

EVALUATION SERIES No. 79

**EVALUATION OF THE
COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT'S
STRATEGY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND
GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABC	Advocacy, Brokering and Capacity-building
APR	Annual Performance Report
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEEM	Commonwealth Education Ministers Meeting
CFMM	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
EAD	Economic Affairs Division
EC	European Community
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunities
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GMS	Gender Management System
GRBI	Gender-Responsive Budget
KBN	Knowledge-Based Network
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation
NWM	National Women's Machinery
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PCP	Primary Contact Point
PCR	Project Completion Report
PIMS	Project Information Management System
PoA	Plan of Action for Gender Equality
POC	Points of Contact
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RPR	Rapid Panel Review
SASD	Special Advisory Services Division
SIDA	Swedish Agency for International Development Co-operation
SPED	Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division
STPD	Social Transformation Programmes Division
TORs	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Fund for Women
WAMM	Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting
YAD	Youth Affairs Division

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation report concludes the *Performance Audit of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategy for Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming*, carried out between January 2006 and January 2007. It summarises and discusses the key findings from all stages of the audit and provides recommendations for future deliberation within the organisation. It draws on and refers to the following Annexes:

- Annex 1: Internal Review of the Secretariat's Structures and Procedures for Gender Mainstreaming
- Annex 2: Rapid Panel Review of Selected Projects
- Annex 3: Country Case Study Field Visits
- Annex 4: A Set of Guidelines for Integrating Gender into Project Management

Background

The Commonwealth Secretariat's 1995 *Plan of Action on Gender and Development* represented the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing. It established the mandate for gender equality issues to be mainstreamed by both member governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat. This audit is an external assessment of these ten years of specialist gender mainstreaming work and therefore provides the opportunity to examine in more depth the internal support for gender equality and gender mainstreaming; how organisational structures support it; how these operate in practice; and the wider contribution that the Secretariat has made to promoting gender equality in the Commonwealth.

The audit has the following two main objectives:

1. To assess the degree to which the Secretariat's strategy for gender equality and gender mainstreaming has been understood by Secretariat staff and its consultants, incorporated into management practices and effectively integrated into the preparation, design and implementation of programmes and projects.
2. To assess the quality and impact of the Secretariat's programme for gender equality.

Methodology

The methodology of the audit includes both an *internal* assessment of the organisation's structures and procedures and an *external* review of projects and policies in order to assess the outcomes of gender equality programmes for beneficiaries.

An audit framework was developed to guide the study, which provides a set of standards against which the gender mainstreaming of the Commonwealth Secretariat was assessed. The overall key audit questions are as follows:

- How well are the rationale, aims and strategies of gender mainstreaming understood?
- To what extent is the gender mainstreaming effort owned by staff and partners?
- How accountable are staff and partners to the policy and strategies?
- What are the incentives and incentive mechanisms?
- What are the drivers of sustained commitment to gender equality? And what are the major obstacles?

Methods used include document review, observation, semi-structured interviews, online surveys, a Rapid Panel Review (RPR) of projects and programmes, and field visits.

As part of the audit a set of *Working Guidelines for Integrating Gender in Project Management* were produced to complement the new management handbook and provide a systematic approach to the consideration of gender equality at all stages in the project cycle, from identification to evaluation, and a *Gender Equality Quality Assurance Score Sheet* was developed for the RPR as a tool to assess the extent to which gender equality has been taken into consideration in design, implementation and completion of projects, programme activities or high-level meetings.

Limitations

The study was impeded by poor project documentation produced for the RPR and field visits. The intended four field visits were reduced to three because of political upheaval in Fiji Islands. The field visit to Bangladesh went ahead but this was also impeded by the current political changes in the country. The five days allocated for the field visits also proved to be inadequate.

The International Context

A review of evaluations conducted by major development partners over the past four years reveals a continued commitment to the importance of gender equality and its relevance to social and economic development. However, almost all evaluations noted divergence between rhetoric and reality with policies not being fully and consistently applied and the impact of such policies, as far as it can be measured, being uneven. There appeared to be a diminishing allocation of resources to gender mainstreaming; limited use of gender analysis; many missed opportunities; and limited thinking through of the impact of the new aid modalities on gender equality.

Findings

External influencing role: The Commonwealth Secretariat, and more specifically the Gender Unit, has long been a leading player in promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming on the international stage. Its original plan of action was approved by two Women's Affairs Ministers Meetings (WAMM) in 1987, predating the UN Platform for Action by nearly a decade. Since 1995 the Secretariat has led the way in a number of challenging areas, including gender mainstreaming through different sectors and government ministries; pioneering analysis and policy influencing work in new areas relating gender to conflict, human rights, trade and the informal sector; and introducing mainstreaming within the organisation itself and developing gender monitoring processes. A number of these successful initiatives have been taken on board by other agencies including the scaling-up of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) by the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

Through regional and Commonwealth-wide events, the Gender Section continues to bring National Women's Machinery (NWM) and other stakeholders or partners together to share best practice in the focus areas of democracy, the law and the economy. Best practice in new areas has been shared internationally through the gender mainstreaming series of publications, which are of interest to a wider audience for advocacy and capacity-building work.

The Secretariat has also developed innovative practice in particular through the promotion of cross-sectoral collaboration both within the Secretariat and externally with multi-stakeholder groups, as well as developing multi-sectoral approaches with national governments, for example in addressing HIV/AIDS, education in post-conflict situations or barriers to income generation and trade for women. Collaboration with regional civil society organisations and the Commonwealth Foundation has led to civil society representation on the Plan of Action for Gender Equality (PoA) monitoring group.

High-Level Political Commitment within the organisation is demonstrated by the fact that the Secretary-General is mandated to report to each Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) on progress made by governments and the Secretariat in implementing the Gender Plan of Action. Similarly the three-yearly WAMM agrees and reports on the PoA, which provides the mandate for the Secretariat in general and the Gender Section in particular, to strategise and spend money on gender mainstreaming activities. However, while both WAMM and CHOGM serve to remind high-level personnel in Commonwealth countries of gender equality and give legitimacy to the work of the Gender Section they do not necessarily garner support and commitment to action across all divisions of the Secretariat.

Leadership: Active leadership for internal gender mainstreaming has diminished over the past three years, since a number of high-level management committees have ceased to be operational. While the stated commitment of senior managers is still high, pro-active support for the kind of organisational changes required effectively to mainstream gender is not evident. Stronger continuing leadership from senior management is needed to ensure that the necessary organisational changes are made to support gender equality.

Policy and Strategy: The PoA provides a framework for progressing towards gender equality. However, it is a statement of commitment and does not constitute a policy either for member states or for the Secretariat. There is the need for an active policy with clear enforceable accountability mechanisms, driven and regularly overseen by senior management, in order to move forward the gender mainstreaming agenda internally.

Organisational Structure: While at one level the small size of the Commonwealth Secretariat could be an advantage, being a demand-driven member state organisation makes mainstreaming gender extremely difficult. The regulations for rotating staff also adds to the challenge because there is no institutional memory. The general lack of systematic cross-divisional working around programme areas is another major obstacle to mainstreaming gender (and developing skills in gender mainstreaming) by other divisions. Management structures, budget lines and pressure of work do not encourage cross-divisional working.

Organisational Culture: Aspects of organisational culture, accustomed ways of working on individual activities or projects, and lack of open discussion on sensitive issues are obstacles to gender mainstreaming; there seem to be limited opportunities for real organisational transformation.

The Work of the Gender Section: Since 1995, within its limited financial and human resources, the Gender Section has continued to develop its strategies in order to maximise impact; but workload, programming and professional reward have resulted in the Gender Section focusing a lot of their current advocacy, brokering and capacity-building on external, rather than internal, work. The RPR highlighted the enormous breadth of work across the Secretariat and thus the wide range of themes in which gender issues need to be addressed. This makes it impossible for the gender advisers to be directly involved in all, or even a large proportion of the work related to the monitoring of project preparation and implementation within the current context.

The Location of the Gender Section: The Gender Section is not located in the most strategic position within the corporate structure. Its current location within Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD), which combines education and health, located in the development rather than political wing of the Secretariat is viewed by many as a “traditional” location that does not take account of the political influence required to bring about the kinds of changes required if the organisation is to seriously mainstream gender. Locating it within the political wing or within the Office of the Secretary-General would enable deeper influence at a higher level within the organisation and across programmes and divisions, and would reduce the amount of “running”

and “stretching” of the gender team to cover the breadth of Commonwealth Secretariat projects and programmes.

Human Resources: The Equal Employment Opportunities Recruitment Strategy for Secretariat staff has resulted in an increase in the number of women in professional and management positions over the years. There are currently seven female senior managers out of 12. However, there is still some way to go before there is a gender balance in middle management. The recruitment of consultants still remains an issue with twice as many men as women on the roster.

Gender Training: There has been no systematic programme of training on gender mainstreaming since 1999. The common consensus, from interviews, the survey and workshop evaluation comments, is that there needs to be:

- specific gender training provided for each Division
- discussions at Divisional level with gender advisors from STPD
- guidelines that provide direct practical support for implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Gender Management Systems: Many of the key GMS mechanisms are no longer operational: the high-level driver Gender Steering Committee; the Gender Focal Points meetings; the training programme for gender awareness and gender analysis in project management.

Monitoring and Evaluation: A particular organisational weakness is the lack of an effective monitoring system to chart progress toward gender equality; to assess the quality of operational work in relation to gender equality; and to ensure compliance with guidelines in making the Secretariat’s commitment to the PoA a reality. Lack of systematic monitoring in recent years has been an important factor in the loss of sustainability in the gender mainstreaming process. This is clearly linked to the suspended operations of the Gender Steering Committee and the Gender Focal Point meetings, both of which had a monitoring role.

It is clear from the RPR, and from field visits and interviews that the Project Information Management System (PIMS) sheets are completed in an arbitrary and perfunctory way by many project managers. There is a serious need to remove the categories themselves because all Commonwealth Secretariat activities have a gender dimension and the PIMS documentation needs to relate more to how each project or activity aims to contribute to gender equality rather than whether it does or not.

A formal Monitoring Group has been established for the new PoA (2005–2015). This has representation from NWMs and regional civil society organisations. It has been tasked with developing indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the PoA and at the same time harmonising reporting systems and requirements between the PoA and other frameworks. When these new indicators are developed and agreed they should also provide a very useful single tool to support internal programme monitoring of gender mainstreaming.

Projects and Programmes: While there is general spoken commitment for gender equality and mainstreaming efforts this does not regularly translate into the proactive integration of gender into project and programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting. Currently there are no compliance mechanisms and no sufficient awareness-raising nor professional development to ensure that this happens. Consequently, individual project and programme managers do not always have the technical skills or support to mainstream gender in their daily work, nor do they work within an enabling environment that engenders intrinsic motivation for gender mainstreaming.

Missed Opportunities: Both the RPR and field visits highlighted the many missed opportunities for promoting gender equality and their consequent potential negative impact. Without including a gender dimension and conducting a gender analysis, these missed opportunities have the potential for a negative gender impact, and may widen the gender gap.

Working at Country Level: Cross-sectoral communication and co-ordination problems at country level reflect those in the Secretariat. There is the need for more support to NWMs in their challenging role, as well as for more strategic targeting of gender-specific projects through the Points of Contact (POC) to maximise impact across government. Training for other government representatives is recommended in order to effectively integrate gender into projects and government systems. Linkages between different projects, partners and plans would contribute enormously to sustaining the impact of Secretariat action.

Comparative Advantage: The findings emphasise that the Commonwealth Secretariat has a number of potential advantages over other bilateral and international organisations, which could support the gender mainstreaming approach. It is a relatively small organisation with almost all staff in one centre, which makes it feasible to send strong political messages to all staff and target a relatively small group of critical decision-makers. It has the advantage of having a multinational staff who bring a diverse range of experiences. It is not subject to sudden policy swings following political events such as elections and ministerial reshuffles; it is a unique institution in that it brings together developing and developed countries as equal members; and through its sister organisations and bilateral relations, it also has potential to influence globally.

Summary of Findings: In general, there is commitment to the principle of gender equality across the Secretariat, and high-level actions, such as reporting to CHOGM, and the many initiatives undertaken by the Gender Section provide a significant contribution to improving gender equality. Gender mainstreaming has been adopted as the mechanism/tool for translating this commitment into action, but across the organisation there appears to be limited understanding about the organisational systems and structures which need to be in place and functioning effectively in order to mainstream gender into projects and programmes. Promoting gender equality is not embedded in procedures and the formal and informal rules guiding staff behaviour, and so can easily be dislodged, especially with the rotation of staff. Addressing gender issues and conducting gender analysis within the organisation is not routine, legitimate and non-controversial. From an audit perspective, the performance of the Commonwealth Secretariat is not measuring up to its stated commitments.

Recommendations

While the Commonwealth Secretariat has the advantage of being a small organisation, with an important and focused mandate, it faces a number of external and internal constraints to mainstreaming gender equality. *Externally* its demand-driven approach, breadth of programmes and limited resources means the organisation has a narrow opportunity to affect gender equality results. *Internally*, the lack of a gender policy, inconsistent programme quality, staff turnover and poor compliance, sanction and monitoring mechanisms also undermine its gender mainstreaming efforts. Simply put, the Commonwealth Secretariat is not able to match its aspirations with the robust and effective organisational context and support that is required.

The audit recommendations recognise the Secretariat's commitment to gender equality and recommends that one of three options are selected as the way forward:

1. Improve what exists
2. Take a different approach
3. Effectively mainstream gender

Option 1: Improve what exists

Within the Commonwealth Secretariat, there are areas in which relatively minor organisational change could build on examples of good practice and improve what currently exists. It is essential to make these changes because, without doing so, missed opportunities and gender unaware actions are potentially “harmful” to gender equality as they inadvertently reinforce and reproduce men’s status and women’s subordination. Areas for improvement might include:

- a greater emphasis on influencing inside the Secretariat
- consistent use of gender disaggregated data
- improved monitoring systems
- project coding which reflects how a project will contribute to greater gender equality
- improved project preparation and documentation showing how activities will contribute to greater gender equality
- use of the new gender Working Guidelines
- improved communications between the Secretariat and NWMs about the PoA
- monitoring progress between WAMMs
- acknowledging that the notion of gender mainstreaming is aspirational rather than actual and working with divisions to develop a practical plan for moving closer to that goal.

Option 2: Take a Different Approach

On the other hand, the organisation could acknowledge the enormous difficulties in mainstreaming gender and the limitations of the Commonwealth Secretariat in terms of organisational structures and ethos, and recognise that gender mainstreaming is over-ambitious and unrealistic. The organisation’s profile would then be commensurate with its resources and role in the international arena; and could then be more strategic, focusing its energy and resources on the most fruitful areas for bringing about change. This might include the following actions:

- develop change strategy statements/objectives; prioritise activities to where most impact can be gained, internally and externally
- work to comparative advantage
- focus on areas such as women’s rights, and gender relations
- focus on Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) etc/other conventions to underpin strategy rather than develop own PoA
- go where the energy is i.e., civil society
- work with the converted; identify change agents
- build alliances and partnerships and use resources strategically to support the work of other multi- and bi-lateral agencies
- provide guidance and support to NWMs on how to ensure gender is mainstreamed in current aid agenda, such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)
- use gender experts instead of expecting everyone to be able to do gender analysis etc
- develop and publicise best practice
- focus on learning, exchange, solidarity and collective advocacy

Option 3: Effectively Mainstream Gender

If the Commonwealth Secretariat seeks to keep gender mainstreaming as its mechanism for contributing to gender equality, then substantial organisational change needs to occur. In addition to those actions listed at 1 above, other changes required are reflected below.

Organisational

- establish a clear gender policy, reconsider utility of the PoA as a Commonwealth-wide document
- reintroduce high-level committee on gender equality
- ensure that senior management account for progress (or lack of it) towards gender equality
- relocate the gender section in the political wing of the Secretariat
- place a greater emphasis on influencing inside the Secretariat
- refocus organisational structures to reward internal work
- create systems and structures which facilitate cross-divisional collaboration

Human Resources

- ensure that gender-sensitivity is a criterion for selection of staff and consultants. Recruit staff using understanding and practical implementation of gender-sensitive strategies as one of the criteria
- provide a mandatory capacity-building programme to address rotating staff
- develop strategies to ensure the PoA is part of everyone's work, not just the gender section
- performance indicators should include movement towards gender equality
- refocus work of gender team to ensure reallocation of time spent on internal influencing, providing technical advice, continuing to develop cross-sectoral initiatives and promoting innovation

Ways of Working: towards programme quality

- improve project preparation, design and documentation showing how activities will contribute to greater gender equality
- provide ongoing professional development, particularly for Heads of Division, to ensure good design and project appraisal and completion of Project Completion Reports (PCR)
- systematically use the gender standards and guidelines associated with this audit report
- improve monitoring systems including ensuring project coding actually reflects *how* a project contributes to greater gender equality and consistent use of gender disaggregated data (for gender analysis and monitoring)
- recognise civil society as key stakeholders and develop coherent relationship with the Commonwealth Foundation
- develop mechanisms for cross-divisional programme monitoring
- improve communications between the Secretariat and NWMs about the PoA
- monitor and support progress between WAMMs

The evaluation team recommends that the Commonwealth Secretariat undergoes the significant organisational change process required sustainably to achieve the above. This needs to include a serious and realistic assessment of its comparative advantage and the “costs” and benefits of its current strategies. For example, given the effort to establish the PoA but its relative utility along with the Commonwealth Secretariat's limited authority to monitor and enforce its implementation, is this the best use of the organisation's and member countries' resources? The Commonwealth Secretariat is a unique organisation and requires unique strategies to create an enabling environment for the organisation to enhance its effectiveness, quality and, ultimately, its contribution to gender equality.

1. INTRODUCTION

This evaluation report concludes the *Performance Audit of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategy for Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming*, carried out between January 2006 and January 2007. It summarises and discusses the key findings from all stages of the audit and provides recommendations for future deliberation within the organisation. It draws on and refers to the following Annexes:

- Annex 1: Internal Review of the Secretariat's Structures and Procedures for Gender Mainstreaming
- Annex 2: Rapid Panel Review of Selected Projects
- Annex 3: Country Case Study Field Visits
- Annex 4: A Set of Guidelines for Integrating Gender into Project Management

Internal Review

This component of the review assesses the effectiveness of the Secretariat's current structures, mechanisms, tools, procedures and guidance for mainstreaming gender across programmes. It assesses the degree to which staff have understood and implemented the Secretariat's strategy for gender equality and gender mainstreaming as set out in the Plan of Action; and incorporated it into management practices.

Rapid Panel Review (RPR)

The RPR provides a broad-brush assessment of the degree to which the Secretariat's strategy for gender equality and gender mainstreaming has been effectively integrated into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects.

Three Country Case Study Field Visits

These three country case studies report on the field visits conducted to assess the contribution of the Secretariat's gender mainstreaming activities to the promotion of gender equality in countries and regions. In particular they attempt to assess the contribution made by the Secretariat to the gender mainstreaming effort of 'National Women's Machineries' and member state governments.

Working Guidelines

An output of the audit is a set of new working guidelines which provide practical advice on how to implement the "Plan of Action" and effectively mainstream gender into projects and programmes at all stages of the project cycle as well as at high level meetings. Included in this volume is a Gender Quality Assurance Score Sheet, which was developed through the process of conducting the Rapid Panel Review.

1.1 Background to the Audit

The Secretariat's 1995 *Plan of Action on Gender and Development* represented the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing. It defined a clear link between gender equality and the wider development agenda, made a shift from the "women in development" to the "gender and development" approach, and established the mandate for gender equality issues to be mainstreamed by both member governments and the Secretariat. Accompanied by a set of guidelines, the PoA provides the procedural framework for the Secretariat's approach to gender mainstreaming and, with the new 2005–2015 Plan of Action, is the core set of reference statements for this audit.

This audit is the first external assessment of these ten years of specialist gender mainstreaming work and therefore provides the opportunity to examine in more depth the internal support for gender equality and gender mainstreaming and how organisational structures support it; how these operate in practice; and the wider contribution that the Secretariat has made to promoting gender equality in the Commonwealth. The findings of the audit are important for generating lessons from gender mainstreaming efforts to support future work of the Secretariat, for its international partners and for the ongoing discussions about gender mainstreaming as a strategy for progressing women's rights and achieving social transformation.

The audit has the following two main objectives:

1. To assess the degree to which the Secretariat's strategy for gender equality and gender mainstreaming has been understood by Secretariat staff and its consultants, incorporated into management practices and effectively integrated into the preparation, design and implementation of programmes and projects
2. To assess the quality and impact of the Secretariat's programme for gender equality

1.2 Clarification of Terms

Gender Mainstreaming

There is general agreement that the concept of gender mainstreaming first came to prominence at the United Nations Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Since then it has increasingly been adopted by bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental development agencies as a key mechanism to promote gender equality.¹

For the purposes of this audit, we take gender mainstreaming to mean the following:

*'the process of assessing the implications for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is gender equality and equity.'*²

From an organisational perspective, gender mainstreaming is successfully achieved when gender equality becomes institutionalised, that is, when it becomes an integral part of organisational structure, systems and culture. This means that addressing gender equality becomes routine, legitimate and non-controversial. It is embedded in procedures and formal as well as informal rules guiding staff behaviour, and so cannot easily be dislodged (for example, by changes in personnel).

Performance Audit

There is an ongoing debate about terminology such as audit, assessment, evaluation, especially in relation to performance and gender audits. To ensure clarity from the start, we have taken *Performance Audit* to mean:

A process that enables the organisation to measure the extent to which it lives up to the shared values and objectives to which it is committed. It is a framework which allows the organisation to build on existing systems and structures, develop a process whereby it can

¹ Rees, T. *Gender Mainstreaming: Misappropriated or Misunderstood?* University of Sweden, 2002.

² UN Economic and Social Council 1997 as quoted in the Commonwealth Plan of Action for 2005–2015 (18).

*account for its performance, report on that performance, understand its impact on the wider community and be accountable to its stakeholders.*³

It follows that this is an audit of the extent to which the Commonwealth Secretariat lives up to its stated commitments, strategies and actions related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming; the extent to which it can account for its performance in this area and understands the impact of its gender mainstreaming on its member states and the wider stakeholders. Our analysis will also include the personal and institutional biases in the organisation that constrain gender equality objectives from moving forwards.⁴

1.3 Methodology

The methodology of the audit includes both an *internal* assessment of the organisations' structures and procedures and an *external* review of projects and policies in order to assess the outcomes of gender equality programmes for beneficiaries. It looks at the *direct* impact of gender mainstreaming on National Women's Machineries and the *indirect* impact, both internally and externally, on the work of divisions, other sectors of national governments, partners, including civil society, and the international gender equality agenda.

An audit framework was developed to guide the study, which provides a set of standards against which the gender mainstreaming of the Commonwealth Secretariat was assessed. The overall key audit questions are as follows:

- How well are the rationale, aims and strategies of gender mainstreaming understood?
- To what extent is the gender mainstreaming effort owned by staff and partners?
- How accountable are staff and partners to the policy and strategies?
- What are the incentives and incentive mechanisms?
- What are the drivers of sustained commitment to gender equality?
- What are the major obstacles?

Methods used in the audit include:

- desk research: study of internal documents, previous reports, external publications, the Commonwealth website, management systems;
- observation: of internal and external mechanisms such as WAMM consultation, Executive Board Committee, Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division (SPED) workshops, Commonwealth Civil Society Consultation;
- individual semi-structured interviews: with a variety of current Secretariat staff, former staff and consultants, members of National Women's Machineries and representatives of civil society and partner agencies;
- online surveys with Secretariat staff, NWMs and development partners;
- a five-day Rapid Panel Review (RPR) to generate a broad-brush assessment of the degree to which the Secretariat's strategy for gender equality and gender mainstreaming has been understood and implemented by Secretariat staff and its consultants. The RPR used a Gender Quality Assurance Score Sheet to assess 29 projects and four high-level meetings;
- three one-week field visits (The Gambia, Bangladesh, and Trinidad and Tobago) which were carried out to review the quality and impact of Secretariat activities at a country level, in consultation with National Women's Machineries, other government ministries,

³ See: Netherlands Development Organisation (2004); www.caledonia.org.uk.

⁴ Caroline Moser (2005): *An Introduction to Gender Audit Methodology: Its design and implementation in DFID Malawi*.

representatives of civil society and partner agencies. Relevant projects and high-level meetings from the RPR formed the basis of the field visit reviews.

1.4 Tools Produced as Part of the Audit

The Working Guidelines for Integrating Gender in Project Management were produced after the internal assessment. The guidelines are designed to complement the *new management handbook* and provide a systematic approach to the consideration of gender equality at all stages in the project cycle, from identification to evaluation.

The Gender Quality Assurance Score Sheet was developed for the RPR as a tool to assess the extent to which gender equality has been taken into consideration in design, implementation and completion of projects, programme activities or high-level meetings. It is closely linked to the above Guidelines and is included in the RPR report.

1.5 Limitations

The Rapid Panel Review

The project documentation made available for the Rapid Panel Review was very poor; much of it was missing and the quality of completion was variable, but mostly inadequate, highlighting many inconsistencies in completion and interpretation of the project appraisal, the logical framework (logframe) and the PIMS sheet. Some project documentation was so incomplete that it could not be assessed. The assessment of many others was based on three main documents, the PIMS sheet, the project appraisal and the logframe.

The Field Visits

Four field visit case study countries were originally selected for this study; one in each of the four major regions in which the Commonwealth Secretariat works. The selected countries were ones in which records showed some recent Secretariat activity. Establishing the relationship between policy and impact is enormously complex, especially for an organisation with a relatively small programme working in dynamic environments. We therefore intended to assess results and contribution on the basis of statements/explanations of key stakeholders⁵ about the impact, then track backwards from results to interventions, to strategy. This could only be achieved where there was, or had been, some definite Secretariat activity.

While four countries – Bangladesh, Fiji Islands, The Gambia, and Trinidad and Tobago – were originally identified, the Fiji Islands visit had to be cancelled at the last minute because of the military coup. Bangladesh was also going through a major political upheaval and reorganisation, and most key interlocutors were new to the job, with limited or no institutional memory. This seriously hampered the assessment and lesson learning.

Working in partnership with local consultants was helpful in terms of making advance arrangements and appointments and understanding the local context. However, five days proved to be much too short for conducting the review.

⁵ Secretariat staff, other providers, beneficiaries of programmes.

2. SETTING THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: EXPERIENCES OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN OTHER ORGANISATIONS

This section places the work of Commonwealth Secretariat in relation to other Bi- and Multi-lateral Development Partners by reviewing a number of gender evaluations and audits carried out in the past four years. It draws on gender evaluation reviews (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2003, which covered 43 gender and 43 general evaluations) as well as more recent evaluations of multilateral (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2006) and bilateral agencies (Swedish Agency for International Development Co-operation (SIDA) and European Community (EC) 2003; Department for International Development (DFID) 2006; and Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (Norad) 2005). It focuses on those aspects that are relevant to the nature and scope of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The importance of gender equality and its relevance to social and economic development has been broadly embraced, as evidenced by the wide adoption of gender policies, strategies and action plans by development agencies. Still, however, almost all evaluations reviewed noted divergence between rhetoric and reality where policies are not being fully and consistently applied and the impact of such policies, as far as it can be measured, is uneven.⁶ For Norad, for example, the “main challenge is to move from policies and goals to translating... into country level dialogue, programming and operations.” (Norad, 2005: 3).

2.1 Lack of Clarity

The lack of implementation is often attributed to a lack of clarity, consistency and coherence of policy messages⁷ as well as an absence of strategic direction and practical and relevant guidance for its implementation.⁸ Most evaluations noted how the promotion of gender equality is one of many policy priorities in an already “crowded” agenda (Hunt and Brouwers, 2003: 50) and how there has been insufficient thinking through the implications of new aid architectures and modalities on gender mainstreaming. Even where such clarity exists, there is a commonly observed fundamental lack of understanding of the conceptual and practical links between poverty reduction and gender equality (including human rights).⁹ Staff demonstrate confusion about gender mainstreaming (e.g. it’s a goal, just about staff gender parity, or women’s projects) and do not possess “know-how”. For example, the SIDA evaluation found that “the reasons for the low visibility of effects, appear less to do with active resistance than to a lack of clarity about how to gender mainstream and how to measure its progress.” (Braithwaite and Mikkelsen, 2004: 7).

2.2 Missed Opportunities

The practice and impact of gender mainstreaming efforts, particularly on promoting gender equality and women’s status, is described, at best, as uneven. Gender evaluations report a catalogue of missed opportunities as well as gender unaware and potentially “harmful” activities, as they inadvertently reinforce and reproduce men’s status and women’s subordination. For example, the UNDP evaluation cites a number of areas where the agency has a comparative advantage – PRSPs, energy and the environment and conflict prevention and recovery – but has not taken advantage of the opportunity to promote gender mainstreaming.¹⁰

⁶ Footnotes in this section refer to recent evaluations or reviews of evaluations. For example, see DFID, EC, Norad, SIDA and UNDP evaluations.

⁷ DFID, EC, SIDA, UNDP.

⁸ AusAid, DFID, ILO, World Bank and WFP (Hunt and Brouwers, 2003).

⁹ DFID, OECD and UNDP.

¹⁰ See also Jensen et al. (2006: 53) for similar missed opportunities with DFID’s direct budget support initiatives.

2.3 Gender Specific Projects

Not surprisingly, those initiatives that demonstrate the most consistent good practice (e.g., gender analysis, gender aware implementation including monitoring) and the greatest impact are those that have specific gender equality or women-specific objectives, especially in sectors that are traditionally associated with women and girls, such as health and education. The following Norad evaluation finding was not atypical. “It is difficult to document good practices of mainstreaming, except in sectors where Women and Gender Equality issues are well integrated, such as support to the education sector. There is no evidence that Norway is at the forefront of mainstreaming and integration of gender in its programmes and projects.” (Norad, 2005: 5).

2.4 Gender Equality in Non Gender-specific Initiatives

Where gender equality was taken into consideration as a cross-cutting issue, in non-gender specific initiatives, this was due to a number of reasons; very few of which, however, reflected a systematic and intentional organisational effort. For example, gender unaware projects still sometimes produced gender equality results when staff and/or partners were particularly committed to gender equality and were sufficiently motivated and enabled to take corrective action. Conducive national and local contexts also play a role and can sometimes be the main driver of improving gender unaware initiatives. In particular, partnering and true dialogue (as opposed to consultation) with national governmental and non-governmental women’s organisations is seen as key but often lacking.

2.5 Leadership and Senior Management Commitment

Still, such engendered initiatives seem to be the exception to the rule pointing to a number of constraints and disabling factors. In addition to the lack of clarity, consistency and coherency of intentions, common is the lack of leadership, commitment and accountability. The evaluation of DFID found that the “Narrow gender targeting in result setting has not been balanced by consistent and broad-based senior management leadership on gender.” (Jensen, 2006: 50) Similarly, UNDP “has given mixed signals about its commitment”, and “top management should clarify what gender mainstreaming means for UNDP, and introduce mechanisms to institutionalise policy.” (Sadik, 2006: 9 and 40) Moreover, gender policies are perceived as optional due to their invisibility, particularly, among senior and line management. There is a lack of incentives and disincentives to follow organisational gender policies, systems and procedures.

2.6 Capacity and Commitment of Development Partners

The evaluations highlighted how development agencies were found not to pay sufficient attention to the capacity and commitment of partners, such as government departments. There was often an assumption, frequently incorrect, that they have shared vision, understanding and commitment to gender equality.¹¹

2.7 Gender Analysis

Despite the plethora of gender training and supporting-resources that reflect “best practice”, gender analysis and gender-aware practice is commonly absent from all stages of the project cycle, most notably during assessment and design. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) review stated that “Systematic approaches to gender analysis and mainstreaming in the activities evaluated appear to have been rare.” (Hunt and Brouwers, 2003: 58) In particular, gender disaggregated data is not collected, and gender analysis is not seen as part

¹¹ ADB, AusAid, CIDA, ILO and SIDA (Hunt and Brouwers, 2003).

of a social-economic analysis even when this is undertaken. Women's voices are not a factor in identifying needs.

2.8 Gender Objectives

There is an overall absence of gender equality or engendered objectives as well as gender-sensitive indicators. These affect monitoring and evaluation and organisations' abilities to track the implementation of objectives. Even if objectives and design are engendered, gender aware implementation does not seem to automatically follow. Performance management information systems were found to be inadequate to track gender results, particularly the financing of gender mainstreaming and other gender equality initiatives.¹² Often the gender markers did not correlate to the evaluators' own assessment of the organisations' initiatives, as was the case of the DFID evaluation.

2.9 Resources and Organisational Mechanisms

The measures taken by different agencies to mainstream gender and promote gender equality vary but also represent commonalities, particularly in terms of supporting staff. The establishment of a gender unit and a system of gender focal points (GFPs), gender training and supporting resources are the most common and relevant to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Overall, evaluations found gender units and gender specialist mechanisms to be under-resourced both financially and technically (as regards number of staff) – particularly in terms of the ambitious organisational gender objectives and the breadth and depth of change that gender mainstreaming requires. GFPs are still being used despite their well-documented constraints to perform their roles. Some are marginalised while others are under-utilised. The authority and mandate of such units and mechanisms was a particular concern for UNDP, which most recently relocated its gender unit to a more strategic and authoritative position in the organisation. Overall, given the low level of knowledge and capacity of programme staff, greater in-house gender expertise is called for.

2.10 Gender Training

Gender training and the production of supporting resources for staff are common key strategies for addressing staff capacity. While training has been popular, efforts have been largely insufficient in terms of scope and depth. The DFID, Norad and UNDP evaluations all included recommendations for updating more detailed and more specific training in terms of sectors and what staff need to know and be able to do.

2.11 Gender Tools

Many noted the plethora of tools, checklists and other resources and their under-utilisation by staff, yet surprisingly some evaluations recommended the development of more tools to address this overwhelming under-utilisation. Although many focused on how to make them more accessible, e.g., publicising them better, none address the fundamental issue of why staff are not using them beyond the issue of time constraints.

2.12 Organisational Change

Another area that has not been given a lot of attention concerns the organisational changes required in order for development agencies to produce gender equality results. In fact, most

¹² DFID and UNDP.

evaluations seem to ignore or pay superficial attention to work place and organisational culture factors.

2.13 Reaffirmation of Commitment to Gender Equality

Lastly, while the evaluations paint a negative picture of gender mainstreaming efforts overall, they also reaffirm organisations' commitments to this strategy to promote gender equality. In fact, only one report questions its appropriateness but concludes that there was consensus for "modifying and strengthening what has already been started (especially making the strategy more practical and concrete), rather than for changing direction." (Braithwaite and Mikkelsen, 2004: 5)

2.14 The Challenge of Gender Mainstreaming

The review above of other agency evaluations illustrates that the concept of mainstreaming gender has been understood and applied often differently by different organisations, but all with limited success. The main problem highlighted by these evaluations is the fact that new gender norms have to "fight their way into institutional thinking" in competition with traditional norms, because established goals may compete with the prioritisation of gender equality even if this goal is not directly opposed.¹³

Another reason for difficulties experienced in the gender mainstreaming approach is that it requires both individual and organisational change. Even when there is a real commitment to this, it constitutes a long, challenging process. For example, recent research for OECD with data from 14 Development Assistance Committee (DAC) countries indicates slow progress in the integration of gender analysis into the design, implementation and evaluation of development projects since 1994.¹⁴

Research suggests that the *technical* process of mainstreaming gender into programmes is not enough: instead an overtly *political* analysis and a transformation of institutions is needed.¹⁵ The political barriers have led some agencies to reconsider their conceptual approach and to look beyond gender mainstreaming as a primary tool, to other possibilities for transformation, for example, a more explicit focus on women's rights.¹⁶

¹³ See S. Walby, Gender Mainstreaming. Productive Tensions in Theory and Practice, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 2005 12(3): 321-343.

¹⁴ J Hunt and R Brouwers, *Review on Gender and Evaluation. Final Report to DAC Working Party on Evaluation*, 2003.

¹⁵ Is There Life After Gender Mainstreaming? *Gender and Development*, Vol 13:2 July 2005.

¹⁶ See C. Sweetman (editor) *Mainstreaming Gender in Development: A Critical Review*, Oxfam, 2005.

3. THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT'S STATED COMMITMENTS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

3.1 Strategic Level

The Secretariat has made a consistent commitment to gender mainstreaming in the Commonwealth through the development, implementation and monitoring of the Plan of Action for Gender Equality (PoA), which is regularly endorsed by the bi-annual Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

This 1995–2005 PoA was adopted by the Commonwealth Heads of Government and presented as part of the official contribution to the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, 1995. The PoA identified Fifteen Critical Issues and Nine Special Measures to be addressed by member states. The strategic objectives included strengthening institutional capacity to integrate a gender perspective into the mainstream of all government and Secretariat activities, with a focus on the key issues of gender and macroeconomics, women's human rights and gender in politics, peace and conflict prevention.¹⁷

The 2005–2015 PoA has a more specific focus and provides a framework for action on a number of key themes (gender, democracy, peace and conflict; gender, human rights and the law; gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; gender and HIV/AIDS). It also emphasises the importance of Advocacy, Brokering and Capacity-building (ABC).

In its Strategic Plan 2004/5–2007/8 the Secretariat commits itself to the objective of:

*'strengthening the capacity of governments and civil society to achieve gender equality and equity in political, legal, social and economic policy, planning and programme implementation.'*¹⁸

The key strategies identified in the plan are: (1) the preparation and monitoring of the PoA 2005–2015 and (2) mainstreaming gender in the governance, policies, programmes and practices of member countries, the Secretariat and other Commonwealth organisations.

Gender issues are also for the first time inserted into eight of the Secretariat's strategic programme areas: Peace; Democracy; Rule of Law; Human Rights; International Trade; Finance and Debt; Education; and Health. For each of these programme areas at least one gender indicator has been identified. The Strategic Plan thus technically mainstreams the critical areas agreed in the new PoA for Gender Equality across the Secretariat.

3.2 Resources for Gender Mainstreaming

Human Resources

Since before 1995, the Secretariat has maintained a relatively large gender specialist capacity, attracting highly qualified, experienced personnel to the Gender Team, who are, additionally, able to count on strong political and technical leadership from their Head of Division.

The current Gender Team comprises a Head of Section and four other advisors (three at Special Advisor grade), supported by a Programme Officer and Programme Assistant. This is a significant commitment as a percentage (2.7 per cent) of overall staffing (7 out of 256).

¹⁷ During the period prior to 1995, the Women in Development Programme, along with the legal and political divisions of the Secretariat had already carried out important gender mainstreaming work: for example, legislation around violence against women, women's constitutional rights and citizenship, sensitisation work with police (see A *Bibliography of Commonwealth Secretariat Publications on Women 1975 to 1994*).

¹⁸ Strategic Plan 2004/5-2007/8, Programme 14 on Gender Equality and Equity.

The gender team is located within the Social Transformation Programmes Division along with Health and Education Sections, which also have gender expertise, making a total of nine gender specialists.

The Secretariat has a stated commitment to gender equality in the recruitment of full-time staff and consultants. The Human Resource Department of the Secretariat is responsible for recruitment of staff and their induction support, capacity-building and training as well as the maintenance of a database of consultants and their recruitment for short-term consultancies.

Financial Resources

The Gender Section draws on the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) as well as some support from Secretariat Core Funding. Their own programme budget for 2005/6 is £542,000 (not including staffing costs). In addition, other Divisions draw on CFTC for gender-related activities. For example, gender specific projects in 2003/4 accounted for £1.4 million or 15.6 per cent of the CFTC budget.

3.3 The Work of the Gender Section

Within the organisation, the gender advisers are involved in strategic planning and review workshops as well as liaising to some extent with thematic divisions. In addition, the Gender Section has responsibility for its own gender-specific projects and programme activities. Because of the need to spend and account for their budget, the majority of their work focuses on external activities, supporting specific projects at national and regional levels and carrying out ABC work. Organising Women's Affairs Ministers meetings (WAMMs) on a regular basis is a major task.

3.4 Women's Affairs Ministers meetings (WAMMs)

One of the key mechanisms for the support and promotion of gender mainstreaming and gender equality across the Commonwealth is the organisation of three-yearly WAMMs. The WAMMs bring Commonwealth Ministers for Women's Affairs and other senior personnel together to discuss progress towards gender equality, using targets such as 30 per cent women in political and high-level decision-making roles. The PoA is developed and agreed and monitored through the WAMM.

3.5 Support to National Women's "Machineries" (NWMs)

From 1995 onwards one of the main roles of the gender section was to support and strengthen the work of NWMs in the promotion of mainstreaming gender into different sectors and government ministries.¹⁹ However, more recently the development and support of gender mainstreaming work at individual country level, was found to be unsustainable as well as being perceived as "supply-led".²⁰ Findings from the review questionnaire to NWMs in 2003²¹ indicated that there remains a demand for financial and technical support in a range of areas. The more sustainable response has been to move towards regional working, developing collaboration with regional organisations and academic institutions, with a focus on specific gender issues (the critical areas of the PoA) and then to share lesson-learning across regions.

¹⁹ *Gender Mainstreaming Series* (Sector Manuals) Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999-2001.

²⁰ This begs the question of whether it is possible for a demand-led, responsive organisation to mainstream gender, or advocate for women's rights, in member states. The ABC approach is intended to 'drive demand'.

²¹ See Annex 1: Internal Review of the Secretariat's Structures & Procedures for Gender Mainstreaming, Appendix F.

3.6 Gender Management Systems

The Gender Management System (GMS) is the key Commonwealth framework for gender mainstreaming. It was developed in consultation with member governments and other partners, not only to strengthen the capacities of NWMs and the public sector in promoting gender equality, but also to transform the Secretariat itself. In this respect, the Secretariat recognised from the outset that gender mainstreaming involved institutional as well as operational change. In other words, that gender mainstreaming work within the Secretariat was intended to be a mirror image of gender mainstreaming work with governments.

The key features of the GMS were established in 1998. These included the following elements:

- A high-level Gender Steering Committee which met bi-annually to check on progress in Divisions
- A system of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) from each division to liaise with the Gender Team and support developments in their Division
- Systems for collecting sex-disaggregated data
- Introduction of gender analysis and planning by Divisions in their project development
- A programme of gender training within the Secretariat to support Divisions in gender analysis skills and integrating gender into the project cycle
- Guidelines for implementation of the PoA by the Secretariat

3.7 Strategic Approach: ABC

The current 'ABC' approach of the Gender Section has a focus on:

Advocacy, in particular raising awareness about the PoA through regular contact with National Women's Machineries and other strategic partners, including UN agencies and regional organisations; through international, regional and inter-agency meetings; and through Briefs provided for the Secretary General for CHOGM, country or regional visits and other speaking engagements;

Brokering or building strategic partnerships with other agencies in order to upscale successful pilot projects, such as the adoption of the Gender Responsive Budgeting Initiative (GBI) by UNIFEM, which has the resources to move it forward more widely. Internally, a key strategy has been to include gender on the agenda of all high-level Ministerial Meetings, through partnership working with thematic Divisions, while providing NWMs with briefings that can be used in-country as a lobbying tool prior to Meetings;

Capacity-building. Here the strategy is to develop, pilot and make accessible training materials which can be used in-country or in regional centres. Examples include the adoption of gender modules as an integral part of the Youth Training Diploma, which is delivered worldwide, and gender modules on HIV/AIDS used by the University of South Africa. Modules on Gender Trade and Export Promotion are now being developed, based on training workshops related to the global Trade Policy Formulation, Negotiations and Implementation (Hubs and Spokes) project.

3.8 Knowledge Development

Given that the gender section has a relatively small budget and a wide remit, it has adopted the publication of gender mainstreaming titles as a key strategy for maximising its impact externally. The first series looks at gender mainstreaming in different sectors (public service, agriculture, education etc). There has also been a series of publications on Gender Responsive Budgeting. The

current series looks at gender in relation to other development issues, such as conflict and peace; HIV/AIDS; human rights; multilateral trade.

In addition, the web-based Gender Knowledge Based Network (KBN) aims to “strengthen expertise, target advice and resources...” and to apply “a selective systematic approach to gender mainstreaming”. It enables access to key documents and online use of the Gender Management System Toolkit.

3.9 Programmes and Projects

All project and programme managers are asked to consider the gender dimension of their activities through 1) the allocation of a “gender code” on the current programme information management system (PIMS) and 2) in all project planning documentation: the project concept note, logframe and appraisal and 3) to comment on the activity’s contribution to gender equality as part of the Project Completion Report.

The identification of new projects/programme activities at country level through the Primary Contact Points (PCP) is said to take gender equality into consideration.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 International influence

The Commonwealth Secretariat, and more specifically the Gender Unit, has long been a leading player in promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming on the international stage. Its original plan of action was approved by a WAMM in 1987, predating the UN Platform for Action by nearly a decade. Through its 1995 PoA, the Secretariat led the way in a number of challenging areas:

- Developing strategies for promoting gender mainstreaming through different sectors and government ministries, the concept of gender management systems, which, along with capacity-building/training materials, have been adopted by other organisations including the Economic Commission for Africa.
- Commissioning ground-breaking analysis and policy influencing work in new areas: gender, democracy, peace and conflict; gender and human rights; gender-responsive budgeting; gender mainstreaming in the multilateral trading system; women in the informal economy; gender and HIV/AIDS (in addition to the traditional areas of health and education, in relation to the MDGs).
- Gender mainstreaming within the Secretariat, employing the same mechanisms as developed with and for governments – recognising from the outset that gender mainstreaming involved institutional as well as operational change.
- Developing gender monitoring processes and frameworks, including the manual to support countries in reporting progress to the commission for the Advancement of Women, which has been translated into a number of UN languages for use in non-Commonwealth countries.

The Secretariat's profile for gender advocacy and international networking is evidenced, for example, in the invitation to address the UN Security Council in 2004 and 2005 on Resolution 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) and the recent adoption and scaling-up of the gender-responsive budget initiative by UNIFEM. GRB has already been adopted by some 50 countries globally, 25 of which are Commonwealth countries, notably India, which now plays an important advocacy role for GRBs in other forums. Countries like Pakistan and Jamaica are now looking at GRBs in different sectors such as education.

Through regional and Commonwealth-wide events, the Gender Section continues to bring NWMs and other stakeholders or partners together to share best practice in the focus areas of democracy, the law, the economy and so on, to provide mutual support, discuss common problems and look at future action – an important function when NWMs tend to lack status and resources within their own government.

Best practice in new areas has been shared internationally through the gender mainstreaming series of publications, which serve as an effective means of outreach in policy-making and are also of interest to a wider audience. They draw on theoretical analysis, national and regional experience, provide policy guidelines, and highlight lesson learning. Some publications have been translated into other languages and there is demand for reprinting of certain titles, especially those on poverty-reduction, gender-based violence and engendering budgets. Findings from an external survey of other agencies²² indicate that the majority of respondents are familiar with the gender mainstreaming publications and use them both for their own reference and in advocacy and capacity-building work with others.

²² See Annex 1: Internal Review of the Secretariat's Structures & Procedures for Gender Mainstreaming, Appendix I.

The Secretariat has also developed innovative practice in particular through the promotion of cross-sectoral collaboration, including the following examples:

- The Commonwealth Education Ministers Meetings (CEEM) incorporate discussion on gender equality in education not only as one of the MDGs but in relation to issues such as HIV/AIDS, distance learning, teacher recruitment, civil society involvement, education in difficult circumstances (post-conflict zones) and male underachievement.
- Gender equality is systematically incorporated in Programme 12 on HIV/AIDS. The strategy emphasises the importance of engaging men in HIV/AIDS programmes while the incorporation of multi-sectoral approaches is defined as a result area.
- Divisional collaboration to provide training on Good Governance and Gender Equality in the Public Sector to civil servants in Commonwealth Africa.
- Incorporation of gender issues in election observation missions. Reports clearly show the selection of women for election observation teams; briefing on gender issues by women's organisations in country; a gender-sensitive observation checklist; identification of restrictions on women voters; comments on support for women candidates, etc.
- Through collaboration between the Gender Section and Special Advisory Service Division (SASD), the Commonwealth Business Women's Network (CBWN) was set up in 2002 and this now provides a platform for sharing best practice among businesswomen, with its own website.
- The recent work of the Gender Section on trade policy and export promotion is a best practice example of creating small multi-stakeholder teams to address barriers to women's participation in trade, breaking down institutional and cultural barriers by bringing together officials from trade, finance ministries and women's affairs with civil society organisations on issues of poverty and income generation.
- Collaboration with the Commonwealth Foundation to promote the involvement of civil society in WAMMs, which has led to civil society representation on the PoA monitoring group.
- Collaboration with Youth Affairs Division (YAD) has resulted in a gender module as an integral part of the Commonwealth-wide Youth Workers Diploma. Gender balance among regional youth representatives is 50:50 and gender is recognised as a cross-cutting issue in the CYP strategic plan.

4.2 High-Level Commitment: CHOGM, WAMM and Other High-Level Meetings

High-level political commitment within the organisation is demonstrated by the fact that the Secretary-General is mandated to report to each CHOGM on progress made by governments and the Secretariat in implementing the Gender Plan of Action. The CHOGM communiqué gives high-level formal support as far as protocol is concerned and provides the Gender Section with the mandate to operate "at the request of member governments." While it gives permission/legitimacy to the Gender Section it does not necessarily garner support and commitment to action across all Divisions. "Gender does not filter up"²³ and gaining greater movement towards gender equality needs active high-level leadership and support.

The three-yearly WAMM agrees and reports on the PoA, which provides the mandate for the Secretariat in general and the Gender Section in particular, to strategise and spend money on gender mainstreaming activities. While both WAMM and CHOGM serve to remind high-level personnel in Commonwealth countries of gender equality, there is no formal follow-up between the meetings. Turnover of (both government and Secretariat) personnel from one meeting to the next also means that it is difficult to use the opportunity presented by WAMM to move forward

²³ Member of Gender Section.

collective action to challenge the marginalisation of women's voices and interests by their own governments.²⁴

The input of STPD/Gender Section into all high-level Ministerial Meetings is the most strategic activity to integrate advice on gender issues into different sectors. However, while the strategy is operational, the onus is still on the Gender Section, as other divisions have not yet taken over responsibility for ensuring gender issues (and gender advisors) are included. An example of this is the incorporation of gender into the Finance Ministers Meetings:

In 2002 the Finance Ministers reviewed the work that had been undertaken on gender-responsive budget (GRB) initiatives and committed themselves to making progress in this area, agreeing to a review in 2005. Prior to the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM) 2005, a survey was carried out by the Gender Section and a detailed country-specific report was produced. STPD presented a paper which analyses the helping and hindering factors in the establishment of a sustainable GRB initiative.²⁵ An agreement was made at the meeting to develop a systematic approach to monitoring and to review progress every two years at CFMM. However, the collaborating division (the Economic Affairs Division, or EAD) perceives that it is the role of the Gender Section to move this forward, that EAD does not have the mandate to do so.

4.3 Leadership

Active leadership for internal gender mainstreaming has diminished over the past three years, since a number of high-level management committees have ceased to be operational. The main driver for gender mainstreaming, the Gender Steering Committee, chaired by one of the Deputies SG, has not met since 2002. The Project Management Committee, which was tasked with screening the gender element of project submissions and appraisals, no longer meets. The same applies to the Equal Employment Opportunities Committee, whose remit was to oversee the implementation of the Equal Employment Opportunities policy (EEO).

While the stated commitment of senior managers is still high, proactive support for the kind of organisational changes required effectively to mainstream gender is not evident. Trade, politics and economic development receive greater attention and yet addressing gender issues is essential for effectively meeting the challenges of trade, economic development, governance, the environment and human rights.

Stronger continuing leadership from senior management is needed to ensure that the necessary organisational changes are made to support gender equality; that the gender mainstreaming agenda can maintain its strengthened profile in the face of more recent CHOGM mandates; and that addressing issues of gender becomes integral to the Secretariat's political and economic work.

Responses to the online questionnaire raised the concern that, while heads of department promote gender equality and encourage staff to mainstream gender, this does not translate into practical action. The majority of respondents felt that insufficient attention is given to gender equality and mainstreaming and greater effort needs to be made. Above all, there was a consensus that strong leadership is necessary to drive the gender agenda forward across the Secretariat and to make the commitment become a reality.

²⁴ Observation by Rosalyn Eyben and Hazel Reeves at 8WAMM, *IDS News* June 2007.

²⁵ *Gender-Responsive Budgets in the Commonwealth: Progress and Challenges*, STPD 2005.

4.4 Policy and Strategy

The PoA provides a framework for progressing towards gender equality. However, it is a statement of commitment and does not constitute a policy either for member states or for the Secretariat. This means that compliance in gender mainstreaming practices ultimately depends on the intrinsic motivation or commitment of individuals rather than institutionalised incentives or sanctions. There was a high level of consensus among interviewees that there is the need for an active policy with clear enforceable accountability mechanisms, driven and regularly overseen by senior management, in order to move forward the gender mainstreaming agenda internally.

The results from questionnaires demonstrated a lack of familiarity with the PoA and this was reflected in the field visits where nobody outside the NWMs had any knowledge of its existence.

Strategic Planning

Gender issues are also for the first time integrated into eight of the Secretariat's strategic programme areas: peace; democracy; rule of law; human rights; international trade; finance and debt; education; and health. For each of these programme areas, at least one gender indicator has been identified. However, these indicators are inserted by the gender section after the main planning process has occurred.

The Gender Section takes the major responsibility for delivering the gender-related activities within each programme. While this provides an opportunity for dialogue between the gender team and the implementing division, in practice, time pressures result in limited discussion and separate action by the gender team. The Gender Section is also responsible for using its own budget in the achievement of these objectives and, in the annual report, it is expected to report on this aspect of the work relating to the other divisions, which reinforces the popular notion that it is entirely responsible for mainstreaming gender.

Analysis of objectives and indicators in the Strategic and Operational Plans strongly suggests that more in-depth work needs to be done on mainstreaming gender into programme areas and that this task requires specialist gender support for divisions. This underlines the fact that gender mainstreaming takes a long time to become embedded into organisational structures. Sustained efforts are necessary to ensure that the gender equality goal continues to be addressed and prioritised by divisions.

4.5 Organisational Structure

While at one level the smallness of the Commonwealth Secretariat could be an advantage, being a demand-driven member state organisation makes mainstreaming gender extremely difficult. The regulations for rotating staff also adds to the challenge because there is no institutional memory.

The pressure of work, budgeting and reporting mechanisms within the organisation does not encourage cross-divisional co-operation and synergies. *“Collaboration is still difficult – we all work in silos – a busy road divides us – it often comes down to individual relationships”*.²⁶

4.6 Coherence and Cross-divisional Working

Cross-referencing between the Strategic Plan and the Gender Logframe for 2005–08 shows there is clear coherence between the Gender Section outputs and the gender indicators for the identified programmes (peace; democracy; rule of law; human rights; international trade; finance and debt;

²⁶ Member of the Gender Section.

health). However, because the Gender Section takes the major responsibility for delivering these outputs, ownership of the gender policies by divisions is limited, as discussed above.

The general lack of systematic cross-divisional working around programme areas is another major obstacle to mainstreaming gender (and developing skills in gender mainstreaming) by other divisions. Management structures, budget lines and pressure of work do not encourage cross-divisional working. However, the Environmental Task Force (supporting Programme 9) and the cross-divisional Monitoring Committee for the Hubs and Spokes Project provide some useful models to build on in terms of gender mainstreaming, according to feedback from members.

Both groups have STPD/Gender Section representation, which ensures the inclusion of gender expertise. The structure thus provides the possibility to develop a better understanding of gender mainstreaming; exchange good practice; promote the pooling of resources; and ensure greater conceptual and programmatic coherence. Review of documentation for these projects, however, shows that the setting of specific gender objectives and indicators is still missing.

It is important to highlight here that the intra-divisional/cross-sectional collaboration between Health, Education and Gender in STPD, has been shown to be effective, particularly in developing a cross-sectoral approach to HIV/AIDs; rights of the girl child; and gender budgeting in the education sector.²⁷

According to the perceptions of many interviewees, the current planning and review structure and systems are a disincentive for collaboration. Allocation of budgets and working practices encourage staff to focus on their own projects or their own regions, rather than on the broader programme areas. Indicators and objectives are perceived to be tied to individual projects, whereas in reality, several projects may contribute to each programme. All of these represent obstacles to mainstreaming gender.

The separate programme to promote Gender Equality and Equity, which is managed by the Gender Section and aims to strengthen capacity within the Secretariat, governments and civil society in “all political, legal, social, economic and developmental policies and programmes” was not included overtly in the recent strategic planning review. This indicates a lack of attention to gender mainstreaming across the Secretariat.

Cross-divisional relationships between gender advisors and other technical advisors tend to be *ad hoc* and are usually developed through working together on specific projects. The perception of the gender advisors is that it is they who have to initiate most of the contact. Testimony from other advisors reinforces that perception; some admit that they forget to consult with Gender Section, others do not see it as their responsibility. According to the survey results, only one third of project managers regularly contact the Gender Section for support.

Interview and survey comments indicate that both sides would ideally like to have greater contact and co-ordination, since there are clear overlaps in the work being carried out under the different projects and programmes. However, the development of systematic relationships is hindered by a number of factors. The first is that there are only five gender advisors (including the Head of Section) to liaise with the rest of the Secretariat. Secondly, all advisors spend a lot of time travelling. Thirdly, despite the move towards strategic programming, the nature of Secretariat work still involves one-off activities, which need to be completed, and staff also feel constantly under pressure to spend their budget. For the same reasons, even liaison between Sections within STPD tends to be *ad hoc* and time-limited.

²⁷ STPD documentation and interviews.

Lack of systematic cross-divisional relationships becomes a problem when individual advisors leave, since institutional memory is lost and new relationships have to be built up by new staff on both sides. Induction of new staff at corporate, divisional and section level needs to address this issue.

4.7 Culture and Practices

Relationships and communication within the Secretariat are usually formal and diplomatic; there is a lack of open debate and in general controversial issues are avoided. This applies especially to gender issues and half of the questionnaire and interview respondents felt that gender issues were not discussed openly.

Divisions do not often seek support from the gender section; the gender section has to approach them.²⁸ Interaction between project managers and the gender section is low and tends to be on an ad hoc basis, and depends on relationships with individuals and time available. It is not systematised.

Aspects of organisational culture, accustomed ways of working on individual activities or projects and lack of open discussion on sensitive issues, are obstacles to gender mainstreaming; there seem limited opportunities for real organisational transformation.

A number of interviewees also highlighted the fact that, although implementation of the PoA is mandated by CHOGM, the main driver of the Secretariat is its political and economic work, which tends to take priority over human development and gender. In addition, budget allocation is directed by the Executive Committee. ExCom members tend to be more familiar with the political and economic sectors, which is where the Secretariat is seen as having a comparative advantage.

The new PoA identifies key departments for the different gender advisers to target, but there is still no systematised approach to mainstreaming gender across all divisions and still a sense that this is the role of the gender section rather than the responsibility of all staff.

4.8 Cross-Cutting Issues

As a result of mandates from CHOGM 2002, other cross-cutting issues were introduced into Secretariat work. These included Civil Society Involvement (located in SPED) along with the Environment (located in EAD). A separate Human Rights Unit was also established with a mainstreaming mandate and its strategic importance is reflected in its location in the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General (political). A number of interviewees and survey respondents expressed the opinion that Gender had subsequently lost its profile internally and that the Gender Section was not sufficiently strategically placed within the corporate structure.

4.9 The Work of the Gender Section

Since 1995, within its limited financial and human resources, the Gender Section has continued to develop its strategies in order to maximise impact. Workload, programming and professional reward have resulted in the Gender Section focusing a lot of its current advocacy, brokering and capacity-building on external, rather than internal, work.

The RPR highlighted the enormous breadth of work across the Secretariat and thus the wide range of themes in which gender issues need to be addressed. It makes it impossible for the gender advisers to be involved in all, or even a large proportion of the work related to the monitoring of

²⁸ This was echoed during the field visits between the NWMs and other Ministries.

project preparation and implementation. One way forward would be to concentrate on projects over a certain value. However, in some of the smaller projects, activities are strategic in nature and provide valuable opportunities to contribute to greater gender equality. Hence other mechanisms, such as staff training and utilisation of the newly prepared gender guidelines would need to be employed.

The survey results indicate the limited success of the various internal gender mainstreaming strategies to date: 45 per cent of respondents feel they do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to mainstream gender in their work; 50 per cent never seek support from the Gender Section and 66 per cent are unfamiliar with the key features of the PoA. Comments from the survey and interviews also support a more active, higher profile role for the Gender Section within the Secretariat, in particular working with individual divisions.

However, there are also implications for other staff. Within the current mode of working, time and space for other advisors to collaborate on gender mainstreaming will still be limited. Nevertheless, an internal strategy of marketing successes and promoting innovative practice by STPD/Gender Section should help to motivate collaboration from thematic Divisions.

4.10 Location of the Gender Section

Consensus from those interviewed was that the Gender Section is not located in the most strategic position within the corporate structure. Its current location within STDP, which combines education and health, located in the development rather than political wing of the Secretariat is viewed by many as a “traditional” location which does not take account of the political influence required to bring about the kinds of changes required if the organisation is to seriously mainstream gender. Locating it within the political wing or within the Office of the Secretary-General would provide the gender advisers with greater power and visibility in the spaces they need to inhabit to help bring about more significant changes “without having to break the door down”.²⁹ This location would enable deeper influence at a higher level within the organisation and across programmes and divisions, and would reduce the amount of “running” and “stretching” of the gender team to cover the breadth of Commonwealth Secretariat projects and programmes. It would also signify the seriousness with which the organisation is taking gender issues and the importance it gives to the improvement of gender equality.

4.11 Staffing/Human Resources

There have been some important steps forward in the area of Human Resources. The Equal Employment Opportunities Recruitment Strategy for Secretariat staff has resulted in an increase in the number of women in professional and management positions over the years. There are currently seven female senior managers out of 12. As regards the overall staffing composition, women are in a small majority (56 per cent).³⁰ There is still some way to go before there is a 50/50 gender balance in middle management and the majority of lower grade professional posts are filled by young women. However, the job description for Programme Assistants has recently been transformed from carrying out essentially secretarial duties to a more active role in programme delivery and this provides good professional development, according to the individuals involved.

The online questionnaires and interviews revealed some differences in perceptions of male and female staff with one third of male staffing feeling that there are “too many women” in the Secretariat.

²⁹ Member of the Gender Section.

³⁰ See Annex. 1: Internal Review of the Secretariat’s Structures & Procedures for Gender Mainstreaming, Appendix 4.

Selection takes account of ensuring representation from a cross section of member states and has succeeded in ensuring opportunities for women. However, no account is taken of levels of sensitivity, previous training or evidence of implementing gender-sensitive programmes. Without sufficient induction programmes and CPD, which emphasises the role of all staff in promoting greater gender equality and practical understanding of how to go about it, little progress will be made in gender mainstreaming.

As regards the recruitment of consultants, the statistics on technical experts³¹ clearly show that, despite early fluctuations, the overall ratio between male and female long-term consultants has remained at 2:1 since 1995. The roster searches by skills not gender and there are still more than twice as many men as women on the roster. No corporate system has yet been developed to address this continuing imbalance, although some interviewees gave examples of *ad hoc* advocacy to encourage nominations by women. Some Terms of Reference (TORs) include reference to gender balance, but the issue of gender sensitivity and gender expertise among consultants in general, as well as engendered TORs, have not been addressed.

Rotation of Staff

From 2002 the Secretariat began to enforce its six-year employment rule (rotation). As a result a large number of staff, both gender specialists and other personnel who had been involved in follow-up activities to Beijing 1995, left the organisation. Because of the individualised organisational character, this constituted a significant loss of institutional memory in general, but in particular as regards the embedding of gender mainstreaming mechanisms.

In addition, rotation has resulted in a large number of vacancies, which has meant the focus of the Human Resource Section was on recruitment. Increased workload in this area has meant that other aspects of work related to gender mainstreaming have been suspended. In particular, these include:

- orientation about the PoA and sensitisation to gender equality as part of the induction programme for new staff
- the provision of training in gender analysis and gender planning for operational work
- moving forward other areas of the EEOP such as more flexible working and addressing issues such as sexual harassment

It is important to highlight that there are also opportunities which could be capitalised on presented by rotation. One is the influencing potential of both male and female staff returning to work in their own country, if their skills, understanding and commitment in relation to gender mainstreaming have been developed while in the Secretariat. Another is that new staff entering the organisation might bring with them a wealth of relevant experience and knowledge, which needs to be identified and drawn on more systematically.

4.12 Gender Training

There has been no systematic programme of training on gender mainstreaming since 1999. Only 20 per cent of the survey respondents indicated they had received training since joining the Secretariat, although a further 25 per cent had had training prior to joining. One problem seems to have been the transfer of the training mandate from STPD (Gender Section) to the Human Resources Section (SSD).

³¹ See Annex 1: Internal Review of the Secretariat's Structures & Procedures for Gender Mainstreaming, Appendix H.

Reflection by interviewees who had taken part in training prior to 1999 indicates that training in cross-divisional groups had been effective as a means to raise general awareness about gender issues. A review of the early training materials shows that the workshops used a standard approach to gender analysis, they were practical, included project case studies and provided useful examples of how to integrate gender into projects.³²

However, the audit revealed two key issues for consideration. Firstly, the previous training was not compulsory. Results from the survey – that only 33 per cent of respondents felt they were sufficiently familiar with the key features of the PoA; only 33 per cent perceived that gender issues are taken seriously and discussed openly; and the significant difference of perception between male and female staff on how well the Secretariat is implementing gender mainstreaming – strongly indicate the need for a general orientation to gender equality for all staff. Similarly, interviewees and survey respondents highlighted the need for compulsory training in basic gender awareness for new staff.

The second issue to consider is the specificity of training. According to the perceptions of interviewees, the cross-divisional training was not sufficient in terms of enabling staff to use gender analysis tools and concepts at the desk. The common consensus, from interviews, the survey and workshop evaluation comments, is that there needs to be:

- specific training provided for each Division
- discussions at Divisional level with gender advisors from STPD, and
- guidelines that provide direct practical support for implementation of gender mainstreaming.

4.13 Gender Management Systems

The review of internal gender management systems indicates that these have not been sufficient to institutionalise gender equality: gender mainstreaming has not yet become an integral part of organisational culture, in the sense of being routine and non-controversial. It is not sufficiently embedded in procedures but is still dependent on individuals or *ad hoc* relationships and can be easily dislodged by changes in personnel or institutional priorities.

Some of the early gains of gender mainstreaming in the Commonwealth Secretariat appear to have been lost. The considerable expertise and experience of the Gender Section, including the development and documentation of best practice, has not been mainstreamed across divisions and thus the comparative advantage of the Secretariat has not been maximised.

A Gender Focal Points Needs Assessment Survey was carried out in 2002, the results of which indicated the need for the GFPs' role and function to be clarified and their work in this role to be properly recognised by divisions. Top-down nomination of GFPs by directors had meant that some GFPs were not particularly committed to the work, some were not confident in their own capacity as gender experts/advocates and some not strategically situated to influence divisional developments. The 2002 survey also highlighted the felt need for further training for GFPs.

Many of the key GMS mechanisms are no longer operational: the high-level driver Gender Steering Committee; the Gender Focal Points meetings; the training programme for gender awareness and gender analysis in project management. The field visit to Trinidad and Tobago showed a similar picture; while the NWM has adopted the GMS with enthusiasm, many mechanisms had also ceased to function. For example, the GFP system had already met with resistance and blockages in other Ministries.

³² SPED Gender Planning Workshops File.

4.14 Monitoring and Evaluation

A particular organisational weakness is the lack of an effective monitoring system to chart progress toward gender equality; to assess the quality of operational work in relation to gender equality; and to ensure compliance with guidelines in making the Secretariat's commitment to the PoA a reality.

Under the new Strategic Plan, programme managers have to report annually against all programme indicators, which includes the gender indicator in the eight programmes above. However, in the last Annual Performance Report (APR) in 2004–5, Programme 5 omitted to do so. While the Gender Section takes responsibility for delivering the gender objectives, STPD perceives that sometimes other divisions take credit for their achievement (for example, publications) in their reporting.

A review of relevant documentation reveals that gender concerns are mainstreamed in a perfunctory manner by divisions in many of the evaluation mechanisms. This is supported by testimony from staff in interviews and from the online survey: over two-thirds of survey respondents perceive that gender aspects are not regularly taken into account in monitoring and review reports. In the previous APR (2003–4) there was no reference to gender in divisional reports except for Health, Education (and Gender). The most recent APR (2004–5) improves on this practice, through the inclusion of a gender indicator in eight of the programmes, against which programme managers have to report. However, this is a one-line statement, rather than a detailed examination of impact, and does not identify attribution (whether it was the Division or the Gender Section that carried out the work).

The common practice in review reports, for example the CFTC 2003 report, is to include gender as a separate section, rather than mainstreaming the issues. The gender advisors have responsibility for providing this section, but have no input into other technical sections.

Sometimes, despite the fact that gender is discussed throughout the report, the overt gender element is lost in the recommendations (for example see *The 15CCEM Mid-Term Review Meeting Caribbean Region and Canada 2005 Summary Report*).

A review of recent evaluation studies commissioned by SPED yields similar findings to those from review reports. Unless specified in the TORs, such as in the study on Corporate Governance, gender issues are not automatically included in evaluation studies. Where they are included it is in a separate section. However, even where gender has not been included at the project outset, gender evaluation can highlight where the project has gone wrong and provide valuable lessons, as shown in the Corporate Governance study.³³

Gender-disaggregated statistics are kept for participation in all CFTC activities. These show that the overall ratio of women to men is 1 to 3 with wide differences between individual countries. Even in the Caribbean, contrary to popular opinion, men outnumber women participants. However, the statistics are not discussed in reports or used for forward planning. Much more needs to be done in order to evaluate the quality, appropriateness and impact of these activities in relation to women's needs and benefits and in relation to promoting gender equality. As discussed above, gender-disaggregated statistics are kept on consultants but these also need to be reviewed and used as a basis for developing a gender-sensitive recruitment strategy.

It has to be emphasised that the lack of attention to systematic monitoring in recent years has been an important factor in the loss of sustainability in the gender mainstreaming process. This is clearly linked to the suspended operations of the Gender Steering Committee and the Gender

³³ *Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat Development Assistance in the Area of Corporate Governance*, 2005.

Focal Point Meetings, both of which had a monitoring role. Errors in gender coding on PIMs have not been identified and divisional annual reports on gender mainstreaming have been discontinued. Effective monitoring has not been facilitated by evolving information management systems, which require the completion of different paperwork at different times for different purposes. In general, according to testimony from interviews, the accountability process is seen as onerous and staff do not have a sense of ownership in this process.

4.15 Gender Coding and PIMs

An analysis of gender coding on PIMS was carried out, using the Commonwealth Secretariat Reporting System data for 2003–4 and 2004–5 and involving review of the documentation for a random sample of 105 projects.

Part of the rationale for introducing the gender codes into the coding system was to prompt project and programme managers to consider gender issues at the outset of project design.³⁴ According to a number of interviewees (longer standing staff in the Secretariat) the strategy has helped to raise general awareness. However, this is not evidenced in terms of project development on PIMS documentation. The coding system has not encouraged Divisions to rethink their work in terms of gender. A comparison with earlier statistics (1999) shows that the overall pattern has not significantly changed: there is no real increase in the percentage of “Gender Specific” projects or “Gender Mainstreamed” projects. However, these statistics may well be meaningless in that the RPR and field visits demonstrated how project managers categorise projects in a random fashion, with, what appears to be, limited understanding of what the categories mean. There is a serious need to remove the categories themselves because all Commonwealth Secretariat activities have a gender dimension and the PIMS documentation needs to relate more to how each project or activity aims to contribute to gender equality rather than whether it does or not.

The PIMS data aims to provide evidence of concrete achievements which contribute towards programme gender equality objectives yet ultimately, the Secretariat’s progress towards gender mainstreaming will be most effectively measured by achievement in its strategic programmes, rather than in the perfunctory and arbitrary allocation of gender codes which are problematic to control.

External monitoring of the PoA, as described below, provides an example of the process of working towards a single monitoring framework, which could help to inform practice within the Secretariat. This model has the potential for strengthening internal as well as external gender equality monitoring systems.

4.16 Monitoring the Implementation of the PoA in Member Countries

Questionnaires to the NWMs in member countries have been used to review progress of the PoA in 1999 and 2003, with findings reported in related publications.³⁵ Regular review and exchange of progress between member countries occurs annually at CWMM in New York. In 2006 the focus was on women’s political participation and included presentation of practical examples, for example the targeting of women appointees to public bodies/boards in New Zealand, and strategies for supporting the participation of women in local government, as well as discussion of continuing difficulties.

³⁴ See GFP Meeting Minutes 14 March 2001.

³⁵ *Learning by Sharing*, 1999 and *Gender Equality: A Decade of Commonwealth Action*, 2005.

A formal Monitoring Group has been established for the new PoA (2005–2015). This has representation from NWMs and regional CSOs. It has been tasked with developing indicators for monitoring and evaluation of the PoA and at the same harmonising reporting systems and requirements between the PoA and other frameworks: CEDAW, the UN Gender Development Index and Gender Empowerment Measure (GDI/GEM) the Millennium Development Goals and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. When the new indicators are developed and agreed (8WAMM, 2007) they should also provide a very useful single tool to support internal programme monitoring of gender mainstreaming.

Discussions at the PoA Monitoring Group Meeting in New York (26–27 February 2006) highlighted the fact that currently NWMs are required to take the major responsibility for gender monitoring and reporting against all the frameworks, even though other ministries (should) have responsibility for delivering the targets. This reflects the similar situation within the Secretariat and the perception that it is the role of the Gender Section to report and deliver.

4.17 Financial Resources

Given the wide-ranging remit, the Gender Section sometimes finds itself unable to respond to an important request for support because of limited funding. Other divisions can draw on the CFTC for gender-related activities which in practice may have significant funds that it could allocate for mainstreaming gender but they more often turn to the Gender Section to fund any aspects of their work with a gender dimension.

4.18 Projects and Programmes

In the majority of projects reviewed in the Rapid Panel Review, the overall quality of project design, based on the documentation, was extremely poor; objectives are often poorly defined; and many projects have multiple rather than a singular overall objective and there appears to be limited understanding of how to complete the logframe.

Projects are rarely appraised for integration of gender and, where they exist, project logframes hardly ever include gender indicators. As a consequence, gender tends to be overlooked altogether at the evaluation stage in most projects. The PCR requires a brief statement on how the project has contributed to gender equality. Only a minority of PCRs are sent to SPED. The RPR revealed that 80 per cent of project documentation reviewed showed a lack of attention to, or lack of understanding of, gender equality: most of the remaining 20 per cent were from STPD.

While there is general spoken commitment for gender equality and mainstreaming efforts this does not regularly translate into the proactive integration of gender into project and programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and reporting. Currently there are no compliance mechanisms and no sufficient awareness raising nor professional development to ensure that this happens. Consequently, individual project and programme managers do not always have the technical skills or support to mainstream gender in their daily work, nor do they work within an enabling environment which engenders intrinsic motivation for gender mainstreaming, through providing the time and the opportunity for collaboration, lesson learning and the development of innovative approaches.

4.19 Missed Opportunities

Both the RPR and field visits highlighted the many missed opportunities for promoting gender equality and their consequent potential negative impact. All of the projects reviewed in the RPR are gendered (i.e. the issues being addressed and how they are designed have implications for gender equality) and most would provide particular opportunities for contributing to gender

equality. One such example is the “ComHabitat” Project and the box below is an extract from the RPR panel’s comments.

This is a well-defined and well-documented programme. The objective mentions gender in relation to the MDGs, but gender is mentioned nowhere else. The whole programme is an example of a missed opportunity to promote gender equality. There are many gender issues inherent in the Habitat Agenda, yet these appear not to have been addressed or even mentioned in the documentation. The Management Group includes a number of women and CSOs, but minutes of meetings reveal no evidence that the gender dimension of the issues have been given any attention. The management group would have benefited from input from the Gender Section. Within the project, there is a clearly defined communications strategy which would provide a powerful vehicle for promoting gender equality, but there is no mention of gender in relation to it.

Without including a gender dimension and conducting a gender analysis, these missed opportunities have the potential for a negative gender impact, and may widen the gender gap. For example, if women’s access or lack of access to technology is not addressed the *Competition and e-commerce in Trinidad and Tobago* is likely to exclude and further marginalise women.³⁶ Likewise the documentation on the *Set-up of The Gambia Bureau of Standards* (a six-month consultancy with National Standards Bureau to improve access of selected categories of SMEs to international market) provides no evidence of a gender analysis of women’s participation in different sectors and particular constraints/opportunities of women and men in selected sectors. The project potentially has a negative impact on gender equality if the focus is on male-dominated sectors and women as well as male stakeholders are not included in discussions from the outset.

4.20 Working at country level

In many ways the problems observed at country level reflect the internal organisational situation of the Secretariat: a general lack of cross-sector collaboration within government; insufficient communication between the NWM and other government ministries; the NWM is usually underfunded, understaffed, marginalised within government and yet overworked since it is expected to service other sectors as well as report on progress in gender equality (for CEDAW, GEM/GDI, the Beijing Platform for Action) that other sectors (should) have responsibility for.

In terms of communication between the Secretariat and member state government machinery, these problems are compounded by turnover of staff, both in the Secretariat and in country (especially after national elections) and the difficulties of making contact because of limited access to and use of information technology in some parts of the world. Discussion with the PMO during The Gambia field visit, for example, highlighted the need for more strategic targeting of gender specific projects through the POC in collaboration with the Women’s Bureau, in order to maximise impact across government. Poor communications between divisions in the Secretariat, between government ministries and then between the Secretariat and government have meant that there is little or no linkage made between previous or existing projects, partners, research, results, action plans etc. Gender analysis may actually be available on the ground but overlooked, as was the case with the *Set-up of The Gambia Bureau of Standards*. Addressing these communication and co-ordination issues could make the impact of Secretariat work much more sustainable in general, as well as contributing to gender equality.

Although work with Primary Contact Points at regional consultation meetings aims to include awareness-raising of the PoA, gender mainstreaming and gender issues in project design, it became clear during the field visits that there is a real need for capacity-building for government personnel (other than WAMs or NWMs) in relation to the:

³⁶ See Annex 2: Rapid Panel Review and Annex 3: Field Visit Case Studies (field visit to Trinidad & Tobago).

- explicit integration of gender into all project proposals for CFTC funding
- practical understanding and implementation of gender-responsive budgeting in different ministries
- effective application of the GFP system
- effective mechanisms, which include the involvement of civil society, for monitoring progress towards gender equality

Such capacity-building programmes could be developed in country or at regional level through strategic provision of ‘training of trainer’ courses by the Secretariat.

4.21 Comparative Advantage of the Commonwealth Secretariat

Despite the above problems, the Commonwealth Secretariat has a number of advantages over other bilateral and international organisations, which could support the gender mainstreaming approach:

- It is a relatively small organisation with almost all staff in one centre (London). This makes it feasible to send strong political messages to all staff and target a relatively small group of critical decision-makers. It is more complex to mainstream gender in organisations with devolved offices overseas.
- It has the advantage of having a multinational staff who bring a diverse range of experiences. This means that its gender specialists can draw on in-house resources in highlighting the cross-cultural dimensions of gender and women’s rights.
- Unlike bilateral agencies, the Commonwealth Secretariat is not subject to sudden policy swings following political events such as elections and ministerial reshuffles. This should create a more predictable policy environment for sustainable work on gender.
- The Commonwealth itself is a unique institution in that it brings together developing and developed countries together as equal members. The Secretariat has direct political access to member governments and thus has a key influencing potential.
- Through its sister organisations and bilateral relations, the Commonwealth Secretariat also has potential to influence globally. Comments from the online survey for external partners provided a number of illustrations of how developments in gender mainstreaming, initiated by the Secretariat, have been adopted by other countries and institutions.³⁷

4.22 Summary of Findings

In general, there is commitment to the principle of gender equality across the Secretariat, and high-level actions, such as reporting to CHOGM, and the many initiatives undertaken by the Gender Section which provide a significant contribution to championing gender equality internationally. Gender mainstreaming has been adopted as the mechanism/tool for translating this commitment into action but across the organisation there appears to be limited understanding about the organisational systems and structures which need to be in place and functioning effectively in order to mainstream gender into projects and programmes. Promoting gender equality is not embedded in procedures and the formal and informal rules guiding staff behaviour, and so can easily be dislodged, especially with the rotation of staff. Addressing gender issues and conducting gender analysis within the organisation is not routine, legitimate and non-controversial.³⁸

³⁷ See Annex 1: Internal Review of the Secretariat’s Structures & Procedures for Gender Mainstreaming, Appendix I.

³⁸ See definition of gender mainstreaming p10.

From an audit perspective, the performance of the Secretariat is not measuring up to its stated commitments. It is contributing to gender equality to some extent but it is not mainstreaming gender. This creates three main problems:

1. Staff become complacent because they believe that the organisation is already making a significant contribution to greater gender equality and, therefore they do not have to take an active role in its promotion

OR

2. The perception amongst staff is that the organisation is not serious and there is no “standard” or good practice to follow

AND

3. Opportunities for promoting gender equality across all sectors are missed. As identified in the Rapid Panel Review report and in the Field visit reports, these missed opportunities are not neutral, but can have a detrimental impact on gender equality because they are likely to reinforce the status quo and widen the gender gap.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

While the Commonwealth Secretariat has the advantage of being a small organisation, with an important and focused mandate, it faces a number of external and internal constraints to mainstreaming gender equality. *Externally* its demand-driven approach, breadth of programmes and limited resources means the organisation has a narrow opportunity to affect gender equality results. This applies to the majority of its programmes as well as its Gender Specific (GSPEC) initiatives, although to a lesser degree. *Internally*, the lack of a gender policy, inconsistent programme quality, staff turnover and poor compliance, sanction and monitoring mechanisms also undermine its gender mainstreaming efforts. Simply put, the Commonwealth Secretariat is not able to match its aspirations with the robust and effective organisational context and support that is required.

The organisation is not alone in this; recent gender evaluations and audits of other agencies (OECD, 2003; SIDA, 2003, EC, 2003; Norad, 2005; DFID, 2006; and UNDP 2006) reveal that almost all evaluations noted divergence between rhetoric and reality in which the practice and impact of gender mainstreaming efforts, particularly on promoting gender equality and women's status, is described as "uneven", at best.

Commitment to gender equality still exists but this needs to be re-energised and one of the following options adopted:

- Improve what exists
- Take a different approach
- Effectively mainstream gender

5.1 Improve What Exists

While gender is not currently mainstreamed within the Secretariat, there are examples of good practice in contributing to greater gender equality. One such example is the STPD project Mainstreaming Gender Equality in Primary and Secondary Education. Field visits also provided some examples of good practice, such as the CS/UNESCO Chair in HIV/AIDS and Education in Trinidad and Tobago. Within the Commonwealth Secretariat, there are areas in which relatively minor organisational change could build on examples of good practice and improve what currently exists. It is essential to make these changes because, as noted in the desk review and field visits, without doing so, missed opportunities and gender unaware actions are potentially "harmful" to gender equality as they inadvertently reinforce and reproduce men's status and women's subordination.

5.2 Take a Different Approach

The Commonwealth Secretariat could acknowledge the enormous difficulties in mainstreaming gender and the limitations of Commonwealth Secretariat in terms of organisational structures and ethos, and recognise that gender mainstreaming is over-ambitious and unrealistic. There is a mismatch between aspirations and willingness to take a prescribed approach, with organisational structures, monitoring mechanisms and sanctions that gender mainstreaming would mean.

The organisation could still aim for and contribute to gender equality, without using mainstreaming as the mechanism. It could set a policy to contribute to greater gender equality and equity wherever it can, not trying to mainstream across all sectors. The Commonwealth Secretariat's profile would then be commensurate with its resources and role in the international arena; the organisation as a whole, and the gender section in particular, could then be more strategic and focus their energy and resources on the most fruitful areas for bringing about

change. This would give a stronger mandate to the Gender Section's current external work, the use of Advocacy, Brokering and Capacity-building externally and the development of specific projects to narrow the gender equality gap (in line with the ECSOC Resolution 1997). It could also mean more focused work with NWMs supporting lesson learning and collective action in between WAMMs.

This option would mean that minimum performance standards would need to be established by the PMRU, so that gender unaware work is not undertaken by other divisions, thereby avoiding the risk that the Commonwealth Secretariat is furthering gender inequity and the marginalisation of women.

5.3 Effectively Mainstream Gender

In spite of sustained efforts on the part of a number of actors within the Secretariat, the organisation does not mainstream gender. As outlined above, the current organisational structure, demand-driven approach makes gender mainstreaming extremely difficult. If the Commonwealth Secretariat seeks to keep gender mainstreaming as its mechanism for contributing to gender equality, then substantial organisational change needs to occur.

The areas needing improvement, as discussed in this report, could be taken as a list of activities that would form a plan of action. This may result in some progress, but it will likely be unsustainable and inconsistent. For implementing these without further analysis does not address some of the root and systemic reasons for the less than optimal organisational performance and programming. Moreover, each of them requires substantive change in not only practice, but also changes in attitudes and strengthening of skills and knowledge. They cannot be implemented by decree.

The evaluation team recommends that the Commonwealth Secretariat undergo an organisational change process. This would start with a strategic analysis of its strengths, weakness, opportunities and challenges to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. This needs to include a serious and realistic assessment of its comparative advantage and the costs and benefits of its current strategies. Such an organisational change process would also include the establishment and implementation of a change management plan to create an enabling environment for the Commonwealth Secretariat to enhance its general effectiveness, quality, other cross-cutting issues and, ultimately, its contribution to gender equality.

6. CONCLUSION

In common with many other multilateral and bilateral agencies, the energy and momentum towards gender equality and focus on gender mainstreaming as a tool has diminished over the past ten years. The Gender Management mechanisms instigated after 1998 have not been sufficiently embedded to become routine and sustainable. As a consequence the Secretariat cannot be said to be mainstreaming gender at present.

There are many areas in which it has made a significant contribution to gender equality, including:

- the gender mainstreaming publications, which provide useful resources for increasing knowledge and awareness
- the WAMMs, which provide an opportunity for experience-sharing at a high level and serve to maintain a focus on gender. They raise awareness of and help identify critical issues such as peace and conflict or human rights which later translate into programme issues within the PoA
- where a gender dimension is mainstreamed into projects, major contributions can be made to improving gender equality such as in HIV/AIDs
- the development of effective strategic partnerships such as with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in Trinidad and Tobago
- the provision of sound technical assistance for country or regional projects
- provision of knowledge and encouragement to some governments in the use of gender budgeting

In response to Objective 1 of the audit:

To assess the degree to which the Secretariat's strategy for gender equality and gender mainstreaming has been understood by Secretariat staff and its consultants, incorporated into management practices and effectively integrated into the preparation, design and implementation of programmes and projects.

Within the organisation, the systems and structures do not facilitate gender mainstreaming: there is no gender policy; budgets and reporting mechanisms and reward systems do not encourage cross-divisional working and synergies; they also provide more encouragement for the gender section to work externally than within the organisation; staff are committed to gender equality in principle, but do not have the understanding of the changes required nor the knowledge and skills to implement.

In response to Objective 2:

To assess the quality and impact of the Secretariat's programme for gender equality:

The field visits revealed that the demand-driven approach, breadth of programmes and limited resources means the organisation has a narrow opportunity to affect gender equality results in member states. Some greater success was identified with Gender Specific (GSPEC) initiatives but the majority of programmes reviewed were gender blind and in danger of reinforcing men's superiority, women's subordination and the consequent asymmetrical gender relations.

Given the continued commitment to gender equality, it is now time to redouble effort and either improve the quality of what currently happens, while acknowledging that gender mainstreaming is more aspirational than actual; take a different approach which might be more commensurate with the Secretariat's resources and role in the international arena; or commit to the significant organisational changes which are required for successfully mainstreaming gender.

7. AN ACTION FRAMEWORK

Subsequent to a feedback discussion with divisional representatives on the draft synthesis report, the following action framework is presented as a summary of agreed priorities.

Stage 1. Organisational changes

The first step is for a formal gender policy to be drafted and endorsed by senior management for internal Secretariat use, to underpin gender mainstreaming and gender equality. This policy would include the following key points:

- A clear mandate for all divisions and individual staff members to comply with the policy in their work
- A clear mandate for the Gender Section to reallocate time for internal ABC work; structures and mechanisms to formalise this role and support it
- The reinstatement of a Gender Steering Committee to provide high-level leadership, monitor progress; ensure accountability of programme and project managers; oversee structures and mechanisms; and support the ABC work of the Gender Section
- An organisational commitment to creating or refocusing systems and structures which facilitate and reward cross-divisional collaboration (which will also be relevant to other cross-cutting themes)
- Introduction to the new Gender Guidelines as the common basis for practical design, implementation and monitoring of gender equality and gender mainstreaming for all programmes and project work
- A commitment to developing a lesson learning ethos within the organisation, through open and regular exchange of ideas, experience and best practice, sharing and celebrating success
- The need for an organisational framework for measuring progress on a two-year cycle, which dovetails with the PoA monitoring framework agreed at 8WAMM.

The gender policy would also include commitment to the following aspects:

Human resources

Recruitment policy should state that gender sensitivity is one of the criteria for all personnel and consultants. The gender policy should be sent to candidates for all long and short-term posts and signed by all new staff on appointment. The staff appraisal system should include a formal check on how the commitment to gender equality and mainstreaming is carried out.

Programme quality

There should be systematic integration of gender in the new strategic plan, so that gender equality and mainstreaming are owned by all divisions and not just the Gender Section. This to be achieved through the following key actions:

- The establishment of cross-divisional programme teams with a named gender advisor as a full member of each team
- Gender aspects should be considered at each stage of the programme cycle (following the guidelines)
- Monitoring and evaluation should involve shared accountability for (gender) indicators between all team members in each programme. Organisational progress towards gender equality/mainstreaming will be most clearly identified by meeting programme gender targets.

Projects

The gender codes should be taken off PIMS and this practice should be replaced by the use of the checklist in the gender guidelines, starting from the identification and design stage onwards. The focus in project preparation and documentation should be on how a project will contribute to gender equality.

Project design should include some level of involvement of the Gender Section.

Appraisal of the gender aspect of projects should be carried out by PMRU with the help of a gender specialist (preferably an internal gender advisor) with reference to the gender guidelines and the gender quality assurance score sheet (included in this report under Appendix 2).

Recognition of the need to provide in-country capacity-building for POCs and other key government personnel in relation to integrating gender issues in project identification, delivery, evaluation and further application, as well as promoting cross-sectoral collaboration in relation to gender.

Civil society

Organisational commitment to develop coherent relationship with the Commonwealth Foundation, recognising civil society as key stakeholders in implementing the gender equality policy and the need for women's voices to be heard at all stages in the project, including the identification stage.

Stage 2. Follow-up action

The second stage will consist of establishing the (above outlined) practice and procedures which the organisation has committed itself to by introducing the policy. Key activities here will include:

Organisational

Involvement of divisional heads in the discussion on refocusing the work of the gender team to ensure reallocation of time spent on internal influencing, providing technical advice, continuing to develop cross-sectoral initiatives and promoting innovation.

In order to ensure political as well as development impact, the location of the Gender Unit should be discussed in connection with:

- the reinstatement of Global Focal Points or a different system of thematic/gender specialist appointments in each division and
- the internal ABC mandate of the Gender Section, including programme team membership and support for PMRU as well as collaboration/advice specifically on high-level meetings.

Human Resources

Staff appraisal sheets should include how the individual has contributed to gender equality.

A mandatory capacity-building programme should be established on gender equality/mainstreaming, which is ongoing in order to address the turnover and rotation of staff.

Job descriptions for Gender Focal Points (or divisional specialists) should be drawn up in order to clarify their role and responsibilities as regards gender equality/mainstreaming and

also in relation to the other aspects of their workload. Selection of GFPs/division-based advisors needs to be based on expertise and authority. Recognition of the role and support for it needs to be provided by the home division and by senior management.

Ways of working towards programme quality

- Establish ongoing professional development, particularly for Heads of Division, to ensure good design, project appraisal and project monitoring
- Development of programme specific guidelines, team training and ongoing support for the systematic use of the gender checklist
- Establish a programme for staff exchange/celebration days (not just for gender)
- Develop mechanisms for cross-divisional programme monitoring and dovetail indicators with the PoA monitoring framework.

Projects

Ensure that gender disaggregated statistics are i) collected ii) published iii) discussed and iv) lessons learned are applied in future programming and project identification and design.

Pilot appraisals by PMRU with gender advisors, using the gender guidelines and quality assurance checklists.

Develop training of training courses for government personnel (POCs and other key representatives).

Stage 3: Consolidation

Given the wide remit of the Gender Unit and the need for gender expertise to inform and support the re-establishment and implementation of internal systems, it is recommended that the Commonwealth Secretariat considers using external gender consultants to supplement work with divisions in the practical move towards meeting gender targets. Additional support would be useful in the following areas:

- designing sector specific guidelines for the new strategic programmes, drawing on expert publications of the gender section, for example on trade and SMEs.
- delivering corresponding training workshops for each of the strategic programme teams
- examining and advising on how disaggregated statistics can be constructively used in programme development
- reporting on the effectiveness of training; making modifications to the guidelines as appropriate
- giving further advice to consolidate the corporate use of disaggregated statistics; advocacy; incorporating a gender perspective into government work and design of projects at country level
- in collaboration with HR and GS, developing a plan for regular future delivery of the gender training programme (using in-house expertise and /or external support)
- training of trainers at country or regional level for more systematic and cross-sectoral application of GBI, GFPs and monitoring of progress.

Stage 4. Internal monitoring every two years

Draft standards, which were developed during the internal review of the audit, are appended to the synthesis report under Appendix 1. The standards relate to the action framework above as

well as to the gender guidelines for programmes and projects. They could be used as a basis for organisational self-monitoring.

**APPENDIX 1: DRAFT STANDARDS FOR INTERNAL MONITORING
OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING**

INPUTS (1-2)	
1. How effectively is gender mainstreamed <u>within the Secretariat?</u>	Standards
Institutional structure and culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Organisational culture actively promotes inclusion, diversity and open debate b) Operational systems actively facilitate cross-divisional communication and collaboration c) Information systems promote transparency as regards decision-making around resource allocation d) There is a gender mainstreaming policy with clear guidelines for compliance e) Gender mainstreaming is clearly located within the overall institutional strategy with appropriate resourcing f) Common approach and commitment to cross-cutting issues g) Institution knowledge is not lost on rotation h) There are incentives for staff to be proactive, innovative and collaborative i) The organisation promotes lesson learning and facilitates the internal dissemination of best practice on a regular basis
Leadership/Senior management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Gender mainstreaming is driven by senior management b) Leaders clearly articulate the meaning and importance of gender mainstreaming and seek/take advantage of opportunities to actively promote gender equity inside and outside the organisation c) Gatekeepers actively facilitate the integration of gender in all activities d) Commitment to gender mainstreaming is reflected in the promotion of compliance with agreed practice
Thematic work (divisions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Each division has a Plan of Action for gender mainstreaming b) Divisional directors/programme managers/leaders actively promote gender equality within their division and in relation to their work c) Divisions proactively seek out contact with the Gender Section on a regular basis d) Divisions automatically comply with agreed systems for gender mainstreaming practice e) Gender is mainstreamed in all projects and

	<p>programmes</p> <p>f) PIMS is used conscientiously as a self-check on gender sensitivity</p>
General human resource management	<p>a) Recruitment documents and procedures clearly promote equality/equity (and encourage women's participation)</p> <p>b) Induction programme on gender and EO/diversity provided to all new staff</p> <p>c) Continued professional development in relation to gender issues</p> <p>d) Disaggregated appointment and deployment data is reviewed annually</p> <p>e) Balance in numbers of men and women recruited into short and long term consultancy positions</p> <p>f) Routine screening of the gender/ethnicity profile of appointees to identify progress in gender equity</p> <p>g) Balance in numbers of South-South versus North to South transference of expertise</p> <p>h) Staff appraisal system includes consideration of gender sensitivity and expertise</p> <p>i) Working practices are flexible and family friendly</p>
Finance and management information	<p>a) All statistics disaggregated by sex, ethnicity and age are reviewed annually</p> <p>b) Sufficient resource allocation to gender activity in all regions</p> <p>c) Proportion of CFTC funds allocated to gender mainstreaming projects</p>
Communication and Public Affairs	<p>All public materials (e.g. website, leaflets, reports) and communications (e.g. media) demonstrate Commonwealth Secretariat's commitment to promoting gender equality and provide the rationale for this</p>
Other corporate services as appropriate	

Strategic planning and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) Strategic planning documents illustrate that gender is mainstreamed, through use of gender objectives, activities, targets and indicatorsb) Appraisal/analysis of all strategic objectives in relation to the interests and needs of women and menc) Compulsory capacity-building/training ensures that all staff have an awareness and skills to implement the strategy within their particular area of workd) All review and evaluation TORs and reports contain a gender dimensione) Evaluations contain disaggregated data considering impact on women and men
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<p>2. How effectively is gender mainstreaming within the Secretariat catalysed <u>through the Gender Section</u>?</p>	<p>Standards</p>
<p>Strategy development</p> <p>Advocacy, Brokering and Catalysing</p> <p>Expert advice</p> <p>Knowledge Based Network/Help Desk</p> <p>Formal and informal relationships</p> <p>Gender mainstreaming publications</p> <p>Institutional Guidelines</p> <p>Quality Assurance</p> <p>Training</p> <p>Other institutional mainstreaming systems (steering committee, focal points etc)</p> <p>Collaboration with individual divisions</p>	<p>Section's own strategic plan clearly shows how their activities combined will meet programme objectives</p> <p>An internal influencing strategy for ABC</p> <p>All divisions proactively seek advice</p> <p>a) Programme managers use the Help Desk in a timely fashion in development/implementation of activities b) Use of the Help Desk is monitored and reviewed annually</p> <p>Induction process includes effective handover of institutional knowledge for new staff</p> <p>a) Strategic plan for allocation of budget to publications b) Dissemination and use of publications is monitored annually</p> <p>Institutional guidelines for compliance with gender mainstreaming policy are revised and updated regularly</p> <p>Use of gender monitoring codes (gender mainstreaming in projects and programmes) is monitored and analysed annually and recommendations made for improved practice</p> <p>Section provides expert advice on appropriate training and monitors its impact</p> <p>The section services agreed systems, e.g. through documentation of meetings; monitoring and providing an annual review of effectiveness</p> <p>a) A strategic balance in time allocation between internal collaboration and the section's own external activities is agreed on and reviewed annually b) Gender Section keeps abreast of projects, high-level meetings and other activities in other divisions</p>

<p>Monitoring evaluation and reporting</p>	<p>a) Milestones and indicators at different levels of the gender logframe enable progress to be easily monitored on an annual basis b) Impact and lesson learning is disseminated throughout the Secretariat</p> <p>INDICATORS OF IMPACT WITHIN THE SECRETARIAT Staff are able to articulate their understanding of gender mainstreaming/equality</p> <p>Increased commitment and responsibility to pro-actively promoting gender equality</p> <p>Increased skills and capacity to mainstream gender into own work</p> <p>Operational systems increasingly engendered</p> <p>Increased (and effective) use of systems and guidelines</p> <p>Gender mainstreamed into strategic plan/programme objectives</p> <p>Gender increasingly integrated into projects, high-level meetings and programme-related activities</p> <p>Enhanced coordination and leadership of gender mainstreaming at management level, including compliance with systems and gatekeepers facilitating the agenda</p>
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<p>ACTIVITIES 3-4-5</p>	
<p>3. How effectively is gender mainstreamed in projects?</p>	<p>Standards (also see gender guidelines)</p>
<p>Resource allocation</p>	<p>Proportion of funds allocated to gender specific projects/increased resources on gender mainstreaming projects</p>
<p>Targeting</p>	<p>Strategic targeting of projects by PoCs, others in national government and Secretariat staff promotes gender equality issues.</p>
<p>Identification</p>	<p>Identification involves links with other government ministries, NWMs, civil society and other partners</p>
<p>Objectives</p>	<p>Are expressed in terms of how the project</p>

Design	<p>contributes to objectives of the PoA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Takes into account men and women in terms of needs and interests, participation, benefit and influence b) Designed to address structural/institutional blockages to gender equality
Indicators	<p>Key indicators relating to impact on women's empowerment, gender roles and relations, developing an enabling environment for gender equality</p>
Appraisal	<p>All projects appraised for contribution to gender equality</p>
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How are men and women involved as participants, decision makers, consultants and partners b) Commonwealth Secretariat gender resources (staff, materials) are drawn on to support the project c) The project helps to publicise the commitment to gender equality d) All projects contribute in some way to gender equality
Monitoring	<p>PIMS sheet asks HOW gender is mainstreamed and requires more than perfunctory action.</p>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Qualitative as well as quantitative methods are used b) All data is disaggregated c) Women as well as men are involved in the evaluation
Results	<p>Results are measured against realistic indicators in the strategic and operational plans.</p>
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) All impact assessments include contribution to gender equality b) Assessment of longer term sustainability, up-scaling, replication elsewhere, wider influence

<p>4. How effectively is gender mainstreamed in high-level meetings (policy development)?</p>	<p>Standards (also see gender guidelines)</p>
<p>Partnerships</p>	<p>a) Key partners e.g. civil society are enabled to take part/shape agendas for meetings b) Strategy of ABC with key partners</p>
<p>Targeting</p>	<p>a) Opportunities for integrating gender issues are identified automatically b) Positive action taken to include women in the process c) Key players e.g. Heads of State targeted for involvement</p>
<p>Preparation</p>	<p>a) Governments encouraged to send women participants b) Gender briefing papers prepared c) Attendance by representatives of the Gender Section</p>
<p>Conduct of meetings</p>	<p>a) Women chairs for meetings and task groups b) Opportunity for women only groups to discuss issues c) Women-only issues included in the agenda</p>
<p>Policies developed</p>	<p>All policies include a gender dimension</p>
<p>Subsequent strategy development</p>	<p>a) Strategies include gender activities, targets and indicators b) Strategies are realistic</p>
<p>Implementation</p>	<p>a) In-country planning groups are operational b) In-country monitoring groups feed back on progress</p>
<p>Reporting and Evaluation</p>	<p>All reports include sections on how gender equality has been included</p>
<p>Impact</p>	<p>The impact of high-level meetings is evaluated, including their contribution to gender equality</p>

<p>5. How effectively is gender mainstreamed in <u>programme-related activities</u> at country level?</p>	<p>Standards</p>
<p>Publications</p> <p>Capacity-building: seminars, workshops, training courses</p> <p>Technical support: short- and long-term consultants</p> <p>Communication and collaboration with PoCs and other government representatives</p> <p>Monitoring, evaluation and reporting</p>	<p>a) Impact of gender publications is monitored: the extent to which they are used as a resource for training/education assessed.</p> <p>b) Distribution of gender-related publications is regularly checked (to all Heads of Government, POCs, NWMs, partners, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) etc)</p> <p>a) Number of male and female participants routinely collected and discussed, any imbalances addressed</p> <p>b) All training includes a gender dimension</p> <p>c) Impact of training on women and men is assessed</p> <p>a) Gender balance in appointees</p> <p>b) Gender sensitivity among appointees</p> <p>c) Roster includes 50% female consultants</p> <p>d) At least 50% of short-term consultants are female</p> <p>e) Strategies in place to inform and encourage governments to seek gender balance in TC</p> <p>a) Gender equality and PoA are highlighted</p> <p>b) Support is provided for incorporating a gender perspective into government work (GBI, GFP) and design of projects</p> <p>c) Strategic targeting of gender specific projects through the POC</p> <p>c) Linkages between projects, partners and plans help to maximise and sustain impact</p> <p>All reports include a section on how gender has been included</p>

APPENDIX 2: GENDER EQUALITY QUALITY ASSURANCE SCORE SHEET (1)

PROJECTS/PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES

TITLE OF PROJECT/PROGRAMME ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY CODE

DIVISION /SECTION

Indicators and associated quality standards	Score	Comments
Indicator 1: Appropriateness of objectives and design		
1.1. Objectives clear and realistic		
1.2. Objectives consistent with the PoA for Gender Equality		
1.3. Objectives consistent with the gender objectives within the Strategic Plan		
1.4. Beneficiaries needs are reflected in the objectives and differential needs and interests of women as well as men are highlighted		
1.5. Objectives consistent with national development priorities for gender equality and endorsed by the PoC		
1.6. Implementing partners and other stakeholders clearly identified, are appropriate and have actively participated and contributed at the design stage		
1.7. Design process takes account of other projects and evidence is provided of how lessons and possible complementarity have been incorporated		
1.8. Milestones include specific action relating to gender balance; positive action; and results for women and men		
1.9. Indicators include concrete results for women as well as men; impact on women's empowerment; development of an enabling environment (addressing structural or institutional blockages to gender equality)		
1.10. Resourcing targets women and men equally and takes into account any additional resourcing needed to ensure equal participation of and benefit to women; resources are targeted appropriately to meet the gender objectives		
1.11. Risks in relation to participation of women and gender impact have been identified and measures taken to address them		
1.12. Monitoring framework includes sex-disaggregated statistics		
1.13. Adequate appraisal undertaken. Appraisal recommendations have been incorporated into final design		
1.14. Project manager has appropriate knowledge and		

skills in gender mainstreaming		
Overall score for Indicator 1		

Indicators and associated quality standards	Score	Comments
Indicator 2: Appropriateness of implementation		
2.1 The project helps to publicise the commitment to gender equality		
2.2. Application forms make explicit how women will be encouraged/enabled to take part		
2.3. TORs encourage women applicants; include gender sensitivity as a competence; make reference to the gender aspects of the project		
2.4. Specialist gender resources (staff, materials) drawn on to support the project		
2.5. BTORs show how men and women are involved as participants, decision makers, consultants and partners		
2.6. Reports show how men and women are involved as participants, decision makers, consultants and partners		
2.7. Feedback from participants shows how women have benefited and how appropriate the activities were		
2.8. Project activities can be seen to be contributing to greater gender equality		
2.9. Activities which contribute to meeting the gender indicators being given sufficient attention and resources		
2.10 Risks to gender equality been mitigated. Any new risks have been identified and addressed		
Overall Score for Indicator 2		
Indicator 3: Appropriateness of completion		
3.1. Reporting requirements include reference to gender objectives and gender mainstreaming goals		
3.2. Sex-disaggregated data are use to comment on the success of positive action and positive impact		
3.3. A range of stakeholders, women as well as men, involved in internal review/evaluation		
3.4. The PCR addresses impact on gender impact adequately		
3.5. Lessons learned are shared within the Secretariat		

and external partners and followed up at individual, divisional, institutional and Commonwealth level		
3.6. Evaluation studies include reference to how the project has contributed to gender equality		
3.7. Sustainability of impact has been considered and measures for follow-up support have been addressed where necessary		
Overall score for Indicator 3		

GENERAL COMMENTS

SPECIFIC ISSUES IN RELATION TO FIELD VISITS

(e.g. appropriate/recommended for field visit inclusion; any specific questions or aspects to follow up during field visits)

Scoring system

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 5. Best practice: | over and above normal; innovative; a model to follow |
| 4. Fully satisfactory: | normally as good as it gets; fully satisfies requirements; only a few minor weaknesses |
| 3. Satisfactory overall: | strengths outweigh the weaknesses |
| 2. Marginally satisfactory: | weaknesses outweigh the strengths and need for gender issues to be addressed if the project is to progress |
| 1. Weak: | seriously deficient with widespread problems, which need to be decisively and immediately addressed |

APPENDIX 3. GENDER EQUALITY QUALITY ASSURANCE SCORE SHEET (2)

HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS

TITLE OF MEETING

ACTIVITY CODE

DIVISION/SECTION

Indicators and associated quality standards	Score	Comments
Indicator 1: Appropriateness of objectives and design		
1.1. Planned outcomes include gender equality/equity issues		
1.2. Objectives consistent with the PoA for Gender Equality		
1.3. Objectives consistent with the gender objectives within the Strategic Plan		
1.4. Objectives relate to gender issues raised in previous meetings		
1.5. Partners and other stakeholders clearly identified, are appropriate and have actively participated and contributed at the design stage		
1.6. Design process takes account of relevant gender-related Commonwealth Secretariat projects/activities and evidence is provided of how lessons and possible complementarity have been incorporated		
1.7. Design takes gender into account, as regards sex of participants, speakers, chairs, facilitators etc as well as topics for discussion		
1.8. Adequate documentation is provided to support the gender equality/equity objectives		
1.9. Risks in relation to participation of women and gender impact have been identified and measures taken to address them		
1.10. Monitoring plans include sex-disaggregated statistics (participation list, male and female feedback)		
Overall score for Indicator 1		

Indicators and associated quality standards	Score	Comments
Indicator 2: Appropriateness of implementation		
2.1 The meeting helps to publicise the commitment to gender equality		
2.2. Invitations make explicit how women will be encouraged/enabled to take part		
2.3. Specialist gender resources (staff, materials) drawn on to support the meeting		
2.4. Activities which contribute to meeting the gender objectives have been given sufficient attention and resources		
2.5 Risks to gender equality been mitigated. Any new risks have been identified and addressed		
Overall Score for Indicator 2		
Indicator 3: Appropriateness of completion		
3.1. All outcomes of the meeting include a gender equality dimension (communiqués, policies, action plans etc)		
3.2. Reporting requirements (BTORs, debriefing, feedback and review reports) include reference to gender objectives and gender mainstreaming goals		
3.3. Reports show how men and women are involved as participants, decision makers, consultants and partners		
3.4. Feedback from participants shows how women have benefited and how appropriate the activities were		
3.5. Sustainability of outcomes has been considered and measures for follow-up support have been addressed where necessary		
Overall score for Indicator 3		

GENERAL COMMENTS

SPECIFIC ISSUES TO EXPLORE IN RELATION TO FIELD VISITS

Scoring system

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| 5. Best practice: | over and above normal; innovative; a model to follow |
| 4. Fully satisfactory: | normally as good as it gets; fully satisfies requirements; only a few minor weaknesses |
| 3. Satisfactory overall: | strengths outweigh the weaknesses |
| 2. Marginally satisfactory: | weaknesses outweigh the strengths and need for gender issues to be addressed if the project is to progress |
| 1. Weak: | seriously deficient with widespread problems, which need to be decisively and immediately addressed |

APPENDIX 4: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INTERNAL REVIEW, JULY 2006

Action Area 1: Clarification of commitment and responsibility to gender mainstreaming within the Secretariat

Strong leadership is necessary to drive the gender agenda forward and it is recommended that the following measures be adopted by senior management to provide a clear mandate for all staff and reconfirm the Secretariat's commitment:

A Gender Policy: a clear policy statement which formalises the commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming and which makes clear the accountability of all staff.

A Set of Standards: for the organisation; for each Division; and for individuals, against which performance assessment can be measured at the different levels.

Working Guidelines: a separate Set of Working Guidelines for regular use by staff in their programme/project management work.

Gender Monitoring System: linked to the gender objectives and indicators in the Strategic Plan and the stages of the project cycle in the Working Guidelines, a single system which is overseen by senior management and reviewed on a regular basis.

Gender Focal Points: the reactivation of the GFP system with specific responsibilities written into the job description and a recognised, institutionalised role within the Division, as well as a corporate mandate to implement the gender monitoring system.

Action Area 2: Technical support for Divisions to underpin gender mainstreaming through each of the strategic programme areas

In order to ensure that all Divisions are able to confidently and effectively promote gender equality goals through the Secretariat's strategic programme areas, the following action areas are recommended:

A set of guidelines for each programme: with specific examples, to support the integration of gender into the project cycle, drawing on case studies, checklists and analyses from the Gender Mainstreaming publications.

Training and on-the-job technical support: for the practical implementation of gender mainstreaming in projects and programmes, in particular setting objectives and indicators.

Developing best practice: mechanisms for sharing best practice and collaborating on the development of innovative approaches.

Use of sex-disaggregated data: a common system of collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data for all programmes and projects, to be used for monitoring and future planning.

Cross-divisional programme monitoring groups: including a gender adviser, which meet regularly to review progress and to coordinate activities in member countries.

Action Area 3: Development of the gender-sensitive workforce

To ensure that all staff have an individual commitment to, and understanding of, gender equality and also have the technical skills to mainstream gender into their work, the following recommendations are made:

Recruitment: the recruitment and selection processes for both Secretariat staff and consultants should overtly address gender sensitivity.

Induction: orientation for all new staff on the PoA, gender equality and gender mainstreaming issues.

Gender awareness: a new training programme for gender awareness be re-instituted for all new staff.

Gender analysis for project management: a training programme for existing staff, to support gender mainstreaming in their operational work. The most effective model would be to provide specific training for the different strategic programme areas.

Change management training: for key actors, including senior managers and Gender Focal Points.

Open discussion: formal and informal mechanisms for debate and sharing best practice in gender mainstreaming, for example:

- discussion forums or seminars on gender issues;
- exchange of experience via the new intranet;
- other events to celebrate women's rights and diversity in general.

Action Area 4: Refocusing of the strategy of the Gender Section

In order to support and develop the above measures, it is strongly recommended that the balance of work of the gender advisers between external projects and internal advisory support be redressed. This implies a higher profile for the Gender Section within the Secretariat and a reallocation of time spent on internal influencing, providing technical advice, continuing to develop cross-sectoral initiatives and promoting innovation. Key areas for development are as follows:

An internal advocacy strategy: targeting key players including OSG and ExCom.

Formalising relationships: developing systematic relationships with divisions, so that methods and areas of collaboration are formally established and can survive changes of personnel.

Strategic technical support: supporting gender mainstreaming in the strategic programme areas.

Training: working with Human Resources Section and SPED to develop and oversee regular induction and training programmes.

Monitoring progress: through the implementation of a Gender Monitoring System in collaboration with SPED and Gender Focal Points.

Civil Society: working with the Commonwealth Foundation and the Civil Society Liaison Adviser to develop a joint strategy for gender mainstreaming in collaboration with civil society.

The Working Guidelines for Integrating Gender in Project Management which accompany this report have been designed to underpin the integration of gender in project management, through a systematic approach to project and programme design, which highlights gender aspects at each stage of the process. They aim to establish the relevance of gender mainstreaming at project and activity level and provide evidence of concrete achievements. They provide the foundation for a single monitoring system, which clearly links projects and activities upwards to strategic gender equality programme objectives.