The Commonwealth

Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth



NOVEMBER 2026

Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth

November 2026

The Commonwealth

Suggested citation: Commonwealth Secretariat (2026), ***Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth: November 2026***.
https://doi.org/10.14217/ebir9094

© Commonwealth Secretariat 2026

All rights reserved. This publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or otherwise provided it is used only for educational purposes and is not for resale, and provided full acknowledgement is given to the Commonwealth Secretariat as the original publisher.

Views and opinions expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the author and should in no way be attributed to the institutions to which they are affiliated or to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Wherever possible, the Commonwealth Secretariat uses paper sourced from responsible forests or from sources that minimise a destructive impact on the environment.

Published by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Contents

1 **Executive Summary**

3 **Introduction**

Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth

7 **1. Women in Leadership**

1.1 More women candidates standing for public office
1.2 Increasing representation of women in the private sector

12 **2. Women's economic empowerment**

2.1 Equitable access to education, including primary, secondary and training for employment
2.2 Access to adequate ICT education
2.3 Access to good employment opportunities
2.4 Enabling legal environment
2.5 Increased land ownership rates for women
2.6 Support for women entrepreneurs and increased access to capital
2.7 Sharing the burden of unpaid labour

18 **3. Ending violence against women and girls**

3.1 Rates of early, child and forced marriage decline
3.2 Rates of violence against women and girls decline
3.3 Improved laws, policies and funding to protect women and girls from violence
3.4 Improved health outcomes for women and girls

24 **4. Gender and climate change**

4.1 Representation of women in decision-making processes and national action plans
4.2 Gender responsive funding for climate initiatives
4.3 Collecting and monitoring of the impact of climate change on women

28 **5. Accountability for gender equality**

30 **Recommendations to accelerate progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth**

32 Annex A

35 Annex B

37 Annex C

38 Endnotes

Executive Summary

This document reports the progress on commitments made in the Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022–2030 ('the Declaration'). The Declaration and the associated 'roadmap' of indicators was proposed by Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers in 2019 and adopted by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2022.

The Declaration lays out five priority areas of focus towards gender equality and the empowerment of women:

- women in leadership
- women's economic empowerment
- ending violence against women and girls
- gender and climate change
- accountability for gender equality.

The inaugural roadmap report was published in 2024.[1] Since then, while there are some notable highlights such as the continued decline in rates of maternal mortality, current data on those five priority areas show slow progress – and in some cases reversed progress – since 2024.

The intensification of conflict and climate-related disasters, combined with tight fiscal conditions, sluggish economic growth and reduced access to development assistance has impacted progress towards gender equality across the Commonwealth. These barriers to progress have been accelerated by reports of increasing online and physical violence towards women, and organised social movements that oppose gender equality.

Levels of women's leadership in government and the private sector remain similar to those reported in the 2024 report. Concerted efforts are required to increase the proportion of women in leadership and develop the pipeline of young women leaders.

In terms of women's economic empowerment, data show very slow progress since the last report, and some deterioration – for example, the 8 percentage point drop in the proportion of females enrolled in secondary schools. While one country added legislation prohibiting gender discrimination in employment, women's labour force participation remains unchanged overall. Women's unpaid domestic and care work remains unequal and continues to be a significant barrier to women's access to educational and economic opportunities.

Data show rates of violence against women – in terms of child, early and forced marriage; physical and sexual violence; and intimate partner violence – remain concerningly high across the Commonwealth.

One positive is that maternal mortality has decreased by almost 13 deaths per 100,000 live births across the Commonwealth since the previous report.

While the unequal gendered impact of climate change and climate-related risk is acknowledged by member countries, both representation and the collection and analysis of data on the issue is limited. Women were represented in only half of consultations on updating member countries' national climate commitments under the Paris Agreement (Nationally Determined Contributions, or NDCs). Only small minorities of NDCs include gender-responsive funding for climate initiatives, and are informed by gender-disaggregated data – though several intend to or are considering doing so.

This report presents deeper analysis on the data, and data availability, by region under each priority area to strengthen accountability on gender equality. In general, consistent and systematic gender-disaggregated data are required to better understand and address gender inequalities in all priority areas, especially violence against women and girls.

Table A: *Summary table on* ● *improved (green),* ● *static/mixed (amber) and* ● *deteriorated (red) indicators of gender equality and women's empowerment in this report,* **2024 and 2026**

***Note:** Because the methodology used to assess progress against indicators 4.1–4.3 has changed since the 2024 report, their 2024 and 2026 'scores' are not directly comparable.*



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a briefing on the progress towards meeting the commitments made in the Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022–2030 ('the Declaration').[2] The Declaration was proposed by Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers in 2019 and adopted by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2022.

The Declaration lays out five priority areas of focus towards gender equality and the empowerment of women:

- women in leadership
- women's economic empowerment
- ending violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- gender and climate change
- accountability for gender equality.

The commitments in the Declaration are monitored through the 'roadmap' – a series of indicators on the five priority areas set out in this and a previous report.

That first report updating the status of progress on the indicators in the roadmap was produced and shared with Heads of Government in 2024 at the CHOGM in Apia, Samoa. Two years on, this report provides an update for Heads on the current situation of the roadmap indicators.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's new Strategic Plan for 2025–2030 has been designed in response to the stated needs of Commonwealth member countries, and focuses on developing resilience in member countries under three pillars: democracy, economy and the environment. Women and girls – alongside youth and small states – are central to its vision of sustainable development. Understanding the state of gender equality across the Commonwealth, and the extent of progress towards achieving the goals of the Declaration, is therefore critical to planning and implementing this strategy – particularly in the context of increasing opposition to gender equality by well-funded, transnationally networked and strategically-co-ordinated actors.[3]



In focus: pushback against gender equality

Many countries' gender equality initiatives are facing intensifying, organised opposition – often by well-funded international actors seeking to undermine women's economic, political and social progress by influencing political decision-making and public opinion. They often attempt to erode consensus and support for gender equality initiatives by promoting the importance of:

- treating everyone the same, thereby invalidating the specific needs of women
- conceptions of 'family' and the protection of 'tradition' or 'culture' that reinforce structures that have historically disadvantaged women.

Cross-border transnational spending on efforts to challenge and oppose women's rights, gender equality and inclusion worldwide is estimated at US$1.18 billion between 2019 and 2023.[4]

A 2025 report by the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) and UN Women noted that nearly a quarter of governments worldwide reported a rise of co-ordinated opposition to gender equality imperatives.[5] Such dynamics have also been reflected in intergovernmental outcome texts, such as the 2022 CHOGM Communique and the outcomes of the 13th meeting of Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers,[6] which invoke terms including 'setbacks', 'reversing gains', 'persistent discrimination', 'uneven progress', 'risks' and 'challenges to implementation' to describe the current context in which they are implementing programmes for gender equality.

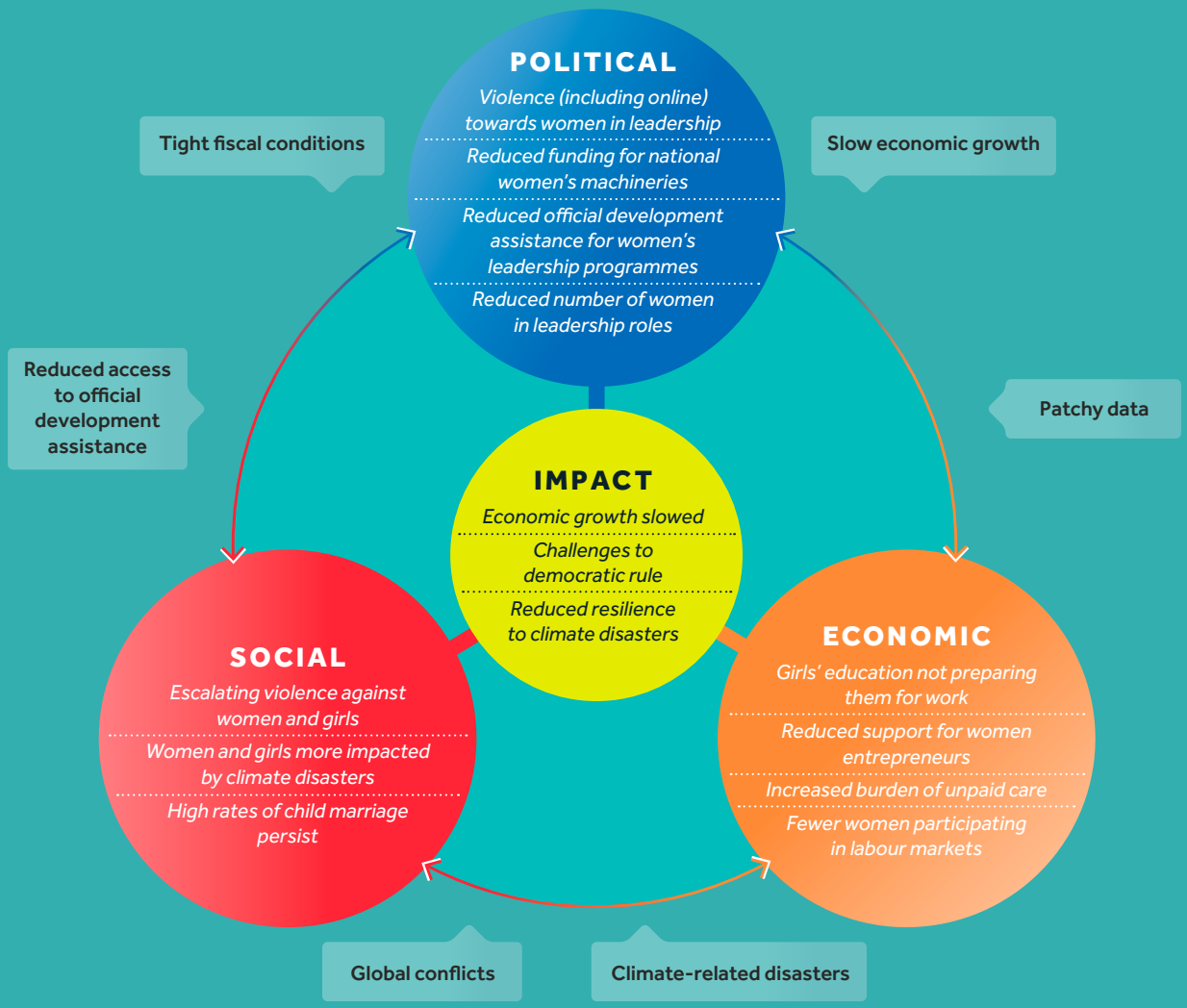


Figure 1: *Impacts of the pushback against gender equality and women's empowerment (VAWG = violence against women and girls; TFGBV = technology-facilitated gender-based violence.)*

An accompanying report commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat[7] will assess the extent and impact of these actors, and recommend actions to ensure progress towards achieving gender equality across the Commonwealth.

Figure 1, which is drawn from that report, illustrates how these actors have had material impacts on progress across the five priority areas of the Declaration, including in terms of:

- increasing rates of violence, sexism and sexual harassment, both physical and online, towards women in leadership in general and parliamentarians in particular
- the erosion of the institutional capacity to support women in leadership initiatives due to decreased funding for national women's machineries
- reinforced expectations on women to perform the bulk of unpaid labour, especially care work, thus reducing their ability to participate in the labour market
- technology-facilitated VAWG and normalisation of violence, compounded by defunded survivor support systems, inadequate laws, and unacknowledged rates of child marriage in remote communities
- growing resistance to identifying the gendered impacts of climate change
- the deprioritisation of data collection on gender equality, due in large part to lack of political will.

The consequences of inaction extend beyond the gender equality agenda: where women are excluded from leadership, economies underperform and governance weakens; where violence goes unaddressed, communities become less stable; where rights-based language erodes, decades of Commonwealth commitments become harder to sustain.

The report argues that the risks of inaction are risks to the Commonwealth's broader resilience agenda itself. It therefore puts forward several recommendations on how to ensure continued progress towards gender equality across the Commonwealth in the face of increased opposition.

- **Secure political stability** by modernising and implementing legislation to protect women and girls from emerging threats such as online violence and hold perpetrators accountable.
- **Unlock economic growth** by promoting women's engagement in the labour market and entrepreneurship through continued investment in girls' secondary education, digital literacy and artificial intelligence (AI) skills.
- **Boost national competitiveness** by removing barriers to women's economic participation through investing in childcare and implementing protections against workplace violence and discrimination.
- **Strengthen environmental resilience** by embedding gender analysis in the development and implementation of national climate change strategies. Positioning women at the centre of decision-making with dedicated climate finance to empower women economically will drive more resilient green and blue economies.
- **Ensure these gains are realised** by expanding national institutional capacity and ringfencing adequate, sustainable funding to advance gender equality and inclusive democratic participation.
- **Optimise policy-making** by resourcing the systematic collection of high quality, comparable and gender-disaggregated. Such data are fundamental for accurate evaluation of the economic and social impact of gendered initiatives.
- **Scale success through regional and pan-Commonwealth co-operation** and exchange of evidence-based, high-impact gender equality solutions to accelerate national and collective progress.

About this report

In this context of pushback against gender equality, this report focuses on the progress made (and not made) since the last report produced in 2024, and also takes a longer view of the trends in data since the baseline year of 2015. Additionally, it assesses the availability of data against the indicators in the roadmap, recognising the vital importance of data quality in promoting the rights of women and girls.

This report is intended to serve as a point of dialogue and learning exchange among women's machineries in their various efforts to advance the rights of women and girls across the Commonwealth.



Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth

Progress on each of the five priority areas outlined in the Declaration is presented below. Although gender-disaggregated national reporting remains uneven, available data allow for identification of key regional and pan-Commonwealth trends, which are presented in this report.

1. Women in leadership

Democratic resilience, one of the pillars of the Commonwealth Secretariat's new strategic plan, requires the equitable participation of women at all levels of leadership in both the public and private sectors.

WHAT IT WAS

Women's representation at leadership levels had always been below the targets for equitable representation anticipated by the Declaration.

WHAT IT HAS BECOME

There have been historic firsts for women in leadership, and signs of significant progress. Despite this, indicators on women's leadership across public and private sectors show a slight decline compared to 2024.

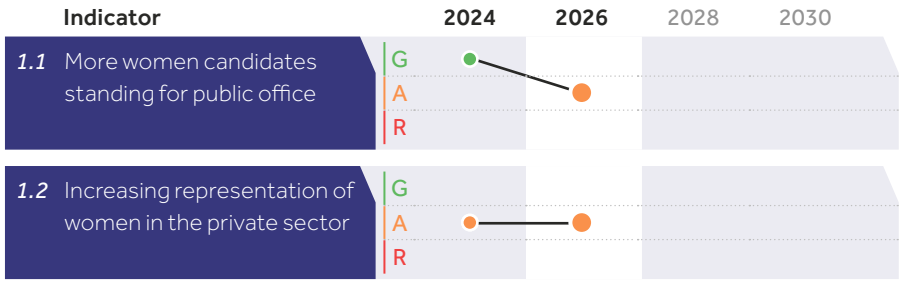
RECOMMENDATIONS

Measures to appoint and develop more women leaders are required at all levels of the public and private sectors. These should include setting appropriate targets, growing talent pipelines in the private sector and for political office, and resourcing national women's machineries and women's groups to inspire and develop emerging women leaders across all sectors.

The Commonwealth has seen some historic firsts for women in leadership in the past two-and-a-half years: Namibia and Dominica elected their first women presidents, and New Zealand and Australia both appointed the first women ever to command their national armies or one of their branches. However, among Commonwealth Heads of Government, only four of 56 (or 7 per cent) are women – two from the African region and two from the Caribbean and Americas.

In terms of women in leadership in the public and private sectors, there has been no substantial change from figures reported in 2024. Data are readily available across the Commonwealth on women in public sector leadership, so an accurate picture of progress can be presented here. However, data on women's leadership in the private sector are patchy.

Table 1: *Summary table on ● improved, ● static/mixed and ● deteriorated indicators of gender equality and women's empowerment in this report,* **2024 and 2026**







1.1 More women candidates standing for public office

The available data show that between 2024 and 2026, the percentage of seats held by women in national parliaments across the Commonwealth slightly increased by less than 1 percentage point, to reach 22 per cent.

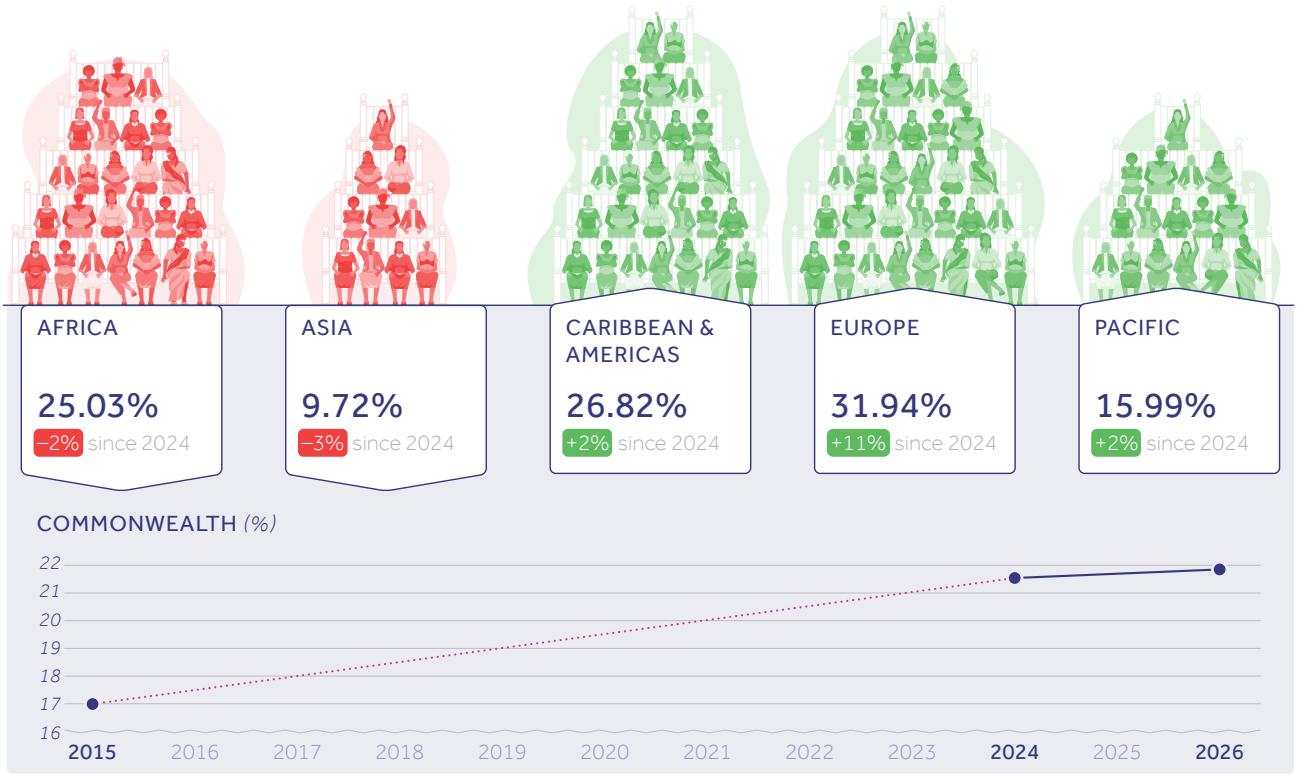
Despite the overall Commonwealth trend being positive, there were decreases in the Asia and Pacific regions. There is also variation among regions, with values for Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean and Americas being between 25 per cent and 28 per cent, which is around 10 percentage points ahead of Asia and the Pacific.

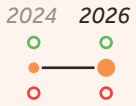
However, the overall proportion of women in national parliaments across the Commonwealth remains at around one-fifth, well below targets for equitable representation anticipated by the Declaration.

Women's representation in ministerial posts remains uneven across the Commonwealth. Collectively, women's ministerial appointments have increased by less than half a percentage point since 2024. Positively, Europe has increased average representation to 32 per cent; this is a 19 percentage point increase since 2015, with an increase in 11 percentage points over the last two years. In contrast, Asia has the lowest average level of representation at 10 per cent. While there were small gains in Asia and Africa between 2015 and 2024, some of this progress was reversed from 2024 to 2026.

The overall figure for women in local government is 25.7 per cent, slightly lower than the figure of 27.4 per cent reported in 2024. However, there is great regional variation, with the Caribbean and Americas showing a figure of 38 per cent, 9 percentage points higher than in 2015, and the Pacific showing 17 per cent, 5 percentage points lower than in 2024.

Women in ministerial positions, 2026 *(%)*





1.2 Increasing representation of women in the private sector

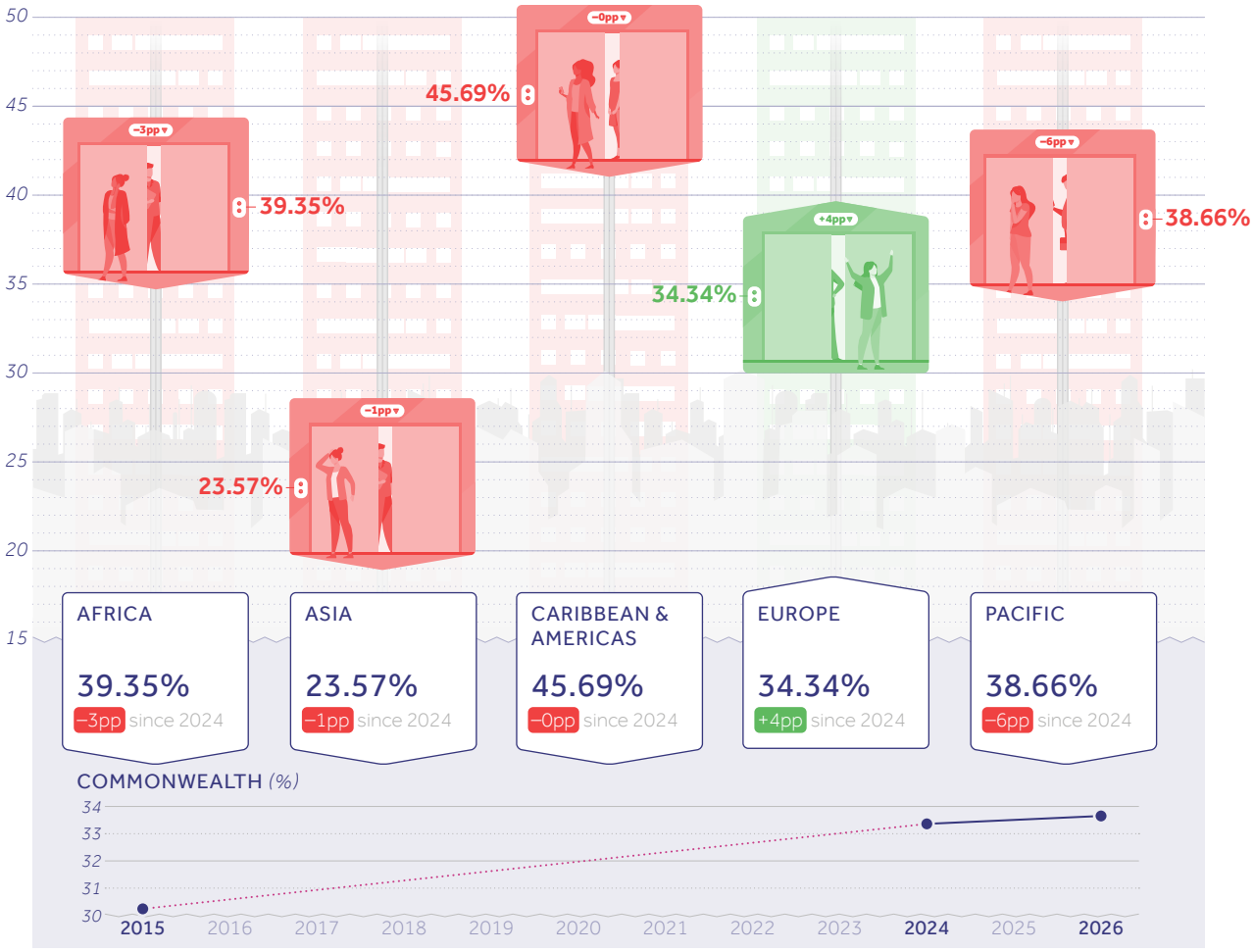
Recent research indicates that the more women on an executive team, the greater the likelihood that the business will financially outperform similar organisations with lower female executive representation.[8]

To assess the representation of women in the private sector, two indicators were examined: the proportion of women in managerial positions and the proportion of women in senior and middle management. Data about women in private sector leadership are patchy and inconsistently collected across Commonwealth regions.

The latest data on women in managerial positions show rates that are almost the same as in 2024, at 34 per cent. The overall trend from 2015 is positive and in the past two years, Europe had an increase of 4 percentage points. However, Africa and the Pacific reported decreases of 3 and 6 percentage points, respectively, over the same period. In terms of absolute figures, data show variation by region, with the Caribbean and Americas reporting 46 per cent and Asia reporting 24 per cent.

In terms of the proportion of women in senior and middle management, the pan-Commonwealth figure is 36 per cent, representing little change from the figure in the previous report. Notable exceptions are the Caribbean and Americas region, which has increased by almost 14 percentage points, from 39 per cent to 53 per cent, in the past two years. Additionally, Europe saw a smaller increase, from 31 per cent to 34 per cent. However, the figure in the Pacific has decreased from 42 per cent to 37 per cent.

Women in managerial positions, 2026 *(%)*



Accelerating women in leadership

To accelerate progress towards more women in leadership positions, effective measures include setting targets for women in leadership and developing pipelines, through partnerships, of women leaders at all levels of the public sector and in the private sector.

In particular, one important measure is the examination of a key barrier to women in leadership positions: gender-based violence, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). This includes hate speech, disinformation, image-based abuse or unwanted disclosure of personal data online ('doxing').[9]

Studies conducted in Asia-Pacific, Europe and Africa affirm global findings: women parliamentarians and parliamentary staff face psychological, sexual, physical and economic violence, with women under 40, unmarried women and women from minority backgrounds facing disproportionately higher rates of violence. Parliament is the primary site of harassment – with male parliamentarians being key perpetrators.[10]

Accelerating progress on strengthening protections for women running for office, including instituting and enforcing stricter laws and policies around online and offline gender-based violence for women in leadership, is important. Also critical is ensuring there are strong internal mechanisms within parliaments to prevent sexual harassment and abuse. Finally, the implementation of social and educational programmes to address socio-cultural norms that discourage women from pursuing leadership roles, and discourage men from championing and welcoming women's leadership, would address underlying prejudices hindering women's participation in public and private sector leadership.



2. Women's economic empowerment

Economic resilience, which is one of the pillars of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan, requires the full participation of women in national economies. For this to take place, women and girls must have equitable access to educational, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

WHAT IT WAS

Modest and uneven progress had been made towards equality of access to education, employment and legal protections as envisaged by the Declaration, resulting in modest progress for economic advancement for women.

WHAT IT HAS BECOME

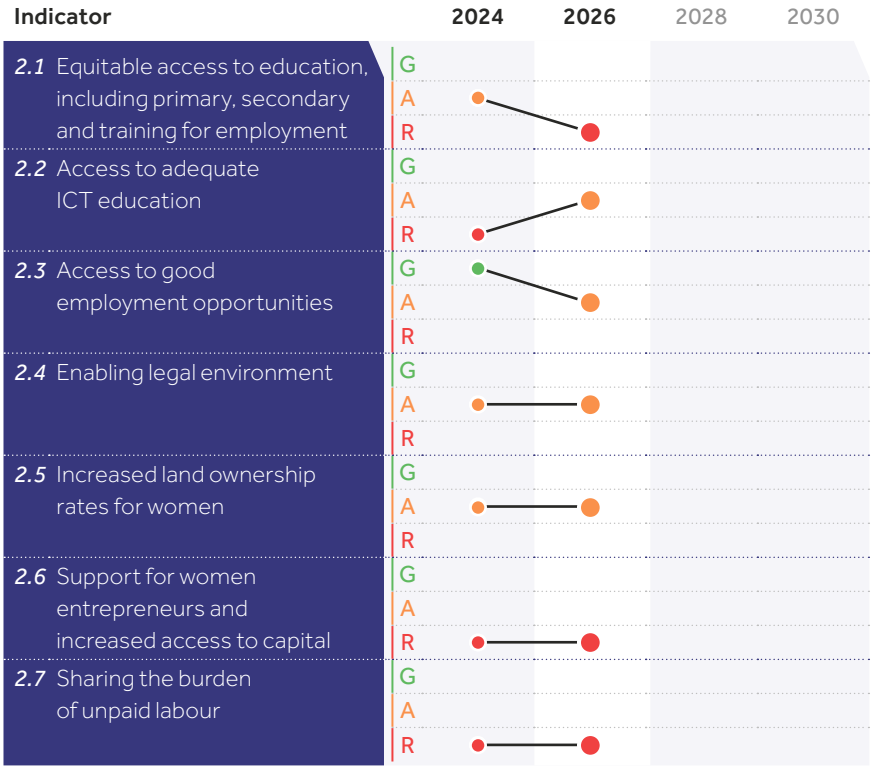
Modest gains in ICT education at the tertiary level and laws prohibiting discrimination by gender have done little to offset a lack of progress on women's economic empowerment and apparent reversals in enrolment in secondary education since 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Efforts to keep girls in school and invest in their ICT education, and legal reform that enables equitable participation in the labour force, must be intensified. The root causes of the unequal burden of domestic and care work must be addressed by lessening unpaid work through social infrastructure and policies, and making it visible in national statistics.

Data availability on women's economic empowerment is strong on topics such as labour force participation and women's access to capital, banking services and signing contracts. However, data are patchy on girls' access to secondary and information and communications technology (ICT) education. Data are almost non-existent for women's unpaid labour.

Table 2: *Summary table on* ● *improved*, ● *static/mixed and* ● *deteriorated indicators of gender equality and women's empowerment in this report,* 2024 and 2026





2.1 Equitable access to education, including primary, secondary and training for employment

The percentage of females enrolled in secondary education across the Commonwealth has decreased by 8 percentage points since 2024, from 77 per cent to 69 per cent, reversing some of the progress made from 2015 to 2024 in Africa, Asia and the Pacific. There is regional variation in the latest figures: Europe maintained a figure of around 95 per cent from 2015 to 2017 but lacks more recent data; the figures for the Caribbean and Americas stayed in the low 80s, while the Asia and Pacific figures are in the low 70s. Africa's figures have fluctuated in the 50s.

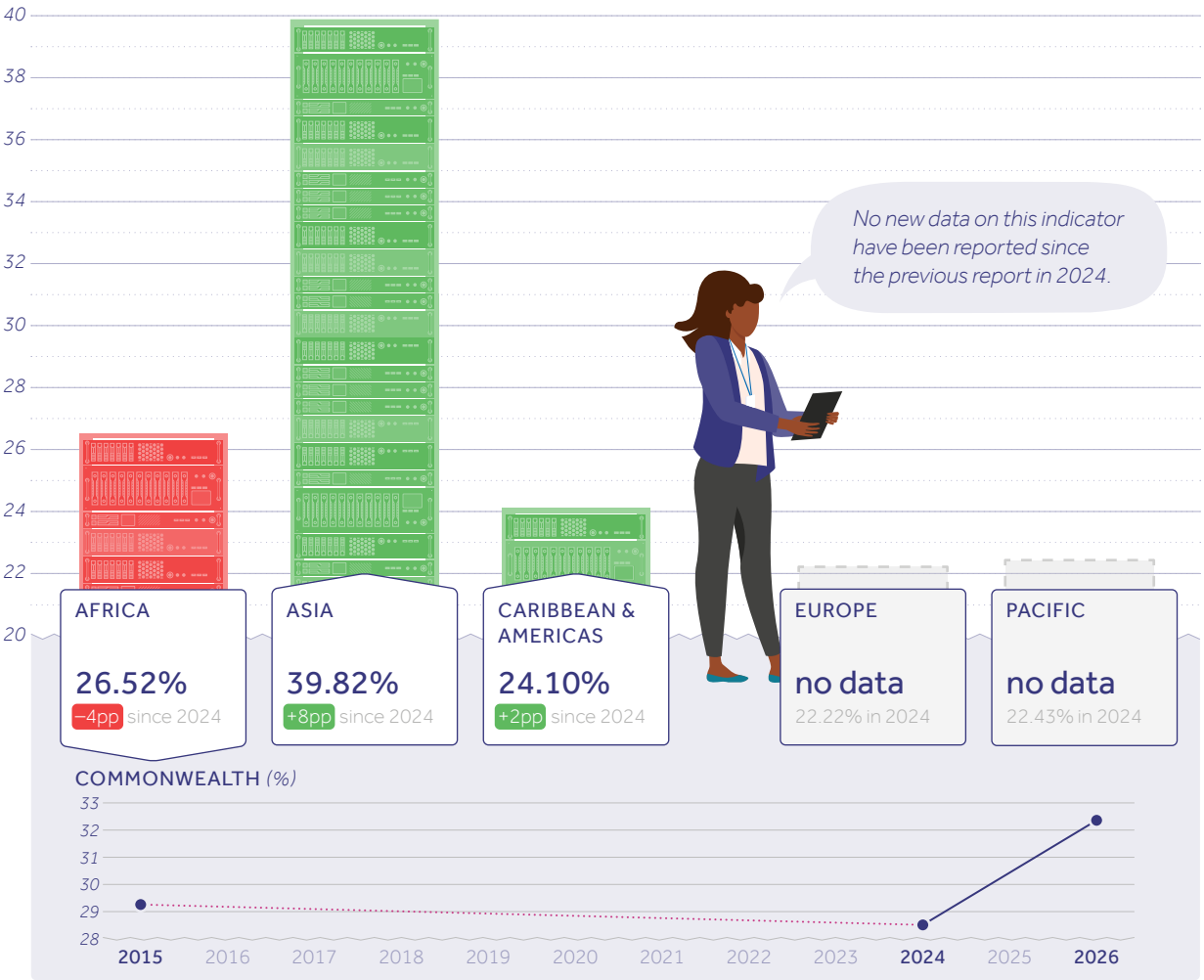
It must also be noted that reporting of data for this critically important indicator is inconsistent. Forty-one countries reported at least once between 2015 and 2026. Additionally, for the latest data, no data were recorded for Europe.

2.2 Access to adequate ICT education

Digital literacy is essential to economic resilience. As the Commonwealth Secretariat seeks to support member countries to reach 10 million young people with access to digital skills and training, the digital divide between boys and girls must be examined and addressed.

In terms of female graduates of ICT programmes at the tertiary level, the Commonwealth figure reached 32 per cent in 2026, an increase of almost 4 percentage points since 2024. Asia saw an increase of 8 percentage points over this period, reaching 40 per cent and reversing the previous, decreasing trend from 2015 to 2024. The Caribbean and Americas also saw an increase – by 2.5 percentage points – to reach 24 per cent. In contrast, Africa saw a decrease of 4 percentage points to 27 per cent. Over time, there have been large variations in trends by region, with data for this measure being patchy at best.

Female graduates in ICT programmes, 2026 *(%)*



'24 '26

2.3 Access to good employment opportunities

The ratio of female-to-male labour force participation provides an indicator of women's access to employment. At 78 per cent, there has been no change since 2024 and, indeed, the level of women's participation in the workforce has been stagnant since 2015. As such, Commonwealth nations have not moved any closer to parity in workforce participation and access to employment opportunities for more than a decade.

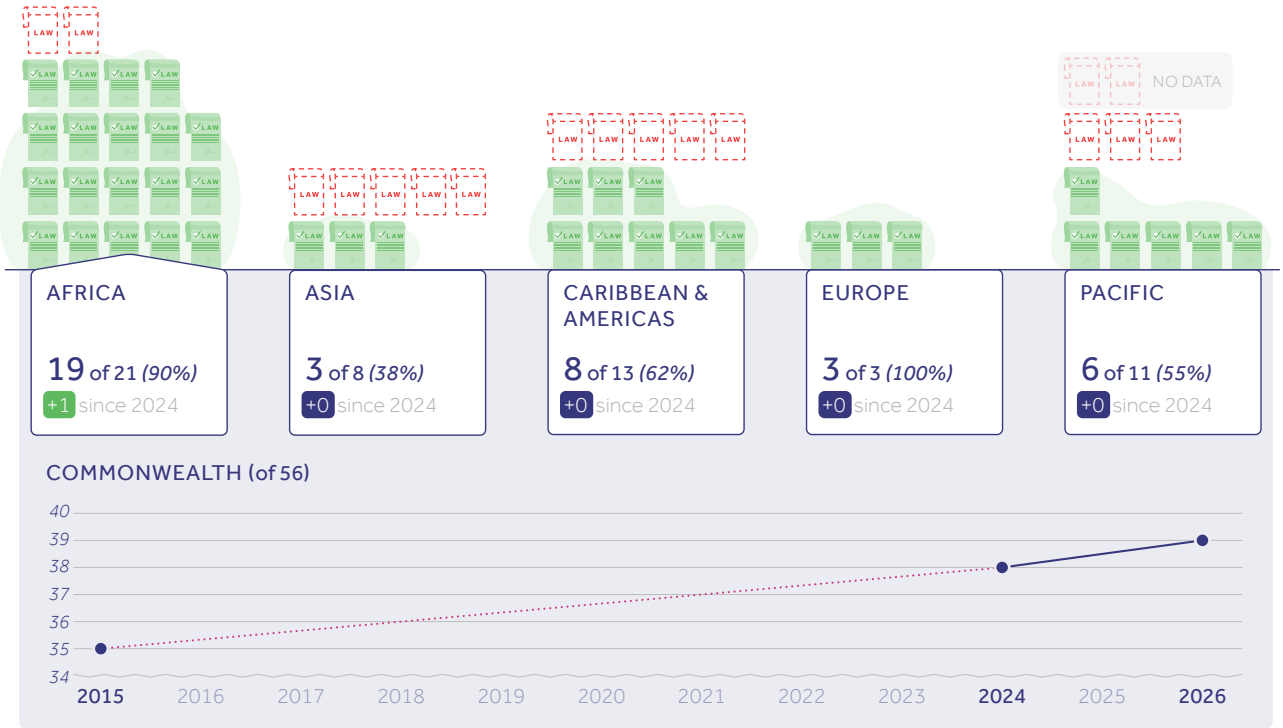
'24 '26

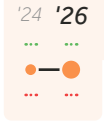
2.4 Enabling legal environment

Since the 2024 report, an additional African country has adopted a law mandating non-discrimination by gender in employment. Currently, 39 of the 54 Commonwealth countries that reported this data have such legislation in place.

Except in Asia, most Commonwealth countries in all regions have supportive legislation. In Europe, all three countries have such a law; in Africa, 19 of 21 do; in the Caribbean and Americas, the number is eight of 13; and in the Pacific, it is six of the nine countries that reported. In contrast, in Asia, three of eight countries have such a law.

Adoption of law mandating non-discrimination by gender in employment, 2026

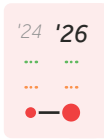




2.5 Increased land ownership rates for women

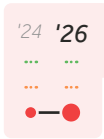
Since the last report, there has been no change in the data for this indicator, with women in 49 of 56 Commonwealth countries having equal land ownership rights to men. All Commonwealth countries in Europe, Asia, and the Caribbean and Americas reported 'yes'. In Africa, almost all countries reported 'yes': only one country reported 'no'. In the Pacific, five of the nine countries that reported answered 'yes', while four answered 'no'.

While legislation is a critical staring point enabling land ownership by women, it does not automatically translate into equal land ownership due to the social, cultural and economic conditions in each member country.



2.6 Support for women entrepreneurs and increased access to capital

Women in 52 of 56 Commonwealth countries can open a bank account in the same way as a man, which is the same figure as in 2024. No new data on how many countries allow women to sign contracts in the same way as men have become available since the 2024 report: the figure remains 53 of 56 Commonwealth countries.



2.7 Sharing the burden of unpaid labour

Women perform most unpaid labour, which includes looking after children, elderly people and people with disabilities, and doing domestic work, such as cooking, cleaning, washing, and fetching water and firewood.

Data on the proportion of time women and men spend on unpaid domestic and care work as a percentage of the 24-hour day are sparse. From the data that are available, the range of time women spent on unpaid domestic and care work ranged from 12.7 per cent (UK, 2015) to 20.3 per cent (India, 2019), while the range for men was 2.8 per cent (India, 2019) to 12.3 per cent (UK, 2022).

There are, however, multiple studies that have calculated the time that women spend on unpaid labour and quantify its monetary value. One study found that, across the world, women perform more than three-quarters of unpaid care and domestic work – three times as much as men.[11] In Asia and the Pacific, this proportion rises to 80 per cent. A recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) study on OECD countries found that in all countries, women spent more time than men on household tasks. Data from select Commonwealth countries in this study show that the smallest gap was in Canada, where women spent 1.5 times more time on unpaid labour than men; the largest gap was in India, where women spent 6.8 times more time on unpaid labour than men.[12] Research conducted in some countries reveals that women who earn the same or more than their husbands still do more unpaid labour in the home.[13]

The value of women's unpaid labour is substantial: if women earned minimum wage for their unpaid domestic and care work, they would earn US$10.8 trillion globally, which is nearly three times the gross domestic product (GDP) of India.[14]



It is estimated that closing the gender gap in unpaid care work will take 210 years.[15]

This gap is one of the main factors preventing women from entering and staying in the labour force. It also prevents women and girls from pursuing educational opportunities.

Accordingly, across the Commonwealth, work is being done to close the gender gap in unpaid care. The Boosting Labour Force Participation initiative in India is piloting models of community-based and industry-led childcare. In Malaysia, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) has presented a compelling business case for the care economy to be recognised as an essential public good.[16] In Samoa, a pilot estimated time-use study was conducted to generate evidence on and recognition of care work, expand women's choices and increase their labour force participation.[17] These initiatives can form the basis of critical knowledge exchange initiatives among Commonwealth countries in tackling the unequal burden of unpaid labour borne by women and girls.

However, the historical lack of systematic, comparable government-reported data on the share of women's unpaid domestic and care work remains a significant barrier to evidence-based policy and the recognition of women's contributions to the global economy.

Accelerating women's economic empowerment

Accelerating women's economic empowerment requires continued efforts to keep girls in school and continued investment in ICT education for women and girls. Similarly, the continued acceleration of legal reform to enable the equitable participation of women in the labour force is a critical factor.

A key intervention is to address the root causes of the unequal burden of domestic and care work. This can be done by institutionalising regular National Time Use Surveys to make unpaid work visible in national statistics and GDP calculations. Additionally, direct investment in social infrastructure, such as affordable childcare, elder care and basic utilities (piped water and electrification) to decrease the time intensity of domestic chores would be effective. Finally, the implementation of transformative social policies, including paid parental leave for both fathers and mothers, and public awareness campaigns to challenge traditional gender norms regarding domestic roles, is critical to address the root causes of limited economic participation of women. Doing so promises to strengthen national economies across the Commonwealth.

3. Ending violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation occurring across the globe. It has wide-ranging negative consequences, not only for women and girls but for the resilience of societies and economies as a whole. Monitoring progress on levels of violence against women is made difficult by the limited availability of accurate data.

WHAT IT WAS

Around one in three women will experience violence in their lifetimes, with severely damaging consequences for their physical, mental and sexual health.

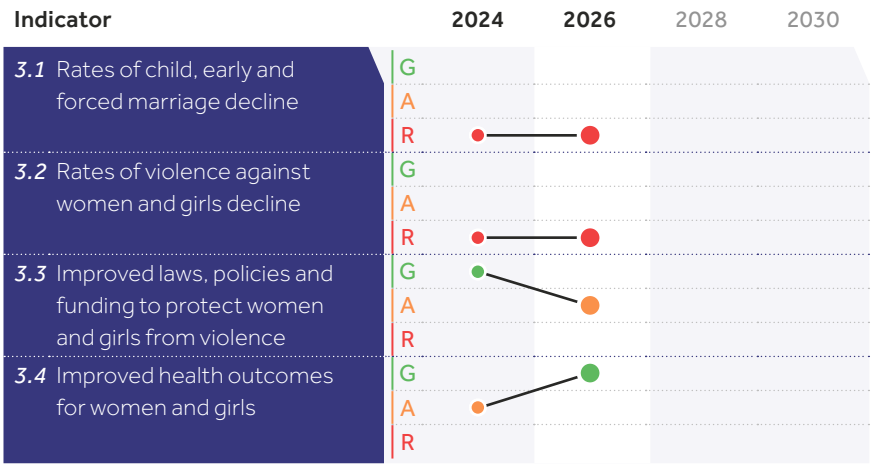
WHAT IT HAS BECOME

The ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and declining development assistance mean that most progress – where it can be measured, given gaps in the data – appears to be modest at best.

RECOMMENDATIONS

While legislation protecting against VAWG is in place across almost all of the Commonwealth, the focus must now be on strengthening its enforcement. There is also a clear need to invest in the collection of quality data that allows a deeper understanding of rates and patterns of VAWG to inform effective measures against it.

Table 3: *Summary table on* ●*improved*, ●*static/mixed* *and* ●*deteriorated* *indicators of gender equality and women's empowerment in this report,* **2024 and 2026**



'24 '26

3.1 Rates of early, child and forced marriage decline

Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) refers to any marriage in which at least one of the parties is under 18, or one or both parties have not expressed their full, free and informed consent. It is therefore considered a form of violence against women and girls.

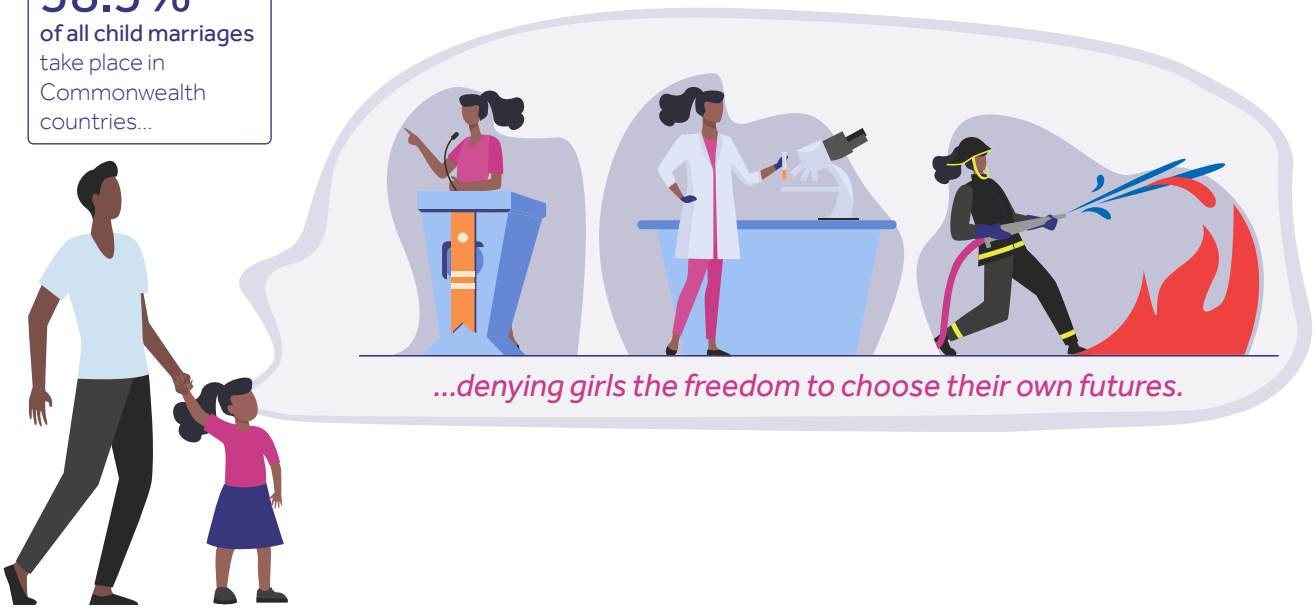
The most recent year for which there were data for most Commonwealth regions is 2021. While Africa and Asia reported figures of 22 per cent, the Pacific reported 4 per cent. Europe reported 0 per cent. No data were reported for the Caribbean and Americas.

There are, however, significant gaps in the data that make it difficult to understand violence against women and girls in the Commonwealth. This is particularly concerning because 58.5 per cent of all child marriages take place in Commonwealth countries.[18] Prevalence rates of child marriage in Commonwealth countries reaches as high as 50 per cent in Africa and Asia.[19]

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is estimated that an additional 10 million girls are at risk of marrying as children by 2030. This is because of COVID-19 restrictions, school closures, increased adolescent pregnancy, disruption to programming that combats child marriage, economic instability and parental death due to COVID-19.[20] Additionally, reduced access to official development assistance has included cuts to efforts targeting the eradication of child marriage, threatening hard-won progress made over the past decades.[21]

To understand the true state of CEFM across the Commonwealth, and to formulate effective, data-driven policies and initiatives to end it, it is imperative to collect and report data on this indicator consistently.

58.5%
of all child marriages take place in Commonwealth countries...



'24 '26

3.2 Rates of violence against women and girls decline

Based on reporting by 45 Commonwealth countries in 2018 (the last available data), on average 15 per cent of women have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence within the past 12 months, with large variations between regions. The Pacific and Africa reported 20 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively, with Europe reporting 4 per cent. It is highly probable that across all regions, these figures are underreported.[22]

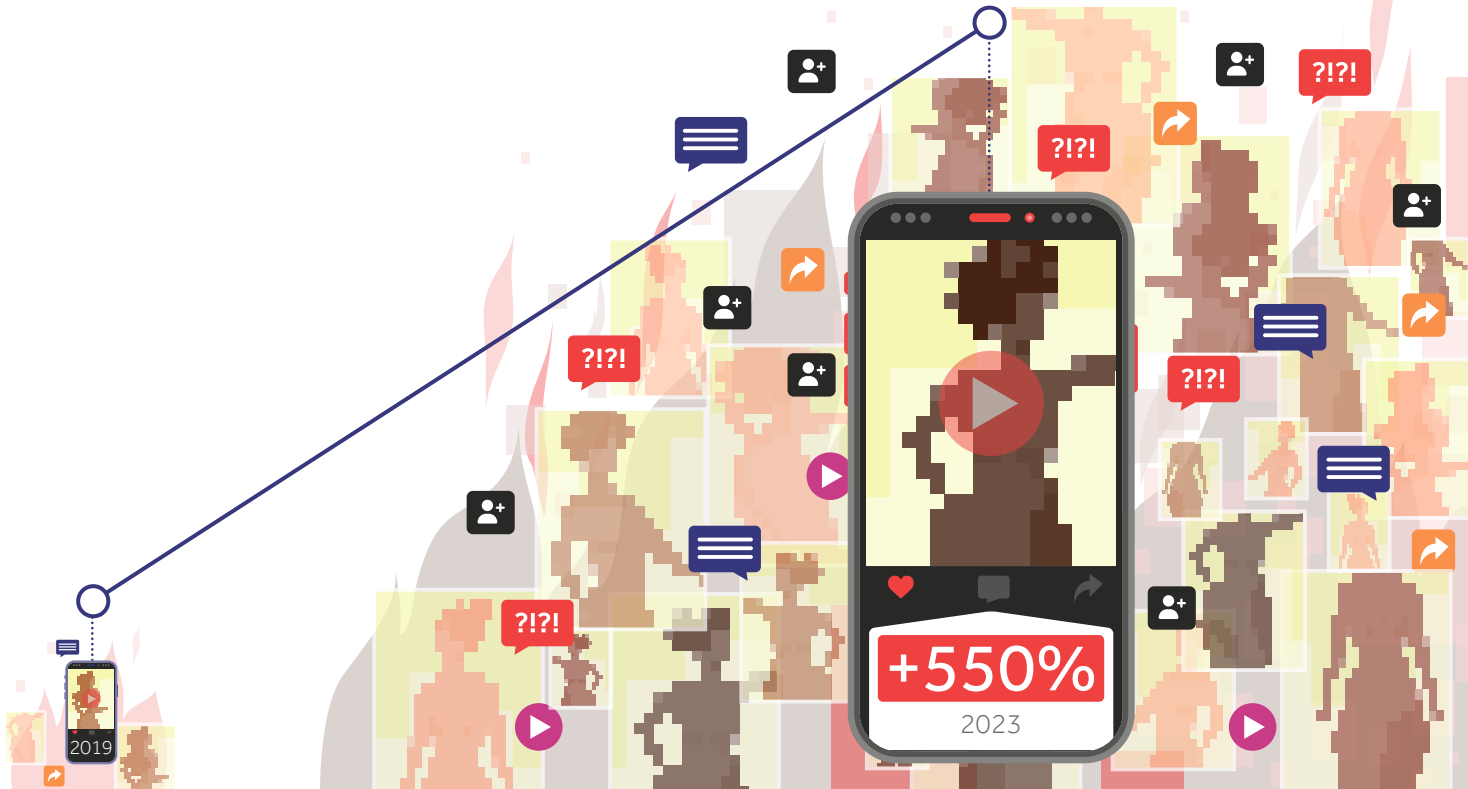
In 2018, 44 countries reported on intimate partner violence, with the average proportion of women who have ever been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence being 33 per cent. In this case, there was less regional variation. Europe reported 19 per cent, while the Pacific reported 42 per cent.

UN data show that reductions in intimate partner violence have been minimal over the last two decades, with only a 0.2 per cent annual decline.[23] However, both intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence remain profoundly stigmatised and underreported globally. Consequently, significant data gaps and measurement challenges persist, particularly regarding the availability and quality of geographically consistent information.[24] Furthermore, during and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, all types of violence against women intensified.[25]

Another critically important development is the rapidly escalating rate of TFGBV. Available data from a study on 180 countries shows that an average of 52 per cent of young women and girls experienced some form of online abuse. Similarly, another study of 22 countries – including Commonwealth countries such as Australia, Canada, Ghana, India, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia – showed that 58 per cent of girls and women aged between 15 and 25 reported having experienced some form of online harassment.[26]

The phenomenon has seen a dramatic rise, particularly with the proliferation of artificial intelligence, leading to a 550 per cent increase in deepfake videos between 2019 and 2023, 98 per cent of which are classified as 'deepfake pornography' and 99 per cent of which target women.[27] Online violence has been linked to offline attacks, abuse and harassment.[28]

The burning rise of deepfake videos between 2019 and 2023

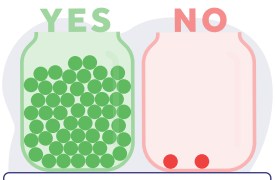


Not only does TFGBV have a devasting impact on the survivors, it also undermines participatory democracy by discouraging women from engaging in public life and civic discourse. Furthermore, it poses direct threats to women's livelihoods and economic empowerment, often limiting their access to education, economic opportunities and digital tools.[29] At the same time, with the rise of anti-gender equity movements, there is a concerning trend of declining news coverage of misogynistic abuse and violence against women and girls.[30]



3.3 Improved laws, policies and funding to protect women and girls from violence

Adoption of laws protecting women and girls from violence, 2026



52 of 54 *(96%)* of responding Commonwealth countries reported having adopted laws protecting women and girls from domestic violence

Most Commonwealth countries meet their commitments to protect citizens from violence. In terms of existent legal protections from domestic violence, there are no new data since the last report. Between 2015 and 2023, five countries in the African region introduced legislation to protect women and girls from violence, resulting in 52 of 54 Commonwealth countries reporting 'yes' to having existent legal protections from domestic violence. As of 2024, the latest data available, only two countries from Africa are still reporting 'no'. Heads are encouraged to support efforts towards universal legal protections.

There is strong data availability for this indicator, with 54 countries reporting. Data are unavailable for only two Commonwealth countries, both in the Pacific region.

While legal protections are paramount to protecting women and girls, their success depends on strong enforcement and budgetary support regarding the areas of physical, sexual and intimate partner violence mentioned above, as well as measures to counter TFGBV.



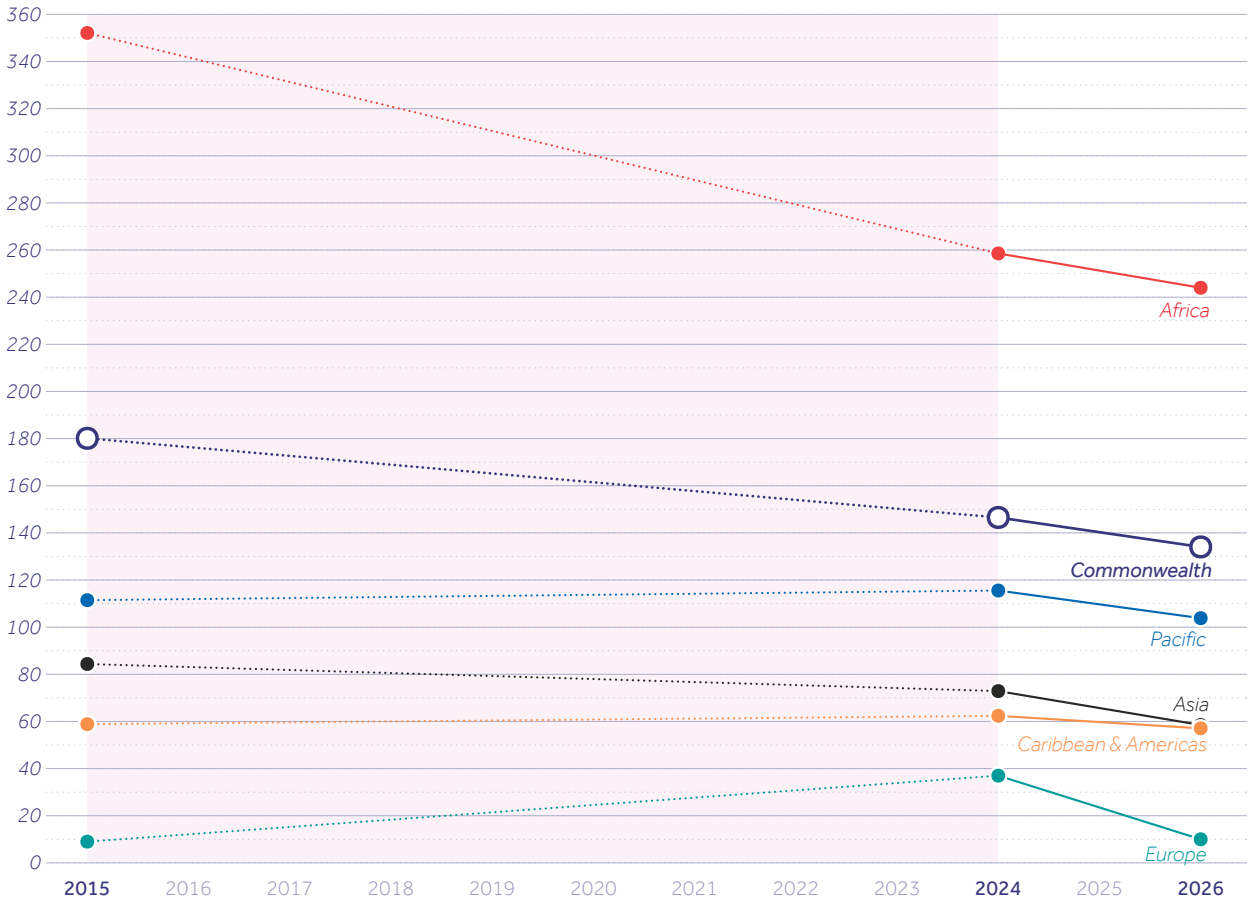


3.4 Improved health outcomes for women and girls

Maternal mortality rates per 100,000 live births decreased by 12.5 between 2024 and 2026. However, there is great variation among regions. In the case of Europe, which has the lowest rates at 10 deaths per 100,000 live births, there was an increase of 28 between 2015 and 2024, but a decrease of 27 from 2024 to 2026. The figures for Asia and for the Caribbean and Americas are close to 60, while that of the Pacific is over 100 and that of Africa is around 250.

Overall progress on reducing maternal mortality is currently insufficient to meet Sustainable Development Goal target 3.1 (to 'reduce the global maternal mortality ratio'), and recent development aid cuts threaten to reverse gains due to health facility closures and the loss of health workers. These cuts also disrupt supply chains for lifesaving supplies and medicines, such as treatments for haemorrhage, pre-eclampsia and malaria.[31]

Maternal mortality rates, 2026 *(per 100,000 live births)*



COMMONWEALTH	AFRICA	ASIA	CARIBBEAN & AMERICAS	EUROPE	PACIFIC
134.04	244.00	58.50	57.08	10.00	103.82
−12.50 since 2024	−14.57 since 2024	−14.38 since 2024	−5.30 since 2024	−27.00 since 2024	−11.73 since 2024

Accelerating ending violence against women and girls

Most Commonwealth states now have legislation protecting against VAWG. The opportunity now is to focus on enforcement.

To meaningfully reduce violence against girls, such as CEFM, efforts are needed to establish a minimum age for marriage, obtain consent by concerned parties, and prohibit all forms of violence, mistreatment and exploitation of children.[32]

Investing in consistently collecting quality data is essential to understand more accurate rates of physical, sexual and intimate partner violence against women and develop effective solutions to prevent it.

4. Gender and climate change

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change and climate disasters. They are often the 'societal shock absorbers' of households and families during climate crises: they receive food last, their unpaid care burden increases, their right to education is hampered, and their mortality and morbidity increases.[33] Women comprise 80 per cent of individuals displaced by climate change and are 14 times more likely to perish in climate-related disasters.[34]

WHAT IT WAS

Structural inequalities and discrimination mean women are more vulnerable to climate change and less empowered to respond to it.

WHAT IT HAS BECOME

This report's analysis of how gender features in member countries' NDCs has widened since 2024 to assess whether they are informed by gender analysis and meaningful participation by women and gender institutions, and whether they include gender-responsive monitoring and reporting systems and gender targets and indicators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Women must be included in planning and decision-making at all levels to ensure that climate change plans and budgets address their needs. Gender-disaggregated monitoring and evaluation, and the direct integration of gender into NDCs, are vital – as is the sharing of best practice from successful climate change initiatives that promote women's leadership, decision-making and inclusion in climate change action.

Climate change also increases the prevalence and severity of gender-based violence: for every 1°C by which global temperature increases, there is a 4.7 per cent increase in intimate partner violence. If global temperatures rise by 2°C, 40 million more women and girls are likely to experience intimate partner violence each year by 2090.[35]

Yet women and girls are often left out of decision-making spaces on issues of climate change. The 2024 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Gender Composition Report confirms this gap, noting that women average only 39 per cent representation in UNFCCC bodies.[36] The Trust Fund for Participation in the UNFCCC Process aims to support the attendance of delegates from developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing states, at sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and its subsidiary bodies. However, the analysis confirms that women comprised just 30 per cent of the participants supported by the Trust between 2013 and 2023.[37] While observer delegations, such as the Commonwealth's, show higher female engagement, official party delegations continue to lag behind.[38] In order for Commonwealth

countries to achieve environmental resilience, which is a pillar of the current Strategic Plan, efforts must be made to include women and girls in climate initiatives at all levels of government.

The analysis in this report on the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), which are countries' national climate commitments under the Paris Agreement, includes an important change from the previous edition. The methodology used to assess progress against the three indicators below has been updated to more accurately reflect gender integration in NDCs by member countries. The methodology has shifted from assessing whether gender is referenced in the NDCs to consider a wider range of factors. These factors include whether NDCs are informed by gender analysis, include gender-responsive monitoring and reporting systems, contain gender targets and indicators and demonstrate meaningful participation of women and gender institutions in leadership and decision-making. Given this change in methodology, the data presented in this report is not directly compared to that of the previous, 2024 report.

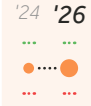
NDCs are the highest-level policy planning documents, outlining each country's plans to mitigate and adapt to climate change. They summarise operational strategies detailed in national and sectoral Sustainable Development Plans, Long-Term Low Emissions Development Plans, National Adaptation Plans, Biodiversity Action Plans and other strategic plans. As such, while they outline core objectives, they do not contain all information related to gender mainstreaming in climate action, nor do they report on challenges and progress, for which the Biennial Transparency Reports and Adaptation Communications are intended.

The latest analysis covered 46 Commonwealth member countries that submitted reports under the NDC 3.0 round. Of the 10 member countries that did not report, five were from Africa, four were from the Caribbean and Americas, and one was from the Pacific.

Table 4: *Summary table on ● improved, ● static/mixed and ● deteriorated indicators of gender equality and women's empowerment in this report,* **2024 and 2026**

Note: *Because the methodology used to assess progress against indicators 4.1–4.3 has changed since the 2024 report, their 2024 and 2026 'scores' are not directly comparable.*

Indicator		2024	2026	2028	2030
4.1 Representation of women in decision-making processes and national action plans	G				
	A	●	●		
	R				
4.2 Gender-responsive funding for climate initiatives	G				
	A	●	●		
	R				
4.3 Collecting and monitoring of the impact of climate change on women	G				
	A	●	●		
	R				



4.1 Representation of women in decision-making processes and national action plans

Of the 46 countries that reported, 23 (or 50 per cent) stated that women's groups or gender institutions were included in NDC update consultations. At the regional level, Africa and the Pacific had the highest percentages of reporting countries that answered 'yes' to this question, with 63 and 60 per cent respectively, followed by the Caribbean and Americas with 44 per cent and Asia with 38 per cent. Europe showed no evidence of a participatory approach.



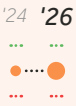
4.2 Gender responsive funding for climate initiatives

The term 'gender responsive funding' can refer to three distinct activities:

- gender-responsive budgeting (GRB)
- budget tagging (potentially using national, OECD or Rio gender markers), or
- budgets that include the financing of projects that include gender elements.

In this round of NDCs, four member countries – Fiji, Mauritius, Sierra Leone and Vanuatu – have noted the use of GRB. Two further countries – Canada and Rwanda – have previously reported their use of GRB. Six countries – Eswatini, Namibia, Nigeria, Tonga, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka – highlight the need for, or intend to promote, gender-responsive budgeting in the future.

In terms of green or climate budget tagging, Rwanda, Zambia, the Bahamas and Pakistan are already using it; Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Fiji are trialling it; and Malawi and Sierra Leone are aspiring to use it. It is not known whether these systems incorporate gender budget tagging specifically.



4.3 Collecting and monitoring of the impact of climate change on women

Of the 46 member countries that reported, 15 already use gender disaggregated data to inform their NDCs, while another 15 do not mention the subject of gender-disaggregated data in their NDCs. Yet, in terms of their plans regarding gender-disaggregated data, 26 countries expressed an intention to continue to strengthen their existing use of data, or to start to use it to inform NDC climate actions. Gender targets and indicators are proposed in a number of NDCs and will lead to an increase in gender disaggregated data collection if and when projects are financed and implemented.

A total of 18 reporting countries mention gender analysis to some degree. This could be using proxy data or historic research as baselines until the gender data supply chain can be improved; commissioning targeted or sectoral gender assessments; or using simulations to embed gender analysis as the project design stage.

Overall, analysis of NDCs found that socioeconomic norms that negatively impact gender equality and limit women's empowerment are being acknowledged in 63 per cent of the 46 NDCs from reporting member countries. These norms are related to:

- employment restrictions (male dominated sectors)
- time constraints (unpaid care work)
- resource access (finance, land, climate information and technical skills)
- physical harm (gender-based violence and child marriage).

Additionally, the unequal gendered impact of climate change and climate-related risk is acknowledged by member countries. However, understanding and analysis of which groups are most exposed and how intersecting vulnerabilities compound these risks remains extremely limited. Gender as a cross-cutting theme remains largely reliant on external conditional financing.

Accelerating gender and climate change initiatives

In order for climate change initiatives to be successful, it is important for women to be included in planning and decision-making at all levels to ensure their specific needs are addressed in climate change plans. Plans and budgeting are most effective when they are gender responsive, and monitoring and evaluation is most useful in planning and decision-making when it is gender disaggregated.

Additionally, the direct integration of gender into NDCs to better access and mobilise public and private climate financing mechanisms to meet the needs of all citizens is critical.[39]

Finally, support for dialogue with other governments and women's organisations, and learning from initiatives around the Commonwealth and beyond, is essential for success in the planning and delivery of climate change initiatives. For example, the Pacific Owned, Women-Led Early Warning and Resilience (POWER) Initiative increased women's leadership, decision-making and inclusion in disaster management and climate change action in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea; Tonga; and Vanuatu.[40] Understanding the factors behind the success of such programmes can support other Commonwealth countries to apply and adapt similar programmes to their unique contexts.



5. Accountability for gender equality

Data are a critical prerequisite for change towards gender equality and women's empowerment. While there are several important data-collection initiatives at the regional level, this report (as with the previous report) relies on World Bank data to ensure the global comparability of data. In these data, inconsistencies and gaps remain a key impediment to progress in the five priority areas of the Declaration.

To address issues faced by women and girls, it is important to invest in high-quality, comparable, sex- and gender-disaggregated data. Currently, the state of data on the four priority areas other than accountability is as shown in table 5.1, following a traffic-light system in which green indicates strong data availability and red indicates low data availability.

Table 5.1: *Data quality of indicators in four of the priority areas of the Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women* 2022–2030

Area	Indicator	Data quality
1. Women in leadership	**1.1** More women candidates standing for public office	G
	1.2 Increasing representation of women in the private sector	A
2. Women's economic empowerment	**2.1** Equitable access to education, including primary, secondary and training for employment	A
	2.2 Access to adequate ICT education	A
	2.3 Access to good employment opportunities	G
	2.4 Enabling legal environment	G
	2.5 Increased land ownership rates for women	G
	2.6 Support for women entrepreneurs and increased access to capital	G
	2.7 Sharing the burden of unpaid labour	R
3. Violence against women and girls	**3.1** Rates of child, early and forced marriage decline	R
	3.2 Rates of violence against women and girls decline	R
	3.3 Improved laws, policies and funding to protect women and girls from violence	R
	3.4 Improved health outcomes for women and girls	G
4. Gender and climate change	**4.1** Representation of women in decision-making processes and national action plans	A
	4.2 Gender-responsive funding for climate initiatives	A
	4.3 Collecting and monitoring of the impact of climate change on women	A

A more detailed analysis on data availability and quality on the indicators in the Declaration roadmap is presented in Annex C.

Accelerating accountability for gender equality

Comprehensive, sex-disaggregated data collection and reporting mechanisms at the national and sub-national levels, with binding timelines and clear ministerial accountability for compliance, is a key step in creating accountability for gender equality. This is especially important for indicators on violence against women and girls.

Additionally, the commitment of sustained, ring-fenced funding to national women's machineries and political backing at the highest levels of government to protect programmes from budgetary erosion across electoral cycles is another key measure.

Finally, gender-responsive budgeting as a whole-of-government requirement, with all ministries demonstrating how resource allocation addresses the distinct needs of women, men, girls and boys – particularly those from marginalised communities – would be a significant step in progressing towards the equality of women and girls across the Commonwealth.

Recommendations to accelerate progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth

Below, the 2024 recommendations for advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women are reiterated. Implementation progress has been limited over the past two years.

The adoption and effective implementation of these recommendations would constitute a significant leap in the acceleration of progress towards democratic, economic and environmental resilience in the Commonwealth.

Accelerating Women in Leadership

- Set targets for the appointment of women in managerial and governance roles in their public services.
- Work collectively with private sector leaders to grow the pipeline of women leaders in their nations, and across the Commonwealth.
- Champion initiatives to attract, support and mentor women candidates for political office within their national, provincial and local governments.
- Set gender targets for their Cabinets and Ministerial appointments and work with their political machinery to achieve them.
- Resource their national women's machineries and women's groups so that they can share case studies promoting women leaders as role models and provide development opportunities for emerging women leaders across all sectors.

Accelerating Women's Economic Empowerment

- Accelerate initiatives to keep girls at school.
- Continue to invest in the ICT education of women and girls.
- Accelerate legal reform and resource the implementation of new laws to protect the employment of women.
- Invest in initiatives to support women entrepreneurs, including increased access to capital.
- Implement campaigns encouraging gender equality in unpaid domestic and caring work and ensuring accessible and affordable childcare for all.

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

- Ensure preventing VAWG and CEFM is a national priority, including ensuring that VAWG and CEFM prevention is a funding priority.
- Ensure the legal protections for women and girls against violence and early and forced marriage are well implemented and resourced.
- Intensify their efforts on prevention, including increased data collection, increased investment in the evaluation of VAWG and CEFM programmes, as well as increased sharing of what is effective across the Commonwealth.

Accelerating Gender and Climate Initiatives

- Ensure women are included in planning and decision-making about climate change at the national and local level.
- Ensure climate budgets are gender responsive and that gendered data is gathered, analysed and used in planning and decision-making.

Accountability for gender equality

- Prioritise the collection and use of systematic, comparable, sex and gender disaggregated data.

Annex A

Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022–2030

1

At their June 2022 meeting in Rwanda, the Commonwealth Heads of Government affirmed and strengthened their commitment to accelerate gender equality by continuing to take achievable, comprehensive and meaningful actions within their own countries and to strengthen their contribution to global efforts, through the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

2

Heads reflected on the far-reaching implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender equality. Women and girls have been disproportionally affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has deepened pre-existing inequalities that perpetuate multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. This is demonstrated by escalating rates of gender-based violence, including increased rates of child, early, and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, as well as women's and girls' under-representation in decision-making processes, including in conflict, crisis and humanitarian settings. The burden of unpaid care and domestic work has also increased for women and girls, despite women making up the vast majority of frontline health care workers. They have also been disproportionately affected by economic crisis, with women and girls more likely to have lost their employment and to have experienced less access to essential health services and education. In light of this, heads acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to roll back decades of gender equality gains.

3

Heads acknowledged that gender equality and inclusion is necessary to enable full, equal and meaningful participation by women and girls in all areas of social, political and economic life. While considerable efforts have been made, progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls has been slow, and the pandemic represents a further impediment. Heads remain concerned that particularly in situations of poverty, women and girls have the least access to food, health, education and land ownership, as well as the least access to capital, training and opportunities for employment and other needs that would raise the standard of living for women, girls, their communities and societies. They reiterated that all forms of discrimination and violence against all women and girls violates human rights and respect for human dignity and hampers growth in the prosperity of societies, communities and families. To ensure women can fully achieve their potential in the service of their countries and of humanity, Heads called on all Commonwealth countries to ratify and strengthen support to implement the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Heads resolved to address systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economy by taking a gender-responsive approach to the development of trade and other related policies. In order to successfully break down the barriers to trade facing women, countries need to prioritise gender within their trade and economic agendas, including by supporting data-gathering initiatives relating to trade and gender and sharing best practices, such as through SheTrades Outlook, and by addressing the gender digital divide.

4 Convinced that the establishment of the new international economic order based on equity and justice must contribute significantly towards the promotion of gender equality, Heads committed to increasing women's access to decision-making and leadership by working to increase the proportion of women candidates standing for public office. Women's leadership and representation can be strengthened by providing training and mentoring opportunities for potential women candidates, removing discriminatory practices in campaigns and elections, and developing action plans to ensure women candidates and voters are free from violence, harassment and discrimination, including online. Heads committed to investigate the benefits of voluntary or legislative quotas or targets for women in the political, public and private sectors. Economic empowerment principles based on equity and justice will contribute significantly towards gender equality. As such, Heads committed to increasing women's participation in all levels of the decision-making process and leadership, improving women and girls' access to education, eliminating violence against women and girls, ensuring equal pay for work of equal value, and valuing and recognising women's unpaid care and domestic work.

5 Heads affirmed their unwavering commitment to strongly encourage access to a minimum 12 years of free quality education for girls, and celebrated progress made thus far. They committed to urgent action to ensure the right to education for marginalised girls in vulnerable circumstances. Heads commended the member states that now provide bursaries to girls pursuing higher learning at tertiary levels. Heads committed to build and upgrade education facilities that are child-, disability-, and gender-responsive and provide safe, inclusive, accessible and effective learning environments for all, which are free from violence. Heads committed to move away from measuring gender parity, and towards wider gender equality in education, understanding and addressing the barriers that stop women and girls from accessing education throughout their lifetime. Heads committed to end discriminatory policies and practices such as exclusion of pregnant or married girls from school.

6 Heads committed to ensure universal health coverage for all women and girls in the Commonwealth. Heads committed to build on the call of the 2018 Commonwealth Women's Forum (CWF), to 'implement and uphold comprehensive quality Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all women and young people and ensure universal health coverage, ensuring that by 2030 women and young people have universal access to sexual and reproductive health care services, including for family planning, information and education, with relevant data collection, review and follow-up' – with further progress including improved access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education.

7 Heads acknowledged the gendered impacts of climate change and environmental degradation, and committed to drive forward inclusive and gender-responsive solutions within national action plans across mitigation, adaptation and resilience across the Commonwealth.

8 To ensure action is sustained, collaboration across nations enhanced and best practice shared, Heads committed to mobilising technical and financial resources for gender equality at all levels and reporting on progress towards gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls at the next CHOGM.

9 Heads requested the Chair in Office of CHOGM with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat to bring this Declaration to the attention of member countries, relevant international organisations, including the United Nations system, regional entities and other stakeholders as the Commonwealth's commitments to Beijing +25 in 2020 to 2030.

10 Heads invited members of civil society, non-government organisations, private sector, academia and development partners to support member countries in accelerating the realisation of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the Commonwealth and beyond.

Commonwealth Secretariat
Nairobi, 20 September 2019

Updated 11 April 2022

Annex B

Roadmap in support of the Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022–2030

Commonwealth gender priorities	Declaration commitments	Indicators of progress
Women in leadership	More women candidates standing for public office	Percentage of seats held by women in national parliament
		Percentage of ministerial posts held by women
		Percentage of seats held by women in local government
	Increased representation of women in the private sector	Percentage of women in board governance roles
		Percentage of women managers and supervisors
Women's economic empowerment	Equitable access to education, including primary, secondary and training for employment	Percentage of females enrolled in secondary education
	Access to adequate ICT education	Percentage of female graduates in ICT programmes
	Access to good employment opportunities	Ratio of female to male labour market participation Percentage of women over 15 who are economically active
		Laws mandating non-discrimination by gender in employment (y/n)
		Legal protections for women in place in the workplace, equal work for equal pay, access to assets and entrepreneurship, and protections for parenthood and marriage
	Increased land ownership rates for women	Proportion of women who own land alone
	Support for women entrepreneurs and access to capital	Percentage of women who have borrowed to start or finance a farm or business
		A woman can open a bank account the same as a man (y/n)
		A women can sign a contract the same as man (y/n)
	Sharing of the burden of unpaid labour	Case studies of data collection and policy initiatives

Commonwealth gender priorities	Declaration commitments	Indicators of progress
Ending violence against women and girls	Rates of child, early and forced marriage decline	Rates of child marriage
	Rates of violence against women and girls decline	Proportion of women subjected to physical and/or sexual violence in the last 12 months (percentage of women aged 15–49)
		Proportion of women who have ever experienced intimate partner violence (percentage of women aged 15–49)
	Improved laws, policies and funding to protect women and girls from violence	Existent legal protections from domestic violence (y/n)
	Improved health outcomes for women and girls	Maternal mortality rates
		Women's life expectancy as a ratio of men's
Gender and climate change	Representation of women in decision-making processes and national action plans	Evidence of women's groups and national and gender institutions being engaged in developing action plans
	Gender-responsive funding for climate initiatives	Reference to gender-responsive budgeting in climate action plans
	Collection and monitoring of impact of climate change on women	Reference to the collection of sex-disaggregated data and gender analysis in national climate action plans
Accountability for gender equality	Widespread collection and reporting of good quality, comparable and disaggregated gender data	Case studies from member states; for example, growing use of gender-responsive budgeting

Annex C

Data availability of indicators

Below is a summary on analysis of data availability across the Commonwealth over time.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA COVERAGE

Overall, there is consistently strong reporting at the pan-Commonwealth level for fundamental demographic, health, political participation and legal gender-equality indicators. However, reporting coverage is notably lower for indicators from household surveys or that capture sensitive social and economic conditions. The weakest coverage is seen for indicators on women's asset ownership, financial inclusion and gender-based violence.

TEMPORAL DATA COVERAGE

Core demographic, labour market, literacy, early marriage and legal framework indicators typically span over three decades (1990–2023/24), enabling longitudinal analysis. Conversely, indicators related to gender-based violence and certain aspects of economic inclusion have more recent or sporadic data, as summarised in the table below.

Table A.1: *Data availability for indicators on gender equality by temporal coverage*

Single-year coverage	(2018 only)	ā Physical/sexual violence indicators ā Intimate partner violence
Moderate time series coverage	(14–18 years)	ā Financial inclusion indicators (saving at a bank or via mobile money for total, men and women) ā Women's land ownership ā Firms with women top managers ā Selected non-modelled gender-based violence indicators
Extended coverage	(20–30 years)	ā Women's political representation in ministerial positions and parliament ā Female participation in ICT tertiary education ā Age at first marriage (female and male) ā Secondary school enrolment
Long time series	(over 30 years, 1990–2023/24)	ā Life expectancy (female and male) ā Maternal mortality (national and modelled estimates) ā Literacy rates (youth and adult, male and female) ā Female labour force participation and gender participation ratios ā Early marriage (under 15 and under 18) ā Major women, business and the law legal- and rights-based indicators

Overall, the combination of uneven geographic and temporal reporting restricts trend analysis and cross-country comparability for several key gender outcome areas.

Endnotes

1 Commonwealth Secretariat (2024), *Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth.* https://thecommonwealth.org/publications/progress-towards-gender-equality-2024

2 Commonwealth Secretariat (2022), *Commonwealth Declaration for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women 2022–2030.* https://comsec-web-static.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2022-11/D19065_COM_Gender%20Declaration%202022.pdf

3 McEwen, H (2026), *Anti-Gender World Building: Reflections from CSW70, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.* https://www.www.fes.de/en/topics/gender/anti-gender-world-building; McEwen, H and L Narayanaswamy, (2023), *The International Anti-Gender Movement: Understanding the Rise of Anti-Gender Discourses in the Context of Development, Human Rights and Social Protection.* United Nations Research Institute for Social Development. https://cdn.unrisd.org/assets/library/papers/pdf-files/2023/wp-2023-4-anti-gender-movement.pdf

4 European Parliament Forum (EPF) for Sexual & Reproductive Rights (2021), *Tip of the Iceberg.* www.epfweb.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/Tip%20of%20the%20Iceberg%20June%202021%20Final.pdf; EPF (2026), *The Next Wave: How Religious Extremism Is Regaining Power.* www.epfweb.org/node/1147

5 Tabbush, C et al. (2025), *Understanding backlash against gender equality: Evidence, trends and policy responses,* UNRISD and UN Women. https://knowledge.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/09/understanding-backlash-against-gender-equality-evidence-trends-and-policy-responses

6 The Commonwealth (2022), '*Communique of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting*'. https://comsec-web-static.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2022-06/CHOGM%202022%20Communique.pdf?VersionId=sqWEwpE4gyzg8wIdTCoPO0yQgVNZ7Izy; The Commonwealth (2023), *Proceedings report of the 13th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting.* https://thecommonwealth.org/publications/proceedings-report-13th-commonwealth-womens-affairs-ministers-meeting

7 McEwen, H and Narayanaswamy, L (2026), *The Pushback against Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Commonwealth: Dynamics and Implications,* Commonwealth Secretariat. https://doi.org/10.14217/wfoc8879

8 McKinsey & Company (2020), *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters,* 19 May. www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters;

9 McKinsey & Company (2023), *Diversity matters even more: The case for holistic impact,* 5 December. www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-matters-even-more-the-case-for-holistic-impact#/

10 UN Women (2025), '*FAQs: Digital abuse, trolling, stalking, and other forms of technology-facilitated violence against women and girls*'. www.unwomen.org/en/articles/faqs/digital-abuse-trolling-stalking-and-other-forms-of-technology-facilitated-violence-against-women
Global: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2016), '*Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians*'. www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2016-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-parliamentarians
Asia-Pacific: IPU (2025), '*60% of women MPs From Asia-Pacific report online gender-based violence*'. www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2025-03/60-women-mps-asia-pacific-report-online-gender-based-violence
Africa: IPU (2021), '*Sexism harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Africa*'. www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2021-11/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-africa
Europe: IPU (2018), '*Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe*'. www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2018-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-europe

11 Coffey, C, PE Revollo, R Harvey, M Lawson, AP Butt, K Piaget, D Sarosi and J Thekkudan (2020), *Time to Care: Unpaid and Underpaid Care Work and the Global Inequality Crisis, Oxfam International,* January. www.oxfam.org/en/research/time-care

12 *OECD Data Explorer – Archive*. https://data-explorer.oecd.org/vis?tenant=archive&df[ds]=DisseminateArchiveDMZ&df[id]=DF_GENDER_EMP&df[ag]=OECD&dq=AUS%2BCAN%2BNZL%2BGBR%2BIND%2BZAF.EMP15_U.MEN%2BWOMEN..LATEST_YEAR&to[TIME]=false&vw=tb

13 University of Bath (2022), '*Married mothers who earn more than their husbands take on an even greater share of housework*'. www.bath.ac.uk/announcements/married-mothers-who-earn-more-than-their-husbands-take-on-an-even-greater-share-of-housework/; Katsha, H. (2023), '*Women Spend A Whopping Extra 15 Working Days On Unpaid Labour Compared To Men*', 2 March. www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/only-1-in-5-british-couples-split-chores-equally_uk_6400afe0e4b0d14ed6a63a45; Picchi, A (2023), '*Even "breadwinner" wives do more housework than husbands*', *CBS News,* 13 April. www.cbsnews.com/news/women-breadwinners-tripled-since-1970s-still-doing-more-unpaid-work/

14 Oxfam (2020), '*Time To Care*', Briefing Paper, https://webassets.oxfamamerica.org/media/documents/FINAL_bp-time-to-care-inequality-200120-en.pdf; World Bank Group (no date), *Data, India*. https://data.worldbank.org/country/india.

15 International Labour Organization (2018), '*ILO: Women do 4 times more unpaid care work than men in Asia and the Pacific*', 27 June. www.ilo.org/resource/news/ilo-women-do-4-times-more-unpaid-care-work-men-asia-and-pacific.

16 UNDP (2024), *Enabling Investments Into the Malaysian Care Economy.* enabling_investments_into_the_malaysian_care_economy_2.pdf

17 UNDP (2023), *Samoa Pilot Time Use Study Report*. samoa_tus_final_report_signed_soft_version.pdf

18 Commonwealth Lawyers Association (2022), '*Child, Early & Forced Marriage in the Commonwealth', Policy Brief*, www.commonwealthlawyers.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Preventing-and-Eliminating-Child-Early-and-Forced-Marriage-in-the-Commonwealth-CommonProtect-Policy-Brief-Nov-22.pdf

19 UNICEF (2020), *'Accelerated action needed to end child marriage in Bangladesh by 2030', Press Release*, 7 October. www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/press-releases/accelerated-action-needed-end-child-marriage-bangladesh-2030; UN Human Rights Council (2026), 'Universal Periodic Review – Mozambique' www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/MZIndex.aspx

20 Atiqul Haq, SM, MNQ Ahmed, SAA Lalin et al. (2024), '*Early marriage of girls in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic: a literature review', Humanities and Social Sciences Communications Vol. 11, 697.* www.nature.com/articles/s41599-024-03085-3; UNICEF (no date), *Child Marriage in COVID-19 contexts*. www.unicef.org/esa/media/7651/file/Child-Marriage-in-COVID-19-contexts.pdf

21 UNICEF (2025), '*Protecting progress: The global impact of funding cuts on ending child marriage', Advocacy Brief.* www.unicef.org/media/176031/file/ECM%20Advocacy%20Brief_5%20Nov%202025.pdf.pdf

22 UN Women and the World Health Organization (2020), '*Violence Against Women and Girls: Data Collection during COVID-19*'. www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/VAWG-data-collection-during-COVID-19-compressed.pdf

23 UN Women (2025), '*Facts and figures: Ending violence against women*', 19 November. www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-ending-violence-against-women#89310

24 World Health Organization (2025), *Violence against women prevalence estimates*, 2023, www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240116962

25 UN Women (no date), '*The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against women during COVID-19*'. www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19

26 Hicks, J. (2021), *Global Evidence on the Prevalence and Impact of Online Gender-based Violence (OGBV) (Version 1).* The Institute of Development Studies and Partner Organisations. https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12413/16983

27 UN Population Fund (UNFPA) (no date), *An Infographic Guide to Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence.* www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/An%20Infographic%20Guide%20to%20TFGBV.pdf

28 Posetti, J, L Hellmueller, K Williams et al. (2025), '*Tipping Point: the Chilling Escalation of Online Violence Against Women in the Public Sphere', Evidence Brief 1.* tipping-point-the-chilling-escalation-of-violence-against-women-in-the-public-sphere-in-the-age-of-ai-en.pdf

29 UNFPA (no date), '*Making all spaces safe: A framework for TFGBV programming*'. www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/A%20Framework%20for%20TFGBV%20Programming.pdf

30 Johnson, S (2026), '*Media coverage of violence against women reaches "dismal" low, report finds' Guardian,* 17 April. www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/apr/17/media-coverage-violence-against-women-low-report

31 WHO (2025), '*Aid cuts threaten fragile progress in ending maternal deaths, UN agencies warn*', news release, 7 April. www.who.int/news/item/07-04-2025-aid-cuts-threaten-fragile-progress-in-ending-maternal-deaths-un-agencies-warn

32 Commonwealth Lawyers Association (2022), '*Child, Early & Forced Marriage in the Commonwealth*', policy brief. www.commonwealthlawyers.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Preventing-and-Eliminating-Child-Early-and-Forced-Marriage-in-the-Commonwealth-CommonProtect-Policy-Brief-Nov-22.pdf

33 ActionAid (2021), *Invisible women: A gender analysis of climate-induced migration in South Asia.* https://actionaid.org/sites/default/files/publications/Invisible%20women.pdf

34 ActionAid Ghana (2025), '*The Unequal Burden of Climate Change*'. https://ghana.actionaid.org/news/2025/unequal-burden-climate-change-how-climate-change-deepens-inequality-women-and-girls

35 Quinones, L (2025), '*Climate crisis driving surge in gender-based violence, UN study finds', UN News.* https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/04/1162461

36 UNFCCC (2024), *Gender composition – Report by the secretariat,* 11 September. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2024_04_adv.pdf

37 Ibid.; UNFCCC (2017), '*Trust Fund for Participation in the UNFCCC Process*'. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/trust_fund_for_participation_in_the_unfccc_process.pdf

38 The Commonwealth (2025), '*Blog: Breaking the cycle – gender equality in climate governance and finance*', 25 March. https://thecommonwealth.org/news/blog-breaking-cycle-gender-equality-climate-governance-and-finance

39 Commonwealth Secretariat (2024), *Accelerating Inclusive Gender Responsive Climate Finance for NDCs – Lessons from Antigua and Barbuda*, 9 May. https://thecommonwealth.org/story/accelerating-inclusive-gender-responsive-climate-finance-ndcs-lessons-antigua-and-barbuda

40 Chowdhury, TJ, E Faerua, L Moala et al. (2025), '*Women-Led Multi-Hazard Earyl Warning Systems in the Pacific*'. https://figshare.uts.edu.au/articles/report/Women-Led_Multi-Hazard_Early_Warning_Systems_in_the_Pacific/30293815?file=58612489



The Commonwealth

NOVEMBER 2026