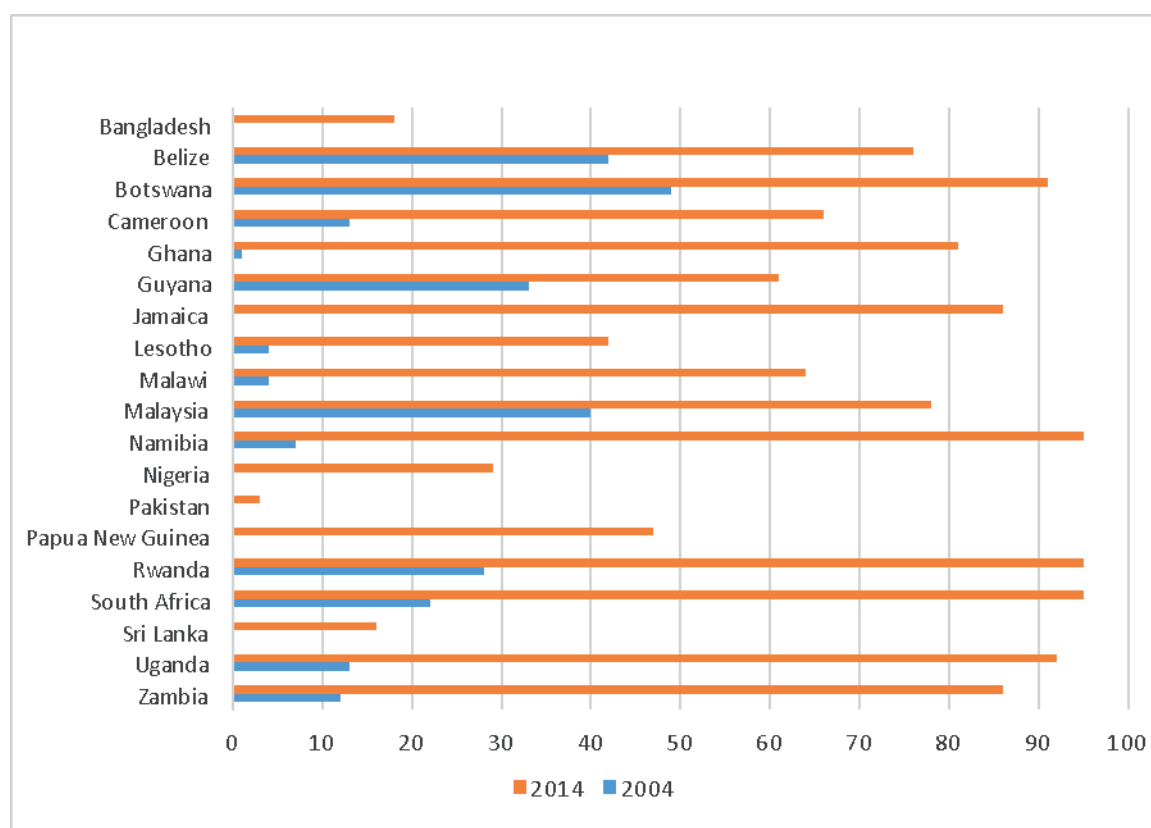
Sources: UNAIDS estimates; World Bank.

Box 4.13 outlines the connections between GBV and HIV/AIDS and demonstrates an approach undertaken in Botswana, which has a high gender disparity in HIV prevalence.

One reason more women than men receive ARVs is the concerted global efforts to test pregnant and breastfeeding women and offer ARVs to prevent mother-to-child transmission rates.

Under WHO guidelines, all pregnant and breastfeeding women are eligible for ARV drugs to prevent mother-to-child transmission. In 2013, approximately two thirds of pregnant and breastfeeding women in low- and middle-income countries received at least some effective ARV treatment.[121] The total number of pregnant and breastfeeding women receiving ARVs is dominated by what is happening in Africa. The WHO African region is home to almost 87 per cent of pregnant women living with HIV in low- and middle-income countries. The WHO has a list of 21 Global Plan priority countries in the African region. Fourteen are Commonwealth countries, so Figure 4.28 has been included to show the percentages of pregnant

women living with HIV who were receiving ARV medicines for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission in 2013.

A slightly wider comparison of ARV therapy coverage of pregnant women living with HIV can be made for 19 Commonwealth countries; see Figure 4.29. The data show that these Commonwealth countries have significantly increased the percentage of pregnant women receiving ART, from 14 per cent in 2004 to 64 per cent in 2014. This is 9 percentage points lower than the global average of 73 per cent in 2014.

There is currently no reliable data series pertaining to the other two elements of indicator 9: the proportions of women accessing counselling and testing services. A recent innovation has been the introduction of self-testing kits, which, depending on the costs and availability, could help reduce the burden on existing testing centres. Critically, any assessment of the numbers or percentages of individuals attending testing services must also incorporate the fact that HIV testing should be voluntary and the right to decline being tested should be recognised. As the WHO insists,

Figure 4.30 Estimated coverage of HIV testing and counselling among pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries, 2005 and 2009–2012 (%)
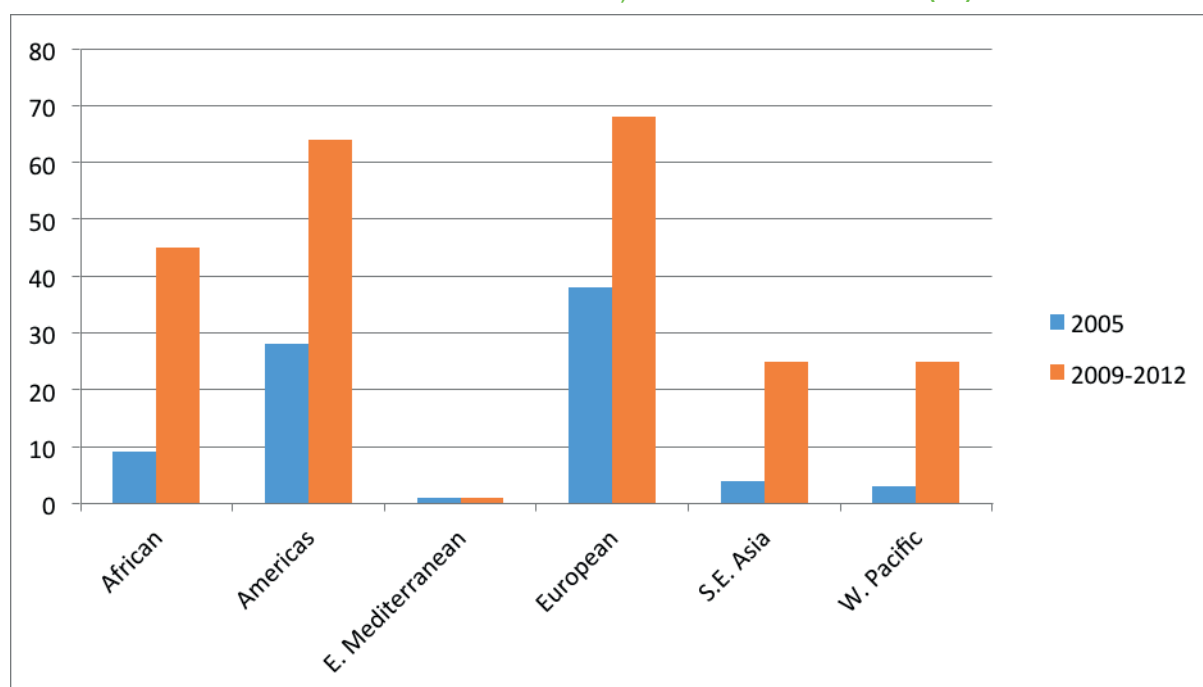
Sources: Global AIDS Response Programme (WHO/UNICEF/UNAIDS); United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2013.

'Mandatory or coerced testing by a health-care provider, authority or by a partner or family member is not acceptable as it undermines good public health practice and infringes on human rights'.[123]

Since 2000, approximately 38.1 million people have become infected with HIV and 25.3 million people have died from AIDS-related illnesses such as certain cancers, tuberculosis (TB) and pneumonia. Developing healthcare facilities that integrate HIV and TB services is an important factor in being able to screen and treat these illnesses. Women living with HIV are at a high risk of getting cervical cancer, so co-ordinating prevention, screening and treatment options is paramount. For pregnant women, de-centralising HIV services, including testing and ARTs, and integrating them into antenatal clinics offers great benefits such as helping to ensure ART take-up and retention rates. One reason people stop taking ARVs is if they must travel far from their home to obtain medication and other health services. There can also be side-effects such as fatigue and changes to physical appearance.[124]

In 2013, the Global AIDS Response Programme (WHO/UNICEF/UNAIDS) estimated the percentage of HIV testing and counselling coverage among pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries in 2005 and 2009–2012. These were grouped into six regions: Africa, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe, South-East Asia and the Western Pacific. The overall totals for low- and middle-income countries in these regions were 8 per cent (2005) and 37 per cent (2012). Although Figure 4.30 does not specifically address Commonwealth countries, it has been included because it outlines overall regional statistics covering HIV testing and counselling services for pregnant women.

Globally, the uptake of HIV testing and counselling has increased by approximately 33 per cent between 2009 and 2013. This increase must, however, be understood in the context that people living with HIV are not necessarily accessing testing and counselling services in greater numbers. Some of the reasons for this contextual check include the fact that more testing takes place within antenatal facilities, which means other communities such as men or sex workers tend to be left out of the overall numbers of those being tested. For example, testing data for communities such as sex workers are often from very small survey samples, which means the true numbers cannot be extrapolated.. Also, countries with a high prevalence of HIV tend to have lower testing rates for men than for

Table 4.7 Reversing and halting the spread of HIV, 2000–2014

Reversing the spread of HIV: more than 20 per cent decline	Halting the spread of HIV: –20 per cent to 20 per cent change
Belize	Bahamas
Botswana	Cameroon
Ghana	Canada*
India	Lesotho
Jamaica	New Zealand*
Kenya	Countries identified with an asterisk are based on changes in the numbers of new HIV diagnoses.
Malawi	
Mauritius	
Mozambique	
Namibia	
Nigeria	
Papua New Guinea	
Rwanda	
Sierra Leone	
South Africa	
Swaziland	
Trinidad and Tobago	
United Republic of Tanzania	
Zambia	

Source: *How Aids Changed Everything*. MDG 6: 15 Years, 15 Lessons of Hope from the AIDS Response. UNAIDS. 2015

women, meaning a large portion of those at risk of HIV infection, or who have HIV and have not been tested, are not included in datasets.[125]

Conclusion

Limited data are available about women accessing ARV therapy, testing and counselling services within the Commonwealth. Even at the global level, obtaining disaggregated data based on gender within the context of HIV is difficult. Despite this, progress has been achieved globally and within the Commonwealth since 2004, especially in terms of access to ARVs for women in general and for pregnant women in particular.

Furthermore, according to data from the UN, certain Commonwealth countries have either reversed or halted the spread of HIV during 2000–2014. Table 4.7 lists Commonwealth countries where there has been a more than 20

per cent decline in the spread of HIV and countries where there has been a –20 per cent to 20 per cent change in new HIV infections.[126]

Barriers continue to exist for women, particularly for young women and girls, in gaining greater access to treatment, given that services vary and there is a need to overcome weak national infrastructures, financial constraints, poverty, lack of access to sexual health and reproductive services, and the continuation of negative cultural and social norms. For those living with HIV/AIDS, these negative and cultural norms can include stigma, discrimination and social marginalisation. During the field trips for the ETR, representatives from government ministries such as health and CSOs working on HIV/AIDS emphasised how much of their work still revolves around educational programmes to stem attitudes that result in discrimination, stigma and social marginalisation of individuals or people living with HIV/AIDS. For example, St Lucia received funding (which ended in 2010) from the World Bank

not only to help prevent and control HIV/AIDS but also to support community advocacy programmes to reduce HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination.[127]

In turn, stigma, discrimination and marginalisation against those whose behaviour falls outside culturally prescribed gender norms also play a role in driving the spread of HIV. For instance, 'most-at-risk populations' (which have not been examined in this section), such as sex workers, are made more vulnerable to HIV infection when they are denied prevention, care and treatment services simply because their behaviour contradicts fiercely protected gender norms such as women having to follow traditional roles as wives and mothers. The realities faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people are another factor that can affect access to testing and other health initiatives. This stigma, often perpetuated by families and communities, is reinforced by discriminatory national laws and policies such as not criminalising marital rape, which all have the unintended and unfortunate result of spreading HIV.

4.4 Implementing the Plan of Action: partnerships

The overall task of implementing the PoA falls to Commonwealth governments and to the Commonwealth Secretariat. As outlined in the PoA, implementation is focused on the following four components: partnerships; knowledge, information and capacity building; resources; and monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

The document identifies several potential partnerships for the implementation of the PoA, such as Commonwealth governments, a network of Commonwealth institutions, the UN and its agencies, multilateral and bilateral agencies, regional bodies and CSOs. It states that generating and sharing knowledge is an important contribution the Commonwealth can make in relation to documenting and disseminating examples of best practice on gender equality. It lists encouraging the development of initiatives to ensure adequate resources, such as increased donor support. It touches upon mechanisms to monitor, evaluate and report on what has been undertaken within the four critical areas. In addition, it expands upon an area where the Commonwealth has been an innovator. The Commonwealth Secretariat was the first intergovernmental organisation to promote Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRBs) by piloting

their use in some countries and developing tools and good practice examples. The PoA also states that governments 'should establish' mechanisms to monitor and evaluate plans associated with budget allocation and expenditure.

The PoA emphasises that the Commonwealth Secretariat is in a unique position to foster effective partnerships with member countries and other stakeholders to implement the PoA's four critical areas. Collaborating with governments and other partners is essential, since this avoids duplication of work and clarifies how programmes are approached and/or monitored, etc.[128] A variety of 'other partners' are listed, including CSOs, the media, cultural and religious organisations, the private sector, academic institutions, and international, regional and other agencies. Commonwealth intergovernmental organisations and associations such as the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network and the Commonwealth Women's NGO Network are also listed.[129]

The role of the Secretariat in building partnerships has emerged as a critical theme across the survey questionnaires, the staff (former and current) interviews, the country field trips and the literature review conducted for the ETR. For those who were not aware of the PoA (including many of the interviewees at country level), the stress was on wanting to build effective and ongoing links with the Commonwealth Secretariat. Although a lack of financial resources to carry out programmes and initiatives was cited, the overwhelming request from interviewees was to open deeper channels of communication between the Secretariat, member countries and other stakeholders such as CSOs, especially in the areas of capacity building and technical exchanges. Most respondents who returned the survey questionnaires were aware of the PoA. One of the areas of concern that those raised is that more efforts should be made to link up with and support women's organisations and networks, given the vital role that CSOs play in PoA implementation.

The Commonwealth Secretariat, in its Strategic Plan (2013/14–2015/17), acknowledges the value in forming partnerships as a key 'methodology to support' members and the need to strengthen existing relationships and explore new effective partnerships at multilateral, regional and national levels. Partnerships have been formed with a variety

of partners including the World Bank, the UNDP, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the African Union (AU), the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DfID), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS). The Commonwealth Secretariat has engaged in several activities and connected with several partners throughout the life-cycle of the PoA. Important partnerships were formed with CSOs and international agencies such as the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), the Association of Women in Development and UN Women. It also developed a partnership with Global Board Ready Women (GBRW) in 2014. The organisation hosts a global database initiative to increase the visibility and number of women serving on boards. The impact of this initiative has not, at this point, been assessed.

An earlier example of partnerships with CSOs occurred in 2006 when the gender component of the Secretariat set up a website and newsletter called *Gender and Trade* (G&T) in conjunction with the Gender and Trade Initiative (GATI). GATI was developed in 1994 by the Society for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (SOFCAR), a research and advocacy organisation based in New Delhi. The website was launched at 8WAMM in Kampala, Uganda (June 2007). The project was also supported by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) South Asia region, and produced newsletters and flyers. In 2009 the Commonwealth Secretariat produced an initial overview of the project (2007–2008) in a short internal memo written by the Gender Section of the Social Transformation Programmes Division (*Project Implementation Report E-Newsletter and Website on Gender and Trade Newsletter Maintained by GATI-SOFCAR*). The interactive website covering gender and trade initiatives for women was deemed successful, while there were some initial concerns with the bimonthly newsletters such as providing academic rigour. In addition, GATI led the creation of a *Gender and Trade Fact Book* for Commonwealth countries, which brought together relevant data on a range of gender and trade indicators. The Commonwealth Secretariat's information technology team was involved in the process of developing the interactive component of the website. The model was to be used for future Secretariat initiatives. This short implementation memo made proposals, such as increasing budgets, to enhance the next phase of the project.

The evaluators of the ETR were given an example of a flyer taken as a screenshot from the website, which introduced the project as follows:

Welcome to Gender and Trade (G&T), a web based resource platform interlinking research, advocacy and action across the Commonwealth countries with the objective of facilitating and promoting gender sensitive trade policies at the national, regional and multilateral levels.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is no longer involved in the G&T website project and no further information was available outlining the impact of this initiative or its links to the PoA.

The Secretariat is currently in the process of developing a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with UN Women. Critical areas of concern covered during the discussions to formulate the MOU included women's political participation, VAWG, GRB and women's economic empowerment.[130] Staff interview responses and recommendations obtained from CSOs and government representatives during the field visits centred on the importance of such formal connections with international agencies. In Solomon Islands, the recent closure of the Commonwealth Youth Office was cited as an example of the Commonwealth losing its 'physical' presence in the country. The result of linking with an organisation such as UN Women in this manner would be two-fold. First, if the MOU permits it, the Commonwealth Secretariat could utilise physical space within UN Women offices located in Commonwealth countries. This would allow a more visible presence, which several respondents during the field trips mentioned is critical for their countries or regions. Cognisant of the costs involved in staffing such offices, an alternative suggestion would be to create a space within UN Women offices where information on the Commonwealth and its work on gender equality in the country and in the region could be displayed and disseminated. Then, when Commonwealth Secretariat staff are in the area, workshops or 'open house' events could be held in this space. To put it bluntly, the Commonwealth is often 'out of sight and out of mind' for CSOs and individual women who may not have been directly involved with the organisation. Second, working closely with other international organisations avoids duplication and would bring to the forefront the unique position of the Commonwealth. It has particular comparative

advantages and niche areas of work, such as its ability to convene a variety of stakeholders at the governmental level and its election-monitoring capacities, which include gender-specific issues such as building the capacity of female election monitors.

As it is an intergovernmental organisation, the Commonwealth Secretariat staff must wait for and react to member government requests for involvement. This means that being proactive in engaging with partners or initiating programmes is at times difficult. However, the Secretariat can still play an important role in acting as a conduit of information between stakeholders, such as CSOs and governments or other partners, and, during the ETR field visits, the willingness of Secretariat staff to meet individuals and relay recommendations or requests for support was evident. However, the ETR has highlighted the need to create the capacity for more formal channels of communication between stakeholders such as CSOs, community leaders, religious organisations, the media, etc. and government representatives, who can then pass on requests to the Secretariat for its participation, rather than relying on more ad hoc opportunities.

One of the Commonwealth intergovernmental organisations involved in the PoA and contributing to building partnerships between governments and civil society is the Commonwealth Foundation.[131] Two years after the PoA was published, the Commonwealth Foundation produced a detailed study that examined how partnerships were formed and projects were implemented in the Commonwealth, focusing on the four critical areas of the PoA.[132] The report outlines a variety of case studies that demonstrate the successes, limitations and challenges of a variety of gender equality projects, including those focusing on issues such as poverty eradication, economic empowerment, trafficking of women and HIV/AIDS, many of which cut across the four critical areas of the PoA.

A relevant finding linked to the ETR, in this report, is in relation to the concept of gender. Several participants during the field trips remarked that gender equality mechanisms must also undertake a conceptual exercise in terms of understanding what is meant by 'gender'. Does gender apply only to women and girls or does gender equality involve both women/girls and men/boys? The Commonwealth Foundation report brings out, for instance, the 'conceptual differences among

the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and CEDAW partners in the understanding of gender.'[133] These differences in understanding gender also affected the original ratio of male to female participants in the partnership. Some of the partners originally understood gender to mean female, so the initial list of participants was mainly female.[134]

By their nature, multistakeholder partnerships including government/civil society partnerships present challenges, such as if the project addresses controversial issues or if not all the stakeholders are involved during the development or initiation phases of the project. Critically, the report emphasises a need for flexibility on both sides of the partnership to adapt to changing circumstances or understanding there may be a need to use different approaches. For example, a fair trade project in St Vincent and the Grenadines required constant and free dialogue within an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding as well the ability to compromise, which resulted in the involvement of certain CSOs that had initially not been deemed to fit into the remit of the project. Importantly, the report notes that MOUs, ToRs and inclusive consultations are important components of successful projects. Although the report is over eight years old, it would have been useful for the ETR to obtain an update to it that examines whether or not partnerships associated with the PoA since 2007 have learned from the successes, limitations and challenges outlined in the review of these multistakeholder partnerships.

As part of the MTR process of the PoA, the Commonwealth Foundation produced a report entitled *Mid-Term Review of Civil Society Organisations' Implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality* (2011), which was presented to the CGPMG meeting held in New York in February 2011. For the report, a survey was conducted to assess CSO engagement with the PoA. Key findings included CSOs wanting more interaction between civil society and governments, and a lack of resources to implement gender equality programmes. One interesting question in the survey related to how CSOs viewed the enabling environment for the promotion and implementation of the PoA. Critically, those respondents who even attempted to answer this question tended to have a direct connection to or involvement with the Commonwealth or 'Commonwealth Platforms', as the report notes.[135]

The Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBW) has also developed partnerships within the Commonwealth. Its main function is to work with women in business by linking governments and the private sector to encourage and enable women's economic empowerment. This is achieved through 'delivering activities, initiatives, products and services focused on trade, talent and training. CBW also sits on the main governance body on gender for the 53 Commonwealth Governments'. One key area has been initiatives to train women in best practice in day-to-day procurement techniques. The network has also worked with the Commonwealth Secretariat on *Leveraging Gender-based Approaches to Procurement for Strengthening Women's Economic Empowerment* (2014) and has partnered with UN Development Business (UNDB) to enable businesses led or owned by women 'to directly access and participate in contracting and export opportunities worldwide.' [136] The briefing note acknowledges that the development of gender-based procurement programmes and access to supply chains is a critical method to support women's economic empowerment and help to drive economic growth. The CBW and UNDB hosted an event in March 2015 that 'addressed both the demand side (procurement as the buying of goods and services by the buyers whether in governments or corporates) and the supply side (the knowledge, skills and tools for women and women-owned businesses to support and strengthen them as participants in international contracts)'.[137] The Commonwealth Secretariat's publication *Gender, Trade and Public Procurement Policy: Kenya, India, Australia, Jamaica (revised, 2014)* served as background for these initiatives. Public procurement is recognised as a way to assist governments in the areas of 'social goals and sustainable economic development'. According to the publication:

The key objectives of public procurement policy are to define an efficient, transparent system which enables governments to procure value-for-money goods and services in order to run the day-to-day business of government.

Gender is important for public procurement policy, since involving more women, who are especially active within SMEs, increases the pool of 'economic agents' in the delivery of goods and services. This can help reduce levels of poverty and assist with overall levels of women's economic empowerment.[138]

A more recent example of a partnership-building endeavour took place in March 2015 during the Annual Consultation of Commonwealth NWMs meeting in New York. First, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the AU convened a joint meeting to review progress and identify gender-related priorities for Africa with respect to Beijing+20 and the post-2015 development agenda under the theme 'Africa's Achievements and Challenges within Beijing+20'. The meeting also examined the development of an AU and Secretariat partnership for inclusive political development in Africa. Second, in partnership with the Rwandan Ministry for Gender and Family Promotion, the Secretariat convened an event to share Commonwealth research on the impact of women's political leadership on democracy and development in Rwanda, the results of which could be a model to be replicated within the Commonwealth. The outcomes of these two meetings were to be used within the first Women's Forum held on the fringe of the CHOGM in Malta in November 2015. It will be interesting to see how the results of these partnerships were incorporated within the first ever CHOGM Women's Forum Meeting.[139]

There is great willingness on the part of current and potential partners to engage with the Commonwealth and with the Commonwealth Secretariat. Given the nature of the Commonwealth as an intergovernmental organisation and the limited financial resources, it is necessary to foster new and effective ways in which these partnerships can be forged.

4.5 Implementing the Plan of Action: knowledge, information and capacity building

Partnerships and developing knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives are intertwined. The two events listed above in relation to the NWM meeting (March 2015) brought together partners including the Commonwealth Secretariat, the AU, the Government of Rwanda, participants attending the NWM meeting and, eventually, those who attended the CHOGM Women's Forum in Malta (November 2015). The initial events and the follow-up in Malta not only created but also shared knowledge-, information- and capacity-building approaches within the

context of a post-2015 African development agenda and Rwanda's work on the impact of women's political leadership on democracy.[140]

Without a doubt, the most often mentioned knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives that have come from the Commonwealth and relate to the PoA have been its initiatives on GRB. This work was consistently cited across all the staff interviews, survey questionnaires, field visits and literature review that were conducted for this ETR.

GRB has become an internationally acknowledged tool for supporting the implementation of commitments towards achieving gender equality and the realisation of women's human rights. The Commonwealth Secretariat has been pioneering its GRB work since at least 1995. The PoA, in its monitoring, evaluation and reporting section, states that governments should establish mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of national and sectoral budget allocation and expenditure.[141] Several Commonwealth governments use GRB.[142] The Commonwealth Secretariat has undertaken capacity-building activities and produced publications on the subject. In 2014, a series called *A Case Study of Gender-Responsive Budgeting* was produced covering Australia, Bangladesh, India and Uganda. These case studies analysed four specific components of GRB: knowledge processes and networking; institutional mechanisms; learning processes and building capacities; and public accountability and benefit incidence. Some of the conclusions reached within these case studies are that GRB is making the entire budgetary exercise more responsive to gender issues; that governments and in particular finance departments need to lead the process of developing GRB and analysing their effects on gender issues; and that there is a need to further develop the availability of sex-disaggregated and gender-relevant data.

Beyond the production of publications, the Secretariat has been asked for advice by the government of Trinidad and Tobago on how it should implement its recently developed GRB guidelines. During the field visit to Trinidad and Tobago the consultants involved in the development of these guidelines highlighted that the Commonwealth Secretariat provides 'best practice' examples from Uganda, Bangladesh and Rwanda covering GRB.[143] A *Toolkit for Gender*

Responsive Budgeting – Trinidad and Tobago has been developed by the consultants and adapted to Trinidad and Tobago. According to the introduction to their toolkit, a GRB 'is one that integrates a gender perspective into the budgeting process with a view to reducing systemic inequalities in the ways in which men and women, boys and girls benefit from the allocation of resources and the way in which they are impacted by policies, programmes and projects.'[144] The toolkit, issued by the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, outlines a 10-step framework for integrating GRB in national budgets. Trinidad and Tobago is, at this point, at Step 8: 'Use the guidelines to apply the GRB process and methodology to every stage of the (budget) cycle'. Step 10 will be to conduct a gender analysis of budget statements after finalisation.[145]

An important connection was made in Trinidad and Tobago to the GRB activities conducted in Bangladesh. As part of the implementation of Bangladesh's National Women Development Policy (2011), the expansion of GRB was prepared by the Finance Division alongside the national budget to track the impact of allocated financial resources in the area of gender development and across various sectors.[146] According to the government, this process has guided policies, interventions and the management of resources linked to gender-based programmes.[147] There is a dedicated section within the Finance Department website for the Gender Budgeting Report 2015–2016.[148]

One opportunity, and an example of how the Commonwealth Secretariat can facilitate partnerships and knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives, was illustrated during the field visit to Trinidad and Tobago. During the ETR interviews, the fact that Bangladesh has put its GRB information online was highlighted as a model for a potential future component of Trinidad and Tobago's platform.[149] Supporting greater interaction between member countries at all levels of partnership and encouraging the use of mentors from within the Commonwealth, for example around GRB activities, could be a vital part of future exchange initiatives. If financial resources are a concern, then perhaps an *e-mentoring* scheme could also be developed, which would limit travel expenses.

Within the Commonwealth Secretariat, the *gender equality* series of publications has served well as a mechanism to share 'best practice' examples and

as an effective means to disseminate theoretical analysis, national and regional experience, policy outcomes and lessons learned. Demand for these publications is high, especially those covering economic empowerment, VAW and GRB. As of December 2015:

- Gender publications are among the top 20 books published by the Commonwealth Secretariat purchased and cited by the public.

- Since 2010, gender publications have been cited 1,354 times out of a total 4,083 citations of all Commonwealth publications.[150]

These, and other gender-based documents, are available on the Commonwealth Secretariat's website – Knowledge Centre (Library and Archives, Digital Assets, Online Bookshop and the online cloud asset of Commonwealth Connects, which allows accredited Commonwealth organisations and partners to collaborate online securely). [151] Respondents from the questionnaire and from the field trips noted how useful the Knowledge Centre has been for accessing timely and informative publications.

Within the Commonwealth Secretariat, collaboration to develop knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives in conjunction with the PoA has indeed taken place but not as readily as current staff members wished. From the staff (current) interviews, the sense is that there is still a lack of cross-divisional work, especially in the area of programme development. Divisions such as Youth have collaborated with the Gender Section, for example on a project encouraging young people to develop their leadership capacities. This included a diploma (now a Bachelor of Arts degree) on capacity building for young workers, which comprised a curriculum section on gender. No further information was available on the outcomes or effectiveness of this initiative and its potential links to the implementation of the PoA.

There have also been initiatives between the Human Rights Division and the Gender Section on the issue of early and forced marriage. The collaboration centred on engaging the 'opinion makers' such as traditional leaders, education initiatives on how early and forced marriages affect women and girls, and understanding the role boys and girls can play in changing practices and traditions. The Gender Section also invited the Human Rights Unit to convene a parallel workshop

on child, early and forced marriage at the Women's Forum held recently in Malta (November 2015). It will be useful to see the impact of this collaboration between the Gender Section and the Human Rights Unit and the results from the Malta workshop.

There is potential to increase collaboration between divisions/units. They do work with the Gender Section but according to some staff members this is not always evident or formally encouraged. Usually, collaboration across issues or divisions/units takes place because of personal staff connections rather than the process being institutionalised across the organisation.

Furthermore, some of the institutional practices within the Secretariat, such as high staff turnover due to its rotational human resources policy, have hindered the implementation of the PoA. Newer staff, and this relates to those outside the Gender Section, were not always made aware of the PoA and its relevance to their work. Also, there has not been a mechanism within the Secretariat whereby, at the design stage of programme development, the four critical areas of the PoA were included. No framework existed that informed staff how the four critical areas of the PoA could be used across divisional programmes. Finally, staff were not always aware of how to develop strategic partnerships with external groups or organisations or how to gauge the effectiveness of these partnerships.

These internal issues and challenges faced by staff members in relation to developing partnerships and knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives are not new to the ETR. An earlier review, examining the PoA and the internal structures of the Commonwealth Secretariat, arrived at similar conclusions in 2007.[152]

4.6 Assessing partnerships: knowledge, information and capacity building and resources

It has been a challenge during the ETR to gather information on a comprehensive list of partnerships and knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat and directly related to the PoA. The literature review has revealed several publicly available and gender-related publications but these are not always linked to the PoA. Information has been provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat

but a comprehensive list of follow-up initiatives that included the effectiveness of activities covering the 10-year period of the PoA was not available.

The latest Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Results Report (2013/2014), which summarises the Secretariat's work during the first year of its Strategic Plan (2013/2014–2016/2017), does include an overview of indicators and outcomes that are gender-related and could be placed within the PoA's four critical areas such as training on GRB. [153] The PoA is mentioned only in relation to the Illustrative Trends Analysis for the End Term Review of the Plan of Action on Women's Political Participation and the fact that this publication led the United Kingdom to create a mechanism for increasing women's leadership. Unfortunately, no information was available to indicate exactly how this correlation had occurred. However, the Annual Results Report (2013/2014) lists the gender 'indicators and results' under the heading of 'gender equality and the empowerment of women effectively mainstreamed into member state policies, framework and programmes and Secretariat's projects' and does not review them as initiatives aimed at the implementation of the PoA. [154] As noted earlier in Chapter 3 (3.4.1), the most recent Strategic Plan does not include the PoA, which means there is no strong sense of what has been directly implemented within the four critical areas during this period.

In a similar vein, the Biennial Report of the Commonwealth Secretary-General (2013/2015) does not mention the PoA. [155] The Commonwealth Gender Equality Policy (2012) is outlined as part of a 'concerted and systematic approach to mainstreaming gender equality principles and measures'. The report goes on to list several initiatives that, once again, could be associated with the four critical areas of the PoA. However, without linking such projects and publications as part of the implementation of the PoA, it is difficult to assess their impact and contribution.

In contrast, the Report of the Commonwealth Secretary General (2011/2013) specifically mentions the PoA and the Gender Equality Policy (2012) as part of a 'systematic twin-track approach to gender mainstreaming across all divisions, and its work in member states'. [156] The report goes on to state that this twin-track approach 'sets out the Commonwealth Secretariat's commitment to promoting and embedding gender equality

goals and provides a framework for the gender mainstreaming process'. Several cross-divisional publications and projects, some of which have been mentioned within the ETR report, are described.

For instance:

Gender and Trade Action Guide has been translated into Arabic and published in 2013 by UN Women. In addition, the organisation has assisted with sensitising countries to the importance of developing a gender responsive export strategy. During 2012–2013, this work broke new ground in the area of gender, trade and procurement policy to identify how inclusive government procurement policy coupled with the effective management of resources can accelerate sustainable economic outcomes.[157]

There are also additional examples of cross-divisional co-operation within the Secretariat and as linked to the PoA:

Collaborations with other programmes across the Commonwealth Secretariat have taken forward the gender cross-cutting theme into areas such as Rule of Law, Economic Development and Trade. The work on women's land rights and violence against women was delivered in collaboration with the former Legal and Constitutional Affairs Division, while the work on gender responsive investment/Savings and Credits Organisations (SACOs) and market access was delivered in collaboration with the Special Advisory Services Division. A needs assessment for the placement of a gender expert in Trinidad and Tobago was completed with the Technical Co-operation and Strategic Response Group of the former Governance and Institutional Development Division.[158]

There is, however, no follow-up on how this collaboration assisted in the implementation of the PoA.

In 2014, the Government of The Bahamas used the Commonwealth Secretariat's publication Impact of W*omen's Political Leadership on Democracy and Development: Case Studies from the Commonwealth* as a resource in the development of a training programme for women and political leadership.[159] The publication describes the barriers to women's political participation and explains why the contribution of women is so vital to democracy. Established strategies are identified such as electoral reforms in New Zealand; voluntary party quotas in South Africa; and mandatory quotas in Bangladesh and India. All of these methods have assisted these Commonwealth countries towards

the global target of 30 per cent representation of women in leadership positions and to advance the participation of women in decision-making at all levels. An event surrounding the issue of women and political leadership is planned in The Bahamas ahead of the 2016 national elections.

Furthermore, a policy paper addressing VAWG in the Commonwealth was produced for the 2014 Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting in Botswana. Ministers who attended the meeting acknowledged the recommendations within the policy paper and expressed support for gender mainstreaming of the law and the need for closer co-operation between law ministries, the judiciary, NWMs and other agencies. Ministers also recognised that law reform alone was not enough to address GBV and that a 'holistic, multi-sectoral and comprehensive national strategy was essential. In that regard, attention must be given to the importance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds and taking into account the fundamental values expressed in the Commonwealth Charter'.[160]

A more detailed overview of partnerships and knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat and related to the PoA can be found in the *Report of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Work Programme in Support of the Implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2005–2015): Background Paper. 2013*. This was produced for the Tenth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting, held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on 17–19 June 2013. The paper covers the period 2010–2013 and focuses on the strategic work (activities and results) of the Gender Section based on the four critical areas of the PoA, some of which have been included in the ETR report. Although a few of the 'results' are at times generalised and difficult to assess properly, the projects and publications listed offer the most consistent and effective overview of initiatives undertaken within the PoA's critical areas.

This background paper is the only source found during the ETR for *resource* information pertaining to the PoA. The information is limited to the Gender Section's budget for 2010–2013 and does not include a breakdown of programme or other allocations except for two extra budgetary resources projects in 2010–2011 (£39,500) and 2011–2012 (£64,713). It lists:

- 2010–2011: £462,851;

- 2011–2012: £471,064;

- 2012–2013: £398,170.[161]

The following information has not been found through the literature review or from the interviews and questionnaires conducted during the ETR: comprehensive lists of partnerships and knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives; details of follow-up procedures to determine the impact of projects and publications on implementing the PoA; and how much money has been allocated to implement the PoA. Therefore, it is important to note here that additional information would be required to assess effectively the Commonwealth Secretariat's implementation of the PoA as it relates to partnerships and knowledge, information and capacity building. In addition, without accurate data on resources requested, allocated and spent, it is difficult to monitor the impact of programmes.

Given this, it would be helpful if the Commonwealth Secretariat began to obtain the following information:

- a list of programme activities, including allocated budgets and any reporting that addresses outcomes and impact, either at Secretariat level or in Commonwealth member countries;

- a database of research (e.g. briefings, country case studies, policy studies) produced on the PoA themes, how the findings were disseminated and any follow-up measures;

- a list of requests made by member countries and/or Commonwealth associations and CSOs for specific support in relation to the PoA critical areas (including type of request, funds requested/allocated, monitoring).[162]

4.7 Implementing the Plan of Action: monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The CGPMG was established in 2005 to function as a mechanism for monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the implementation of the PoA. The

CGPMG is currently made up of a rotating core of 26 members, 21 from NWMs and 5 (soon to be expanded to 6) from CSOs. Members are usually heads of NWMs and representatives of CSOs from Commonwealth regions.

In 2010, an Executive Committee was established to assist the Chair of the CGPMG in 'the co-ordination of the group and delivery of its role and responsibilities'. This is made up of the current Chair, immediate past Chair, Head of Gender Section, CGPMG NWM subregional spokespersons and CGPMG CSO representative. The Committee has met twice, in 2012 and 2014. There have also been subregional meetings (Pacific in 2013 and South Africa in 2014).

CGPMG meetings, as stated in their reports, have discussed and reported on member country initiatives linked to the four critical areas of the PoA and have been very active in the PoA ETR process. Furthermore, the sharing of information and capacity-building experiences at CGPMG meetings has been useful for some of the respondents to survey questionnaires. One commentator from the survey noted that the CGPMG has used tools such as questionnaires, submissions of case studies and the MTR of the PoA but that these are difficult to undertake and are time-consuming. Perhaps the CGPMG's focus should have been on initiatives to monitor and evaluate at the subregional level.

A strategic review of the CGPMG was conducted by an external consultant in 2013–2014. The report examined the performance, governance and accountability of the group. Key findings included that the CGPMG has not been effective in carrying out its monitoring mandate, that the Commonwealth is not the main gender equality reporting organisation for NWMs, that there has been a lack of funding for the CGPMG and that there had not been clear analysis of its terms of reference.[163]

At meetings in March 2014, the CGPMG and the NWMs agreed that, for the remainder of the PoA, the CGPMG would focus on accountability and would provide guidance and feedback on gender equality by using the Gender Accountability Framework.[164] As noted in Chapter 2 above, the Gender Accountability Framework has not been used. Challenges faced by the CGPMG in using this framework were two-fold. First, the country action and results submissions prepared for the PoA review were framed by thematic area

rather than covering the whole of a country, which did not provide an adequate overview for accountability analysis. Second, there has been a lack of 'capacity and technical skills at both CGPMG and Commonwealth Secretariat level to develop and use the tools'.[165] Additionally, the level of capacity for NWMs to generate and record data, the capacity of the Gender Section at the Secretariat to assist member countries in data collection, reporting and analysis, and a lack of resources and of sex-disaggregated data within the Commonwealth have all contributed to the CGPMG not being able to fulfil its new accountability role. In 2014 a technical subgroup was created to provide guidance on the ETR process of the PoA. It was also to provide technical expertise to any accountability mechanism and 'advise the chair to provide feedback on the implementation of the PoA to member countries on behalf of the CGPMG'.[166]

Monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the implementation of the PoA have been problems throughout its life-cycle. A briefing note for the June 2012 Executive Committee Meeting of the CGPMG confirmed this:

The Secretariat and the CGPMG have been unable to fully take forward a clear, guiding PoA monitoring framework. Various frameworks and sets of indicators have been developed over the years but none of these have been found to be effective. [167]

In turn, the CGPMG's most recent focus on accountability has not been effective during the later stages of the PoA's mandate.

The impact of a lack of effective monitoring, evaluating, accountability analysis and reporting on the implementation of the PoA has affected the ability of the ETR to demonstrate fully how Commonwealth governments have implemented the PoA's four critical areas. As the ETR Reporting Framework (2013) document correctly predicted, the ETR will not be able to provide direct linkages between 'results and indicators and what member countries and the Secretariat were proposing to do'. [168]

The ETR report has been able to outline *what has changed* in terms of the quantitative indicators within the four critical areas but not *what has caused* the changes. The Country Action and Results Submissions (from which the case studies emerged) used the *Gender at Work* model with its theory of change format and this has provided deeper analysis in terms of *what has caused changes*

within Commonwealth countries. Examples from these case studies, which have been highlighted within the ETR report, have proved to be an important tool to build on the information gathered in the trends analysis.

However, a critical challenge for effective monitoring, evaluating and reporting has been the lack of centrally available information outlining what has been accomplished in implementing the PoA. This formed the basis of the additional information requested from the Commonwealth Secretariat and mentioned above. During the research for the ETR, the consultants discussed this lack of centralised information with a representative of SPED. Part of the issue stems from the software that has been used within the Commonwealth Secretariat; updated software may have the potential for additional mechanisms to gather information about 'gender' and was to be rolled out in December 2015.

Briefly, the previous project design software (Activity Results Tracking and Expenditure Management Information System, ARTEMIS) used by the Commonwealth Secretariat was limited. Gender mainstreaming was incorporated within the project design tool but it was restricted to a 'tick box' whereby Secretariat divisions determined the level of mainstreaming and provided a justification. There was no monitoring mechanism in place, so there was no evidence to demonstrate whether or not the process had gone past the project development stage. However, the old system did show when partnerships had occurred between divisions, such as gender-related projects in Youth, Trade and Human Rights, mentioned in section 4.5. Publications were not hosted in ARTEMIS.

The updated software (Programme Management Information System, PMIS) moves beyond project design to 'management, monitoring and reporting with mechanisms to ensure that all data that needs to be tracked are in place'. For example, there will be a mechanism whereby all key and relevant documents, such as publications, reports, action plans or points for follow-up, can be uploaded into a central database. Key activities that need follow-up will be marked with a time-frame and action requirements in a separate section. In turn, a component has been developed called *Country Briefs* that includes collated country-level data and information for all Commonwealth countries. The country profiles will have up-to-date information

aligned to international practices, such as key SDG indicators, that are already associated with the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan (2014/15–2016/17). Gender mainstreaming is embedded within the monitoring and assessment tools in five categories: advocacy and consensus building; policy development; institutional development; knowledge management; and corporate efficiency. At the moment, gender indicators have not been highlighted in the projects but a set of 'clear and measurable' indicators is to be developed along with monitoring tools and a mechanism for aggregating similar indicators across projects. An additional feature that has been discussed is the disaggregation of data and developing a mechanism for the overall analysis of data. [169]

Although the use of this improved management, monitoring and reporting software is in its infancy and several parameters need to be worked through, the potential for its adaptation and utilisation within a post-2015 Commonwealth gender equality policy or action cannot be overestimated.

This leads to the question of what should happen to the CGPMG. A post-2015 Commonwealth policy or action on gender equality will need to be effectively monitored and evaluated or involve clear accountability measures. A body such as the CGPMG does have a role to play but its organisational make-up (currently rotating NWM and CSO representatives) should be evaluated; new ToRs attached to the post-2015 priorities should be developed; and the provision of effective training and timely information/data should be ongoing. The evaluators are recommending not that the CGPMG, with its current name and framework, be replicated within a post-2015 policy but that the body should be used as a starting point from which a new monitoring, evaluating or accountability mechanism could be effectively established. Furthermore, the provision of timely information and data could be augmented by the Commonwealth Secretariat's updated management, monitoring and reporting software (PMIS). One last consideration for the future of the CGPMG is the discussions that have begun between the Commonwealth and UN Women for a proposed 'gender peer review' mechanism on gender equality and women's empowerment. Its aim is to combine the M&E efforts of the Commonwealth and UN Women, to harmonise reporting activities and minimise duplication for member countries. It is not, at this

point, clear how a gender peer review mechanism would affect a body such as the CGPMG in a post-2015 scenario.[170]

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5. Challenges and Lessons Learned

5.1 The Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2005–2015)

The overall premise of the PoA was commendable. As one of the respondents to the online questionnaire succinctly observed:

[the] Plan sets a standard for countries to achieve, identifies critical areas of concern which help to streamline activities and explains the connections between many areas (human rights, empowerment, poverty, etc.).

At its source, the PoA encouraged that a gender perspective be included at the national, regional and international levels. It was an important framework for working towards gender equality and women's empowerment within the Commonwealth.

In turn, the fact that the PoA was informed by existing international and established frameworks including the MDGs, the principles set out in international instruments such as CEDAW and relevant UN Security Council Resolutions including 1325, and the gender equality goals as outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action emphasised the Commonwealth's commitment to a rights-based approach to gender equality.

However, efforts to implement the PoA over the past 10 years have encountered a number of obstacles and challenges. Some of these have already been discussed in previous sections of this report, but they can be summarised as follows:

- **Lack of accountability:** Although the PoA provides a useful structure for working towards gender equality, it is not a plan of action with binding policies or enforceable mechanisms. This limits its effectiveness, as stakeholders are not required to undertake any of the actions outlined in the PoA, and there are no sanctions for failing to support gender equality across the Commonwealth's critical areas.

- **Lack of targets:** For progress to be measured and monitored, a clear framework that outlines targets and indicators is necessary.

Besides the objective of attaining 30 per cent representation of women in the political, public and private spheres, no other target was set in the PoA. This has resulted in a lack of clarity about what the PoA was trying to achieve and prevented the different stakeholders from developing a strategic plan with detailed activities that would enable them to achieve or contribute to shared goals.

- **Lack of focus:** The four critical areas include calls for action for Commonwealth governments (53 calls for action in all) and the Commonwealth Secretariat (31 calls for action in all), which were too numerous and at times too broad. The result has been an inability to carry out, implement or evaluate and monitor all of these provisions.

- **Lack of flexibility:** A 10-year plan was too long and the PoA was not flexible enough to address changing priorities or emerging issues. This includes not being able to incorporate emerging and changing issues such as, *inter alia*, the importance of climate change (especially for island member countries and other Commonwealth countries that are vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters); the impact of natural disasters on women, who must continue to take care of children and/or family members under these conditions; a more integrated approach to women's health issues, which involves communicable and non-communicable diseases and prevention considerations; and the global economic crisis that began around 2008.

- **Lack of awareness:** Unless direct contact had been made with the Commonwealth Secretariat, NWMs or other Commonwealth partners on the subject of the PoA, the majority of individuals and organisations were not aware of the PoA.

- **Lack of resources:** No financial or other resources were specifically allocated for the overall implementation of the PoA.

- **Lack of monitoring, evaluation and accountability:** In the absence of a robust results framework, it has not been possible to effectively monitor and evaluate or undertake accountability measures in relation to *what* has been done, *how* any changes have come about or *why* changes did not occur as expected in implementing the PoA within the Commonwealth and the Commonwealth Secretariat over the 10-year period.

Challenges and lessons learned from the survey questionnaires, literature review, country cases and field visits include:

- **Determining priorities:** Commonwealth member countries have their own priorities and resource considerations, which must be factored into the process of developing a strategy to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. It was noted that the PoA was more successfully incorporated when it was aligned with national priorities.

- **Fully appreciating what 'gender equality' entails:** The process of understanding gender equality must involve men and boys as well as women and girls. If not, then the alienation of men and boys will continue to hold back gender equality, as was highlighted by government ministries and CSOs during the field trips to the Caribbean and Pacific regions. The 'good practice' example in Chapter 4 from the NWTF outlines the importance of initiatives that involve both men and women.

- **Identifying and partnering with other key international and regional players:** There is a strong perception that the Commonwealth is not the most important organisation at ground level for gender equality and women's empowerment; UN agencies such as UN Women and UNICEF, and regional bodies such as CARICOM and PIFS, are more visible and regarded as more relevant. Therefore, partnering with other organisations and focusing more strategically on areas of comparative advantage would enable the Commonwealth to increase its leverage and relevance at the national, regional and international levels.

- **Drivers of gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives:** The influence of the other gender equality mechanisms such as the MDGs and the Beijing process, rather than the PoA, is what has driven actions by member governments and CSOs. In turn, the influence of the new UN SDGs, including SDG 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and its targets, is focusing post-2015 Commonwealth planning.

- **Opportunities:** The Commonwealth Secretariat can facilitate interaction between member countries at all levels of partnership building and can encourage the use of mentors from within the Commonwealth as part of future knowledge-, information- and capacity-building exchange initiatives on gender equality and gender mainstreaming. The example in Chapter 4 on GRB and the work undertaken by Bangladesh, which could be used for Trinidad and Tobago's ongoing GRB project, was noted. Furthermore, partnering with other organisations and focusing more strategically on *areas of comparative advantage* and *niche areas* would enable the Commonwealth to increase its profile, influence and relevance at the national, regional and international levels.

- **The need for training and resources:** One challenge identified through the survey questionnaire and from the field visits relates to additional support for NWMs. Because of their responsibilities in the area of providing data and effective analysis of gender equality initiatives associated not only with the Commonwealth but also with international reporting mechanisms' requirements (such as CEDAW and the Beijing process), NWMs need supplementary training and resources.

- **Structure of the Commonwealth Secretariat:** The Secretariat has played a significant role in the areas of gender equality and gender mainstreaming. This has been evident in disseminating information, sharing lessons learned and best practice, training and providing technical assistance such as, *inter alia*, in its work on GRB, women in leadership roles and land rights. The Gender Section of the Secretariat, along with other divisions and units, has spearheaded a variety of initiatives associated with the critical areas of the PoA. A challenge repeatedly raised in the staff (current and former) surveys relates to the positioning of the Gender Section within

the organisation. Although a significant step occurred when the Gender Section was moved into the Secretary General's Office (2014), staff members from within the Gender Section and from other divisions/units noted that, to raise the profile of gender issues and to increase the Commonwealth Secretariat's commitment to gender mainstreaming, the Gender Section should become (or be part of) a division.[171]

- **How to capture and disseminate information:** A further significant challenge and lesson learned emerged from how the Commonwealth Secretariat has, in the past, captured and disseminated information on projects, publications and other activities related to gender mainstreaming. This information relates to the Commonwealth Secretariat's limited software, which really involved only ticking a gender-mainstreaming box for project development, and the potential provided by the updated software (from December 2015), which is much more flexible and may even allow for the disaggregation of data. The updated software seems to offer an excellent opportunity for gathering relevant information and data that would assist in the monitoring, evaluation and accountability of post-2015 Commonwealth initiatives on gender equality and women's empowerment.

- **The CGPMG:** As outlined in Chapter 4, the CGPMG was extensively reviewed by an independent consultant in 2014. In this review, CGPMG members expressed a number of challenges that have impeded the group, from difficulties in working effectively as a group to not being able to effectively monitor the implementation of the PoA. The CGPMG has

made efforts in recent years to respond to these challenges, particularly in the context of preparing for the ETR process for the PoA. For the last two years of the PoA (from 2013), the CGPMG agreed to focus only on accountability for progress in gender equality across the PoA's four critical areas. One of the tools at its disposal, which should have been used, was the Gender Accountability Framework. Given this, the PoA has not been monitored, evaluated and reviewed over the past 10 years. As noted in this report, the CGPMG's most recent role of accountability for the PoA could not be measured in any meaningful way. The purpose of this overview is not to cast blame on the CGPMG but to bring out important challenges and lessons learned, which could be used to ensure more effective and sustainable monitoring of a post-2015 framework. These include:

- the need for clearer ToRs, guidelines and indicators;

- the delivery of adequate information and data – this is where the Commonwealth

- Secretariat's updated software for measuring progress could be an invaluable tool;

- the provision of initial and ongoing technical training for members of a future body on monitoring, evaluation and/ or accountability;

- examination of the make-up of the CGPMG's membership and its institutional components to determine what would be the most effective operational framework in the future (monitoring, evaluation or accountability?).

6. Recommendations and Way Forward

6.1 Global context after 2015

In essence, gender equality includes promoting the participation of women in political, public and private sectors; ensuring that women and girls can fully exercise their human rights; and reducing the gap between women's and men's access to and control of resources and the benefits of development.

Gender equality is still out of reach for most women globally. Women continue to have fewer rights, lower education levels, lower health status, less income, and less access to resources and decision-making than men. If equitable and sustainable progress is to be achieved, women's status must be improved, their rights must be respected and their contributions must be recognised.

The international community has made important commitments to women's and girls' rights and gender equality, including, *inter alia*:

- CEDAW;
- the Beijing Platform for Action process;
- the MDGs – particularly MDG 3 – to promote gender equality and empower women;
- UNSCR 1325 on women, peace and security and its follow-up resolutions (1820, 1888, 1889, 1960, 2106 and 2122);
- the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

The MDGs listed 2015 as the target year to fulfil the eight development goals. In terms of gender equality, MDG 3 was to 'Promote gender equality and empower women' and MDG 5 was to 'Improve maternal health'. In the review of the MDGs, the UN notes that, despite efforts linked to implementing the development goals, women continue to 'face discrimination in access to work, economic assets and participation in private and public decision-making. Women are also more likely to live in poverty than men … and are at a disadvantage in the labour market'.[172]

The report goes on to state that, to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women, key barriers that result in gender inequality must be addressed within the post-2015 development agenda. These key areas include gender-based discrimination in law and in practice; VAWG; women's and men's unequal opportunities in the labour market; the unequal division of unpaid care and domestic work; women's limited control over assets and property; and women's unequal participation in private and public decision-making.[173]

On 25 October 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted the outcome document of the United Nations summit 'for the adoption of the post-2015 development agenda: *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.*'[174]

Seeking to build on the MDGs, this document sets the global agenda for sustainable development for the next 15 years and includes 17 SDGs and 169 targets. Although the other SDGs are relevant to gender equality and the empowerment of women, SDG 5 specifically aims to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls' and outlines nine targets:

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation

5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate

5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences

5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws

5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women

5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels

Please see Box 4.8 for a selection of proposed indicators related to SDG 5.

6.2 What should come after the PoA and the next steps

When it was first issued in 2005, the Commonwealth's PoA was an innovative document that covered important critical areas for gender equality and women's empowerment. The Commonwealth as an organisation, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Family of Organisations and CSOs have undertaken important initiatives associated with the four critical areas of the PoA.

Unfortunately, the results of this evaluation revealed that the PoA was in general not well known and that there is a perception that international players such as the UN have more relevance to those working on gender issues. Despite this, the Commonwealth as a whole (thanks to its distinctive structure as an intergovernmental organisation), the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Family of Organisations and CSOs have a unique opportunity to develop post-2015 mechanisms

that would effectively contribute to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment within Commonwealth member countries.

- The evaluators, therefore, make 10 recommendations for the future development of and the way forward for a post-2015 Commonwealth plan to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. The recommendations are categorised as *strategic* and *operational*. The time-frame could be similar to that outlined within the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan (2013/14–2016/17): some recommendations would be considered *long-term* initiatives (8–10 years) and other recommendations would be *intermediate* (2–4 years) or *short-term* (0–2 years) initiatives[175]

6.2.1 Strategic recommendations

A new Plan of Action or an alternative approach?

The findings of the ETR clearly indicate that a new Commonwealth 10-year plan of action for gender equality and women's empowerment is not the best option. The fact that the PoA was virtually invisible to most people involved in gender work in Commonwealth member countries, the lack of targets (beyond the 30 per cent goal for women in leadership roles) and its inability to adapt to emerging and changing priorities are reasons why a new plan of action should not be developed. Given the recent adoption of the SDGs and focus on them, the most strategic option for the Commonwealth would be to align its work on gender equality and women's empowerment with SDG 5. It is noted that some of the other SDGs, such as SDG 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels), also incorporate gender equality issues. However, at this moment, the evaluators wish to focus on SDG 5 as a starting point for the discussions.

This would ensure that the Commonwealth advances priorities in line with a known process and, critically, would avoid an additional layer of work and accountability/evaluation measures for already overstretched stakeholders such as NWMs and CSOs. By aligning itself with the UN's SDG 5 and its targets, the Commonwealth would not become just another stakeholder undertaking gender equality

Box 6.1 The Commonwealth's comparative advantage and niche areas related to gender equality and women's empowerment

Comparative advantage	Niche areas (current and potential)
• Shared values and aspirations (democracy, human rights, gender equality, etc.) • A trusted partner (to strengthen institutions, etc.) • An independent interlocutor (learning initiatives and information sharing/exchange) • Its convening powers (a variety of stakeholders) • Good Offices (conflict resolution and mediation) • Speed and flexibility of support (for member countries)	• GRB • VAW • Legislative and economic reforms • Land rights • Women's leadership • Child, early and forced marriage • Production and dissemination of publications on gender equality and women's empowerment (specifically undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat)

work. Rather, thanks to the Commonwealth's unique history and structural make-up as an intergovernmental organisation, it would contribute by emphasising its niche areas of comparative advantage such as its innovative work on GRB, VAW, legislative reform and its capacity to monitor elections. As one person interviewed for the ETR emphasised: 'The Commonwealth is still relevant – it just has to *own* its strengths and contributions'. Accordingly, the Commonwealth should play to its strength and focus its post-2015 framework on a selection from the nine SDG 5 targets.

• **Recommendation 1:** Align the post-2015 Commonwealth gender equality initiatives with the UN's SDG goals including SDG 5 and its targets (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls). Focus on how the Commonwealth as an organisation can build upon its distinctive niche areas of comparative advantage, as related to gender equality and women's empowerment, to strengthen its international profile. Enhancing partnering efforts with other organisations and focusing more strategically on niche areas of comparative advantage would enable the Commonwealth to increase its leverage and relevance at the national, regional and international levels.

Box 6.1 outlines these areas of comparative advantage as linked to a selection of niche areas related to gender equality and women's empowerment. These areas could, in turn, be used as a basis to narrow the focus on which SDG 5 targets should be emphasised in a post-2015 framework.

Resources

To implement the Commonwealth's post-2015 strategies, the process must include the allocation of adequate financial, staffing, training and technical resources. These resources need to be monitored and evaluated as well as reported on. The evaluators appreciate the funding constraints faced by an organisation such as the Commonwealth. As discussed in section 4.7 above, a lack of information pertaining to targeted resource allocation during the life-cycle of the PoA has been a problem. It has been suggested during the ETR that the Commonwealth seek alternative funding from other organisations and bodies, if this is compatible with its nature as an intergovernmental organisation. Therefore, it will be strategically important for a post-2015 framework to outline resource allocation, follow up on it and determine its effectiveness.

• **Recommendation 2:** Allocate adequate financial, staffing, training and technical resources for the implementation of a post-2015 strategy. These resources need to be monitored/evaluated and reported on a regular basis.[176]

Allow flexibility

The Commonwealth brings together 53 countries, each with its own history and cultural considerations. There is an underlying tension in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment in that national, local and regional *relevance* still has an effect on how global initiatives such as the UN's SDGs or international instruments such as CEDAW and the CRC are interpreted and implemented in each country. At times the impact of national, local and regional considerations can adversely affect the social, economic, legal and political development of women and girls. This 'relativism' is a consideration not solely for the Commonwealth but also for the international community. However, it is important to consider that gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives within the Commonwealth must allow flexibility in that member countries have varied national, local and regional priorities and resource considerations. The vulnerability of island states to climate change, the consequences of natural disasters, the varying levels of development gains, etc. influence how Commonwealth member countries can address and implement gender equality and women's empowerment.

Furthermore, ensuring that men, women, boys and girls are all encouraged to participate in activities and programmes aimed at achieving gender equality within member countries has been an underlying theme throughout the ETR. One example was given during the field visits to St Lucia and to Trinidad and Tobago: more girls and women finish high school or are involved in post-secondary education, and girls and women generally outperform boys and men in education. In some situations, participants attending the field visit meetings noted that men and boys resent the fact that women and girls are achieving better results or attaining further levels of education. The case studies (prepared separately from the ETR) used in Chapter 4 above highlight the importance of engaging both women/girls and men/boys and give examples of initiatives aimed at ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment. As noted from the Rwanda field trip, the essential goal is to engage all stakeholders and to change attitudes. However, at times, such initiatives may not always be possible, especially when accommodating different cultural practices. This is where the notion of flexibility may also need to be considered.

- **Recommendation 3:** Allow flexibility within a post-2015 framework, since Commonwealth member countries have varied national, local and regional priorities and resource considerations when implementing gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives. In turn, the process of understanding and ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment should involve the participation of women and girls as well as men and boys.

6.2.2 Operational recommendations

The Commonwealth Secretariat's contribution

The Commonwealth Secretariat complements the contributions made by member countries, the Commonwealth Family of Organisations and CSOs to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. The multilayered process of consolidating institutional mechanisms related to gender equality, women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming has been faced by other international organisations. One example is the merging of the four key UN entities addressing gender issues (the UN Development Fund for Women; the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women; the Division for the Advancement of Women; and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women) to form UN Women in July 2010. For the next phase, the following measures should be taken to expand the capacity of the Commonwealth Secretariat as a key contributor to the implementation of a post-2015 strategy:

- **Recommendation 4:** Outline the Commonwealth's post-2015 gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives within subsequent Commonwealth Secretariat strategic plans. The strategic plans should also include gender mainstreaming under the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Equality Policy and analysis of activities undertaken through the Gender Equality Policy's implementation and reporting framework, thereby reaffirming the 'systematic twin-track approach' mentioned in section 4.6 of the Final Report. It is noted that the next instalment of the strategic plan will be produced for the period after 2017.

- **Recommendation 5:** Ensuring that the systematic twin-track approach of specific actions to support gender equality (and women's empowerment) and gender mainstreaming is effectively addressed within the Commonwealth Secretariat will be an important and ongoing consideration. One approach would be for the Gender Section to become a division within the Commonwealth Secretariat structure. Moving the Gender Section under the auspices of the Secretary General's office in 2014 was an important step in raising awareness of its work and of issues such as gender mainstreaming. However, the findings of the research and interviews undertaken for this final report suggest that a Gender Division would result in increased awareness along with a higher profile and would provide the overall issue of gender with a direct place within the Senior Management Group of the Commonwealth Secretariat. This would contribute to the more effective development and implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, not only within the Commonwealth Secretariat but also across the Commonwealth.

- **Recommendation 6:** Through formal mechanisms, initiate and encourage collaboration between units and divisions in the development and implementation of gender equality, women's empowerment and gender-mainstreaming initiatives. Follow-up mechanisms to determine the scope and effectiveness of such collaborative efforts should also be formulated. Initiatives could include some used by other international organisations, such as setting up 'gender focal points' within the divisions and units, which could liaise across the Commonwealth Secretariat.

- **Recommendation 7:** Develop and implement mentoring and/or e-mentoring programmes that would assist member countries and CSOs in sharing good practice examples and effectively contribute to the future formation of partnerships and knowledge-, information- and capacity-building initiatives for a post-2015 framework. Building on initiatives that draw upon experiences from member countries, and could be shared across the Commonwealth, could save valuable resources. The example outlined in section 4.5 in relation to GRB and the possibility of sharing examples of best practice between Bangladesh and Trinidad and Tobago could fit into this mentoring/e-mentoring scheme.

- **Recommendation 8:** Adapt and use the Commonwealth Secretariat's updated software system, PMIS (from December 2015), which is much more flexible and may even capture the disaggregation of data. The updated software offers an excellent opportunity for gathering relevant information and data, which would assist in the regular M&E (accountability) of the implementation of post-2015 Commonwealth gender equality and women's empowerment strategies. It could also be used in future monitoring, evaluating and/or accountability measures associated with Recommendation 10.

- **Recommendation 9:** Where physical structures are available the Commonwealth Secretariat could utilise space within the offices of, for instance, UN Women located in Commonwealth countries. This would enable a more visible presence for the Commonwealth, which several respondents during the field trips mentioned is critical for their countries or regions. Cognisant of the costs involved in staffing such offices, the recommendation suggests instead the creation of a space within the offices of relevant organisations whereby the Commonwealth and its work on gender equality in the country and in the region could be displayed and disseminated. Then, if resources permit, when Commonwealth Secretariat staff are in the area, workshops or 'open house' events could be held in these spaces.

Future monitoring and evaluating (accountability) measures

It is evident from the ETR that there have been lapses in effective M&E and, in the past two years, undertaking accountability measures in terms of gauging the progress of the PoA's implementation. A post-2015 framework will require regular and effective reviews. The CGPMG as a body could act as a useful starting point for discussions, as it offers the basis for a more robust mechanism to be developed.

- **Recommendation 10:** For a more robust review process to take place in the future, the following considerations are put forward:

  – Develop clear terms of reference, guidelines and indicators that would ensure an effective review process for gender equality and women's empowerment after 2015.

  – Use the regular delivery of adequate information and data – this is where the Commonwealth Secretariat's updated software for measuring progress could be an invaluable tool – undertake regular reviews.

  – Agree, with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the provision of initial and ongoing technical training for members of a future body within the scope of Monitoring/Evaluation/Accountability.

  – Review the make-up of the CGPMG's current membership and its institutional components to determine if these are still relevant and fit for purpose for the post-2015 realities. The CGPMG is currently made up of a rotating core of 26 members, 21 from NWMs and 5 (soon to be expanded to 6) from CSOs. Members are usually heads of NWMs and representatives of CSOs from Commonwealth regions. It has subgroups such as the Executive Committee (established to assist the Chair of the CGPMG in the co-ordination of the group and delivery of its role and responsibilities) and the technical subgroup (created to provide guidance on the ETR process of the PoA).

  – Decide what would be the most effective operational framework in the future (monitoring/evaluation/accountability?).

  – Consider the joint proposal by the Commonwealth Secretariat and UN Women for a 'gender peer review' mechanism on gender equality and women's empowerment that the post-2015 body could use. The aim of the gender peer review is to combine the M&E efforts of the Commonwealth and UN Women to harmonise reporting activities and minimise duplication for member

countries. This will be especially relevant if the Commonwealth as an organisation takes on the recommendation to integrate future gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives with the UN's SDG 5 goal and targets.

References

UN General Assembly. A/RES/70/1. Distributed: 21 October 2015, New York. United Nations (2015) *The Millennium Development Goals Report*, United Nations, New York.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

End Term Review of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (PoA)

Terms of Reference

1.   Background and context

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (PoA) provides the framework within which the Commonwealth contributes to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It is aligned with global frameworks, and reinforces the Commonwealth's commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in the United Nations Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Millennium Development Goals and United Nations Security Council Resolutions. As part of the PoA mandate, member countries and the Secretariat are required to establish mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on their progress in implementing the PoA. The rationale underlying this requirement is that a results based monitoring and evaluation mechanism will assist both member countries and the Secretariat to effectively chart progress, learn lessons, share experiences, identify priority issues and make informed decisions to improve policy and practice for advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across the Commonwealth.

To guide the monitoring process, including identification of key indicators and establishment of a baseline, the Secretariat facilitated the formation of a Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG). The CGPMG, established in 2005, is comprised of a rotating core of 21 heads of Commonwealth National Women's Machineries (NWMs) and five representatives of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) from all Commonwealth regions. A strategic review of the performance, governance and accountability of the CGPMG was carried out during 2013/14 and in March 2014 members agreed to shift the focus of the group from monitoring to accountability.

In 2009, under the supervision of the CGPMG, the Commonwealth Secretariat (hereafter referred to as the 'Secretariat') embarked on a Mid Term Review (MTR) of the PoA covering the five year period 2005–2010. The aim of the MTR was to assess progress made by both Commonwealth countries and the Secretariat in implementing the PoA's key recommendations and identifying persistent challenges and gaps. Priority issues requiring attention were highlighted. The key MTR data collection tool used was a survey questionnaire. As there was an uneven quality of responses to the survey, conducting meaningful analyses was a challenge. Consequently, to reduce the data collection burden placed on often under-resourced NWMs, the Secretariat opted to lead PoA monitoring through desk-based research.

In 2012, a Baseline Assessment Report on the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in Commonwealth countries was produced and 2004 was identified as the PoA baseline year. The Executive Committee of the CGPMG met in June 2012 to consider the baseline report, and based on data availability agreed on a revised set of nine quantitative indicators supported by eight qualitative indicators to guide PoA in case studies and Country Action and Results Submissions.

Country Action and Results Submission reports outline the actions taken by member states in advancing gender equality goals in their respective countries as well as the results of those actions.

At the same time, an Illustrative Trends Analysis focusing on women's political development in the Commonwealth and an Illustrative Case Study on monitoring and evaluating the PoA were produced and endorsed by ministers at the Tenth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (10WAMM) in June 2013.

In March 2014 the CGPMG and NWMs endorsed a Commonwealth Gender Accountability Framework which monitors the methodology, commitment levels, investments and transformative results around women's and men's consciousness, access to resources and opportunities, informal cultural norms and exclusionary practices and formal laws, policies and accountability. This is being used by the

CGPMG to assess country level progress on PoA implementation and provide constructive feedback to member countries. In March 2015, the CGPMG at its 13th Meeting endorsed the framework for the End Term Review (ETR) of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015.

2. Purpose of assignment

The PoA ends in 2015 and the Secretariat has been mandated to undertake an independent ETR of the PoA to assess the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth since 2005. The purpose of this review is to assess the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth since 2005, highlighting the policies, practices and mechanisms that have been successfully used to implement the PoA and recommend lessons and strategic priorities moving forward.

Specifically, the ETR will:

1. Assess the extent to which Commonwealth member countries have advanced gender equality and women's empowerment goals against the four critical areas of the PoA during 2005–2015 using the nine quantitative indicators.

   Proxy indicators will be used, where data is unavailable.

   – Gender, democracy, peace and conflict

   – Gender, human rights and law

   – Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment

   – Gender and HIV/AIDS

2. Review, analyse and conduct a meta-analysis of available data to present trends in gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth from 2005–2015 by drawing on international, regional and national gender data/analyses and identify cases from which lessons can be learnt. 3. Assess the extent to which the support from the Secretariat (and other partner organisations) has contributed to member states progress in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment goals in the PoA.

3. Identify issues, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of PoA, both by the Secretariat and the member states, which can be utilised in the design and implementation of future work in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment.

4. Review and analyse member states Country Action and Results Submissions and case studies which are being documented under a separate consultancy and identify best practices for review and follow-up during the ETR.

5. Review PoA monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms, including the role of the CGPMG and recommend results based monitoring and reporting mechanisms for Commonwealth gender priorities post-2015.

6. The ETR is integral to realising the aims of the Commonwealth on gender equality and mainstreaming as enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter, the PoA and the Secretariat's institutional Gender Equality Policy and will recommend gender equality and women's empowerment priorities for the Commonwealth post-2015, taking into account the Commonwealth Charter, mandates from Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) and the Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17.

3. End term review report framework

The final of the ETR report will present a gender sensitive analysis of trends, policies, practices and mechanisms that bring out a comprehensive picture of Commonwealth countries' implementation of the PoA. The report will outline key issues, challenges and lessons and present recommendations on the future strategic direction for gender equality in the Commonwealth, and will include best practice examples of PoA implementation by Commonwealth countries and the Secretariat. In order to facilitate the ETR process a framework for the ETR report was produced in February 2013, using a gender analysis and the RBM approach. The framework assessed i) the implementation of the PoA ii) the monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms for the PoA, including the role of the CGPMG and iii) case studies and country profile

What Are We Trying To Change?
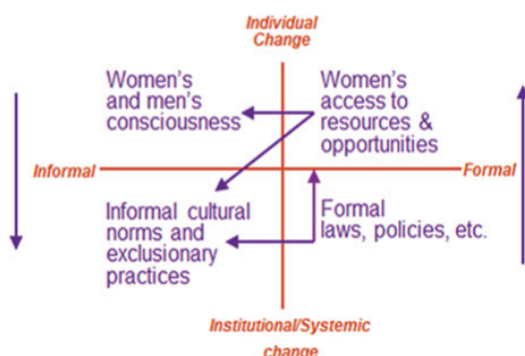
reports. It highlighted that information for a number of the quantitative indicators may not be fully available and proposed that the ETR provides an analysis of trends broadly in the areas defined by the nine indicators and macro level analysis of change using Gender at Work model (Figure A1). The framework was endorsed by ministers at 10WAMM and members have already submitted Country Action and Results

Submissions. In March 2015, the CGPMG

At its 13th Meeting endorsed the final framework for the ETR. During 10WAMM ministers agreed that moving forward, the Commonwealth member countries would agree key Commonwealth gender priorities in the post-2015 Development Agenda and focus on developing mechanisms to implement and monitor the targets and indicators. The ETR report will be key in helping identify these priorities for the Commonwealth.

4.   Scope of consultancy

The review will cover strategies/actions taken by the member governments and the Secretariat in the implementation of PoA between 2005 and 2015. Based on the assessment findings, the study is expected to propose both strategic and operational recommendations that would facilitate the implementation of Commonwealth gender priorities in the post-2015 Development Agenda and suggest mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

5.   Methodology

The Consultant will include the following key steps, but not limited to, in the conduct of the evaluation for information collection, analysis and feedback during the review.

- Review and research of all pertinent records and data related to the implementation of the Gender PoA by the member governments, Secretariat and other organisations.

- Prepare, organise and coordinate a brief but focused gender sensitive impact survey of the relevant stakeholders associated with the PoA.

- Interview the relevant Secretariat staff (past and present) in Divisions associated with the implementation of the PoA.

- Interview selected stakeholders- governments, programme partners, collaborating institutions, and project beneficiaries- engaged in the implementation of the PoA, through field visits and electronically/telephonically.

- Drawing upon cases studies currently being documented by the Secretariat under a separate consultancy, the Country Action Report Submissions and the results from the impact survey- identify and document best practices in the implementation of the PoA by the member states and the Secretariat.

- Undertake any additional activities as may be agreed with Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division (SPED) and the Gender Section of the Secretariat in order to enable the proper execution of the review.

6.   Deliverables and timeframes

This consultancy will provide the following deliverables:

1.   An inception report with an evaluation (review) framework, including work plan and methodology (July 2015)

2.   Draft ETR report with analysis of progress, trends and best practices in the implementing of the PoA by member states and the Secretariat. The report will include an analysis of issues, challenges and lessons learned in the implementation of PoA and recommendations on strategic priorities and monitoring mechanisms moving forward (December 2015)

3. Final ETR Report incorporating all feedback and comments (February 2015)

4. Presentation of the Final ETR Report to the Annual NWM and CGPMG Meeting (March 2016)

The CGPMG will provide feedback and comments on the drafts of the ETR report which will be circulated to them in November 2015. All feedback and comments from the NWMs will be received by January 2016 following which the ETR report will be finalised in February 2016. This will be presented to the NWMs and CGPMG at their meetings in New York in March 2016 for their endorsement and recommendation to the 11th WAMM in August/September 2016 (date to be confirmed).

The deliverables must be submitted to SPED electronically as a Microsoft Word document as per the time frame specified against them. The draft (and final) ETR Report must be no more than 50 pages, excluding all annexes. The copyright of the ETR Report shall belong to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

7. Location

The consultant(s) will need to travel to:

- The Secretariat office in London, UK for inception meetings and presentation/discussion of the draft reports and recommendations.

- The annual NWM and CGPMG meeting in New York, 2016 to present the final ETR report.

- Country field visits, as agreed with the Secretariat, for documentation of best practices, interviews with stakeholders and validation of findings

- Any other relevant work is to be undertaken at the consultant(s)' normal place of work and there is no provision for any other travel.

8. Schedule and level of effort

The review is planned to commence in May/June 2016. It is anticipated that up to 90 working days will be appropriate to complete the review, including agreed field visits to member countries for validation of findings, interviews with stakeholders and documentation of best practices.

The ETR Review will be coordinated by the Evaluation Section of SPED with technical inputs from the Gender Section in the Office of the Secretary General. It is expected that the consultant(s) will work closely with the above Secretariat Divisions during the review.

9. Consultancy requirements

The consultant(s) should demonstrate the following:

- Substantive knowledge and experience (over 10 years) in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment and experience in undertaking similar reviews and evaluation studies.

- Demonstrated experience in undertaking evaluations of development assistance programmes.

- Ability to generate, extrapolate, synthesise, analyse and package complex mega-data across multiple countries and sectors including developing economies.

- Excellent communication skills, both spoken and written in English, including experience in the production of comprehensive reports for international/inter-governmental institutions, and delivery of development messages to a diversified audience.

- In-depth knowledge of Commonwealth policy priorities on gender equality and women's empowerment and experience of engaging with Commonwealth countries.

- In-depth knowledge of the post-2015 Development Agenda and priorities in the Commonwealth.

Annex 2:Field Visit Reports

ETR Field Visits

Introduction

As part of the ETR process, field visits were conducted for the purpose of enriching the understanding of what has taken place over the past 10 years within Commonwealth member countries in relation to gender equality, if/how the PoA has been implemented and what contributions have been made by the Commonwealth Secretariat and other organisations. With input from the Commonwealth Secretariat, the following countries were selected:

Region	Countries
Africa	Cameroon and Rwanda
Asia	Bangladesh
Caribbean and the Americas	St Lucia and Trinidad and Tobago
Pacific	Samoa and Solomon Islands

Twelve days were allocated for field visits within the ETR and therefore only a limited number of countries could be visited. The selection of countries was informed by the availability of relevant stakeholders for meetings and their respective contributions towards gender equality. The aim was to interview and engage in open discussions with a range of stakeholders, including government and other officials, members of CSOs, academic institutions and individuals who had benefited from or engaged with the PoA. A list of questions based on the survey questionnaires and an inception report were sent to the initial contact points and distributed as a starting point for the meetings.

In general, apart from the point of contact persons from the ministries and a few individuals from CSOs who had heard of or worked with the PoA, most of the people who participated in the meetings or interviews had not heard of the PoA. Overall, around 90 per cent of those questioned had not heard of it. This does not, however, mean that member countries have not undertaken gender equality initiatives; it means that instead their reference points are national gender action plans (if these exist), the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW

reporting procedures, regional mechanisms, etc. Also, links between the PoA and programmes or organisations cannot always be made directly. For instance, the OCC that was visited during the field visit in Bangladesh began as a pilot project in 2001–2003, which was before the PoA was developed.[177] This is a critical point, since the ETR is evaluating how/if the PoA has been implemented.

Limitations encountered during the visits should be noted. Some of the meetings were led by the relevant government ministries. A narrative was developed and presented that did not allow any in-depth discussions. These meetings were very formal. There were, however, opportunities for follow-up discussions with some of the CSOs outside the meetings. One of the trips did not have a set schedule developed before the visit but a contact was made via the Commonwealth Secretariat, which helped to arrange some meetings once the consultant and the Commonwealth Secretariat representative had arrived. The consultant did not meet any women who had directly benefited from the implementation of the PoA during the field visits.

Because of poor weather conditions in Europe, the consultant was unable to attend the Rwanda field visit. A Commonwealth Secretariat representative attended the meetings that had been scheduled. As the Commonwealth Secretariat is also being reviewed as part of the ETR process, the consulting team felt that the notes of these meetings should not be placed within the main body of the report, to maintain its impartiality. Instead, the notes have been included at the end of this section. Poor weather conditions also prevented the consultant from attending meetings during the first morning in St Lucia. The Commonwealth Secretariat was also represented during the visit to St Lucia and the relevant notes from that morning's meetings can be found at the end of this section.

It is not possible to state that a consistent methodology was applied during the interviews and meetings across the eight member countries visited. Constraints, such as the formality of some

meetings, contributed to this inconsistency. Despite this fact, the consultants believe there is still excellent value in assessing and reporting on the visits especially in relation to key findings and recommendations for the future. Given this, this chapter summarises the activities undertaken, good practices, challenges faced and future recommendations for the Commonwealth in terms of gender equality.

Africa region

1. Rwanda

Rwanda has been chosen for a field visit because of its gender equality initiatives. In particular, it has the highest percentage of women parliamentarians in the world,[178] has established gender-mainstreaming laws, policies, systems and cultures, has involved men to support gender equality norms and has done work in the area of reducing the poverty gap and initiatives such as the National Accelerated Plan for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV (2010–2014).[179] It is hoped that the information gathered from the field visit will elaborate on the approaches undertaken, the challenges and obstacles faced and the way forward in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment goals within Rwanda.

Commonwealth Secretariat notes: Rwanda

The Rwanda Men's Resource Centre

The organisation was started in 2006 by nine men. The idea was that men should reach out to other men to create space to challenge masculinity to alleviate violence against women and children and be positive and supportive partners. It has grown to 260 members. Regional organs have more members. The organisation has an advisory committee, a conflict resolution committee, a secretariat and a governing board. The initial funding came from members. Now donors such as UNDP, NORAD, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the UN Trust are providing funds. There are 51 staff working on a permanent basis and 32 volunteers. There are nine regional offices at the district level, working on stopping violence against women, gender equality and promoting positive masculinity. The organisation works closely with the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and got to know about the Commonwealth Plan of Action in March 2015, when it was invited to attend a meeting in New York.

For the next Commonwealth Plan, it was suggested that focus be placed on 'engagement and attitudinal change of men'. In Rwanda there is more violence at younger ages; hence, there is a need to engage young men. It was opined that international frameworks such as the International Conference for Population and Development (ICPD) and Beijing+20 are the global plans that organisations such as this use to strategise and take action. For Africa, the Kampala Declaration is a resolution by Heads of Government to end violence, which is the most important agreement to plan and deliver. It was also said that intergovernmental organisations generally work more with governments. CSOs need to be empowered and capacitated and taken as partners. It was recommended that the Commonwealth develop an engagement strategy with civil society organisations. The organisation was not aware of the existence of the Commonwealth Foundation and its work.

Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

The Permanent Secretary was not aware of the mechanism for securing Commonwealth assistance in this area – especially the role of the Secretariat in facilitating the Gender Plan of Action. She briefed on Rwanda's institutional set-up for gender equality. The ministry is the focal point for policy-making and co-ordination and helps other ministries develop and implement gender-mainstreaming policies. It works closely with the Ministry of Finance on gender-based and gender-responsive budgeting. The ministry works closely with Parliament to review all laws that discriminate against women. The constitution is gender sensitive and 30 per cent quotas for women have been allocated for all high positions. There is a Gender Monitoring Office (GMO) under the Prime Minister that works as a watchdog. Presently, 64 per cent of parliamentarians are women – the highest number in the world. There is a long list of affirmative actions that have been taken by the government. This includes free legal services for women, rights to property and inheritance, revision of all discriminatory laws and 75 per cent collateral guarantees for women entrepreneurs applying for banks loans, to name a few. Rwanda was not a member of the Commonwealth when the Gender Plan of Action was agreed. Rwanda is, however, at the top of the list when it comes to gender equality in the Commonwealth countries. The ministry was of the opinion that the Secretariat was rather ambiguous in its facilitating role in the

Plan of Action. In future, the ministry would like to collaborate more and build a stronger relationship with the Secretariat and will be happy to share its experience with other Commonwealth countries.

Gender Monitoring Office

The GMO works under the office of Prime Minister and is in charge of gender accountability. It not only monitors national-level commitments and progress (on mainstreaming, budgeting and gender-based violence) but is also responsible for monitoring international commitments. It is a constitutional body. It monitors the government as well as civil society, faith-based organisations and other players. Its monitoring framework is cross-cutting (and the biggest challenge was developing it). It has core indicators, starting with international commitments and going down to national- and regional-level indicators. The GMO is fully funded by the government and has 34 staff. The High Monitoring Council is the governing body, comprising three persons who are appointed by the President. 2014 was 20 years after the Beijing Declaration. Reports are made by the Ministry of Gender. An annual report is presented to the Prime Minister and sent to the Supreme Court and Parliament.

The GMO learned about the Commonwealth Plan of Action recently when it was invited to join a meeting. Suggestions were made that a gender focal point be appointed by the Commonwealth and that the next gender action plan be prioritised and adapted in line with national priorities and local realities. Also, it should be aligned with the SDGs and a robust monitoring, reporting and accountability framework.

Human Rights Commission of Rwanda (HRCR)

The HRCR made a very detailed presentation. Rwanda's constitution has been amended four times since adoption. It details affirmative actions on women's empowerment and includes commitments to giving women 30 per cent of posts in decision-making organs. Presently, 38 per cent of senior government officials and 50 per cent of Supreme Court judges are women. A bill of rights was added to the constitution in 2003. There are 44 rights of citizens in the constitution. The HRCR is a member of treaty bodies reporting and also provides opinions on draft laws in line with international instruments. It publishes an annual report and submits it to Parliament. The right to

property is crucial to women's empowerment. Any violations are brought to the notice of the commission.

The HRCR is well aware of Commonwealth Secretariat's human rights programme and remains fully engaged, especially when it comes to building institutions' capacity. The commission participated fully in the Commonwealth process that resulted in the Kigali Declaration on Early and Forced Marriage. It also receives assistance from the Secretariat with respect to the universal periodic review (UPR) process. It was not aware of the Commonwealth's Plan of Action on Gender Equality.

Pro-femme, NGO

Pro-femme is an umbrella organisation of 61 CSOs. It was established in 1991 by 13 organisations and has grown since then. It is funded by members' contributions and donors such as the EU. Initially it was about gender-based violence but later it moved on to deal with other issues such as gender equality and women's empowerment. It plays co-ordination and advocacy roles and also implements government- and donor-funded programmes in various sectors. It conducts research and monitors government policies and programmes.

Pro-femme did not know much about Commonwealth's Plan of Action but the participants had read the document for the meeting. They praised Rwanda for having good policies and affirmative practices but regretted that the trickle-down effect of these policies was not great – especially in the area of women's economic empowerment. Women of Rwanda had rights now but exercising their rights was a different ball game. It was observed that the Commonwealth's framework was rather ambitious and not very different from other global frameworks. It was recommended that the Commonwealth consider prioritising its work at the country level. There is a lot of work in the area of political empowerment in Rwanda but not as much on economic empowerment. An exclusive focus on HIV was not right. It should have been on sexual and reproductive health. Also, gender is not only about women. There is a need to engage and involve men.

2. Cameroon

Cameroon has been chosen for a field visit because of its gender equality initiatives. In particular, it has demonstrated the greatest increase in the numbers of women in parliament from 2004 to 2015 among

Commonwealth countries: from only 8.9 per cent female parliamentarians in 2004 to 31.1 per cent in 2015, representing an increase of 22 percentage points.[180] Furthermore, work has been done in the area of women's land rights, which includes the roles of the judiciary, land officials and traditional authorities.[181] It is hoped that the information gathered from the field visit will elaborate on the approaches undertaken, the challenges and obstacles faced and the way forward in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment goals within Cameroon.

a) Synthesis of the field visit

Meetings during the Cameroon visit focused on activities undertaken by the Government of Cameroon. There was also a meeting with Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) and CSOs.

Emphasis was placed on government initiatives. For instance, the government has developed a multisector *National Gender Policy Document (2011–2020)*. Its focus is on sustainable 'development and emergence'. Although the seven strategic areas speak about women and 'the girl-child', the overall outlook also stresses 'promoting social progress based on equality of citizens without discrimination as to sex'. Furthermore, several of the strategic areas, such as participation of women in decision-making, fighting violence against women, HIV and legislation, mirror the PoA.[182]

Interconnections between issues affecting women in Cameroon were discussed. That is, there is a need to utilise a more *holistic* approach such as addressing education, forced marriage, cultural matters and social discrimination between boys and girls.

Although a few of the participants knew about the PoA, most of the focus seems to be on UN projects and reviews such as UN Women and the Beijing Process. However, a direct link to the PoA was made. The Commonwealth Secretariat's project on women's land rights was mentioned as a successful collaboration. Previously, the issue of women's land rights and access to these rights was seen as a taboo subject in Cameroon. The handbook produced by the Commonwealth Secretariat has been translated into French and some local languages, and the process of claiming land rights has been promoted on the radio.[183] From 2006 to 2010, as part of the PoA, the Commonwealth conducted a series of regional workshops and

training sessions to address the issue of women's rights, culture and the law. These were held in Cameroon, Namibia, Kenya and Sierra Leone, and the result was a legal handbook for each jurisdiction. Women caught between culture and the law as this relates to land rights were an important focus of the handbooks.

The electoral process was also highlighted during the country field visit to Cameroon, as were the efforts undertaken to increase the participation of women. The electoral mechanisms of Cameroon include two legislative instruments: the 1972 Constitution (amended in 1998 and 2008) and the Electoral Code (2012). Cameroon currently has a voluntary system of quotas for women to be placed by political parties onto electoral lists.[184] In the election of 2013, women attained 31.1 per cent representation in the National Assembly. Women make up 20 per cent of the Senate but not all senators are elected.[185] Although an important step, the voluntary quotas for political party electoral lists are not enough and a quota provision of at least 30 per cent representation for women is viewed as essential to ensure the advancement of women at all levels of elective positions. Greater involvement of women at the national and municipal levels in terms of candidates, election officials and registered voters is an additional factors that would enhance gender equality.[186]

The contribution of CSOs was explored. Organisations agreed about the need to come together under an umbrella organisation that it is hoped would bring about a stronger and more coherent lobbying framework. It was also noted that both the government and CSOs should create more opportunities to work together for gender equality. For instance, it was suggested that regular training workshops could be set up between parliamentarians and CSO members.

b) Post-2015 suggestions

- Develop a coalition; CSOs must come together to ensure effective campaigning and implementation of programmes.

- Increase engagement between CSOs and the government.

- Establish more formal links with the Commonwealth Secretariat.

- For the Commonwealth, have an international plan regarding gender but include flexibility for national priorities and resources.

- Enhance gender-responsive budgeting initiatives and aim for at least 5 per cent of the national budget to be spent on gender issues.[187]

Asia region

3. Bangladesh

Bangladesh has been chosen for a field visit because of its gender equality initiatives. In particular, it has recorded a large increase in the number of women in parliament between 2004 and 2015: from only 2 per cent female parliamentarians in 2004 to 14.8 per cent in 2015.[188] Furthermore, it has launched eight innovative one-stop crisis centres (OCCs) related to violence against women, which aim to provide an 'all-in-one' centre for health care, police assistance, DNA testing, social services, legal assistance, psychological counselling, shelter services, etc.[189] It is hoped that the information gathered from the field visit will elaborate on the approaches undertaken, the challenges and obstacles faced, and the way forward in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment goals within Bangladesh.

a) Synthesis of the field visit

Bangladesh hosted the Commonwealth's 10WAMM in 2013 in Dhaka. The impact of this meeting, in terms of focus given to gender equality issues and knowledge-sharing opportunities, was mentioned several times during the field visit. The consultations focused on economic issues affecting women; government initiatives in the areas of gender responsive budgeting, addressing violence against women, climate change and natural disasters; and the impact of having women in key political leadership positions such as the current Prime Minister, the Hon. Sheikh Hassina, and the Speaker, the Hon. Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, MP.

The critical issue of women's economic empowerment was a recurring theme. The needs of rural and urban women, access to collateral-free and low interest rate loans, job creation, encouraging women entrepreneurs and developing markets where products can be sold were a few of the issues affecting women's economic empowerment.[190] One way to assist women who wish to access credit and other financial services

has been the creation of dedicated desks for women at almost all banks in Bangladesh (public and private).[191] Another area frequently discussed during the meetings was Bangladesh's textile industry and efforts to improve the situation of workers. There are approximately 4 million workers in this industry and most are women. In partnership with the ILO, the government has embarked on an initiative (2013–2016) to improve the working conditions within the ready-made garment sector.[192]

As part of the implementation of the National Women Development Policy (2011), the expansion of gender-responsive budgeting was prepared by the Finance Division alongside the national budget to track the impact of allocated financial resources in the area of gender development and across various sectors.[193] According to the government, this process has assisted with the guidance of policies and interventions and with managing resources linked to gender-based programmes.[194] There is a dedicated section within the Finance Department website for the Gender Budgeting Report (2015–2016).[195] The reason this has been highlighted is that, during the field visit to Trinidad and Tobago, one of the sessions addressed the country's current project for the development of a gender-responsive budgeting process. During the discussions, the consultant for the ETR mentioned the availability online of Bangladesh's report, and those working on the Gender Responsive Budgeting programme commented that it was perhaps a possible future component of Trinidad and Tobago's platform.[196]

The developmental impact of technology and its potential positive effects on women is an ongoing process. There are over 121 million mobile phone subscriptions in Bangladesh.[197] Several of the participants mentioned how mobiles and the trend towards smartphones have provided opportunities for mobile banking and digital payments initiatives, since many people, especially women, do not have access to physical banking institutions. There are also opportunities for women to participate in IT software and hardware work. The Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021 project includes 5,000 centres that engage women to carry out such work in non-traditional fields.[198]

Continuing with the theme of women's economic empowerment, a visit was conducted to the organisation *Joyeeta Foundation*.[199] Emanating

from an understanding of the consequences of the 'patriarchal socio-economic condition, women in Bangladesh, like any other South Asian countries, were under',[200] a three-year pilot project was initiated in 2011 by the Department of Women's Affairs. Although a direct link to the PoA could not be made formally, the foundation does offer an effective way in which women from rural areas throughout Bangladesh can access the purchasing market in Dhaka. Currently in its fourth year, it has brought together 200 registered women's associations and provided a stall for them to market their products in Dhaka and also foster entrepreneurship skills. Future plans include moving into a dedicated building.

Efforts undertaken to eliminating all forms of violence against women was presented. Legislative initiatives undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh included the Domestic Violence Prevention and Protection Act (2010), the Prevention and Suppression of Human Trafficking Act (2012) and the Overseas Employment and Migrants Act (2013), which covers 'irregular migration'. In 2011, a national survey found that '87 per cent of married women reported having experienced both physical and psychological violence in the last 12 months. There are also new forms of VAW emerging, such as harassment through the use of social media, and new technologies (such as mobile phones), violence against elderly women and so on.'[201] As part of the Beijing process (1995) strategy to develop multisectoral partnerships, in 2001 the government started the One-stop Crisis Centres, which house doctors, nurses, counsellors, lawyers and police officers, for women who have suffered violence.

b) Post-2015 suggestions

- Harmonise future Commonwealth initiatives on gender equality with UN SDGs.

- Enhance the Commonwealth's niche areas of expertise such as capacity building.

- Ensure that robust results-based monitoring indicators and training are in place.

- Support a twin-track approach to gender equality: a stand-alone goal to be mainstreamed across other sectors.[202]

Pacific region

4. Solomon Islands

a) Synthesis of the field visit

The influence of the Pacific Regional Action Plan, climate change, environmental disasters and the fishing industry[203] were themes touched upon. The Pacific Regional Action Plan (2012–2015) is rooted in the Beijing Platform and includes all members of the Pacific Islands Forum. Its main priorities are women, peace and security but with a focus on regional needs and priorities, with the underlying feature of gender equality.[204]

Initiatives to promote gender equality include the Government of the Solomon Islands creating the Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs. The *Solomon Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development* (2010–2015) sets out priority policy outcomes in the areas of health, education, economic status, violence against women and gender mainstreaming. The terms of reference make direct mention of the Commonwealth's Plan of Action (2005–2015). [205]

Legislative and institutional frameworks are further considerations, as is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which emerged in 2010 as a response to the internal situation in the Solomon Islands from 1998 to 2003 and through which regional workshops have been held to ensure the effective participation of women.[206]

b) Post-2015 suggestions

- Because of geographical distances, ensure a physical presence for the Commonwealth, either with its own office in the region or within another international body such as the UN.

- A new Commonwealth gender equality platform must be 'translatable' into national action plans with a 'sense of ownership'.

5. Samoa

Samoa has been chosen for a field visit because of its gender equality initiatives. In particular, it has enacted domestic violence legislation.[207] Furthermore, approximate equality has been achieved between men and women within several spheres of government and the economy.[208] It is hoped that the information gathered from the field visit will elaborate on the approaches undertaken,

the challenges and obstacles faced and the way forward in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment goals within Samoa.

a) Synthesis of the field visit

In terms of the PoA, the current Minister of Women, Community and Social Development, the Hon. Tofa Tolofuaivalelei Falemoe Leiataua, was Chair of the 12th CGPMG Meeting in 2014. The Government of Samoa is to host the Commonwealth's 11th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting in 2016.

Again, the Pacific Regional Action Plan (2012–2015) and other UN frameworks such as Beijing and CEDAW mechanisms featured in the discussions. Legislative initiatives to address gender-based violence comprise the Family Safety Act (2013), the Crimes Act (2013) and the Child Protection Bill (2013). Ongoing projects are the development of gender-responsive budgeting initiatives (with support from Australia), a new women's policy (in draft form) and the upcoming March 2016 elections whereby a constitutional reform sets out a 10 per cent quota for women in Parliament.[209]

The context of 'the village' and utilising a 'holistic approach' to gender equality across various sections was a repeated theme during the field visit to Samoa. The village is a central component of Samoan life, and gender equality cuts across many sectors such as youth, involving men and women in the process and village decision-making structures. Most of the meetings involved a mixture of CSOs and government ministry representatives. Although, in their words, this relationship is not always 'perfect', they confirmed the need to continue working together and increase such ties to ensure that gender equality is effectively addressed.

One programme mentioned was the Regional Rights Resource Team, also known as 'Triple R T'. Located within the Social Development Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), it works 'to provide technical assistance and training in order to assist the 22 Pacific Island member countries and territories of SPC to increase observance to international human rights standards through improved service delivery, access to justice and effective governance'.[210] There are also efforts to go with 'one voice into the village', as the government and various NGOs have started partnership talks on the issue of gender-based violence.

Customary law and how this affects women was outlined. The proposed amendments to the Village Fono Act (1990) were presented in terms of trying to ensure that village council decisions or punishments are in line with the Constitution of Samoa.[211] Some participants during the field visit meetings felt this would be an important step especially in relation to, for instance, domestic violence. The Samoa Law Reform Society is, since January 2015, undertaking a review of Samoa's legislation for compliance under CEDAW.

Approximately 34 per cent of village businesses in Samoa are owned by women. Most of these are small shops.[212] In contrast, a high proportion of businesses in urban areas are owned or managed by women. Economic empowerment initiatives have been developed such as micro finance schemes whereby loans are set at a 20 per cent flat rate and 10 per cent of income must be saved, collateral-free 'relief' schemes, building capacity and training, and understanding climate change/natural disaster realities that can affect businesses. One such area is the effort to revive the Samoan traditional Fine Mats process, a process by which mats used in important ceremonies are woven by women. The *ie sae* and the weaving revival project offer opportunities for the transfer of skills, economic empowerment and preservation of cultural practices.[213]

Human rights in Samoa were considered during the field visit. A representative of the recently created National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), which is based in the Office of the Samoan Ombudsman, mentioned that rights of women in Samoa are more often associated with policy and cultural considerations than with legislative changes. Cultural norms are utilised as a way to justify human rights. The first *State of Human Rights Report* for Samoa was published in 2015. From the survey on women three inter-related issues surfaced that are 'related to women's rights: (1) tackling gender role stereotyping; (2) recognising the unequal participation in political and economic life; and (3) preventing high rates of violence against women'. As the report goes on to state, 'While the human rights system – laws, policies, and conventions – can be used to hold Samoa accountable for obligations undertaken pursuant to treaties, laws can only go so far. Change has to be felt in the culture as well as the legal code'.[214] In turn, the *Women: Matai and Leadership Survey* (2015) examines

women's attitudes towards political participation opportunities and traditional leadership roles in Samoa.[215]

b) Post-2015 suggestions

- On a purely practical level, one of the participants mentioned that, when one is asked to join a Commonwealth forum such as 'Commonwealth Connects' or a participatory list via an email link, countries may restrict access to the internet site, for instance through a work email account or as a result of work internet access protocols.

- The Commonwealth Secretariat should offer programme support and technical advice as found in UN interventions.

- Ensure adequate data, technological abilities, resources and capacity building in the areas of gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

Caribbean region

6. St Lucia

St Lucia has been chosen for a field visit because of its gender equality initiatives. In particular, it has enacted domestic violence legislation (the Domestic Violence Act of 1995, amended in 2005)[216] and has developed a multistakeholder centre called the St Lucia Crisis Centre, which is 'Dedicated to the Reduction and Elimination of Domestic Violence'.[217] It is hoped that the information gathered from the field visit will elaborate on the approaches undertaken, the challenges and obstacles faced and the way forward in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment goals within St Lucia.

a) Synthesis of the field visit[218]

In St Lucia, as in other Caribbean countries, including Trinidad and Tobago, girls tend to do better in primary education than boys. This pattern continues in tertiary education, in which females greatly outnumber males. There are far more female teachers than male teachers. The net result, according to several participants, is a lack of positive male role models, and more boys than girls leave school early.[219] The Open Campus St Lucia reported its current student enrolment at 460 females and 84 males (undergraduate). There are 37 females and no males registered as graduate students.[220] The critical point is to ensure more

gender balance within education as part of a holistic approach to addressing social issues affecting both genders.

Another meeting took place at the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College. Although the individuals who participated had not heard of the Commonwealth PoA, they produced a report in which the four critical areas from the PoA were utilised to outline connections within their establishment and programme delivery mechanisms. One notable example of such a connection was in the area of human rights. All students must take a social responsibility and global awareness issues course, which also looks at, for instance, UN conventions pertaining to rights. The overall conclusion was that the production of such a report and the meeting have opened up the possibility of addressing gender in a more concerted manner, embedding it in programme reviews and programme development, and making the college curriculum more 'gender sensitive'.[221]

A forum was organised attended by several CSOs. Gender equality and its impact on gender roles between men and women, for instance in relation to domestic violence, were debated. One person commented that 'men feel as if they have been left behind'. Great emphasis was placed on educating boys and girls on what is acceptable behaviour so that violence does not become the norm. This education should begin before children attend school and take place within the home and community – 'the community used to raise the child'. The St Lucia Crisis Centre was mentioned for its work on addressing gender-based violence.

b) Post-2015 suggestions

- Enhance civil society and develop an umbrella organisation.

- Involve both men and women in the process.

Commonwealth Secretariat notes: St Lucia (morning of 9 November 2015)

Notes from St Lucia meetings

Morning 09 Nov 2015

Department of Planning and National Development

Gender Plan of Action

Not familiar with the Gender PoA

Advancement of women

Some movement in this area, although advocacy with respect to legislative work still work to be done.

Stark imbalance in educational achievement in St Lucia, with girls outperforming boys.

High participation of women in the workplace and in Ministry of Planning.

Lots of lower and middle management positions held by women in public sector, and significant number in higher management.

Long way to go in poverty eradication. Lots of single headed households with women at the head. These tend to do poorly.

Working with partners – lots of initiatives are donor funded, by NGOs.

Need to have a more comprehensive look at the gender aspect of development

Disadvantages on the male side, due to lower level of education, poor workplace participation, violence.

Women in politics: 3/17 members of parliament; 2 senators.

Tough to get in politics, because in a small society politics becomes personal and women do not like to participate as a result.

Suggestions for Commonwealth priorities in next 5–10 years

Weakness on the planning side is that lots of donor initiatives do not give enough thought to the local situation or the national space. Donors have a good impression of the problem but do not know the nitty gritty to successfully implement it in the local areas.

Currently no national plan for Gender in St Lucia.

Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment

Gender Plan of Action – not specifically familiar with it.

Gender advancement of women

Directed us to UN Women for a gender assessment they had completed in July/Aug 2015 that spoke specifically to societal problems, and social safety net programmes.

The study was important in that it provided insight as to how men and women view programmes, how they access them, and their different requirements. That will help the St Lucia Government reform its cash transfer programmes.

Also indicated that the Caribbean Development Bank had done a gender assessment of St Lucia in July.

The number of women councillors in local government is increasing. Still male dominated with a 70 male/30 female ratio.

Form of local government is by appointment. Parliamentary representatives put forward list of names to the Governor General for appointment.

A new local government bill being developed will allow for local elections. Bill has been drafted and consultations were held to the end of September. Now before the Attorney General's chambers.

In public sector workforce the ratio of women to men is 70 to 30. The gap is gradually getting bigger. Women have the academic requirements for jobs in the public sector. Pay is not great, but there is job security.

Domestic violence is rarely spoken about. When women come for financial assistance (welfare cash transfer programmes) officials hear of domestic violence.

If violence happens to a child, they can call officials to protect the child. However, if the violence happens to an adult, it has to be the person hurt by the violence who voluntarily asks for assistance. Issue of domestic violence may come up in case management of a welfare assistance, which is how the department would learn of it.

Programmes to eradicate poverty include: National Skills Development System (NSDS), National Incentive to Create Employment (NICE) – which includes programmes for single mothers, elderly home care, plus short-term programmes to develop skills. 100 per cent of those accessing elderly care are women.

Suggestions for Commonwealth priorities in next 5–10 years

Commonwealth should assist St Lucia with gender mainstreaming. One recommendation is to have a Department of Gender, a lead agency. St Lucia has been signatory to a number of agreements and

action plans, but the gender group is small. Their focus is on projects, and gender is not integrated across the government.

Important to be at the forefront of awareness. St Lucia is just starting its budget cycle. They have frameworks on child protection and financial and social protection. Gender should have been part of that.

With a Plan of Action, there needs to be an agency to fund reform. St Lucia will be left behind in the development world without it.

Small Enterprises Development Unit (SEDU), Ministry of Commerce

Gender Plan of Action

Not really familiar with it

Gender advancement of women

Clients are both men and women – 43 per cent women/57 per cent men.

The unit provides advice for new businesses (small and micro) from the idea stage to the market – technical assistance, duty free concerns, marketing plans, business registration.

Women clients focus on micro and small, and businesses such as childhood care related or spa related. Men focus on things such as construction.

Business ownership statistics from the unit's data base as of February 2015 – women 220, men 279.

Percentage of clients is growing – up by 40 per cent.

The SEDU partners with chambers of commerce as well as trade and export associations, and other ministries.

US Government has helped fund a Small Business Development Centre that has assisted four other Caribbean islands to improve service delivery. In the past has been on an ad hoc basis, but now structured.

Have signed MOUs with some agencies. Fine tuning how to operate with regular partners.

Suggestions for Commonwealth priorities in next 5–10 years

Mentoring programme for women, where people could meet with other business people, bounce off ideas. Business advisors are limited, so experienced advice would be good. Learn not to be ashamed of challenges and learn how others have dealt with them.

Help women get out of 'micro' business mindset. Some women satisfied to simply get their kids through school and do not think of doing more. Self-employed entrepreneurs need to create more jobs, or partner with others to grow their business.

Some businesses register but never get their idea off the ground. In February started an Essential Business Planning workshop just for new clients. Looks at all aspects of starting a business to determine if they are ready for a business.

Ministry of Health Wellness, Human Services and Gender Relations

Gender Plan of Action

Know the PoA well, as they are responsible for gender relations.

Lots of measures in the PoA incorporated in St Lucia plan.

Gender advancement of women

Local government – most council heads are women.

In 2006 Gender Relations provided training and did some work with women leaders. All the women who won elections had attended the training.

Legal aid project has started recently, which provides increased access for people.

2010 – introduction of legislation against trafficking persons.

Domestic violence legislation introduced in 1995, revised in 2005, is now under review.

Women in public sector management – all of the department's top management are women – ministers, permanent secretaries, deputy PSs. Very few males. Same throughout the health care system – Chief Medical Officer, Chief Pharmacist, head of hospital, etc. Gender imbalance exists.

Gender responsive budgeting. Work with Ministry of Finance to ensure national budget makes adequate provisions for women.

Caribbean Development Bank Project looking at mainstreaming gender in national strategic development plan and all policies and plans would have a gender focus.

Access to HIV/AIDS treatment

Increased access in terms of health facilities, extension of hours.

Access to health services not island-wide with respect to men.

Most services are accessed by women, and that raised concern that men were not accessing health services.

Established a men's clinic tailored to their needs in regions 6 and 7. Have a men's health fair – services for non-communicable diseases, HIV/AIDS, health education and increased access to health care.

Adolescent health clinics are a new initiative in two areas – Vieux Fort and Babonneau. Come into the centre to access services and to congregate and socialise with other young people.

HIV clinics – both men and women have access to testing and counselling. Service is free – blood testing, physical test and drugs.

Fewer deaths now as a result of good care and medicine.

Increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS – higher rate among males than females. Across all of society.

Impact of change in HIV/AIDS started back with funding from World Bank, Global Fund Family.

HIV strategic plan at national and regional level. Target at-risk groups with partners – NGOs and community groups.

For gender equality need involvement of more men in men's HIV and other health care issues.

Suggestions for Commonwealth priorities in next 5–10 years

Work in the area for violence against women and children

Human rights law – need to strengthen the laws

Poverty eradication

Climate change and natural disasters – gender aspect. Most of those in flood areas with substandard housing are female, single headed families. Need to have a global focus to continue to assist in dealing with the fall out of these changes.

Men and boys in general – need to focus, to bring them on board and be an integral part of the whole discussion.

Violence against men – gender based violence initiatives needs to include violence against young boys, as people will not speak out against sexual assaults against young males.

Increase male access to and usage of health care services. Currently they are accessing it too late for it to make an impact.

High suicide rate among males – leaves behind female led households with a number of dependents.

7. Trinidad and Tobago

Trinidad and Tobago has been chosen for a field visit because of its gender equality initiatives, in particular the work undertaken to develop GRB measures within government departments. It is hoped that the information gathered from the field visit will elaborate on the approaches undertaken, the challenges and obstacles faced and the way forward in relation to gender equality and women's empowerment goals within Trinidad and Tobago.

a) Synthesis of the field visit

With reference to the PoA, and in conjunction with the Commonwealth Secretariat, Trinidad and Tobago hosted the Caribbean Regional Colloquium on Women Leaders as Agents of Change (2011) and the past Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Women's Network and the CGPMG Civil Society Representative for the Caribbean, Ms Hazel Brown, participated in one of the field visit meetings.

Participants often spoke of the unique mix of cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds that make up Trinidad and Tobago and some of the challenges faced.[222] For example, the legal age for marriage in Trinidad and Tobago is 18 years but there are exceptions on religious grounds. There are four official marriage options with varying minimum ages: civil marriage, Hindu marriage (16 years), Muslim marriage (12 years) and Orisa marriage.[223]

One of the projects presented is the forthcoming National Domestic Violence Registry, which would enable various stakeholders to use a secure protocol to enter details and access information pertaining to domestic violence reports, cases, services provided, etc. It is hoped the registry will be available at the beginning of 2016.[224]

Another upcoming endeavour linked to gender-based violence is the Women's City Centre(s) Programme. The centres would use the 'Women's

City Centre' (WCC) model, first developed in El Salvador. Women's City Centres would offer one-stop-shop service provision, covering five areas: sexual and reproductive health; economic empowerment; community education; attention to cases of VAW; and child care facilities. During the meeting, discussion turned to the possibility of the Commonwealth Secretariat offering technical support.

Efforts to address HIV/AIDS were outlined. Target areas include prevention, care/support, advocacy and research. HIV/AIDS is not going away and combating stigma/discrimination is a continuing factor.[225]

Links to the Commonwealth Secretariat providing 'best practice' examples from Uganda, Bangladesh and Rwanda covering gender-responsive budgeting were mentioned.[226] A toolkit has been developed and adapted to Trinidad and Tobago. The introduction describes a gender-responsive budget as 'one that integrates a gender perspective into the budgeting process with a view to reducing systemic inequalities in the ways in which men and women, boys and girls benefit from the allocation of resources and the way in which they are impacted by policies, programmes and projects'.[227] The toolkit outlines a 10-step framework for action, and Trinidad and Tobago is, at this point, at Step 8.[228]

On a slightly more theoretical level, the use of language has informed how concepts such as 'gender', 'women and development'/'gender and development', 'equality between women and men' and 'women and the girl-child' are developed or contested. Furthermore, the Commonwealth's 53 member countries have a combined population of more than 2 billion, of whom more than 60 per cent are under 30 years of age.

Suggestions included promoting and implementing gender equality in the post-2015 reality which acknowledges concepts of gender; flexibility so that a new plan on gender equality can be 'translated' into their language; and creating ways to use familiar tools such as social media to promote and implement forthcoming strategies within the Commonwealth.[229]

b) Post-2015 suggestions

- Develop more ties with the Commonwealth Secretariat to promote capacity building and for the exchange of technical capacities in the area of gender equality.

- Allow post-2015 initiatives to be adaptable to local realities and needs.

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Annex 3: Questionnaires

A. Interview Questions with selected Commonwealth Secretariat Staff

Interviews conducted by Public Administration International (PAI)

London, 10–12 August 2015

1.   In which section of the Commonwealth Secretariat do you work?

2.   Please specify in which of the 4 critical areas for Commonwealth Action from the PoA you have been active (Page 25 of the PoA).

3.   Please outline key projects undertaken by you or your team in relation to the relevant critical areas.

4.   Please outline how you or your team have implemented the 'gender mainstreaming approach' as outlined in the relevant critical areas. Please use the 4 implementation sections as a guide (Pages 52–57 of the PoA).

To summarise, these are;

   a.   Partnerships

   b.   Knowledge, information and capacity building

   c.   Resources (*if possible, please provide financial figures*)

   d.   Monitoring, evaluation and reporting

5.   Please identify new and emerging cross-cutting themes which are linked to the relevant critical areas.

6.   Has the work to implement the PoA affected internal practices at the Commonwealth Secretariat? If so, please specify.

7.   Have attitudes towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming in relation to the PoA changed within the Commonwealth Secretariat? If so, please specify.

8.   Have attitudes towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming in relation to the PoA changed within member states of the Commonwealth? If so, please specify.

9.   Has the relationship between member states, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the Commonwealth Secretariat changed in terms of implementing the PoA? If so, please specify.

10.   Please give examples of 'good practices' in implementing the PoA.

11.   What have been some of the main obstacles (institutional, cultural, practical, etc) that have blocked effective implementation of the PoA both internally and externally?

12.   Please outline how accountability to implement the PoA in the relevant critical areas is undertaken within your section of the Commonwealth Secretariat and/or the Commonwealth Secretariat as a whole.

13.   What do you think the main strengths and weaknesses of the PoA have been over the past 10 years? What do you think should be done differently in the future?

B. Survey for National Womens Machineries

1.   Are you familiar with the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015? Yes/No.

   If YES, how useful do you think it has been in guiding the gender mainstreaming and equality agenda in your country? Please give examples.

2. Over the past TEN years (2005–15), to what extent do you think that there has been progress towards the NINE PoA indicators in your country?

Critical area	PoA Indicator	Very significant	Significant	Moderate	Not significant	No progress
Gender, democracy, peace and conflict	Proportion of seats held by women in parliament and local government					
	Proportion of managerial decision-making positions occupied by women in the public and private sectors					
	Existence and/or implementation of national action plans (NAPs) on UN Security Council Resolution 1325					
Gender, human rights and law	Existence of laws addressing violence against women (domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape/defilement and sex trade)					
	Evidence of customary laws codified					
Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment	Existence of laws promoting women's ownership of land and other assets					
	Proportion of national women owned and managed enterprises					
	Proportion of women enterprises accessing credit					
Gender and HIV/AIDS	Proportion of women accessing antiretroviral (ARVs), counselling and testing services					

Please explain your answer with any specific examples of notable progress.

3. How effectively do you think gender equality and the empowerment of women has been mainstreamed into your country's policies, frameworks and programmes? Very effectively/somewhat effectively/not effectively/not applicable. Can you please provide any examples where you have been successful?

4. Do you think the PoA has in any way contributed to the progress in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in your country? If YES, Please explain how?

5. Are there any significant examples to show the impact of the PoA on the lives of women and girls, men and boys in your country/region? If yes, please give examples and explain.

6. To what extent has the Commonwealth Secretariat supported or contributed to your own government's efforts in advancing the gender equality and women's empowerment goals of the PoA, and how effective have they been? Please give examples?

7. What role do you think have civil society and other partner organisations, including women's organisations and networks, played or should play in advancing the implementation of the PoA in the four critical areas in your country?

8. Which of the following partners have you engaged with in your actions to support the implementation of the PoA? Commonwealth Secretariat/Other Commonwealth countries/Commonwealth Family of Organisations/Civil society organisations/Universities and academia/Media/Private sector/ International organisations/Other (please specify)

9. Which partnerships have been most effective and why? Please give concrete examples.

10. During the life of the PoA, what different mechanisms did the Commonwealth Secretariat use to share knowledge and information on gender equality and women's empowerment? (Examples can include, but need not be limited to: Secretariat's Knowledge-Based Network, Electronic Help Desk, regional and international capacity building workshops and consultations, gender training programmes, technical assistance, etc.)

11. How effective did you find them? Can you give any examples of specific actions that have had a positive impact?

12. In your opinion, what are the key strengths and weaknesses of the PoA?

Key Strengths	Key Weakness	Comments, if any

13. What are some of the main obstacles issues and challenges that you believe prevent the implementation of the PoA in your country?

Obstacles/Issues/Challenges	Please tick all that apply
Lack of financial resources	
Limited technical capacity and knowledge	
Organisational dynamics	
Time constraints	
Contextual/political challenges	
Discriminatory attitudes and/or practices	
Unrealistic actions or activities	
Other (please describe):	

Can you please share any examples on how you navigated or overcame any of these obstacles and challenges in your country?

14. In your view, is the implementation of the PoA goals adequately resourced in your country? If not, what areas do you think require increased investment and resources?

15. To what extent have gender perspectives been taken into account in your government's budgets at the national and local levels and what mechanisms have you used to do this?

16. How do you monitor and report on national and regional progress in implementing the PoA?

17. How is data on gender equality and women's empowerment across the four critical areas generated and recorded by your government? Has the PoA played any role in enhancing your capacity for data collection?

18. The Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) was established to monitor and review member countries' progress in implementing the PoA. In your view, has this mechanism been adequate and effective? Why or why not, and how could it be improved?

19. From your experience, are there any lessons that have been learned in the implementation of the PoA that the Commonwealth Secretariat should take into consideration moving forward?

Looking forward: Post-2015

20. What priority areas do you think the Commonwealth should focus on in the next 5–10 years in its work to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women?

21. What is the one action that different PoA partners could take that you believe could most effectively accelerate achievement towards the goal of gender equality?

Key partners	Action to be taken
Commonwealth Secretariat	
Commonwealth Member States	
Commonwealth Family of Organisations	
Civil Society Organisations	
Other partners (please specify)	

Thanks for your time and feedback

C. Survey for experts, partners and Commonwealth family of organisations

1. Are you familiar with the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015? Yes/No.

   If yes, how do you think it guides the gender mainstreaming and equality agenda of the Commonwealth Secretariat's work in member countries? Please give examples.

2. Are you familiar with the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Equality Policy? Yes/No.

   If yes, how do you think this has affected the internal practices and attitudes towards gender equality and mainstreaming in the Commonwealth Secretariat? Please give examples.

3. Over the past TEN years (2005–15), to what extent do you think that there has been progress towards the NINE PoA indicators in the Commonwealth member states?

Critical area	PoA Indicator	Very significant	Significant	Moderate	Not significant	No progress
Gender, democracy, peace and conflict	Proportion of seats held by women in parliament and local government					
	Proportion of managerial decision-making positions occupied by women in the public and private sectors					
	Existence and/or implementation of national action plans (NAPs) on UN Security Council Resolution 1325					
Gender, human rights and law	Existence of laws addressing violence against women (domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape/ defilement and sex trade)					
	Evidence of customary laws codified					
Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment	Existence of laws promoting women's ownership of land and other assets					
	Proportion of national women owned and managed enterprises					
	Proportion of women enterprises accessing credit					
Gender and HIV/ AIDS	Proportion of women accessing antiretroviral (ARVs), counselling and testing services					

Please explain your answer with any specific examples of notable progress.

4. How effectively do you think that gender equality and the empowerment of women have been mainstreamed into:

	Very Effective	Somewhat effective	Not effective	Not applicable
a. Member states' policies, frameworks and programmes				
b. Secretariat policies, frameworks and programmes				

Can you please provide any examples?

5. Do you think the PoA has in any ways contributed to the progress in promoting gender equality and empowerment in member countries? If YES, Please explain how?

6. Are there any significant examples to show the impact of the PoA on the lives of women and girls (if not discussed above)? Have you seen any evidence of such an impact at the local, national, regional and/or international levels? If yes, please give examples and explain.

7. What role do you think the Commonwealth Secretariat has played or should play in advancing the PoA's gender equality and women's empowerment goals at the national, regional and global levels? How effectively has it done this over the past ten years?

8. What role do you think civil society and other partner organisations, including women's organisations and networks, have played or should play in advancing implementation of the PoA in the four critical areas (see question 2)?

9. In your collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat what different mechanisms did you use to share knowledge and information on the PoA and gender issues? If so, how effective have you found them? Can you give any examples of specific actions that have had a positive impact?

   (Mechanisms can include, but need not be limited to: the Secretariat's Knowledge-Based Network, Electronic Help Desk, regional and international capacity building workshops and consultations, gender training programmes, technical assistance, etc.)

10. In your opinion, what are the key strengths and weaknesses of the PoA?

Key Strengths	Key Weakness	Comments, if any

11. What are some of the main obstacles, issues and challenges that you believe prevent the implementation of the PoA?

Obstacles/Issues/Challenges	Please tick all that apply
Lack of financial resources	
Limited technical capacity and knowledge	
Organisational dynamics	
Time constraints	
Contextual/political challenges	
Discriminatory attitudes and/or practices	
Unrealistic actions or activities	
Other (please describe):	

   Can you share any examples of how any of these obstacles have been overcome by the member countries?

12. In your view, is the PoA adequately resourced? If not, what areas require increased investment and resources?

13. What do you think were the processes and mechanisms used for the assessment, monitoring and review of the PoA, including the role of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG)? In your view were these mechanisms, effective, adequate and transparent? Why or why not, and how could they be improved?

14. From your experiences are there any lessons that have been learned through the implementation of the PoA that the Commonwealth Secretariat should take into consideration moving forward?

Looking forward: Post-2015

15. What priority areas do you think the Commonwealth should focus on in the next 5–10 years in its work to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women?

16. What is the one action that different PoA partners could take that you believe could most effectively accelerate achievement towards the goal of gender equality?

Key partners	Action to be taken
Commonwealth Secretariat	
Commonwealth Member States	
Commonwealth Family of Organisations	
Civil Society Organisations	
Other partners (please specify)	

Thanks for your time and feedback

D. Survey for civil society organisations

1.   Are you familiar with the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015? Yes/No.

       If YES, how useful do you think it has been in guiding the gender mainstreaming and equality agenda in your country? Please give examples.

2.   Over the past TEN years (2005–15), to what extent do you think that there has been progress towards the NINE PoA indicators in your country/region?

Critical area	PoA Indicator	Very significant	Significant	Moderate	Not significant	No progress
Gender, democracy, peace and conflict	Proportion of seats held by women in parliament and local government					
	Proportion of managerial decision-making positions occupied by women in the public and private sectors					
	Existence and/or implementation of national action plans (NAPs) on UN Security Council Resolution 1325					
Gender, human rights and law	Existence of laws addressing violence against women (domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape/defilement and sex trade)					
	Evidence of customary laws codified					
Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment	Existence of laws promoting women's ownership of land and other assets					
	Proportion of national women owned and managed enterprises					
	Proportion of women enterprises accessing credit					
Gender and HIV/AIDS	Proportion of women accessing antiretroviral (ARVs), counselling and testing services					

Please explain your answer with any specific examples of notable progress.

3. How effectively do you think gender equality and the empowerment of women has been mainstreamed into your country/region's policies, frameworks and programmes? Very effectively/ somewhat effectively/not effectively/not applicable. Can you please provide any examples where you have been successful?

4. Do you think the PoA has in any way contributed to the progress in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in your country/region? If YES, Please explain how?

5. Are there any significant examples to show the impact of the PoA on the lives of women and girls, men and boys in your country/region? If yes, please give examples and explain.

6. To what extent has the Commonwealth Secretariat supported or contributed to national/regional efforts in advancing the gender equality and women's empowerment goals of the PoA, and how effective have they been? Please give examples?

7. What role do you think civil society and other partner organisations, including women's organisations and networks, have played or should play in advancing the implementation of the PoA in the four critical areas in your country/region?

8. Which of the following partners have you engaged with in your actions to support the implementation of the PoA? Commonwealth Secretariat/Other Commonwealth countries/Commonwealth Family of Organisations/Civil society organisations/Universities and academia/Media/Private sector/ International organisations/Other (please specify)

    Which partnerships have been most effective and why? Please give concrete examples.

9. During the life of the PoA, what different mechanisms did the Commonwealth Secretariat use to share knowledge and information on gender equality and women's empowerment? (Examples can include, but need not be limited to: Secretariat's Knowledge-Based Network, Electronic Help Desk, regional and international capacity building workshops and consultations, gender training programmes, technical assistance, etc.)

    How effective did you find them? Can you give any examples of specific actions that have had a positive impact?

10. In your opinion, what are the key strengths and weaknesses of the PoA?

Key Strengths	Key Weakness	Comments, if any

11. What are some of the main obstacles, issues and challenges that you believe prevent the implementation of the PoA?

Obstacles/Issues/Challenges	Please tick all that apply
Lack of financial resources	
Limited technical capacity and knowledge	
Organisational dynamics	
Time constraints	
Contextual/political challenges	
Discriminatory attitudes and/or practices	
Unrealistic actions or activities	
Other (please describe):	

Can you please share any examples on how you navigated or overcame any of these obstacles and challenges in your country/region?

12. In your view, is the implementation of the PoA goals adequately resourced in your country/region? If not, what areas do you think require increased investment and resources?

13. To what extent have gender perspectives been taken into account in national/regional budgets at central and local levels and what mechanisms have you used to do this?

14. How do you monitor and report on national and regional progress in implementing the PoA?

15. How is data on gender equality and women's empowerment across the four critical areas generated and recorded by country's government/regional government? Has the PoA played any role in enhancing your capacity for data collection?

16. The Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group (CGPMG) was established to monitor and review member countries' progress in implementing the PoA. In your view, has this mechanism been adequate and effective? Why or why not, and how could it be improved?

17. From your experience, are there any lessons that have been learned in the implementation of the PoA that the Commonwealth Secretariat should be taken into consideration moving forward?

Looking forward: Post-2015

18. What priority areas do you think the Commonwealth should focus on in the next 5–10 years in its work to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women?

19. What is the one action that different PoA partners could take that you believe could most effectively accelerate achievement towards the goal of gender equality?

Key partners	Action to be taken
Commonwealth Secretariat	
Commonwealth Member States	
Commonwealth Family of Organisations	
Civil Society Organisations	
Other partners (please specify)	

Thanks for your time and feedback

E. Questions for the Commonwealth Secretariat

1. Could the Secretariat please confirm the current status of the 'Gender Accountability Framework' for the Gender Equality Policy. No information could be found.

2. Could the Secretariat please provide more information on the process under way of developing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with UN Women.

3. Could the Secretariat please provide an update to the Malta Forum in relation to the NWM meeting (March 2015) which brought together partners including the Commonwealth Secretariat, the African Union, the Government of Rwanda, participants attending the NWM meeting and eventually those who attended the CHOGM Women's Forum in Malta, November 2015.

4. Could the Secretariat please provide an updated list of Commonwealth countries utilising GRB..

5. Could the Secretariat please provide the exact correlation between Illustrative Trends Analysis for the End Term Review of the Plan of Action on Women's Political Participation and the fact this publication resulted in the United Kingdom creating a mechanism for increasing women's leadership.

6. Could the Secretariat please provide an update to the 'Gender Peer Review' proposal with UN Women?.

7. The following information has been requested from the Commonwealth Secretariat:

   1. A list of programme activities, including allocated budgets and any reporting that addresses outcomes and impact either at Secretariat level or in Commonwealth member states.

   2. Database of research (e.g., briefings, country case studies, policy studies, etc.) produced on the PoA themes and how they were disseminated and with any follow-up measures.

   3. A list of requests made by member states and/or Commonwealth Associations and CSOs for specific support in relation to the PoA critical areas (including type of requests, funds requested/allocated, monitoring).

   (From Section 4, E – Assessing: partnerships; knowledge, information and capacity building; and resources)

8. Could the Secretariat please confirm how many individuals were contacted for the electronic surveys (National Women's Machineries; Experts, partners and Commonwealth Family of Organisations; and Civil society organisations)

Thank you.

Annex 4. Survey Findings

End of Term Review of the Commonwealth's Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015

Analysis of survey responses

Purpose of questionnaire

The Commonwealth Secretariat has commissioned Public Administration International (PAI) to undertake an End of Term Review (ETR) of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (PoA). The purpose of this review is to assess the current status and trends in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth since 2005, highlighting the policies, practices and mechanisms that have been successfully used to implement the PoA, and to recommend lessons and strategic priorities moving forward. An important part of this process is the administration of a gender-sensitive impact survey to Commonwealth Secretariat staff, National Women's Machineries and other stakeholders. The review team aims to identify areas of strength, innovative practice and challenges from a range of different perspectives to inform the ETR.

The purpose of this survey is to gather views on the structures and processes, financial and technical resources, socio-cultural factors and policy frameworks that have had an impact on implementation of the PoA. The survey therefore addresses both internal and external factors, and in particular seeks to understand the effectiveness and impact of efforts relating to partnerships; knowledge, information and capacity building; resources; and monitoring, evaluation and reporting. The survey consisted of a mix of open and closed questions, some of which were compulsory, and they were adapted slightly to each of the three stakeholder groups.

Profile of respondents

The Gender Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat administered the questionnaires. The breakdown of those who completed the survey is as follows:

- National Women's Machineries: 12 responses;
- experts, partners and Commonwealth Family of Organisations: 15 responses;

- civil society organisations: 3 responses.

Summary of key points

Overall, the questionnaire responses paint a relatively positive picture regarding the relevance and impact of the PoA to the Commonwealth's work and progress on gender equality across the Commonwealth regions. Given the low levels of responses to the survey, it is difficult to draw representative conclusions from the information received. However, it is still possible to identify some gaps and areas from the survey where the Commonwealth Secretariat may want to focus attention as it develops and rolls out its gender strategy in the future.

Positive factors

- A significant contribution of the PoA has been that it identifies a limited number of critical areas of concern and sets priorities.

- Where the PoA has been in alignment with national priorities, it seems that it has been useful as another tool to promote action.

- The PoA, and the Commonwealth Secretariat more generally, have made a real contribution through its work on gender responsive budgeting (GRB).

- The PoA plays an important role in complementing and reinforcing other regional and international frameworks, while at the same time being specific to the Commonwealth countries.

- The Commonwealth Secretariat has played a useful role in disseminating information, sharing lessons learned and best practice, capacity building and training in specific areas, and providing technical assistance to member countries.

Figure A2 National women's machineries, out of 53 questionnaires sent and 12 responses received

National women's machineries, out of total 53 questionnaires sent and 12 responses received
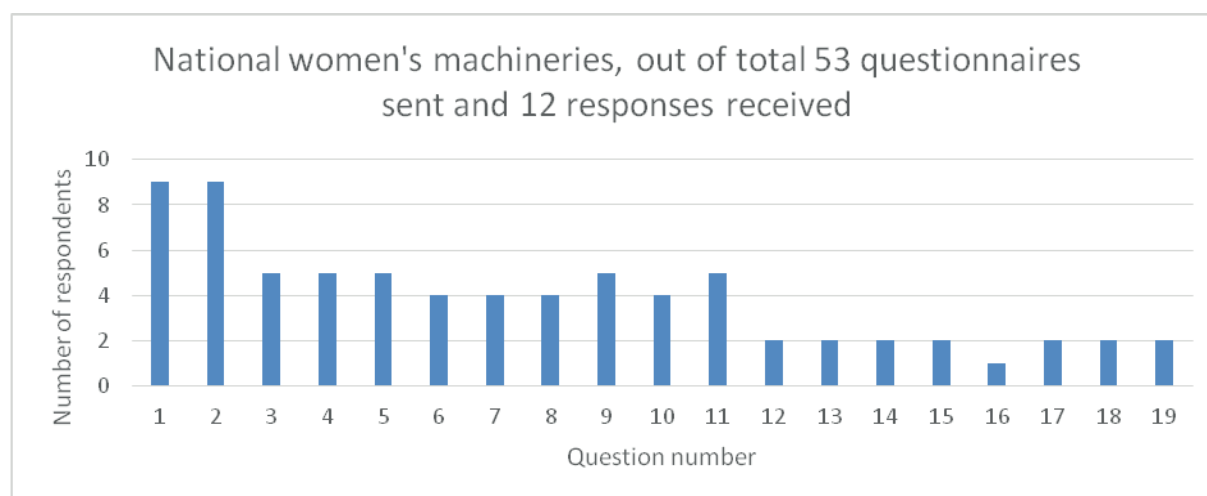
Areas of concern

- It is difficult to isolate the factors that have influenced policies and programmes on gender equality at the national or regional levels through such a survey, so there is very little evidence that the PoA has had a direct and specific impact.

- There is a lack of awareness or follow-through, which limits the extent to which the priority issues and actions identified in the PoA are taken up.

- The data and reporting requirements of the PoA are too onerous.

- The lack of financial resources allocated to the PoA, and gender issues more broadly, within the Commonwealth Secretariat and NWMs is a major obstacle to implementation.

- More efforts could be made to link up with and support women's organisations and networks, given the vital role that CSOs play in PoA implementation.

- The monitoring mechanisms have not been as useful and effective as they could have been.

Figure A3 Experts, partners and Commonwealth Family of Organisations, out of 52 questionnaires sent and 15 responses received
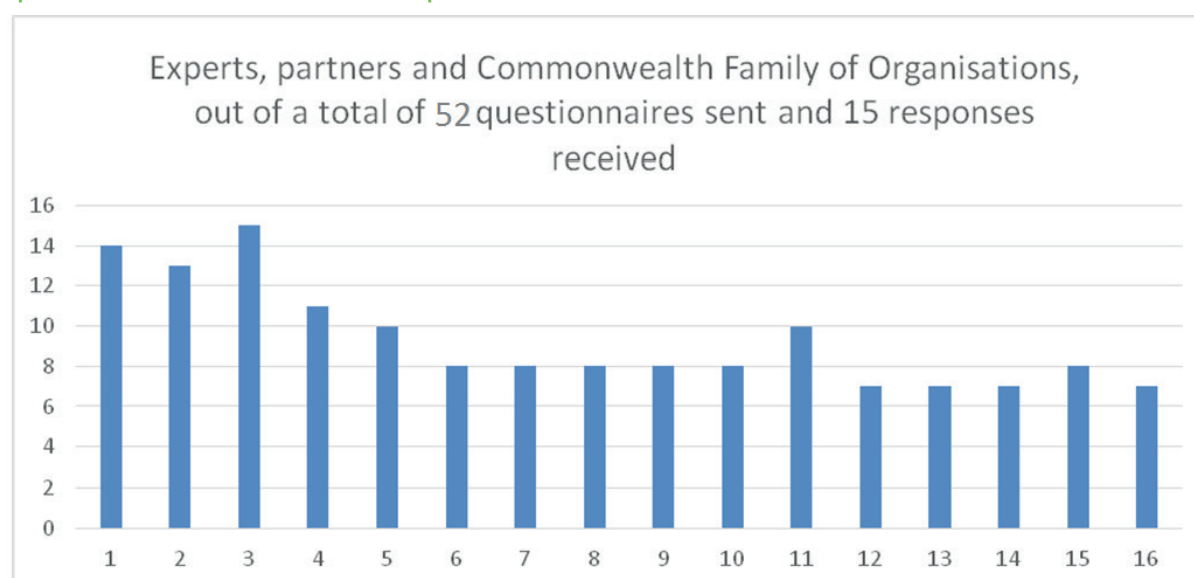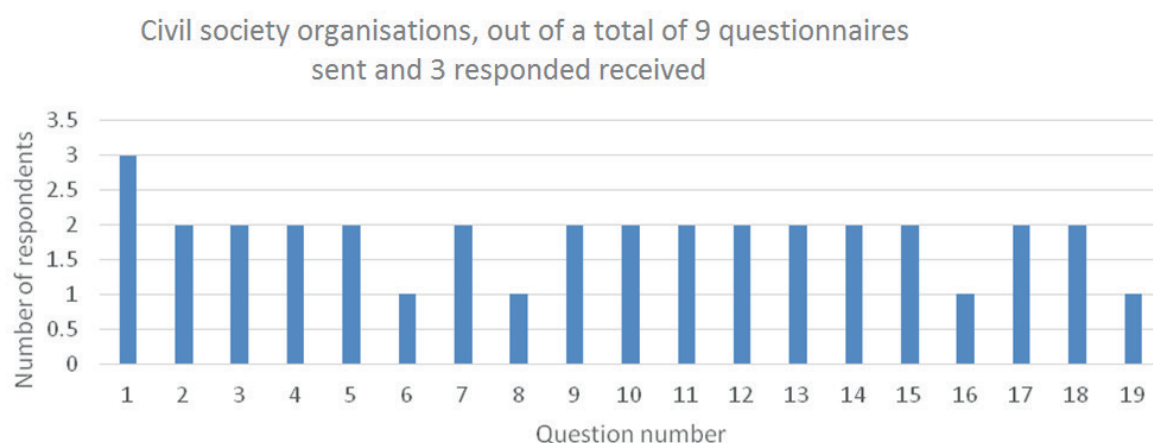

Experts, partners and Commonwealth Family of Organisations, out of a total of 52 questionnaires sent and 15 responses received

Figure A4 Civil society organisations, out of 9 questionnaires sent and 3 responses received

Civil society organisations, out of a total of 9 questionnaires sent and 3 responded received

Quantitative analysis of survey responses

Overall number of responses, by respondent group

It is important to note that the response rate was extremely low and, of those who did respond to the survey, many skipped the majority of questions. In other cases, while questions were answered, the respondents misinterpreted what was being asked and instead cited examples of gender mainstreaming without making any connections with the PoA. The fact that so few people responded to the survey could indicate a lack of awareness of or commitment to the PoA, or a lack of recognition/perception of its importance to the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Figures A2–A4 show the numbers of respondents to each question, by respondent group.

Progress towards the nine PoA indicators (all respondents combined)

The majority of respondents across the three surveys reported either significant or moderate progress against the nine quantitative indicators

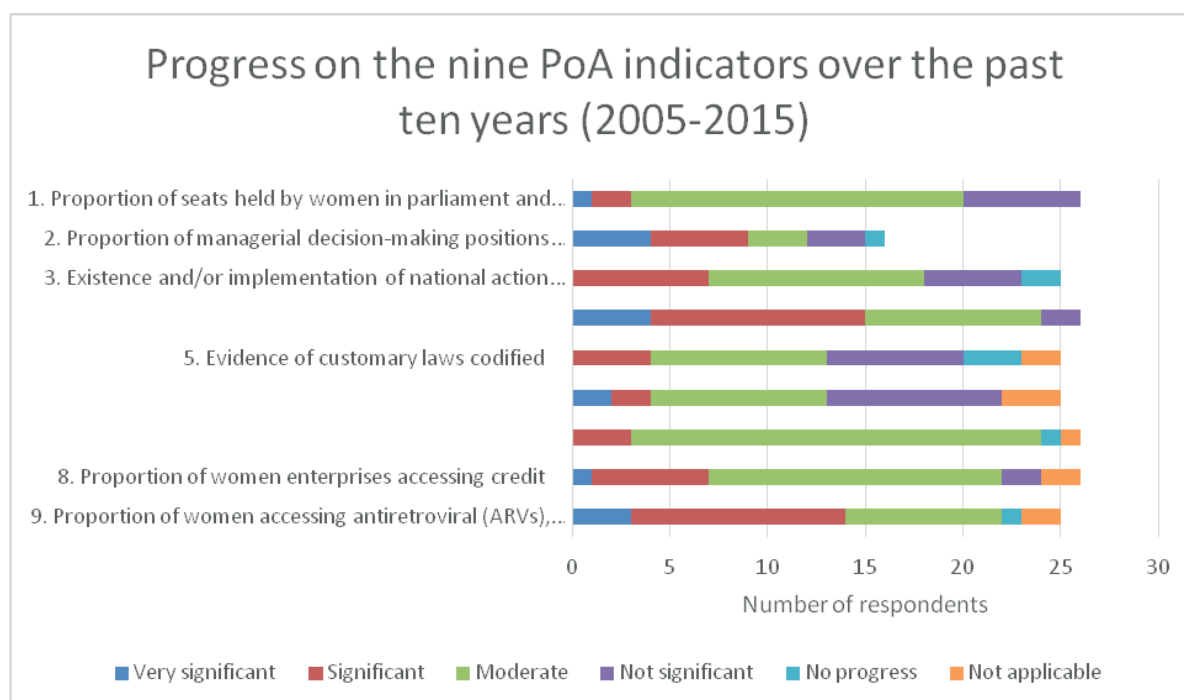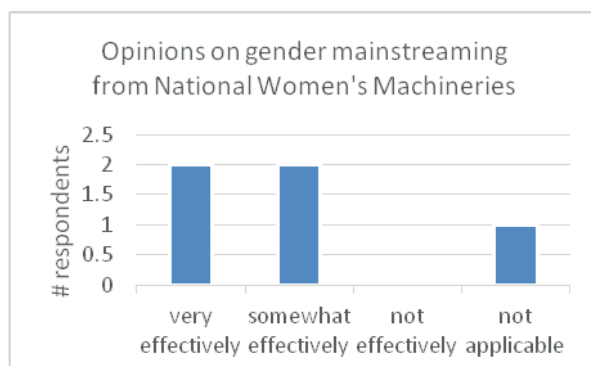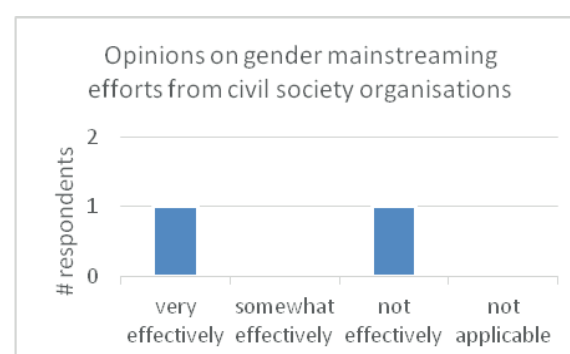## Figure A5 Progress on the nine PoA indicators, 2005–2015

Figure A6 Opinions on gender mainstreaming from national women's machineries

Figure A7 Opinions on gender mainstreaming from civil society organisations

of the PoA. The most notable progress is seen on indicator 4, on the existence of laws addressing VAW. This reflects the advances that have been made in many countries across the Commonwealth, and indeed globally, to adopt new legislation or revise existing laws to offer better protection from VAW. However, while laws are important, many respondents later indicated that implementation is sorely lacking and additional efforts need to be made to ensure that these new laws are enforced, survivors have access to the services they need and perpetrators are brought to justice. The indicator reported to show the least progress is indicator 1, on the proportion of seats held by women in parliament and local government. Only 3 out of 25 respondents reported either very significant or significant progress in this area.

Effectiveness of mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment into country policies, frameworks and programmes

Each group of respondents was asked to rate how effectively they believed that gender was mainstreamed into their country or region's policies. Overall, the response rate was very low on this question, with only two CSOs and five NWMs responding to this question. Figures A6–A8 show the responses, which reveal a mixed view on this issue. In the comments received, it appears that there has been noticeable progress in the area of policies, with several respondents giving examples of policies or frameworks in their countries that reflect a gender perspective, as well as in integrating gender into budgets. This last point reinforces comments made elsewhere that one of the most significant contributions of the Commonwealth Secretariat's work through the PoA

Figure A8 Opinions on gender mainstreaming from experts, partners and Commonwealth Family of Organisations
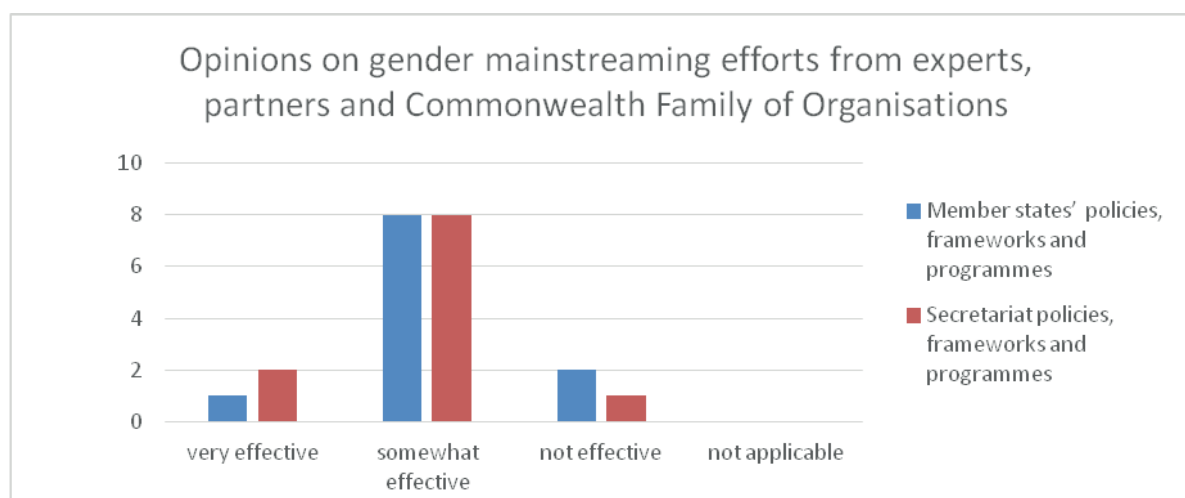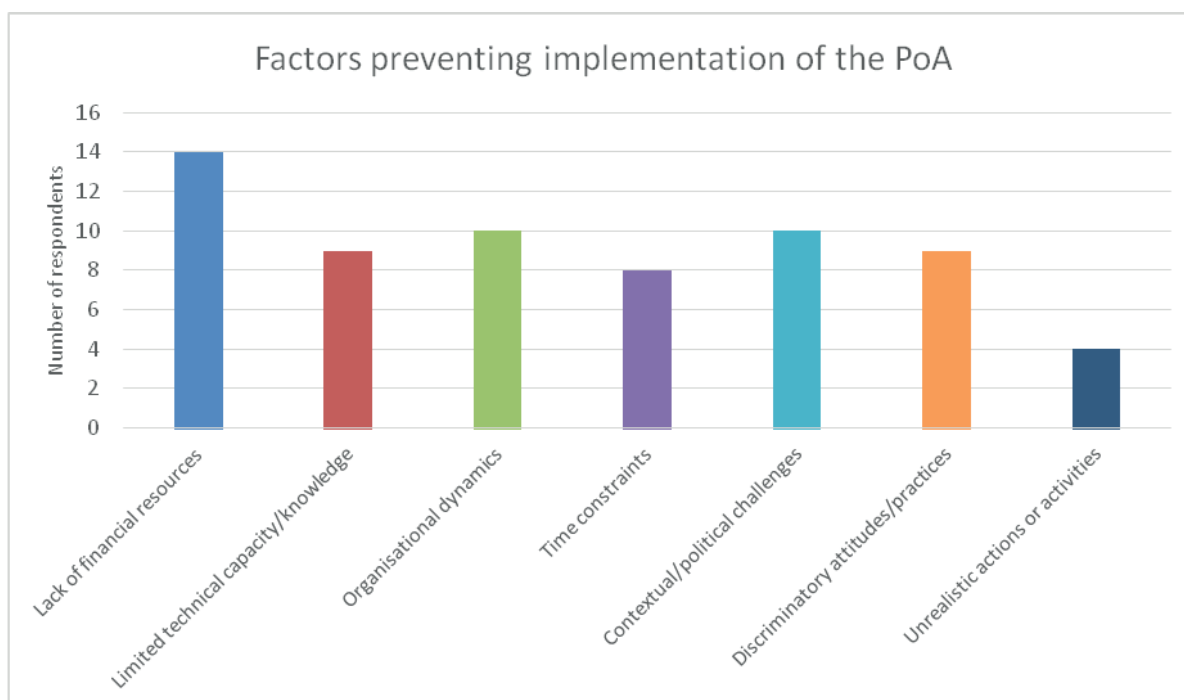
Figure A9 Factors preventing implementation of the PoA

has been on GRB. On the other hand, there is very little evidence of successful mainstreaming at the programming level, although some respondents did give examples of programmes that target specific groups such as women entrepreneurs.

The main obstacles, issues and challenges that you believe prevent the implementation of the PoA (all respondents combined)

Respondents to the survey cited a wide range of obstacles to the full implementation of the PoA. The factor cited most frequently (by 14 respondents) was the lack of financial resources. Importantly, one strategy identified by respondents to overcome this constraint was to seek funding from other actors, particularly UN agencies, to support their activities and fill the funding gaps. Organisational dynamics and contextual or political challenges also ranked highly, with 10 respondents pointing to these as factors.

Overview of findings

Table A1 provides an overview of the main findings coming out of the three sets of surveys, pulled together under broad headings.

Table A1 Overview of main findings

Heading	Findings
Familiarity with PoA and gender policy	Overall: • 8 out of 9 NWM respondents were familiar with the PoA • 12 out of 13 expert respondents were familiar with the PoA • 2 out of 3 CSO respondents were familiar with the PoA • 4 out of 8 expert respondents were familiar with the Commonwealth Gender Policy The most common comment was that it has been useful as a tool to guide policy and programming and to help countries identify priority issues. The gender policy has been useful in giving the Gender Unit more leverage and profile, but resources to support implementation are lacking and not all departments are using it
Progress on gender equality and women's empowerment at the national level and the role of the PoA	Some of the ways that progress is evident: • Many countries have national action plans and gender has been mainstreamed throughout government plans and policies • GRB was cited several times as an example of progress • Countries have benefited from the sharing of ideas, experiences and best practices
Contribution of the Commonwealth Secretariat	• Providing information, publications and other resources to guide planning and implementation • GRB training and toolkit • Regional capacity-building workshops • Raising gender issues with governments at different forums, e.g. CHOGM, WAMM, CGPMG
Contribution of civil society organisations	There seemed to be a consensus among many respondents that CSOs are vital partners in the implementation of the PoA: • a vital role in reaching out to grassroots communities and filling gaps in government programmes • contribution to awareness raising and dissemination of information • technical assistance in implementing PoA • contributing to reporting and M&&E of PoA to ensure governments are fulfilling their commitments
Effective partnerships	The answers provided here were not detailed, but all different partners were covered by respondents; technical assistance and funding support appeared to be the most valued contributions that partners made

Heading	Findings
Mechanisms for sharing knowledge and information	The Commonwealth's role in disseminating information and sharing knowledge and best practice appears to be highly valued and was mentioned by several respondents. Some of the specific mechanisms mentioned include: • regional and global meetings such as the World Conference on Youth and WAMM • electronic updates from the Gender Section • case study development and M&E framework • CGMPG processes and workspaces on Commonwealth Connects, particularly sharing and cross-learning from what worked and what did not work • the Commonwealth Secretariat's Knowledge-Based Network
Key strengths of the PoA	• Very gender-inclusive in approach • Detailed monitoring framework • Streamlines the key areas of concern, and focuses on a limited number • Gives examples of insights from various countries • Provides pertinent and relevant data • Sets out main critical areas with clear objectives, and provides background information so that aims are put into context • Specifies how the Commonwealth Secretariat will contribute to achievement of set goals to complement actions to be taken by national governments • Generating new knowledge and sharing information • Specific to the Commonwealth countries but reinforces international commitments on gender (e.g. CEDAW)
Key weaknesses of the PoA	• Demand for data • Duplicates other reporting obligations on gender equality • Inconsistency in its partnership • Not easily identifiable and not enough profile • Wide-ranging, ambitious, difficult to evaluate and under-resourced by both HQ and member countries • Lack of adequate funding for implementation, particularly at national and local levels • Lack of monitoring mechanisms (targets and indicators) at the outset
Resources and budgeting	Not many respondents explicitly answered the question about adequate resourcing, but elsewhere in the survey the lack of financial resources was repeatedly cited as a problem. Working with CSOs or with international organisations (especially UNW) was also mentioned a few times as a way of filling resource gaps. Several respondents mentioned that they now have some kind of GRB in use

Heading	Findings
Data, monitoring and evaluation	Different countries involve different bodies in data collection and monitoring, and some respondents stated that it was too much of a burden and duplicated what was required by other policies. There appears to be a need for more coordinated data collection and M&E, as well as some capacity building on how to do it. The case study mechanism worked well as a means of sharing lessons learned. The CGPMG did not meet or report on progress frequently enough
Lessons learned	• National action plans should be developed, and these should be based on each country's position and which aspects of the PoA are most relevant to them • Ensure that reporting obligations for the PoA are not unnecessarily demanding, but at the same time strengthen reporting mechanisms • There is a need for more collaboration between the Commonwealth Secretariat and other international agencies dealing with gender issues • Strengthened partnerships among Commonwealth member countries
Priority areas	• Economic empowerment/independence of women • Focus on men and boys • Sexual education and HIV/AIDS • Focus on the involvement of children and youth to influence mindsets • Training and education • Poverty • GBV/VAWG • Reconciliation of work and family life • Participation of women and men in decision-making positions • Women in sport • Gender and climate change • Creating an enabling environment for the realisation of women's rights • Institutional capacity-building, particularly of communities in small island developing states and less-developed countries • Continued to support for civil society with key reference to the SDGs

Annex 5. List of Individuals Interviewed and Field Visit Schedules of Meetings

Commonwealth Secretariat Staff (current and former) interviewed

1. Josephine Ojiambo, Deputy Secretary-General, Secretary-General's Office

2. Ram Venuprasad, Deputy Director and Acting Director of Gender (with Simon Gimson)

3. Amelia Kinahoi Siamomua, Head of Gender Section

4. Chantelle Cummings, Programme Officer, Gender Section

5. Sarah Kitakule, Economic Empowerment Advisor, Gender Section

6. Kemi Ogunsanya, Adviser, Political and Social Development, Gender Section

7. Kathy Daniels, Programme Officer and Co-ordinator of CGPMG and ETR case studies, Gender Section

8. Yinka Bandele, Trade Advisor and former Gender Section Programme Officer, Trade Division

9. Estella Aryada, Trade Advisor, Trade Division

10. Katherine Ellis, Director, Youth Division

11. Layne Robinson, Head of Youth Programme, Youth Division

12. Oliver Dudfield, Head of Support for Development and Peace, Youth Division

13. Jarvis Matiya, Head, Justice Section, Rule of Law Division

14. Elizabeth Bakibinga, Advisor, Rule of Law Division

15. Mbololwa Mbikusita-Lewanika, Health Advisor, Health and Education Unit

16. Victoria Holdsworth, Deputy Director and former Gender Section Media Officer, Communications Division

17. Yvonne Apea Mensah, Head of Africa Section, Political Division

18. Diane Copper, Advisor, Human Rights Unit

19. Ann Keeling, Former Director of Social Transformation Division, Former Staff Member

20. Nabeel Goheer, Director, SPED

21. Yogesh Bhatt, Head of Evaluation, SPED

22. Evelyn Ogwall, Results Team Leader, SPED

Additional telephone interviews conducted under phase III of the evaluation

1. Marren Akatsa-Bukachi, CSO spokesperson for East/West Africa on the CGPMG

2. Christine Campbell, CGPMG Executive Committee member

3. Judge Sarah Ondeyo, contributed to the Commonwealth Land Rights for Women Handbook – Kenya

4. Patti O'Neill, OECD (retired)

Stakeholders interviewed during field visits

Bangladesh

1. Sheepa Hafiza, Director Gender Justice and Diversity (GJD) & Migration Programme (MP), BRAC

2. Banasree Mitra, Senior Programme Coordinator, Manusher Jonno Foundation

3. M. Gaziuddin Munir, Senior Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Social Welfare

4. M. Akhtar Uzzaman, Consultant, National AIDS/STD Programme (NASP), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)

5. Dr M. Saifur Rahman, Assistant Director, National AIDS/STD Programme (NASP)

6. AkM Zakir Hossain Bhuiyan, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education

7. M. Amin Hossain, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

8. AFM Gowsal Azam Sarker, Director General (DG), Ministry of Foreign Affairs

9. Shahin Ahmed Choudhury, Director General (DG), Department of Women Affairs (DWA)

10. Mosharraf Hossain, Director, Bangladesh Shishu Academy.

11. Farida Pervin, Joint Secretary, Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat

12. Kazi Asaduzzaman, Deputy Secretary, Local Government Division

13. M. Azizul Alam, Joint Secretary, Finance Division

14. Luna Shamsuddoha, Chairman, DOHATEC (Software company, Dhaka)

15. Suparna Roy, UNDP Expert, a2i Programme (Access to Information Programme), Prime Minister's Office (PMO)

16. M. Shahjahan Miah, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Labour and Employment

17. Monwara Hakim, Member, The Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI)

18. Selina Hossain, Chairman, Banlgadesh Shishu Academy

19. Ummey Salma Tanzia, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs

20. M. Ali Haider, Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Youth and Sports

21. M. Enamul Haque Khan, Senior Deputy Programme Manager, Campaign for Popular Education

22. S M Latif, Private Secretary to the Honourable State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs

23. Prof. Mahbula Nasreen, Director, Institute of Disaster Management, University of Dhaka.

24. Ferdousi Begum, Deputy Director (Magistrate), Department of Women Affairs (DWA)

Cameroon

1. Tapa Bidtoka Christiane, Representative, Cœur de Femmes

2. Bernadette Ngaleu, President, Coeur de Femmes

3. Epse Deffo Rose Makengni, Representative, Coeur de Femmes

4. Jusith Engono, Executive Secretary, Inside Development

5. Dr Maria Yinda, Director, Institute des Femmes et Filles Cameroun (IFEC)

6. Marina M. Atanga, Volunteer, Inside Development

7. Kevin T. Demanou, Project Coordinator, More Women in Politics

8. Amelie Bossomo, Representative, Hope for Needy Women

9. M. W. Zoneziwoh, Women for a Change, Cameroon

10. Vivian Kendemeh, Service Head (Popularisation of gender), Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF)

11. DeLerce Lefouteng, Representative, Gender Justice

12. Adahou Apedo Aliah, Président, Conseil d' Administration de Groupe de Travailles sur le Genre et les Politiques au Cameroun

13. Francisca Moto, Secretary, MINPROFF

14. Brigitte Moukoko Dume, Présidente, Femmes du Commonwealth, Douala, Cameroon

15. Tilder Kumichi Mdichia, Member, National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF), Cameroon

Rwanda

1. Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

2. Redempter Betete, Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion

3. All commissioners and senior members of staff, Human Rights Commission of Rwanda (HRCR)

4. Chantelle, Pro-femme, NGO

5. Angelique, Pro-femme, NGO

St Lucia

1. Tracy Polius, Permanent Secretary, Department of Planning & National Development

2. Tanzia Toussaint, Assistant Director, Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment

3. Taribba Do Nascimento, Programme Analyst, National Authorising Office, Department of Planning & National Development European Development Fund

4. Juliana Alfred, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community

5. Augustus Cadette, Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment

6. Lavorne Verdant, Research Officer, Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment

7. Justin Charles, Head of Local Government, Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment

8. Joachim Henry, Director, St Lucia Social Development Fund (SSDF), Ministry of Social Transformation, Local Government and Community Empowerment

9. Barbara Innocent-Charles, Director, Small Enterprise Development Unit (SEDU), Ministry of Commerce

10. Cointha Thomas, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health Wellness, Human Services and Gender Relations

11. Merlene Fredrick, Chief Medical Officer, Ministry of Health Wellness, Human Services and Gender Relations

12. Julietta Joseph, Community Nurse, Ministry of Health Wellness, Human Services and Gender Relations

13. Charms Gaspard, Director Gender Relations, Ministry of Health Wellness, Human Services and Gender Relations

14. Lydia Atkins, Epidemiology, Ministry of Health Wellness, Human Services and Gender Relations

15. Yolanda Jules-Louis, Director of Probations, Ministry of Home Affairs and National Security

16. Esther Lorraine Brathwaite, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development and Labour

17. Marcus Edward, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education

18. Sophia-Gabriel, Curriculum Officer, Ministry of Education

19. Gravillis, Ministry of Legal Affairs, Home Affairs and National Security

20. Paula Joseph, on behalf of Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

21. Catherine Sealys, Vice President, Raise Your Voice

22. Olivia Marcellin-Mathurin, President, National Principals Association

23. Claudia Williams-Edwards, Secretary, National Principals Association

24. Dianthea Justin, President, National Youth Council

25. Mary Francis, human rights activist and legal aid assistance

26. Norma Laborde, Managing Director, St Lucia Crisis Centre

27. Nova Alexander, CoFounder – Executive Director, Sacred Sports Foundation

28. Errol Alexander, Acting Commissioner of Police, Royal St Lucia Police Force

29. Veronica Simon, Head, University of the West Indies (UWI) Open Campus

30. Fortuna Anthony, Chairperson Board of Directors, Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (SALCC)

Samoa

1. Fuimapoao Beth Onesemo-Tuilaepa, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD).

2. Louisa Apelu, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Division for Women

3. Misa Seletuta Visesio Pita, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Division for Youth

4. Lemalama Taaloga Faasalaina, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Division for Internal Affairs

5. Ruta Afele, Acting Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Division for Corporate Services

6. Alanna Seugamatupu, Principal Programs and Training Officer (MWCSD)

7. Jolly Papalii, Programs and Training Officer

8. Natasha Darryl, Programs and Training Officer

9. Hon. Tolofuaivalelei Falemoe Leiataua, Minister for Women, Community and Social Development

10. Louisa Apelu, Assistant Chief Executive Officer, Division for Women

11. Alanna Seugamatupu, Principal Programs and Training Officer (MWCSD)

12. Pamela Sua and Andrew McCarthy, Samoa National Council of Women

13. Rosalina Ah Sue, Ministry of Police

14. Losa Bourne, Project Coordinator, SPC/RRRT

15. Jolly Papalii, Programs and Training Officer (MWCSD)

Solomon Islands

1. Ethel Sigimanu, Women Development Division, Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs

2. Pauline Soaki, Women Development Division, Ministry of Women, Youth, Children and Family Affairs

3. Josephine Teakeni, Vois Blong Mere Solomon

4. Lisa Williams, Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Association(FSS)

Trinidad and Tobago

1. Juliana Boodram, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Development and Family Services (MSDFS)

2. Sarah Briggs, Permanent Secretary, MSDFS

3. Gary Tagallie, Chief Technical Officer, MSDFS

4. Monica Williams, Director Gender Affairs Division, MSDFS

5. Francies Bruce, Researcher, International Desk, MSDFS

6.   Adesh Seegobin, IT Specialist, MSDFS

7.   Shelley-Ann Hart, Project Execution Officer, Gender Affairs Division

8.   Denise Thomas, Project Execution Officer, Gender Affairs Division

9.   Natalie O'Brady, General Manager, Coalition against Domestic Violence

10. Donna Heywood-Peltier, Regional Manager/Medical Records Officer, St James Medical Complex

11. Delisa Noel-Christopher, Assistant Solicitor General, Ministry of Attorney General

12. Sherry Ann Simon, Woman Police Constable, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service – Crime and Problem Analysis (CAPA) Unit

13. Magaret Sookraj Goswami, Assistant Registrar and Deputy Marshal, Family Court

14. Aileen Clarke, HIV Coordinator, HIV Unit (MSDFS), Youth Affairs Division

15. Gwendoline Williams, Associate (Consultant), Gender Responsive Budgeting, Karen Bart-Alexander and Associates

16. Maria Mason-Roberts, Associate (Consultant), Gender Responsive Budgeting, Karen Bart-Alexander and Associates

17. Karen Bart-Alexander, Gender Responsive Budgeting, Karen Bart-Alexander and Associates

18. Owen Hender, Senior Policy Specialist, Policy Research and Planning Unit

19. Denise Thomas, Project Execution Officer, Gender Affairs Division

20. Deborah Mcfee, Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS)

21. Paula Morgan, IGDS

22. Celise Patrick-Alfred, IGDS

23. Hermian Smart-Findlay, IGDS

24. Keir Roopnarine, Hindu Women Organisation

25. Natalie O'Brady, Rape Crisis Society

26. Elizabeth Spence, Families in Action (800-SAVE)

27. Patrice Doyle Thomas, Families in Action (800-SAVE)

28. Dianne Browne, Families in Action (800-SAVE)

29. Nester Flander-Skeete, Domestic Violence Survivors Reach Out

30. Sherna Alexander-Benjamin, Organisation for Abused and Battered Individuals

31. Sampson Browne, Victim and Witness Support

32. Adrian Alexander, Caribbean Umbrella Body for Restorative Behaviour

33. Hazel Brown, Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women

34. Terry Ince, Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women

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32.   Report of the Commonwealth National Women's Machineries Meetings (2015), Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015. *Report of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Work Programme in Support of the Implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2005–2015)*, 10th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 17–19 June 2013.

33.   *Report of the 11th Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group*, 16 June 2013.

34.   *Status of Women in Leadership across the Commonwealth: In Civil Service, State-owned Enterprises and Private Sector Corporate Boards*, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015.

35.   *Strategic Options Discussion Paper: Strategic Review of the Performance, Governance and Accountability of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group*, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2014.

36.   *Strengthening Jurisprudence of Equality: Violence against Women*, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015.

37.   *Who Cares?: The Economics of Dignity*, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2011.

Other documents reviewed

38.   'An Independent Supplement from Media Planet to USA Today', *USA Today*, 11 March 2011.

39.   Catalyst, *The bottom line: corporate performance and women's representation on boards (2004–2008)*, March 2011.

40.   *Children and AIDS: Statistical Update*, UNICEF, 2015.

41.   *Empowering Women, Girls is Vital to Tackling AIDS, Poverty*, World Bank, 2014.

42.   *How AIDS Changed Everything. MDG 6: 15 Years, 15 Lessons of Hope from the AIDS Response*, UNAIDS, 2015.

43.   Pande R and D Ford. *Gender Quotas and Female Leadership: A Review*, background paper for the World Development Report on Gender, Harvard University, 7 April 2011.

44.   *Giving Credit Where It Is Due: How Closing the Gap for Women-owned SMEs Can Drive Global Growth*, Goldman Sachs Global Markets Institute, 2014.

45.   *Global Update: On the Health Sector Response to HIV*, WHO, 2014.

46.   *Global Update on HIV Treatment: Results, Impact and Opportunities*, WHO, 2013.

47.   *Land Registration Act*, Government of Kenya, 2012.

48.   *Key Barriers to Women's Access to HIV Treatment: Making 'Fast-Track' a Reality*, ATHENA Network, 2015.

49.   *National Women Development Policy (2011)*, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, 2011.

50.   *Stock-take of the Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of Pacific Island Governments – Samoa*, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), 2015.

51. *Strategic Plan for Gender and Elections in Cameroon*, Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), July 2012.

52. *The Gap Report*, UNAIDS, 2014.

53. *The Millennium Development Goals Report*, United Nations, 2015.

54. *The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality Can Add $12 Trillion to Global Growth*, McKinsey Global Institute, 2015.

55. Bart-Alexander K, G Williams and M Mason-Roberts. *Toolkit for Gender Responsive Budgeting – Trinidad and Tobago: Institutionalising Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Practices in the Government Ministries of Trinidad and Tobago*, Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development, Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, 2013.

56. UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/1, United Nations, distributed 21 October 2015.

57. *Village Government in Samoa: Do Women Participate?*, Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa, 2014.

58. *Women: Matai and Leadership Survey (2015)*, Government of Samoa, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, 2015.

59. *Women Out Loud*, UNAIDS, 2012.

Endnotes

1. PoA, p. 52 (2005).

2. http://www.genderatwork.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Images/Framework1.png (last visited 23/06/2016)

3. Commonwealth Secretariat (2000) *Advancing the Commonwealth Agenda into the New Millennium (2000–2005): An Update to the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

4. A more extensive list of relevant international, regional and Commonwealth instruments is available on pp. 62–63 of the PoA.

5. Commonwealth Secretariat (2007) *Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategy for Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

6. Within each critical area a number of activities were included: 53 activities for governments and 31 activities for the Commonwealth Secretariat. Please see p. 52-53 for a list of 'partners'. Commonwealth Secretariat (2012) *Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015*Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

7. The CGPMG will be discussed in *Monitoring Framework* (3.5) below. Other Commonwealth intergovernmental organisations and associations have also been involved, including the Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network.

8. As of November 2015 these units and divisions were the Human Rights Unit, the Political Division, the Rule of Law Division, the Communications Division, the Economic Policy Division, the Trade Division, the Oceans and Natural Resources Division, the Youth Division, the Health and Education Unit, the Debt Management Unit, the Public Sector Governance Unit and the Technical Assistance Unit. Commonwealth Secretariat Organogram. 2015.

9. Commonwealth Secretariat (2012) *Gender Equality Policy*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

10. Confirmation is required about the current status of the Gender Accountability Framework. Only the Gender Equality *implementation and reporting framework*, which outlines what should occur, has been forwarded to the evaluators.

11. See also Commonwealth Secretariat (2013) *Report of the Secretary General (2011–2013), Gender Equality and the PoA within the Human and Social Development Section*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

12. Commonwealth Secretariat (2013) 'Report of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Work Programme in support of the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of for Gender Equality (2005–2015)', report presented at the Tenth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 17–19 June 2013.

13. Reports of the *Commonwealth National Women's Machineries Meetings* (2014 and 2015). Commonwealth Secretariat.

14. Commonwealth PoA End of Term Review, Terms of Reference, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

15. Two other reports linked to the PoA were also used within the MTR report: 'Mid-term review of the Commonwealth Secretariat Plan of Action, 2005–2015: an organisational and programmatic assessment of the Commonwealth Secretariat' (2009) and 'From the back of our minds to changing mindsets: foregrounding gender equality as a legitimate Commonwealth value in the implementation of the PoA' (2009).

16. Commonwealth Secretariat (2012) *Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015: Baseline Assessment Report*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

17. Both legislative houses combined. Women in Politics: 2015. International Parliamentary Union (IPU), 2015.

18. UN Women (2015) *Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation: Women in Parliaments*, UN Women.

19. Countries that have not had an active parliament (e.g. Brunei Darussalam from 2004 to 2015 and Fiji from 2006 to 2012) have been excluded from the data for those years.

20. Pande R and D Ford (2011) *Gender Quotas and Female Leadership: A Review*, background paper for the World Development Report on Gender, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 7 April 2011.

21. UN Women (2012) *Gender and Post-conflict Governance: Understanding the Challenges*, UN, New York, available at: http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/media/publications/en/05cgenderandpostconflictgovernance.pdf

22. 22 Bangladesh also recorded a significant jump from the 2004 baseline of 2 per cent to 14.8 per cent in 2015. However, as this was due to the allocation of 45 new reserved seats for women to the existing total of 300 in parliament in September–October 2005 based on party outcomes in the 2001 elections, it has not been included in this table.

23. Quota Project: Global Database of Quotas for Women (n.d.) '*Republic of Cameroon*', available at: http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=46 (accessed 17 November 2015).

24. For the legislative period of 2007–2012, women formed 13 per cent of the National Assembly.

25. For an overview of this subject, please refer to ELECAM (2012) *Strategic Plan for Gender and Elections in Cameroon*, ELECAM.

26. O'Neil, T and P Domingo (2016) *Women and Power: Overcoming Barriers to Leadership and Influence*, Overseas Development Institute, London.

27. United Nations (2010) 'The world's women 2010: trends and statistics', pp. 119–120, available at: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/WW_full%20report_color.pdf.

28. Ibid.

29. Cited in UNDP (2014) Gender Equality in Public Administration. New York: UNDP. http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/Democratic%20Governance/Women-s%20Empowerment/GEPA%20Global%20Report%20May%202014.pdf

30. The map highlights the best performer (green) and poorest performer (red) for each of the five Commonwealth regions. Overall regional averages are indicated in the box on the map.

31. Commonwealth Secretariat (2015) *The Status of Women in Leadership across the Commonwealth in Political and Civil Service, State-Owned Enterprises and Private Sector Corporate Boards*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

32. Anon. (2011) 'An independent supplement from MediaPlanet to USA Today', *USA Today*, 11 March 2011, p. 21.

33. UN Women (n.d.) 'CIWiL – Caribbean Institute for Women's Leadership in Politics', available at: http://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/links/partners/civil-society/ciwil (accessed 10 December 2015).

34. McAteer, D (2103), 'Gender diversity trends in New Zealand governance environment 2003–2013', available at: http://women.govt.nz/sites/public_files/Final_Report_Dianne_McAteer_8716927_FINAL.pdf.

35. UN Peace-Keeping Data, 2014.

36. The Commonwealth, Building Peace as a Trusted Partner: http://thecommonwealth.org/agv/building-peace-trusted-partner (accessed 27/06/2016).

37. The ETR consultant, during her field visit to the Solomon Islands, visited the office of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to try and set up a meeting but the office was closed at that time.

38. Joint African Union and Commonwealth Secretariat meeting, March 2015.

39. UN Women (2015) Summary Report: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Turns 20, UN Women, New York, p. 30, available at: http://www.unwomen.org/~/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/sg%20report_synthesis-en_web.pdf?v=1&d=20150226T215547.

40. A 2014 WHO report cited on the UN Women website, in UN Women (2016) 'Facts and figures: ending violence against women', available at: http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures (accessed 10 December 2015).

41. Anderson, L (2013) 'Violence against women: the missing millennium development goal', available at: http://www.trust.org/item/20130926123955-d58b7/ and Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies (2013), 'Factsheet violence against women: the missing MDG?', available at: https://www.shareweb.ch/site/Gender/Documents/ViolenceAgainstWomen_Missing%20MDG.pdf.

42. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the 21st century - SDG 5 (Gender Equality).

43. MDG Achievement Fund (n.d.) 'Bangladesh: Joint UN Programme to Address Violence against Women in Bangladesh', available at: www.mdgfund.org/program/jointunprogrammeaddressviolenceagainstwomenbangladesh (accessed 26 March 2015).

44.	Hossen, MA (2014) 'Measuring gender-based violence: results of the Violence against Women (VAW) survey in Bangladesh', available at: www.bbs.gov.bd/WebTestApplication/userfiles/Image/knowledge/VAW_%20Survey_Bangladesh_2014.pdf (accessed 14 May 2015).

45.	Hossen, MA (2014) 'Measuring gender-based violence: results of the Violence against Women (VAW) survey in Bangladesh', paper presented at Fifth Global Forum on Gender Statistics, available at: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/Mexico_Nov2014/Session%203%20Bangladesh%20ppt.pdf (accessed 16 May 2015).

46.	Khanom, R, DK Saha, K Begum, J Nur and S Tanira (2010) 'Violence against women: a study done in the one-stop crisis centre (OCC) of Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Dhaka, Bangladesh', *Journal of Dhaka Medical College*, Vol. 19 No. 2, 98–101.

47.	*Annual Report of One-Stop Crisis Centre* (2009), cited by Islam, MZ (2011) 'Efficiency measurement of general activities of one-stop crisis centre: a study on Khulna Medical College Hospital, Bangladesh', *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol. 2 No. 5, 29–35.

48.	Ibid.

49.	See also Commonwealth Secretariat (2015) *Strengthening Jurisprudence of Equality: Violence against Women*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

50.	UN Women (2015) *Summary Report: The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Turns 20*, p. 20.

51.	These charts are based on World Bank data for 46 Commonwealth countries (18 in Africa, 8 in Asia, 13 in the Americas and Caribbean, 2 in Europe and 5 in the Pacific).

52.	To mark International Human Rights Day (10 December 2015), the Commonwealth Secretariat hosted a focus group discussion 'on engaging young men and boys in the fight against child marriage – a fundamental human rights violation still widely practised in the Commonwealth.' For more information, see Commonwealth Secretariat (2015) 'Marking Human Rights Day with focus on engaging young men to end child marriage', available at: http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/marking-human-rights-day-focus-engaging-young-men-end-child-marriage (accessed 11 December 2015).

53.	Central Statistical Office (n.d.) *Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report*, available at: http://cso.gov.tt/ (accessed 23 November 2015); *Trinidad Express* (2013) 'Census: mixed population on the rise', available at: http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Census__Mixed_population_on_the_rise-191944721.html (accessed 23 November 2015).

54.	Commonwealth Secretariat (2014) *Commonwealth Roundtable on Early and Forced Marriages* (14–15 October 2013), section on Trinidad and Tobago, Commonwealth Secretariat, London; Government of Trinidad and Tobago (n.d.) 'Getting married', available at: https://www.ttconnect.gov.tt/gortt/portal/ttconnect/!ut/p/a1/jdDBCoJAEAbgp_Hqjoqp3QzMzCA0KttLKKyrsbmybtrjZ97EsuY2w_fDzyCMEoSrtC1pKktepe y948U1jHQwA8eAfQQO6HGgeWCGhq1bPbiMQOyve-CZ2iY8GQDwXx6-jPszfyAVOiM8x_yVNQHTmgOY6bFFmDKeDT-5uFVm2BRhQXIiiFAfoj8XUt bNUgEFuq5TKeeUETUXn3zBG4mSMavvx-QZ3EzW7twXgpQ4qw!!/dl5/d5/

L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/gortt/wcm/connect/
gortt+web+content/TTConnect/Non-National/Role/AVisitor/FamilyServices/
Getting+Married (accessed 23 November 2015).

55. While the ETR consultant was in Trinidad and Tobago, an offline version of the
National Domestic Violence Registry was demonstrated. Note that, because of
a recent change in the government of Trinidad and Tobago (September 2015),
several ministries have been altered, merged, etc. Until November 2015, the
Ministry of Social Development and Family Services was responsible for gender
issues. This brief is currently being moved to the Office of the Prime Minister.
Accordingly, links to Gender Affairs cannot be included in this report, since the
transfer is under way and the Office of the Prime Minister's website is under
construction: http://www.opm.gov.tt/ (last tested 10 December 2015). For an
overview of the National Domestic Violence Registry, see *Trinidad and Tobago
News* (2015) 'Domestic violence unit coming', 21 May 2015, available at: http://
www.newsday.co.tt/news/0,211448.html (accessed 24 November 2015).

56. Ministry of the People and Social Development, Social Investigation Division
(2014) *Research Note: Violence against Women*, Vol. 1, Issue 6, available at: www.
mpsd.gov.tt/sites/g/files/g728121/f/201407/Research%20Note%20-%20
Violence%20Against%20Women.pdf (accessed 20 September 2015).

57. International Inner Wheel (2012) 'NGO CSW outcome document for Latin
America and the Caribbean: violence against women, an open discussion paper',
December 2012, available at: www.internationalinnerwheel.org/ngo-csw-
outcome-document-for-latin-america-and-the-caribbean.html (accessed 20
September 2015).

58. United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2013) '2014–2015
biennial rolling plan: Republic of Trinidad and Tobago', available at: www.tt.undp.
org/content/dam/trinidad_tobago/docs/DemocraticGovernance/Publications/
UNDAF%20(2014%20-%202015)%20-%20Trinidad%20%20Tobago%20Final.
pdf (accessed 18 April 2015).

59. Anon. (n.d.) 'Data collection system for domestic violence', available at: www.
cepal.org/mujer/noticias/noticias/5/9795/rclarke.pdf (accessed 18 April 2015).

60. Ibid.

61. The definition of the variables varies slightly between the 2012 and 2014
editions of SIGI, but comparison between the two periods can be used to give an
indication of the broader trends.

62. Although there are data against some of the variables for OECD countries
(including the UK, New Zealand and Australia) in the 2014 version of SIGI, no
data are provided under the category of restricted physical integrity where the
data for variables on VAW legislation are recorded. OECD countries were not
included at all in the 2012 version of SIGI. For this reason, the table includes
only non-OECD countries; however, this is not intended to imply that all OECD
countries have adequate and fully implemented legislation in the areas of rape,
domestic violence and sexual harassment. It is because of lack of data that they
are not included.

63. Commonwealth Plan of Action - PoA (2005–2015).

64. Ibid.

65. Tabled by the Minister of Women, Community and Social Development, Tolofuaivalelei Falemoe Lei'ataua, the amendment is intended to 'ensure that the exercise of the village fono is in accordance with the Constitution.' *Samoa Observer* (2015), 'Village Fono Act comes under the microscope', 2 July 2015, available at: http://www.samoaobserver.ws/other/government/13853-village-fono-act-comes-under-the-microscope (accessed 21 November 2015); Samoa (2015) Village Fono Amendment Bill, Explanatory Memorandum.

66. Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2015) *Stocktake of the Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of Pacific Island Governments: Samoa*, Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC).

67. Ombudsman (2015) *State of Human Rights Report: 2015*, NHRI, available at: http://www.ombudsman.gov.ws/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=7&Itemid=76 (accessed 23 November 2015).

68. 'The Matai system, known as the fa'amatai is the fundamental village governance structure which operates throughout Samoa.' In 2011, 1.9 per cent of women and 15.5 per cent of men were Matai. The proportion of all people who were Matai was 8.9 per cent. Only 4.1 per cent of MPs elected in the last election were women (2 parliamentary seats out of 49 – there are now 3 female parliamentarians as a result of a by-election in 2014). Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (2015) *Women: Matai and Leadership Survey*, Government of Samoa, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. See also Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (n.d.) National Policy for Women of Samoa (2010–2015), Government of Samoa, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.

69. UN Women, Progress of the World's Women: 13.

70. McKinsey Global Institute (2015) *The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality Can Add $12 Trillion to Global Growth*, McKinsey Global Institute.

71. Ibid.

72. PoA, p. 37.

73. UN Women, Progress of the World's Women.

74. Ibid..

75. Ibid.

76. Ibid.

77. Data from World Bank Gender Data Portal.

78. UNW and PWW.

79. The Gender Gap Index focuses on gaps between men and women's attainment levels, rather than the levels themselves. The economic participation and opportunity subindex focuses on the gaps in participation, remuneration and advancement; see World Economic Forum (2015) 'The global gender gap report 2014', available at: http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf.

80. World Economic Forum (2015) Global Gender Gap Report 2015. http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/

81. Landesa (n.d.) 'A better world: strengthening women's land rights', available at: http://www.landesa.org/wp-content/uploads/infographic-womens-land-rights.jpg.

82. Ibid.

83. UN Women, Progress of World's Women 2015–2016, p. 27.

84. The Commonwealth Secretariat produced handbooks on women's land rights for Cameroon, Kenya, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

85. Kenya (2012) Land Registration Act.

86. Commonwealth Secretariat (n.d.) *Annual Results Report*: 2013/2014, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

87. It could not be confirmed if the entire handbook has been translated into French or which the particular local languages are. Also, despite efforts from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, the key individual from Cameroon who had worked on the handbook project could not be contacted for an interview.

88. The SIGI subindex scores are as follows: 0, the law guarantees the same rights to own, use and control land to both women and men; 0.5, the law guarantees the same rights to own, use and control land to women and men, but there are some customary, traditional or religious practices that discriminate against women; 1, the law does not guarantee the same rights to own, use and control land to women and men, or women have no legal rights to own, use and control land (see www.genderindex.org).

89. See SIGI (2014) for full definitions of the methodology, variables and data sources (http://genderindex.org/data).

90. Catalyst (n.d.) *The Bottom Line: Corporate Performance and Women's Representation on Boards (2004–2008), March 2011*.

91. Credit Suisse Research Institute (2012) Gender Diversity and Corporate Performance.

92. International Labour Organisation, 2015.

93. International Labour Organisation, 2015: 11.

94. Countries do not report data on this issue on an annual basis, so the year to which the data relate ranges from 2006 to 2013 depending on the last data collection in each country. Therefore, the figures in Figure 4.19 are not directly comparable.

95. No data were available for Commonwealth countries from the European or Pacific regions.

96. International Labour Organisation, 2015.

97. Goldman Sachs Global Markets Institute (2014) *Giving Credit Where It Is Due: How Closing the Gap for Women-owned SMEs Can Drive Global Growth*, available at: http://www.goldmansachs.com/our-thinking/public-policy/gmi-folder/gmi-report-pdf.pdf.

98. For an overview of these issues please refer to the Bangladesh Economic Empowerment Association (2015) 'Empowerment of women through entrepreneurship: a study on women SME entrepreneurs in Bangladesh', Meherun, Nesa, available at: http://bea-bd.org/site/ (accessed 20 November 2015).

99. The availability of reliable data for the number of visits made by women and how frequently to these dedicated desks is a concern. However, having these desks in place is considered an important step. Ahmad, S (2011) 'Policy recommendations to support women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh', Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), available at: http://www.cipe.org/blog/2011/06/15/policy-recommendations-to-support-women-entrepreneurs-in-bangladesh/#.VICX_-L8U-0 (accessed 21 November 2015).

100. As of January 2015, the number of mobile phone subscriptions in Bangladesh was 121.860 million. Government of Bangladesh (2016) 'Mobile phone subscribers in Bangladesh January 2015', available at: http://www.btrc.gov.bd/content/mobile-phone-subscribers-bangladesh-january-2015 (accessed 18 November 2015). On the issue of 'unbanked' women in the Commonwealth, see Commonwealth Secretariat (2013) *Gender Responsive Investment Handbook: Addressing the Barriers to Financial Access for Women's Enterprise*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

101. Centre for Samoan Studies (2014) *Village Government in Samoa: Do Women Participate*? Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa.

102. Women in Business Development (n.d.) 'Fine mats revival', available at: http://www.womeninbusiness.ws/266956/ (accessed 23 November 2015).

103. Commonwealth Secretariat (2013) *Monitoring and Evaluating the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2005–2015): An Illustrative Case Study – SEWA Bank*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

104. Ibid., pp. 6–9 and p. 16. For a full diagram of how the SEWA Bank fits into the *Gender at Work* model of change, see ibid., p. 9.

105. PoA, pp. 44–45.

106. UNAIDS (2012) *Women Out Loud*, UNAIDS.

107. From WHO *Global Update* data, 2014.

108. World Bank (2014) *Empowering Women, Girls Is Vital to Tackling AIDS, Poverty*, World Bank.

109. To mark International Human Rights Day (10 December 2015), the Commonwealth Secretariat hosted a focus group discussion 'on engaging young men and boys in the fight against child marriage – a fundamental human rights violation still widely practised in the Commonwealth'. For more information, see Commonwealth Secretariat (2015) 'Marking Human Rights Day with focus on engaging young men to end child marriage'.

110. UNAIDS (2014) *The Gap Report*, UNAIDS.

111. UNICEF (2015) *Children and AIDS: Statistical Update*, UNICEF.

112. New HIV infections in 2004 were 2.7 million (2.6–2.9 million) and AIDS-related deaths were 2.0 million (1.6–2.6 million). Data for people accessing treatment are from 2009 (6.1 million). UNAIDS (2015) *How Aids Changed Everything. MDG 6: 15 Years, 15 Lessons of Hope from the AIDS Response*, UNAIDS.

113. WHO (2014) *Global Update: On the Health Sector Response to HIV*, WHO.

114. Commonwealth Secretariat (2011) *Who Cares? The Economics of Dignity*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

115. In 2013, the WHO issued its 'Consolidated guidelines on the use of antiretroviral drugs for treating and preventing HIV infection' to 'provide new guidance on the diagnosis of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, the care of people living with HIV and the use of antiretroviral (ARV) drugs for treating and preventing HIV infection.' WHO (2013) 'Consolidated guidelines on the use of antiretroviral drugs for treating and preventing HIV infection', available at: http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/guidelines/arv2013/en/ (accessed 19 November 2015).

116. UNAIDS (2014) *The Gap Report*.

117. WHO (2015) *Key Facts: HIV/AIDS*, WHO, July.

118. Findings from the project have not been published but an overview is available. ATHENA Network (2015) 'Key barriers to women's access to HIV treatment: making "fast-track" a reality', available at: http://www.athenanetwork.org/our-work/ensuring-gender-equity/global-review-of-womens-access-to-hiv-treatment.html (accessed 15 November 2015).

119. No data are available for the Europe region of the Commonwealth.

120. WHO (2013) *Global Update on HIV Treatment: Results, Impact and Opportunities*, WHO.

121. WHO (2014) *Global Update: On the Health Sector Response to HIV*.

122. The percentages for Botswana and Swaziland are > 95 per cent.

123. WHO (2015) 'HIV/AIDS', fact sheet no. 360, available at: http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs360/en/ (accessed 28 November 2015).

124. UNAIDS (2014) The Gap Report.

125. WHO (2014) Global Update: On the Health Sector Response to HIV.

126. UNAIDS (2015) *How Aids Changed Everything*. MDG 6: 1*5 Years, 15 Lessons of Hope from the AIDS Response*; WHO (2014) *Global Update: On the Health Sector Response to HIV*.

127. World Bank (n.d.) 'Saint Lucia HIV/AIDS prevention and control', Projects and Operations, available at: http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P076795/st-lucia-hivaids-prevention-control?lang=en (accessed 12 December 2015).

128. PoA. p. 52.

129. Ibid., Appendix V, pp. 66–67.

130. Commonwealth Secretariat (2015) *Proceedings of the Commonwealth National Women's Machineries Meeting*, Commonwealth Secretariat. London, 13–15 March 2015.

131. As part of the follow-up process to increase the numbers of respondents for the ETR survey questionnaires and staff interviews, the consultants contacted the Commonwealth Foundation twice and requested its participation in a telephone interview but no reply was received (as of 13 December 2015).

132. Commonwealth Secretariat (2007) *Multi-stakeholder Partnerships for Gender Equality: Perspectives from Government*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

133. Ibid.

134. Ibid.

135. Commonwealth Foundation (2011) *Mid-Term Review of Civil Society Organisations' Implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality*, Commonwealth Foundation. The consultants were not aware of any follow-up documentation produced by the Commonwealth Foundation in relation to the ETR of the PoA.

136. Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network, available at: http://knowledge. cwbusinesswomen.org/event-gender-trade-procurement-and-potential-leaflet/ (accessed 16 December 2015).

137. Ibid.

138. Commonwealth Secretariat (revised 2014) *Gender, Trade and Public Procurement Policy: Kenya, India, Australia, Jamaica*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

139. Commonwealth Secretariat (2015) *Proceedings of the Commonwealth National Women's Machineries Meeting*. For more information on the Women's Forum see CHOGM (n.d.) '*Women's Forum*', available at: https://chogm2015.mt/fora/ women (accessed 10 December 2015).

140. An update to the Malta Forum in relation to these events is required.

141. PoA, p. 56.

142. The latest list of Commonwealth countries which use GRB is outdated. The consultants have asked the Commonwealth Secretariat for an up-to-date list, since this does not seem to be available from online sources.

143. For example, Kusambiza, M (2013) *A Case Study of Gender Responsive Budgeting in Uganda*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London. Additional, similar reports are available from the Commonwealth Secretariat's Knowledge Centre (http:// thecommonwealth.org/knowledge-centre).

144. Bart-Alexander, K, G Williams and M Mason-Roberts (2013) *Toolkit for Gender Responsive Budgeting – Trinidad and Tobago: Institutionalising Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Practices in the Government Ministries of Trinidad and Tobago*, Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development.

145. Ibid.

146. In 2009–2010 only four ministries participated in the GRB process. Since 2013, including the 2015–2016 estimates, 40 ministries have contributed. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (n.d.) *Gender Budgeting Report 2015–2016*, available at: http://www.mof.gov.bd/en/index. php?option=com_content&view=article&id=315&Itemid=1 (accessed 21 November 2015); Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (2011) *National Women Development Policy*.

147. Ibid.

148. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (n.d.) *Gender Budgeting Report* 2015–2016.

149. Please refer to Annex 2's section on the Caribbean region and in particular section 7, Trinidad and Tobago.

150. Personal Communication,Commonwealth Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat, 15 December 2015.

151. The Commonwealth, Knowledge Centre can be found at: http://thecommonwealth.org/knowledge-centre (accessed 27/06/2016).

152. Commonwealth Secretariat (2007) *Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategy for Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming*, Evaluation Series no. 79, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

153. Commonwealth Secretariat (2015) *Annual Results Report (2013-2014)*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

154. Ibid.

155. Commonwealth Secretariat (2015), *Biennial Report of the Commonwealth Secretary-General (2013/2015)*, London.

156. Commonwealth Secretariat (n.d.) *Report of the Commonwealth Secretary General* (2011–2013), Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

157. Ibid., pp. 68–71.

158. Ibid.

159. Commonwealth Secretariat (2012) *Impact of Women's Political Leadership on Democracy and Development: Case Studies from the Commonwealth*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

160. Commonwealth Secretariat (2014) 'Communique: Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting 2014', available at: http://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/communique-commonwealth-law-ministers-meeting-2014 (accessed 18 December 2015).

161. *Report of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Work Programme in Support of the Implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality* (2005–2015): Background Paper. 2013. p. 6.

162. The Secretariat has provided the consultants with a list of gender-related publications for 2005–2015. This list has informed the literature review for the PoA but it does not address the additional information requested.

163. Commonwealth Secretariat (2014) *Strategic Options Discussion Paper: Strategic Review of the Performance, Governance and Accountability of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

164. Commonwealth Secretariat (2014) *Executive Committee Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London, pp. 30–35.

165. Commonwealth Secretariat, *Proceedings of the Commonwealth National Women's Machineries Meeting, 13–15 March 2015*, p. 41, London.

166. Ibid.

167. Commonwealth Secretariat, Briefing note for the June 2012 Executive Committee Meeting of the CGPMG, London, 2012.

168. Commonwealth Secretariat, PoA ETR Reporting Framework, London, 2013.

169. Personal Communication, Commonwealth Secretariat, December 2015.

170. An update to the peer review proposal is required.

171. Gender was previously part of the Social Transformation Division (Health, Education and Gender).

172. United Nations (2015) *The Millennium Development Goals Report*, United Nations.

173. Ibid.

174. UN General Assembly. A/RES/70/1. Distributed: 21 October 2015.

175. It is noted that all the strategic outcomes listed in the current Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan are considered to be long-term. instead, the ETR evaluators suggest that similar time-frames (long-term, intermediate and short-term) be assigned to the *strategic* and *operational* recommendations put forward within this final report. See Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan (2013/14–2016/17), pp. 21 and 38.

176. The evaluators are aware of the impact on the burden of work this recommendation for a review and reporting of resources will have. Given this, the length of the interval between the monitoring/evaluation and reporting of financial, staff and technical resources should be decided by the Commonwealth as an organisation.

177. Bangladesh Case Study produced by the Commonwealth Secretariat as part of the ETR process, 2015, London.

178. Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016) 'Women in national parliaments', available at: http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm (accessed 25 September 2015).

179. Findings from initial desk research and Republic of Rwanda National AIDS Control Commission.

180. Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016) 'Women in national parliaments'.

181. Findings from initial desk research and the Commonwealth Secretariat Handbook Series on Women's Land Rights in Cameroon, available at: http://thecommonwealth.org/project/women%E2%80%99s-land-rights-cameroon (accessed 29 September 2015).

182. The seven broad key areas are improvement of women's living conditions; improvement of the legal status of women; promotion of female human resources in all development sectors; effective participation of women in decision-making; protection and promotion of the girl-child; fighting violence against women; and improvement of the institutional framework for women in development. Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (n.d.) *National Gender Policy Document* (2011–2020), Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family.

183. It could not be confirmed if the entire handbook has been translated into French or which the particular local languages are. Also, despite efforts from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, one of the individuals from Cameroon who had worked on the handbook project could not be contacted for an interview.

184. Quota Project: Global Database of Quotas for Women (n.d.) 'Republic of Cameroon', available at: http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=46 (accessed 17 November 2015).

185. For the legislative period of 2007–2012, women made up 13 per cent of the National Assembly. For more on this issue please refer to section 4.3.1.

186. ELECAM mentioned the 'gender sensitive' nature of the electoral reforms and the implications of having a 50 per cent quota on electoral lists within Cameroon's electoral process. For an overview, please refer to: Strategic Plan for Gender and Elections in Cameroon. ELECAM. July 2012.

187. UN Women (2014) 'Gender Café: Gender Responsive Budgeting and Planning, a comparative perspective on Cameroon, Mali and Senegal', available at: http://www.unwomenwestandcentralafrica.com/news1/gender-cafe-gender-responsive-budgeting-and-planning-a-comparative-perspective-on-cameroon-mali-and-senegal (accessed 19 November 2015); European Community and United Nations (2008) Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid Effectiveness Agenda: Cameroon Country Report; UN Women (n.d.) 'Financing for gender equality', available at: http://gender-financing.unwomen.org/en (accessed 20 November 2015).

188. Inter-Parliamentary Union (2016) 'Women in national parliaments'. Based on 45 new reserved seats allocated to women.

189. Findings from initial desk research and Multi-sectoral Programme on Violence against Women (n.d.) 'One stop crisis cell (OCC)', available at: http://www.mspvaw.gov.bd/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=192&cmp=1&adfile=0&Itemid=143 (accessed 29 September 2015).

190. For an overview of the issues please refer to a report by the Bangladesh Economic Empowerment Association (2015) 'Empowerment of women through entrepreneurship: a study on women SME entrepreneurs in Bangladesh', Meherun, Nesa, available at: http://bea-bd.org/site/ (accessed 20 November 2015).

191. The availability of reliable data for the number and frequency of visits made by women to these dedicated desks is a concern. However, having these desks in place is considered an important step. Ahmad, S (2011) 'Policy recommendations to support women entrepreneurs in Bangladesh', Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), available at: http://www.cipe.org/blog/2011/06/15/policy-recommendations-to-support-women-entrepreneurs-in-bangladesh/#.VlCX_-L8U-0 (accessed 21 November 2015).

192. ILO (n.d.) 'Improving working conditions within the ready-made garment sector', available at: http://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Publications/WCMS_241516/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 19 November 2015).

193. In 2009–2010 only four ministries participated in the GRB process. Since 2013, including the 2015–2016 estimates, 40 ministries have contributed. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (n.d.) *Gender Budgeting Report 2015–2016*, available at: http://www.mof.gov.bd/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=315&Itemid=1 (accessed 21 November 2015); Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (2011) *National Women Development Policy*.

194. Ibid.

195. Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh (n.d.) *Gender Budgeting Report 2015–2016*.

196. Please refer to the section below on the Caribbean Region and in particular section 7, Trinidad and Tobago.

197. As of January 2015, the number was 121.860 million. Government of Bangladesh (2016) 'Mobile phone subscribers in Bangladesh January 2015', available at: http://www.btrc.gov.bd/content/mobile-phone-subscribers-bangladesh-january-2015 (accessed 18 November 2015).

198. Better than Cash Alliance (2015) 'Making Digital Bangladesh Vision 2021 a reality, Government joins the Better than Cash Alliance', available at: https://www.betterthancash.org/news/media-releases/making-digital-bangladesh-vision-2021-a-reality-government-joins-the-better-than-cash-alliance (accessed 21 November 2015).

199. According to the founders, the Bengali word 'Joyeeta' 'symbolically denotes success of women in all spheres of life … particularly in economic front'. Joyeeta Foundation (2015) *Understanding Joyeeta Foundation: An Institution of Bangladesh for Empowering Women Economically*, Joyeeta Foundation.

200. Ibid.

201. Planning Commission (2014) 'Gender equality and women's empowerment: suggested strategies for the 7th Five Year Plan', available at: http://www.plancomm.gov.bd/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/16_Gender-Equality-and-Womens-Empowerment.pdf (accessed 19 November 2015).

202. As outlined in Point 6 of the Commonwealth's 'Dhaka Declaration'. Tenth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting, 'Women's Leadership for Enterprise', Dhaka, Bangladesh, 17–19 June 2013. Dhaka Communiqué 2013. Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

203. 70 per cent of the world's tuna comes from this region and the majority of the onshore tuna-processing workers are women. Pacific Islands Forum Fisheries Agency (FFA), available at: https://www.ffa.int/ (accessed 21 November 2015).

204. *Pacific Regional Action Plan: Women, Peace and Security* (2012–2015).

205. The *Solomon Islands National Policy on Gender Equality and Women's Development* (2010–2015), Ministry of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs, Honiara.

206. For a more detailed overview of the situation of women in the Solomon Islands, see Manjoo, R (2012) 'Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Rashida Manjoo: Mission to Solomon Islands (from 12 to 16 March 2012), available at: http://www.mwycfa.gov.sb/publications/reports/viewdownload/10-reports/473-solomon-islands-report-on-domestic-violence (accessed 21 November 2015). The ETR consultant, during her field visit to the Solomon Islands, went to the office of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to try to set up a meeting but the office was closed at that time.

207. Commonwealth Secretariat (2016), Country Case Study Report for Pacific Island Countries (PICs). PoA End of Term Review, London.

208. Centre for Samoan Studies (2015) *Political Representation and Women's Empowerment in Samoa*, Centre for Samoan Studies.

209. 'According to Article 44 of the Constitution, as amended by the Constitution Amendment Act 2013, women shall constitute a minimum of 10% of the Members of the Legislative Assembly. This provision will apply to the parliament to be elected in 2016.' Quota Project (2014) 'Samoa', available at: http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=WS (accessed 18 November 2015).

210. Secretariat of the Pacific Community (n.d.) 'Regional Rights Resource Team'.

211. Tabled by the Minister of Women, Community and Social Development, Tolofuaivalelei Falemoe Lei'ataua, the amendment is intended to 'ensure that the exercise of the village fono is in accordance with the Constitution.' *Samoa Observer* (2015), 'Village Fono Act comes under the microscope', 2 July 2015, available at: http://www.samoaobserver.ws/other/government/13853-village-fono-act-comes-under-the-microscope (accessed 21 November 2015); Samoa (2015) Village Fono Amendment Bill, Explanatory Memorandum.

212. Centre for Samoan Studies (2014) *Village Government in Samoa: Do Women Participate?*, Centre for Samoan Studies, National University of Samoa.

213. Women in Business Development (n.d.) 'Fine mats revival', available at: http://www.womeninbusiness.ws/266956/ (accessed 23 November 2015).

214. Ombudsman (2015) *State of Human Rights Report*: 2015, NHRI, available at: http://www.ombudsman.gov.ws/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=7&Itemid=76 (accessed 23 November 2015).

215. 'The Matai system, known as the fa'amatai is the fundamental village governance structure which operates throughout Samoa'. In 2011, the proportion of women who were Matai was 1.9 per cent and the proportion of men who were Matai was 15.5 per cent. The proportion of all people who were Matai was 8.9 per cent. Only 4.1 per cent of MPs elected in the last election were women (2 parliamentary seats out of 49 – there are now 3 female parliamentarians as a result of a by-election in 2014). Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (2015) *Women: Matai and Leadership Survey*, Government of Samoa. Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. See also Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (n.d.) *National Policy for Women of Samoa (2010–2015)*, Government of Samoa, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development.

216. UN Women (n.d.) 'Saint Lucia', available at: http://caribbean.unwomen.org/en/caribbean-gender-portal/saint-lucia.

217. St Lucia Crisis Centre Corporation (n.d.) 'About us', available at: https://slucrisiscentre.wordpress.com/about/.

218. As noted in the introduction, the Commonwealth Secretariat representative's notes on the meetings held on the morning of 9 November 2015 can be found at the end of this section.

219. Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development and Labour (n.d.) *2013 Educational Statistical Digest*, Government of Saint Lucia.

220. Statistics obtained in a factsheet received from the University of West Indies, Open Campus Saint Lucia, during the field visit on 10 November 2015.

221. The ETR consultant has received an edited version of this report from the Sir Arthur Lewis Community College.

222. Central Statistical Office (n.d.) *Trinidad and Tobago 2011 Population and Housing Census Demographic Report*, available at: http://cso.gov.tt/ (accessed 23 November 2015); *Trinidad Express* (2013) 'Census: mixed population on the rise', available at: http://www.trinidadexpress.com/news/Census__Mixed_population_on_the_rise-191944721.html (accessed 23 November 2015).

223. Commonwealth Secretariat (2014) *Commonwealth Roundtable on Early and Forced Marriages* (14–15 October 2013), section on Trinidad and Tobago, Commonwealth Secretariat, London; Government of Trinidad and Tobago (n.d.) 'Getting married', available at: https://www.ttconnect.gov.tt/gortt/portal/ttconnect/!ut/p/a1/jdDBCoJAEAbgp_Hqjoqp3QzMzCA0KttLKKyrsbmybtrjZ97EsuY2w_fDzyCMEoSrtC1pKktepey948U1jHQwA8eAfQQO6HGgeWCGhq1bPbiMQOyve-CZ2iY8GQDwXx6-jPszfyAVOiM8x_yVNQHTmgOY6bFFmDKeDT-5uFVm2BRhQXIiiFAfoj8XUtbNUgEFuq5TKeeUETUXn3zBG4mSMavvx-QZ3EzW7twXgpQ4qw!!/dl5/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/?WCM_GLOBAL_CONTEXT=/gortt/wcm/connect/gortt+web+content/TTConnect/Non-National/Role/AVisitor/FamilyServices/Getting+Married (accessed 23 November 2015).

224. While the ETR consultant was in Trinidad and Tobago, an offline version of the National Domestic Violence Registry was demonstrated. Note that, because of a recent change in the government of Trinidad and Tobago (September 2015), several ministries have been altered, merged, etc. Until November 2015, the Ministry of Social Development and Family Services was responsible for gender issues. This brief is currently being moved to the Office of the Prime Minister. Accordingly, links to Gender Affairs cannot be included in this report, since the transfer is under way and the Office of the Prime Minister's website is under construction: http://www.opm.gov.tt/ (last tested 10 December 2015). For an overview of the National Domestic Violence Registry, see *Trinidad and Tobago News* (2015) 'Domestic violence unit coming', 21 May 2015, available at: http://www.newsday.co.tt/news/0,211448.html (accessed 24 November 2015).

225. Ministry of Health (n.d.) 'About the HIV/AIDS Coordinating Unit', available at: http://www.health.gov.tt/sitepages/default.aspx?id=223 (accessed 24 November 2015).

226. For example, Kusambiza, M (2013) *A Case Study of Gender Responsive Budgeting in Uganda*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London. Additional, similar reports are available from the Commonwealth Secretariat's Knowledge Centre (http://thecommonwealth.org/knowledge-centre, accessed 23 November 2015).

227. Bart-Alexander, K, G Williams and M Mason-Roberts (2013) *Toolkit for Gender Responsive Budgeting – Trinidad and Tobago: Institutionalising Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming Practices in the Government Ministries of Trinidad and Tobago*, Ministry of Gender, Youth and Child Development.

228. Ibid.

229. These discussions developed at a meeting during the field trip with representatives from the Centre for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies.

End Term Review of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005 - 2015

Management Response

The Commonwealth

Evaluation title	End Term Review of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005 - 2015
Evaluation published	March 2016
Management response prepared by	Gender Section, Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate
Management response approved by	Senior Management Committee

Overall comments

The Secretariat welcomed the evaluation, the first, following the 10-year implementation of the Plan of Action on Gender Equality. It was noted that gender mainstreaming is the responsibility of all divisions and units and therefore the End Term Review's recommendations in terms of gender mainstreaming are of importance to all. The recommendations and actions will be coordinated across the organisation.

"New Commonwealth Priorities on Gender Equality 2017-2020 and Beyond"

Based on the End Term Review, the outcome of the Women Leaders' Summit (July 2016), the SDGs, the Secretariat presented a paper "The new Commonwealth Priorities on Gender Equality 2017-2020 and Beyond" at 11WAMM (September 2016) on 4 key priority areas: (i) women's economic empowerment; (ii) women in leadership; (iii) ending violence against women and girls; and (iv) gender and climate change. The proposal was endorsed by WAMM and the Secretariat is preparing an Implementation Plan for 2017-2020 and Beyond. These priorities, the implementation strategy, including monitoring and evaluation was presented and acknowledged by the meeting as focused.

Ways forward and next steps

A Violence Against Women and Girls Action Plan will be created where the whole of the Secretariat contributes and is also responsible for Monitoring and Evaluating on it. WAMM agreed four priority areas for Member States (but not for Secretariat) but we will ask Member States to link to the SDGs and to identify priority target indicators. Member countries will then report on their progress and it will go to Heads of Government as part of a standing item on the Leaders' Agenda.

The Secretariat will draft a response with actions and responsibilities. We should report on progress of agreed recommendations every 6 months as a part of our 6 monthly reporting process. Moving forward there will be a systematic response to all evaluations and this will be monitored and reported on a 6 monthly basis. This will also be discussed annually at a SMG level to see the level of evaluation utilization of finding and lessons learnt.

Recommendation 1

Align the post-2015 Commonwealth gender equality initiatives to the UN's SDG goals including SDG 5 and its targets (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls). Focus on how the Commonwealth as an organisation can build upon its distinctive niche areas of comparative advantage, as related to gender equality and women's empowerment, to strengthen its international profile. Enhancing partnering efforts with other organisations and focusing more strategically on niche areas of comparative advantage would enable the Commonwealth to increase its leverage and relevance at the national, regional and international levels.

Management Response	AGREED
	Work on gender should be aligned to the SDGs and the Commonwealth Charter. It was also noted that mainstreaming gender would be broader beyond Goal 5 and its targets to incorporate Goal 16 among others.

Four key priority areas within the SDGs have been identified and approved by member states for implementation. These include: (i) women's economic empowerment; (ii) women in leadership; (iii) ending violence against women and girls; and (iv) gender and climate change.

However, it is imperative that to ensure proper alignment, the Secretariat should focus its efforts on key results and indicators to be achieved within the strategic plan period. This is to be effectively incorporated in the Strategic Plan and Delivery Plan. |

Recommendation 2

Allocate adequate financial, staffing, training and technical resources for the implementation of a post-2015 strategy. These resources need to be monitored / evaluated and reported on a regular basis.

Management Response	AGREED
	This recommendation is forcing the Secretariat to reflect on its gender mainstreaming work. With limited resources, the Secretariat needs to be smart about the way that gender is mainstreamed, that means all teams working together within existing resources towards the shared targets. Consensus needs to be reached on the Secretariat's gender mainstreaming results and targets in order to have meaningful impact. There is the need to pool resources, stop the silos and do more across the Secretariat to gender mainstreaming, including considerations for partnerships.

In this regard, clear indicators with baselines and targets, embedded in the Strategic Results Framework, for all to contribute towards and a coherent way of reporting will be required. Each team across the organisation will determine its contribution (actions and resources) towards the shared indicators in order to deliver value for money for the member states.

In the new Strategic Plan Framework and the vision of the S-G, Violence Against Women has been identified as the Secretariat's niche area and a plan of Action will be developed to guide implementation. |

Recommendation 3

Allow for flexibility within a post-2015 framework, since Commonwealth member countries have varied national, local and regional priorities and resource considerations when implementing gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives. In turn, the process of understanding and ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment should involve the participation of women and girls as well as men and women.

Management Response	AGREED
	The agreed 4 priorities in the 2020 agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment will be flexible and implemented by member states in line with their respective targets. The implementation of 2020 agenda will be reviewed at the end of the three years at the Women Affairs Ministers Meeting.

Recommendation 4

Outline the Commonwealth's post-2015 gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives within subsequent Commonwealth Secretariat strategic plans. The strategic plans should also include gender mainstreaming under the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Equality Policy and analysis of activities undertaken through the Gender Equality Policy's implementation and reporting framework, thereby reaffirming the 'systematic twin-track approach'. It is noted that the next instalment of the strategic plan will be produced for the period after 2017.

Management Response	AGREED
	The context of gender in the Secretariat should be fully cognisant of both genders as varying member states face different gender issues. Mainstreaming should ensure that both women and men, boy and girls are equally considered, not just women and girls. In particular circumstances, issues of boys and men may have to be prioritized. This should be fully defined and embedded in the Secretariat's implementation plan.

Recommendation 5

Ensuring that the systematic twin-track approach of specific actions to support gender equality (and women's empowerment) and gender mainstreaming is effectively addressed within the Commonwealth Secretariat will be an important and ongoing consideration. One approach would be for the Gender Section to become a division within the Commonwealth Secretariat structure. Moving the Gender Section under the auspices of the Secretary General's office in 2014 was an important step in raising awareness of its work and of issues such as gender mainstreaming. However, the findings of the research and interviews undertaken for this final report suggest that a Gender Division would result in increased awareness along with a higher profile and would provide the overall issue of gender with a direct place within the Senior Management Group of the Commonwealth Secretariat. This would contribute to the more effective development and implementation of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, not only within the Commonwealth Secretariat but also across the Commonwealth.

Management Response	**PARTIALLY AGREED**
	The Secretariat is currently in the reform process. The Secretariat will not be able attract funds if it does not deliver value for money. Value for money can only be demonstrated in areas where the Secretariat has comparative advantage or in the niche areas. It was noted that development partners will have limited discretionary resources calling for a smarter and focused way of delivery of gender agenda. Teams should ensure adequate resources (both financial and expertise) are allocated to their respective gender targets, within the existing funds.
	The Secretariat is undergoing restructuring and reform. It is anticipated that appropriate funding would be allocated towards implementing of work plans in accordance with the Implementation Plan for 2020 and Beyond.
	This recommendation is due to the fact that Gender does not receive representation at the SMG meetings. Recommendation is very restricted and only pertains to our current structure. As the Secretariat is undergoing reform, it was noted that Gender issues will have to be prioritised and discussed at management level irrespective of the structures.

Recommendation 6

Through formal mechanisms, initiate and encourage collaboration between units and divisions in the development and implementation of gender equality, women's empowerment and gender-mainstreaming initiatives. Follow-up mechanisms to determine the scope and effectiveness of such collaborative efforts should also be formulated. Initiatives could include some used by other international organisations, such as setting up 'gender focal points' within the divisions and units, which could liaise across the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Management Response	**AGREED**
	This is an opportune time to establish a mechanism to establish and strengthen inter-divisional/ unit collaboration. This is one of the recurring recommendations in the recently concluded Meta-Evaluation report. The current reform is a good opportunity to look at the recommendation. Also other Commonwealth Organisations are collaborating around gender and we can be a part of this too. Mechanisms to ensure coordination should be considered in the delivery plan and current organisational reform processes.

Recommendation 7

Develop and implement mentoring and/or e-mentoring programmes that would assist member countries and CSOs in sharing good practice examples and effectively contribute to the future formation of partnerships and knowledge-, information and capacity-building initiatives for a post-2015 framework. Building on initiatives that draw upon experiences from member countries, and could be shared across the Commonwealth, could save valuable resources. The example outlined in section 4.5 in relation to GRB and the possibility of sharing examples of best practice between Bangladesh and Trinidad and Tobago could fit into this mentoring/e-mentoring scheme.

Management Response	**DEFFERED**
	The recommendation addresses mentoring and also working by e-programmes and in order to reduce travel. Need to think about this further to see what this might look like.

Recommendation 8

Adapt and use the Commonwealth Secretariat's updated software system, PMIS (from December 2015), which is much more flexible and may even capture the disaggregation of data. The updated software offers an excellent opportunity for gathering relevant information and data, which would assist in the regular M&E (accountability) of the implementation of post-2015 Commonwealth gender equality and women's empowerment strategies. It could also be used in future monitoring, evaluating and/or accountability measures associated with Recommendation 10.

Management Response	**AGREED**
	The current Secretariat system (PMIS) has the potential to be designed to collect, analyse and report on gender information. Since it is a customised system developed for the Secretariat, results, indicators with their respective baselines and targets can be developed and tagged to all projects as required. It was also noted that a new software in under consideration for procurement to address the data and information gaps in the Secretariat.

Recommendation 9

Where physical structures are available the Commonwealth Secretariat could utilise space within the offices of, for instance, UN Women located in Commonwealth countries. This would allow for a more visible presence for the Commonwealth, which several respondents during the field trips mentioned is critical for their respective countries or regions. Cognisant of the costs involved in staffing such offices, the recommendation suggests instead the creation of a space within the offices of relevant organisations whereby the Commonwealth and its work on gender equality in the country and in the region could be displayed and disseminated. Then, and if resources permit, when Commonwealth Secretariat staff are in the area, workshops or "open house" events could be held in these spaces.

Management Response	NOT ACCEPTED
	This could potentially lead to an imbalance which the Secretariat and its membership does not need. The Commonwealth is not just for women. Alternative means for increasing the Commonwealth profile will be explored, and this pertains to all programme areas.

Recommendation 10

Strengthen future monitoring, evaluation and accountability measures.
(The following actions were proposed by the evaluators)

Management Response	AGREED
	Staff shortage and changes to Gender team meant that there was not sufficient secretariat support for Plan of Action Monitoring Group. Future monitoring mechanisms should be incorporated within the Secretariat's monitoring processes.

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