



Women Leaders' Summit: Building a Roadmap to 2020

Brief Information

1. Background

We look forward to welcoming you to the Commonwealth Women Leaders' Summit on 14 July 2016 to discuss gender equality and women's empowerment. This will be the inaugural gender equality event convened by the Secretary-General and the results will form part of the Secretariat's Gender Equality Framework **2020**.

The event will bring together female leaders from all parts of the Commonwealth to agree practical steps on that journey and include the three specific subject areas: Violence Against Women and Girls, Women in Leadership and Women's Economic Empowerment.

The process will also provide an opportunity to broker new partnerships between the Commonwealth Secretariat and other organisations working in this sphere.

This document sets out some of the background on the challenges that you will be very familiar with. What we want to ensure is that on the day all guests participate in making this an action-orientated event, practically looking at how the Commonwealth can better deliver for women and girls.

Your contribution is vital towards us developing our action plan. We hope you will share your ideas, experience and energy with us as we work to turn this shared agenda into action.



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Areas of Focus

2.1 Ending violence against women and girls

Some Key Issues¹

Some religious and cultural practices have victimized and oppressed women and girls

Child marriage most often occurs in poor, rural communities. In many regions, parents arrange their daughter's marriage unbeknownst to the girl. That can mean that one day, she may be at home playing with her siblings and the next, she's married off and sent to live in another village with her husband and his family - strangers, essentially. She is pulled out of school. She is separated from her peers. And once married, she is more likely to be a victim of domestic violence and suffer health complications associated with early sexual activity and childbearing. One third of girls in the developing world are married before the age of 18 and 1 in 9 are married before the age of 15. In 2012, 70 million women 20-24 around the world had been married before the age of 18.

Commercial sexual exploitation of children

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is the use of a child for sexual purposes in exchange for cash or kind favors between the child, intermediary or agent and others that profit for the trade in children for these purposes². Experiences from many countries indicate that the social, economic, cultural and political changes in these societies provide a relative breeding ground for the exploitation of children. Commercial sexual exploitation of children is an infraction of the fundamental human rights of children. The United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child provides that State Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse while in care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has care of the child³.

Law reforms, enforcement and cooperation is critical

Legislative and other changes to better protect women and girls, and all survivors of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women continue to be priorities at national, regional and international levels of development. Unacceptable controlling, domineering and demeaning behaviors currently fall outside some of the laws of Commonwealth members, and cumulative harms are ignored when each abusive incident is treated as an isolated offence.

¹ It is to be noted, that the issues provided are **only some** of the issues relevant for discussion and experts may have others to add during the working group discussions.

² United Nations.

³ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, reprinted in 28 I.L.M. 1148, art. 19(1).



Opportunity costs and data on violence

The high cost of violence on societies and in particular, the economic impacts of violence against women and children are lacking in assessment and national accounting. Countries continue to be faced with challenges with the collection of sex-disaggregated data on prevalence of VAW.



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2.2 Women's economic empowerment

Some Key Issues⁴

Inclusive growth that promotes opportunity for all

Economic growth is the most powerful tool we have for realizing a commonwealth free of poverty. The Commonwealth needs inclusive growth that promotes opportunity for all, and that requires the full participation of men and women.

Women globally still earn less, own less, run smaller businesses, employ fewer people, and create fewer jobs than men, and they remain vastly more vulnerable to poverty. They are also far less likely than men to have access to a bank account, mobile money provider, or other financial service. All of this adds up to a costly missed opportunity for women, families, and economies.

Increased capacity for international trade and economic development

Increased capacity for international trade and economic development has been highlighted as a solution to poverty reduction but macro-economic policies and trade liberalisation has not always translated into economic gains for both men and women. A disproportionate number of small and medium sized enterprises (SME's) are women owned and do not have access to procurement opportunities available to larger corporations due to barriers including limited access to finance for growth and investment, weak networks, lack of knowledge on how to access the tendering process, and an inability to conform to the required international standards due to failure to obtain appropriate accreditation.

Under-representation of women accessing procurement opportunities

This under-representation of women accessing procurement opportunities, both as large, medium and small enterprises constrains women owned businesses from reaching their full potential. There is clearly a need to utilise female engagement within the business supply chain, thereby strengthening economies throughout the Commonwealth.

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Access to finance is a particular issue for women entrepreneurs

Access to finance is a particular issue for women entrepreneurs at all stages of business development with more women than men fearing that a lack of finance and a fear of debt would prevent them from starting a business. Small, young and home-based firms often face greater difficulties accessing finance. These types of firms are more likely to be started and owned by women. Gender-based differences in access to finance may explain why female-owned firms tend to be smaller and concentrated in highly competitive sectors with low entry barriers. If women are unable to access business finance on equitable terms, the growth of their firms may be constrained, with flow-on implications for economic growth.

Access to full and productive employment and decent work is crucial for all

Gender inequality remains an issue within labour markets globally. Women suffer multiple disadvantages in terms of access to labour markets, and often do not have the same level of freedom as men to choose to work. Gender differences in labour force participation rates and unemployment rates are a persistent feature of global labour markets. Women are overrepresented in the agricultural sector, and if the more industrialized regions are excluded, almost half of female employment can be found in this sector alone. Women are also often in a disadvantaged position in terms of the share of vulnerable employment (i.e. unpaid family workers and own-account workers) in total employment. Access to full and productive employment and decent work is crucial for all, and decent work deficits are the primary cause of poverty and social instability.



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2.3 Women in leadership

Some Key Issues⁵

Exclusion of women's perspectives in decision-making

Women represent a huge economic opportunity. In 2009, globally women earned \$13 trillion which was double the combined GDP of China and India (\$5.6 trillion). (Silverstein & Sayre 2009). Greater board diversity through the inclusion of more women on boards has also been shown to improve performance and lead to greater investment and ethical behaviour (McKinsey). Women make up half of the population and yet there are currently less than a handful of Commonwealth female heads of government. With the continued exclusion of women's perspectives at the highest levels of decision-making, we cannot hope to achieve truly sustainable and equitable development solutions for commonwealth citizens.

Women are systematically discriminated at the household, community and institutional level

Women are systematically discriminated at the household, community and institutional level throughout the life-cycle by cultures of patriarchy, misogyny and discriminative practices within institutions that perpetuate cultural stereotypes and social norms, leading to gender inequalities and cultural stereotypes, perpetuated by both men and women alike, that prevent women from taking up leadership positions

Access to leadership is often based on socio-economic status and links to the ruling class within a society. This impacts on women who may be poorer than their male counterparts due to differing levels of access to resources and the formal economy. While women represent more than half of the workforce there are very few women leaders in comparison to men. Women's time constraints and their responsibilities as carers for children, the sick and the elderly alongside household chores impact on available opportunities for leadership.

The socialisation of girls and boys into specific gender roles from a young age, and their choice of interests according what is deemed to be socially acceptable for their gender, may prevent young women from obtaining certain academic qualifications, for example; in traditionally male dominated areas and STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), or from pursuing a particular pathway that may be considered unconventional but could lead to great success. Gender norms which see young girls who are loud and know what they want as 'bossy' and young boys who do the same as 'assertive' and by association

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potentially ‘better’ leaders can also inhibit the gateway for young women to take up leadership roles later in their careers.

Narrow definitions of leadership support embrace strong characteristics and the so called ‘hard’ skills that are perceived to be traditionally male (such as decision-making, prioritising, strategic analysis) and ignore the ‘soft’ skills that are traditionally associated with being female (such as communication, teamwork and emotional intelligence). Both sets of characteristics are equally important to successful leadership and there is a need for a new 21st century governance to embrace this and to encourage new ways of working that are more inclusive and open to innovation.

The lack of access to adequate and comprehensive data on women in leadership is also problematic and more robust methods of robust data collection, monitoring and evaluation are required so corrective measures can be taken to redress the balance. Women are often deemed to be ‘invisible’ and as such, miss out on opportunities to be put forwards for leadership roles. As a result, those women leaders who are seen and who have been recognised often suffer from being nominated for many leadership positions and will serve on multiple boards while women with the potential for leadership remain hidden.

The exclusion of women from informal male networks is also a challenge.

The exclusion of women from informal male networks is also a challenge. Much business is conducted in informal networks away from the board room, on the golf course or in private members clubs. Boardroom culture must be adapted to be more transparent in its working methods and to allow equal participation and respect for all, including women who may have less mobility and access due to additional childcare responsibilities.

Young women’s lack of access to resources in terms of finance, adequate education and opportunities and networks.

The building of a pipeline of women for future leadership positions is also a challenge, given young women’s lack of access to resources in terms of finance, adequate education and opportunities and networks. There is also a need to build the demand for more women on boards to prevent young women from being demotivated through the lack of opportunities or the stress of trying to thrive in a male dominated culture without the relevant support and stretch opportunities being given.

The more recent phenomenon of women jumping from the public sector to the private sector in order to create faster career progression must also be taken in consideration. It is only through equal participation of both men and women in public sector decision-making roles that we will achieve truly sustainable socio-economic growth.

Women’s corporate leadership

- What strategies can the private sector employ to encourage more women into leadership positions and to support greater board diversity?
- What strategies can be employed by companies to ensure the retention of talented women leaders through more inclusive working environments and business practices?



- What can governments and businesses do to address the gap in the care economy which while underpinning the global economy, inhibits women from taking on leadership roles due to the consistent reliance on free labour and under-valuing of reproductive and care roles?

Women's political leadership

- How can we avoid the backlash following the successful election of women into parliamentary positions which leads to their de-selection in the next round due to their inability to fix 'all' the problems?
- What can be done to prevent the over-scrutiny and criticism of women in leadership who are rarely judged by the same standards as their male counterparts and who are often upheld to be the panacea to extremely complex global issues?
- As long as women have limited access to finance, time and resources they will always be on the back foot when it comes successful campaigning for political office. What can be done to support more young women into leadership roles?
- What role can civil society play in supporting women leaders?

Questions for both political and corporate leadership

- What strategies can be employed by both business and governments to break the institutional norms that operate on patriarchal lines and systematically exclude women from access to and influence within key networks essential for effective leadership?
- What, policies, rules and regulations should be put in place to assist the implementation of the key strategies identified?



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2. Facts and Figures

Violence Against Women and Girls	
Physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or sexual violence by a non-partners in their lives	Est. 35% of women worldwide
Women alive today were married as children (below 18 years of age)	Worldwide, more than 700 million women
Have experienced forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts at some point in their lives	Est. 120 million girls worldwide Slightly more than 1 in 10
Have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting in 30 countries	At least 200 million women and girls alive today
Experience school-related violence every year	About 70 per cent
	Est. 246 million girls and boys
In majority of countries with available data, women that experience violence seek help of any sort	Less than 40%
Passed laws on domestic violence	119 countries
Laws on sexual harassment	125 countries
Laws on marital rape	52 countries
Women in Leadership	
Parliament seats worldwide	Only 23 % are women
National Legislature - meeting an international goal where women have 30% of national legislatures	44 countries 17 are Commonwealth countries
Women on Boards	Apart from the Scandinavian countries, no other country has 30% women representation on their corporate boards
Women Leadership	Women only represent 5% of the CEOs of the Fortune companies, 19% of the House of Representatives and 20% of the Senate
Women Speakers of Parliament	19 Commonwealth countries
Women's Economic Empowerment	
Women continue to participate in labour markets on an unequal basis with men.	In 2013, the male employment-to-population ratio stood at 72.2 per cent, while the ratio for females was 47.1 per cent
Globally, women are paid less than men	Women in most countries earn on average only 60 to 75 per cent of men's wages. If pay were equal in 15 major developing economies, per capita income would rise by 14% by 2020 and 20% by 2030.



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	If all forms of discrimination against female workers and managers was eliminated, productivity per worker could soar by up to 40%.
Women bear disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care work	Women devote 1 to 3 hours more a day to housework than men; 2 to 10 times the amount of time a day to care (for children, elderly, and the sick), and 1 to 4 hours less a day to market activities
Gender differences in access to land and credit affect the relative ability of female and male farmers and entrepreneurs to invest, operate to scale, and benefit from new economic opportunities	Less than 20 per cent of landholders are women
There is a business case for women on boards and senior roles in companies	One study found that companies with the greatest representation of women in management roles delivered a profit 34% higher than companies with the lowest representation.

4. Sustainable Development Goals



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The stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG #5) on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls offers the potential to embed gender equality into transformative approaches to sustainable development. However, for this promise to be fulfilled, it is vital that stand-alone does not mean siloed. Gender equality has implications for all the other SDGs, and as implementation proceeds, an integrated approach will be needed to maximize synergies and avoid any unfortunate trade-offs.

5. Format of Discussions

Each Working Group will have a Moderator and maximum of three speakers to initiate discussions. The Moderator will have a set of key questions on the subject matter to stimulate the discussion. It is expected that delegates will raise and discuss feasible action-oriented strategies and policies. These will be captured by a report-writer and included in an Action Plan that will then be discussed by delegates in the afternoon.

Question for Working Group

Given the stated issues (and others that group may raise), groups will discuss and identify 4 - 5 practical smart actions that can be implemented over the next 4 years. For each recommendation, delegates will be asked to provide the specific action(s), target for 2020 and indicators of success.

Example

Recommended Smart Action	Target	Indicators of success
<p>Example: Law reform on xxxx to xxxx</p> <p>Smart action-orientated recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific • Measurable • Achievable • Realistic • Time-bound (by 2020) 	<p>Questions to consider in formulating target(s): interventions impacting on a particular Commonwealth region? at country level? Specific countries? specific sector(s)? what is/are the targeted area(s)? how is it related to SDGs or COP21 or other international, regional, national frameworks?</p>	<p>Quantitative indicators Qualitative indicators (at outcome level)</p>

6. Expected Outcome

To develop an action plan for women's empowerment and gender equality for the Commonwealth through to 2020.



7. Milestones

13 July 2016	Pre-Summit Dinner, Southbank Centre, London
14 July 2016	Women Leaders' Summit, Marlborough House, London
7-8 September 2016	11 th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting, Samoa
20 September	UN General Assembly opens, New York
8 March 2017	International Women's Day
13 - 24 March 2017	UN Commission on the Status of Women, New York
TBC March 2017	Women Leaders Conference, Wilton Park



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