

Workshop on Leadership for Good Governance and Social Transformation in the Caribbean

25–27 April 2022, Bridgetown, Barbados

Highlights and Recommendations



The Commonwealth

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Contents

Introduction	1
Session 1: High-Level Opening Session	3
Session 2: 'Building Forward Equal': Gender Equality, Leadership and Post-COVID-19 Recovery	6
Session 3: Good Governance and Transformational Leadership	8
Session 4: Using Gender Analyses in Parliamentary Functions	10
Session 5: Utilising Parliamentary Processes to ensure Gender Equality	12
Session 6: Multi-Stakeholder Engagement with Women Political Leaders: Better Practices and Lessons Learned	14
Session 7: Successful Approaches in Challenging Barriers to Political Leadership	16
Key Themes	18
About the Partners	19

Introduction



The Commonwealth Secretariat, Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) and UN Women convened a three-day regional workshop on Leadership for Good Governance in the Caribbean. The workshop was held from 25 to 27 April 2022 in Bridgetown, Barbados.

The workshop reflected critically on the significance of women's transformational leadership as one of the foundations for inclusive governance frameworks, democratic participation and equitable development in the Commonwealth. The workshop explored good governance, gender-sensitive and gender-responsive parliaments, and identified approaches/opportunities to promote gender equality and how to implement these strategies in a sustainable way.

Background

Within the past 50 years, gender equality, empowerment and the advancement of women's human rights have seen notable gains in several sectors throughout the Caribbean. In the labour market, Caribbean women have seen steadily increasing numbers in top levels of leadership and decision-making spaces. In the political arena, greater numbers of women have taken their place in national parliaments as well as in local government and municipal governance structures. Inequalities in the private lives of women have improved, with countries strengthening domestic violence laws and beginning to address sexual harassment.

While there is no doubt that much work has been done across the Caribbean through policy, legislation and advocacy in support of advancing women's rights and equality, there remain gaps requiring urgent action. Policy implementation is still slow and significant areas for action remain unaddressed. The twin crises of COVID-19 and climate change have deepened existing inequalities and threaten to roll back progress in areas where advancements have already been made. Women's participation in political leadership is an inalienable right and a prerequisite for inclusive democracy, gender equality and good governance. The right of every person to participate in all political and public affairs is protected in various international human rights instruments, including the Commonwealth Charter and Agenda 2030, while CEDAW [Convention

on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women] General Recommendation 23 on Political and Public Life calls on governments to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life.

Participants

More than 50 parliamentarians, aspirant women leaders, civil society representatives and gender-responsive policy experts from across the Commonwealth were in attendance.

Session 1

High-Level Opening Session



Outline

The workshop was opened by Dr Shavana Haythornthwaite, Head of the Human Rights Unit at the Commonwealth Secretariat. This was followed by a high-level session with remarks by:

- Baroness Patricia Scotland, QC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth;
- Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph, President, Regional Board of Directors, CIWiL;
- Alexandra Langley, Deputy High Commissioner of the Australian High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago;
- Malgorzata Wasilewska, Ambassador to the European Union Head of Delegation to Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, and CARICOM/CARIFORUM; and
- Excellency High Commissioner Lilian Chatterjee, High Commission of Canada in Barbados.

The following discussion was chaired by Honourable Valerie Woods, Speaker of Belize, with panellists including:

- Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph, President, Regional Board of Directors, CIWiL;
- Tonni Brodber, Representative, UN Women Multi Country Office – Caribbean;
- Hon. Minister Keisal Peters, Minister of State with Responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in St Vincent and the Grenadines;
- Alisha Todd, Director General of ParlAmericas; and
- Bernice Antoine, Youth Representative and graduate of CIWiL's Young Women in Leadership Programme.

The panellists emphasised the importance of increasing women's political participation across the Caribbean and expressed their hopes that the workshop would be a catalyst for harnessing ideas and transforming them into positive action. The session also outlined the region's commitment to advancing gender equality and mapped the trajectory of the region's commitment to international women's rights instruments.

Key quotes and lessons



'The importance of building the capacities of women in parliaments and key decision-making institutions cannot be overstated. There is a direct line between our collective efforts to improve gender-responsive political legislation, our international human rights obligations and the Sustainable Development Goals.'

Baroness Patricia Scotland, QC, Secretary General of the Commonwealth



'Only by creating, and thereafter strengthening, inherent gender-responsive approaches in all aspects of parliamentary work can we move forward to achieving gender equality, inclusive governance frameworks, democratic participation and equitable development.'

Dr Shavana Haythornthwaite, Head of Human Rights at the Commonwealth Secretariat



'Now must be the time to accept the batons passed on by the women's movements in the region. It is time to purposefully claim our space as women parliamentarians and leaders, recognising the power of our collective voice and action to foreground gender equality on our political agendas and to transform the balance of power in our societies.'

Lady A Anande Trotman-Joseph, President, Regional Board of Directors at CIWiL



'Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but also a central pillar of democratic, peaceful and prosperous societies. Enshrined in CEDAW and promoted by the Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality is a Caribbean value, a European value and a universal value.'

Ambassador Wasilewska, Ambassador to the European Union Head of Delegation to Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean States, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, and CARICOM/CARIFORUM



'Promoting gender equality, including enhancing women's voices in decision-making and leadership is a key priority for Australia. What is widely recognised is that in order to see women rise to more senior levels, there is a need for purposeful leadership, for engagement with men, and for cultural change.'

Deputy High Commissioner Langley, Deputy High Commissioner of the Australian High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago



'Data continues to show that inclusive policies and legislation that integrate gender responsiveness [lead] to reduced inequality and increased economic growth. Parliaments need more diversity of voices, including more women from across all walks of life and vocal male allies demonstrating transformational leadership and advocating for gender responsive solutions to build back better.'

Tonni Brodber, Representative at the UN Women Multi Country Office



'Women's full and meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making processes is a fundamental building block to democratic societies that are not only diverse and inclusive but efficient, effective, transparent and accountable.'

*Excellency High Commissioner Lilian Chatterjee,
High Commissioner of Canada in Barbados*



'In order to achieve gender equality in the political arena we must ensure that we are educating and training not just MPs, but also administrators and presiding officers who work within parliamentary institutions with greater longevity.'

Honourable Speaker Valerie Woods, Speaker of Belize



'I credit all of the women before me who have made it easier for women of my generation. When women participate, we broaden representation in our respective countries.'

*Minister Keisal Peters, Minister of State with Responsibility for
Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade in St Vincent and the Grenadines*



'The crises that we face today require bold, feminist and transformational leadership from women and from men alike. This is simply a foundation of good governance, and it looks like leaders recognising societies' differentiated needs and championing good policies at their core.'

Alisha Todd, Director General of ParlAmericas



'My personal journey into transformational leadership was by recognising that all leadership starts with self-leadership and that I have to start by applying the gender lens into my decision-making.'

*Bernice Antoine, Youth Representative and graduate of
CIWIL's Young Women in Leadership Programme.*

Action points

- Create and nurture safe spaces for Caribbean women to share lessons learned on the path towards equality in the political arena.
- Purposeful leadership, alliance and coalition building, and engagement with stakeholders, including male allies, are the key to change.
- Strengthen relationships among women in parliament, create mentorship programmes for aspirant women leaders, further engagement with civil society and continue collaboration with development partners.

Session 2

'Building Forward Equal': Gender Equality, Leadership and Post-COVID-19 Recovery



Outline

This session explored the status of women and key contemporary issues in gender equality within the Caribbean context, specifically the critical gaps, challenges and barriers thereto. Recent crises of COVID-19 and climate change have had a disproportionate impact on women and subsequently women's political participation. The panellists discussed the destructive impact of these ongoing issues and the role of human rights frameworks and gender-responsive legislation in advancing women's political participation.

Key quotes and lessons



'As leaders we have to think about the inequalities in Caribbean countries and how to tackle them. Understanding how the inequalities intersect is key in ensuring that no one is left behind.'

Roberta Clarke, Commissioner at the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights



'In a 2018 UN Women Report on Women in Politics in the Caribbean, over 60% of people surveyed "perceived the national attitude in their country to be generally supportive of women's participation in politics and leadership"¹ but gender equality gaps still exist in terms of representation.'

Tonni Brodber, Representative at the UN Women Multi-Country Office

1 UN Women (2018), *Women in Political Leadership in the Caribbean*, 8, available at: <https://parlAmericas.org/uploads/documents/WomensPoliticalLeadershipUNWomen.pdf> [accessed 21 July 2022].

Action points

- Post-COVID-19 recovery requires greater financial inclusion; states must leverage trade for women's economic empowerment, measure and recognise unpaid care work, provide social protections, and invest in subsidised childcare, social safety nets and affordable housing.
- Strengthen the policy and supporting legislative framework around gender-responsive data collection and inform gender-responsive policy.
- Civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-state actors can apply CEDAW as a tool to hold states accountable for commitments to women's human rights such as substantive equality and non-discrimination.
- Recognise that intersectionality and targeted measures for disadvantaged groups of women are key to ensuring gender equality in the Caribbean.
- To address recent climate change crises that continue to disproportionately impact women, we must invest in climate-responsive agriculture and support infrastructure that allow the resilience of reliable, staple crops. We must push for improved access to solar and other alternative energy sources across the Caribbean.

Session 3

Good Governance and Transformational Leadership



Outline

Gender equality – equal participation of men and women – at all levels of government decision-making, including parliaments and legislatures, is central to good governance. SDG 16: 'Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions', requires states to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels. Panellists reflected critically on the good governance approach to governing and the significance of women's transformational leadership in the political sphere towards ensuring the success of such an approach. Participants also discussed and brainstormed ways of addressing the barriers to good governance that they had encountered, as well as ways of addressing those barriers.

Key quotes



'Transformational leaders are bold and fearless and have the courage to believe in what they stand for and see it through to the end.'

*Hon. Valerie Woods,
Speaker of Belize*



'The key to good governance lies in humility and self-discipline, service to others over self-service, honesty over corruption, peace over conflict and leadership in a circle rather than from the top.'

*Dr Rosina Wiltshire, Gender and Development Specialist at
CARICOM and OAS*



'Transformational leaders do not think that they are above the people they lead, and they are accountable. It is about delivering. It is about positively shaping the space in which you stand and inviting others to join the space. It is participatory and inclusive and upholds human dignity.'

HE Elizabeth Thompson, Barbados' Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for Climate Change, Law of the Sea, and Small Island Developing States. Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations



'When we deal with gender equality, we deal with the issues that are important for transformational leadership to take place. Leadership means to have courage in your beliefs. You must be willing to face some of the consequences, but if you believe in what it is that you stand for, you have to follow that through completely. If we are going to have change in this region, which we need, we must have people who are willing to stand up, be heard and make sure that you bring others along with you.'

Patricia Francis, CD, Chair of the Government of Jamaica Trade Facilitation Task Force



'Transformational leadership is accountability, transparency, combatting corruption, participatory governance and enabling legal judicial governance. To be a woman politician with a gender agenda is not an easy task.'

Minister Dr Virginia Albert-Poyotte, Minister of the Public Service, Home Affairs, Labour and Gender Affairs (St. Lucia)



'Transformational leadership focuses less on tangible outcomes and measurable outputs and highlights the need for a more human-centred approach and building the confidence of women and girls in positions of power.'

Chelsea Foster, Founder and Executive Director of Girls of a Feather

Action points

- Increase focus at all levels of decision-making on the transformational leadership approach, with an emphasis on equality, justice, non-violence and co-operation.
- Sustain progress on gender equality through investment in institutional capacity, succession planning and implementation of knowledge management systems.
- Implement mentorship to strengthen support for women leaders using diverse approaches.
- Apply an inclusive, feminist approach and intersectional lens to leadership and decision-making, that considers the differentiated experiences and policy outcomes on diverse and marginalised populations.

Session 4

Using Gender Analyses in Parliamentary Functions



Outline

The inclusion of gender-aware transformational women leaders in legislative, policy and programme planning, design, delivery, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation decision-making, is a cornerstone of good governance and ensures that gender equality is at the centre of those processes from the outset. Panellists suggested including a gender lens in decision-making on and deployment of the approaches presented, to strengthen gender responsiveness in parliamentarians' official duties (legislative, budgetary and oversight) and within their respective ministries and portfolios.

Key quotes and lessons



'When we speak to how we enact policies and pass legislation, it is essential that we continue to explore the gender implications. Without that, there are going to be significant gaps and we run the risk of perpetuating gender inequality.'

*Monique Long, Planning and Coordination Specialist,
UNWOMEN Multi Country Office*



'Ensure that your budget reflects your priorities and objectives. Reducing gender-based violence and ensuring that girls are using STEM to contribute to the climate-sensitive risk management and adaptation is key to Gender-Budgeting.'

*Dr Caren Grown, Global Director,
Gender at the World Bank Group*



'Distributional considerations, who is benefitting and who is not, in the national budget is necessary for national development and the achievement of gender equality.'

*Isiuwa Iyahan,
Deputy Representative,
UN Women Multi-Country Office – Caribbean*



'The women in our various jurisdictions are depending on us to be their voices at the table. It is crucial that we apply the gender lens when enacting and implementing policies.'

*Hon. Minister Keisal Peters, Minister of State
with Responsibility for Foreign Affairs and Foreign
Trade, St. Vincent and the Grenadines)*

Action points

- Parliamentarians should undertake practical training on how to use a gender lens when working on legislation and policy. The training should include case studies and examples of bills.
- Building the knowledge base for CSOs will serve as an accountability tool for parliamentarians and lawmakers. Training around gender equality and human rights instruments like CEDAW can be used to monitor states' fulfilment of obligations and hold parliamentarians accountable.
- Strengthen gender analysis in parliamentary functions to ensure that the priorities of women are understood and addressed.
- Establish mechanisms for gender monitoring systems across all ministries.
- Ensure that ministries are well-resourced to implement gender mainstreaming in policies and practices at all levels.

Session 5

Utilising Parliamentary Processes to ensure Gender Equality



Outline

A legislature that places gender equality at the centre of its processes, structures and methods of work can address the barriers to women's participation at all levels of decision-making. Panellists explored the ways in which parliamentary rules had been used as a tool to exclude the effective participation of women in parliamentary processes and offered practical tools to understand and effectively use parliamentary rules to advance gender equality within a parliamentary setting. Participants were given the tools to develop core skills like interrogation of legislation, policy and government responses, as well as effectively using parliamentary procedures to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment.

Key quotes and lessons



'Successful institutionalisation involves not only determining necessary reforms relevant to a particular parliament and its circumstances but in identifying the actors and means through which reforms are implemented, and gender-sensitive parliamentary standards maintained. The responsibility to re-gender parliaments can no longer be left as an additional burden for women parliamentarians, nor to willing women and men parliamentarians; it is for the parliament as an institution, both political and administrative.'

Professor Sarah Childs, Professor of Politics and Gender, University of London



'A stumbling block for women's caucuses can be not separating politics from purpose. The focus of the caucus tends to disappear when governments change. Sometimes we see ourselves not as sisters but as adversaries, as my party against your party. My advice is to have a set purpose and not let your political colour change you.'

Hon. Glynis Roberts, Representative from the Grenada Women's Parliamentary Caucus



'Every intervention and question posed in parliament presents an opportunity to put gender equality on the agenda, contribute to more inclusive outcomes, and strengthen your representation of constituents. A key line of action is to widen the number of perspectives and voices being considered and centring those women and other individuals experiencing inequities.'

Eilish Elliott, Project Manager, Gender Equality at ParlAmericas

Action points

- Strengthen collaboration between academia and parliamentarians to refine the application of a gender lens to policy and decision-making.
- Make greater use of committee spaces and use a gender-responsive approach to guide committee deliberations.²
- Increase advocacy by women parliamentarians on gender equality and women's political leadership within the political party structure, greater use of committee spaces and use a gender lens to guide committee deliberations.

² Committees can be effective spaces for facilitating public engagement in the legislative process (engagement with gender and diversity organisations and advocates is valuable to committees working on any theme).

Session 6

Multi-Stakeholder Engagement with Women Political Leaders: Better Practices and Lessons Learned



Outline

Global networks of women parliamentarians are central to skills development and knowledge transfer. Panellists in this session emphasised the notion that multi-stakeholder engagement among existing and aspirant women leaders was critical to tap into good practices in other jurisdictions. They conveyed ways in which male parliamentarians and decision-makers could work in solidarity with women and marginalised groups to advocate for gender equality.

Key quotes and lessons



'Women are overwhelmingly under-represented in managerial or decision-making positions. We are learning that when women have the same access as men to jobs, tools, resources and decision-making power, both conservation and food productivity increases. This is to say that fully including women in society and the economy benefits all.'

Faatimah Saarah Monawvil, Programme Officer at Parliamentarians for Global Action



'Multi-stakeholder workshops like these critically reflect on the status of women in the Caribbean as well as create spaces and enduring networks where women leaders can share lessons, experiences, best practices and develop their transformational leadership ethic.'

Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph, President, Regional Board of Directors at CIWiL



'Gender analysis and gender studies are crucial and can be used as interventions for parliamentarians to tackle some of the barriers that women are facing.'

HE Ambassador Yolande Smith, Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of Grenada to the United States of America and Permanent Representative of Grenada to the Organization of American States



'Men must understand that women's advocacy groups are not trying to replace them but complement them. Advocates for women's political participation should engage with men and convince them that they cannot stand by while injustice is being perpetrated.'

Frankie Campbell, Former Minister of Ministry of Social Services and Urban Affairs, Bahamas

Action points

- Increase engagement through structured, regular meetings (including bilateral meetings) with women's caucuses in the Caribbean to facilitate sharing of best practices.
- Undertake stakeholder mapping to support effective multi-stakeholder engagement.
- Advocate for actions such as policy and legislative reform to remove barriers that impede women's full participation in political and leadership spaces, including access to campaign financing and additional unpaid care responsibilities.

Session 7

Successful Approaches in Challenging Barriers to Political Leadership

Outline

Discriminatory laws and practices, gender stereotypes, the embeddedness of patriarchal styles of leadership in political spaces, male-dominated political spaces, gender-based violence perpetrated against women in politics, poverty, the burden of unpaid care work, and climate change were some of the barriers to women's political participation that panellists explored during this session. Participants were given the space to closely examine these challenges, share personal experiences, brainstorm and co-create strategies for dismantling these barriers. Panellists shared good practices by women's parliamentary caucuses in the region, as well as built knowledge and skills around some of the mechanisms and parliamentary structures that could be optimised for advancing women's participation and promoting gender equality.

Key quotes and lessons



'Barriers to women's political participation are not legislative in the Caribbean; our barriers are more dangerous because they are less visible and deeply entrenched, such as family care obligations, fear of political participation and the desire to not intimidate potential partners.'

HE Elizabeth Thompson, Barbados' Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for Climate Change, Law of the Sea, and Small Island Developing States



'We must dismantle exclusionary electoral systems. The first-past-the-post electoral system is possibly the worst system for women's political participation; a possible solution to this is introducing a quota system.'

Prof. Cynthia Barrow-Giles, Professor, Constitutional Governance and Politics, Department of Government, Sociology, Social Work and Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Cave Hill Campus, UWI



'While there is greater parity in education, the "ambition gap" remains. Hate speech and online violence against women in elections can contribute to internalised fears, self-doubt and ultimately serve as barriers to their political participation.'

Regina Waugh, Senior Global Gender Advisor, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)



'By having women candidates in seats that are considered to be the strong hold seats of political parties as opposed to the marginal low-profile seats, we can increase and encourage women's political participation and push the gender agenda.'

Senator Gregory Nicholls, Senator, Barbados

Action points

- Advocate for the implementation of legislative and constitutional reform that would institutionalise equity and remove entrenched barriers to women's political participation and leadership. This can include special temporary measures and sanctions for violence against women in politics.
- Dismantle cultural barriers to women's political participation through effective gender-sensitive campaigns, civic and voter education, behaviour change programmes, and other interventions that improve appropriate gender socialisation and awareness of women's political rights and gender equality.
- Advocate for increasing regular, dedicated funding to gender desks and the implementation of mechanisms whereby outcomes can be effectively monitored.
- Use a holistic approach to cultivate a network of strategic alliances and partnerships among women parliamentarians – past and present – and with male allies, the media, academia, trade unions and civil society.

Key Themes

- Women's parliamentary caucuses
- Gender quotas
- Gender desks with dedicated funding
- Gender-responsive budgeting
- Re-socialisation
- Women's arms of political parties
- Male allyship
- Mentorship
- Multi-stakeholder engagement
- Gender-sensitive parliamentary sessions
- Monitoring and evaluation by parliamentary commissions
- Financial inclusion
- Collaboration with academia

About the Partners

The Commonwealth Secretariat

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent and equal countries. It is home to 2.5 billion people and includes both advanced economies and developing countries. Thirty-two of our members are small states, including many island nations.

Our member governments have agreed to shared goals like development, democracy and peace. Our values and principles are expressed in the Commonwealth Charter.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is the intergovernmental organisation that supports member countries to achieve the Commonwealth's aims of development, democracy and peace. We:

- are a voice for small and vulnerable states;
- champion young people;
- promote justice and human rights;
- address threats like climate change, debt and inequality;
- help grow economies and boost trade;
- support decision-makers to make good laws and deliver policies;
- help strengthen governance and build inclusive public institutions;
- provide technical help and training;
- send experts and observers to countries to give impartial advice and help solve national problems; and
- provide systems, software, and research for managing resources.

Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL)

The Caribbean Women in Leadership (CIWiL) was conceptualised in the 1990s and launched in 2005 at a meeting organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat, with participants from women's organisations and political parties from across the region, and representatives of UN Women (UNIFEM) and CARICOM. The organisation went on to establish itself as an invaluable, non-political, independent institution for advancing women's political participation and leadership in the region. Today, CIWiL continues this legacy of enabling Caribbean women to realise gender equality and equity for sustainable, transformational leadership and people-centred development, at the community, national and regional levels, through advocacy, partnership, sisterliness, mentorship, training and development. The work of CIWiL is currently primarily supported by ParlAmericas, with funding from the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada. ParlAmericas is the multilateral interparliamentary institution for the inter-American system, with a membership that comprises the national legislatures of the 35 sovereign countries from North, South, Central America, and the Caribbean.

UN Women

UN Women is the UN organisation dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. See caribbean.unwomen.org

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