

Preface

This compilation of case studies shows optimism and challenges in advancing gender equality across Commonwealth countries during the last ten years. The case studies attest to the commitment, energy and creativity of the wide array of forces involved: governments; non-governmental organisations, women's networks and men's groups; community and business leaders; and donors among others. They bring into sharp focus instances of genuine progress – sometimes significant, sometimes incremental – balanced against existing (if ever shakier) sociocultural and institutional barriers.

The case studies document good practices and lessons learned as Commonwealth countries have worked to implement the 2005–15 Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (PoA).¹ As the PoA came to an end, the Commonwealth Secretariat embarked on a review to assess where things stand regarding gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth. The assessment was conducted around the four critical areas of the PoA: Gender democracy, peace and conflict; Gender, human rights and law; Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment; and Gender and HIV/AIDS. The case studies were developed to make a substantial qualitative contribution to the review.

This publication is timely. United Nations member countries, building on the 2000–15 millennium development goals (MDGs), adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty and combat inequality by 2030. This ambitious agenda features 17 goals and 169 targets and it reflects the widely held view that women have a critical role to play in achieving them. Goal 5 is specific to gender equality and women's empowerment² and many of the targets recognise this goal as both the objective and part of the solution.

The case studies document the strategies employed by Commonwealth member countries to change social institutions and discriminatory norms preventing progress on gender equality. They are practical interventions that governments, policy-makers, civil society and the private sector in Commonwealth countries and beyond can modify to fit their own settings. The compilation will stimulate reflection and dialogue on actions and results and it will be a useful resource in global efforts to achieve the SDGs.

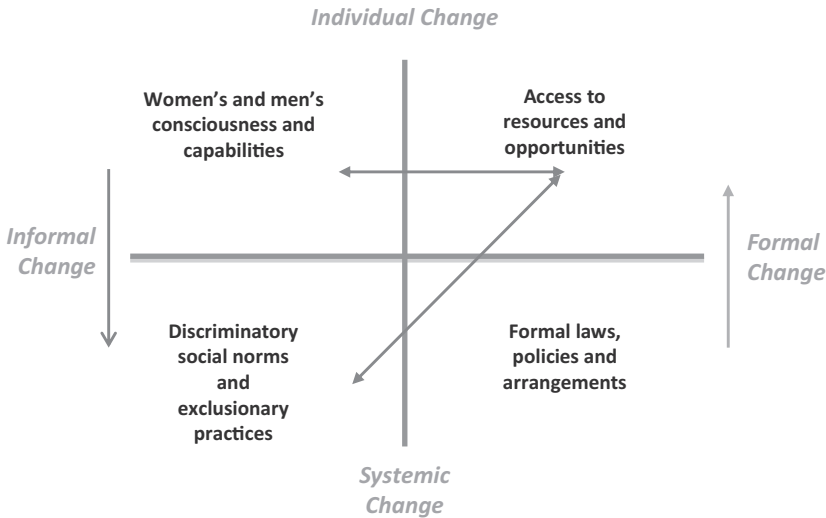
Developing the case studies

Analytical framework

Each of the case studies has been put together using the framework for case study analysis developed by Gender at Work, a transnational network of individuals and groups working for gender equality and women's empowerment. The framework

ensures that the analysis of achievements and impacts covers all bases – individual and institutional perspectives as well as formal (policy and regulation) and informal (cultural norms) spheres. In doing so it highlights areas of movement towards gender equality that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Gender at Work analytical framework



Gender at Work developed the framework in 2002. Its starting point is that sustainable progress toward gender equality requires change in multiple areas: formal policies and laws; resource distribution; individual and collective consciousness; and social norms. Transforming gender relations requires building the individual capabilities and resources of women and men while transforming the institutional context, or the ‘deep structure’ of organisations, within which they live and work. The analytical framework makes clear how change in gender relations is dependent upon change in all the quadrants. It illustrates the links between various domains of change and the deep structural and discriminatory social norms held in place by power dynamics. Change in the bottom left quadrant of the framework is a key ingredient for supporting changes across the other quadrants and towards sustainable change in gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Collection and selection

The process of collecting information took place over two years and garnered some 150 submissions. The case studies were developed from a variety of sources including country reports submitted by national women’s machineries to the Commonwealth Secretariat, interviews with representatives of national women’s machineries and civil society organisations, and research reports and other published documentation.

The objective was to show the range of strategies employed by governments, and civil society and other social investing organisations to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment. The selection process deliberately favoured positive cases with high impact to derive lessons about what worked and in what circumstances.

Not all Commonwealth member countries are represented. The 20 case studies selected illustrate innovations across the four PoA thematic areas and across countries and regions (Table 1). Some of the case studies adopted a multisectoral approach and therefore addressed more than one thematic area. This is particularly true of the critical area ‘Gender and HIV/AIDS’, which was typically addressed through integrated strategies for eliminating gender-based violence.

Case studies by country, region, issue/programme and PoA thematic area(s)

No.	Country	Region	Issue/Programme	PoA Thematic Area
1.	Australia	Pacific	Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012	Gender, human rights and law; Gender, democracy, peace and conflict; Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
2.	Bangladesh	Asia	One Stop Crisis Centre, violence against women and girls	Gender, human rights and law
3.	Botswana	Africa	Integrated approach to combatting gender based violence	Gender, human rights and law; Gender and HIV/AIDS
4.	Cameroon	Africa	Mass product consumer regulatory authority and the empowerment of women	Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
5.	Canada	Caribbean and Americas	National action plan to combat human trafficking	Gender, human rights and law
6.	Grenada	Caribbean and Americas	Advancing the legislative and policy framework to combat gender based violence	Gender, human rights and law
7.	India	Asia	The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act	Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
8.	Kenya	Africa	Women Enterprise Fund	Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
9.	Malaysia	Asia	1AZAM programme for women’s economic development	Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
10.	Malta	Europe	The Equality Mark initiative for employers	Gender, democracy, peace and conflict; Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment

(Continued)

Case studies by country, region, issue/programme and PoA thematic area(s) (continued)

No.	Country	Region	Issue/Programme	PoA Thematic Area
11.	Mauritius	Africa	Fostering entrepreneurship in the SME sector, National Women's Enterprise Council initiative	Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
12.	Namibia	Africa	Women and Child Protection Unit – gender-based violence	Gender, human rights and law
13.	New Zealand	Pacific	Women in leadership programme – women on private sector boards and supporting state sector boards	Gender, democracy, peace and conflict; Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
14.	Nigeria	Africa	Nigerian Women's Trust Fund to strengthen women's political participation	Gender, democracy, peace and conflict
15.	Pacific-CSO	Pacific	Pacific Women's Network male advocacy programme	Gender, human rights and law
16.	Pakistan	Asia	Women's parliamentary caucus	Gender, democracy, peace and conflict
17.	Trinidad and Tobago	Caribbean and Americas	Central registry on domestic violence	Gender, human rights and law
18.	Uganda	Africa	Income-generating activity programme	Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
19.	United Kingdom	Europe	Women's Business Council	Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
20.	United Republic of Tanzania	Africa	Channelling men's positive involvement in the national response to HIV/AIDS (CHAMPION)	Gender and HIV/AIDS

A rundown of the strategies

The collection of case studies demonstrates the broad range of initiatives undertaken in Commonwealth countries to advance women's leadership (in both the public and private sectors), the diversity of stakeholders involved, and the partnerships formed. With a view to inform evidence-based policy and programming in support of women's rights and gender equality, each case study presents a brief description of the intervention, theory of change, key institutional actors involved and the main

findings, including outcomes achieved and lessons learned. The case studies are organised into five sections as follows:

Section One: Women’s Political Participation – In Pakistan, the Women’s Political Caucus (WPC), a national cross-party platform, has amplified the voices of women parliamentarians. Since its formation in 2008, WPC has successfully lobbied parliament to pass a number of laws that advance women’s rights, initiated multiple programmes to tackle gender inequality and helped to raise awareness and funding to address violence against women. The Nigerian Women’s Trust Fund (NWTF), launched in 2011, provides women candidates with electoral financing and capacity-building support. Since its inception, the NWTF has assisted 154 of the 220 eligible candidates, across political parties and in various electoral districts. NWTF is a multi-stakeholder initiative backed by government and a coalition of civil society, private sector and international development agency partners.

Section Two: Women’s Corporate Leadership and Gender Equality in the Workplace – National women’s machineries in Australia, Malta, New Zealand and United Kingdom have developed tools and strategies for employers to increase women’s labour force participation and raise public awareness of workplace equality issues. Australia’s Workplace Gender Equality Act (2012) aims to overcome implementation gaps in existing legislation on gender equality at the workplace. Malta’s Equality Mark certification is awarded to employers who have in place positive equality policies and measures to implement them. In New Zealand, the Women in Leadership Programme works to get more women on private sector boards while the Women’s Business Council in United Kingdom has adopted a strategy of raising awareness and building partnerships to increase women’s labour force participation.

Section Three: Women’s Enterprise and Economic Empowerment – Cameroon’s Mass Product Consumer Regulatory Authority provides economic empowerment opportunities for women and responds to their need for food security. India’s Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act offers rural women new opportunities for paid employment and enhanced women’s autonomy in making household decisions. The establishment of government-supported entities to foster women’s entrepreneurship has been a prominent strategy in Kenya, Mauritius and Uganda. Women entrepreneurs have benefited from increased access to credit, markets and support services, and in the process are developing their business acumen and entrepreneurial skill sets.

Section Four: Combatting Violence Against Women and Gender-Based Violence – Bangladesh provides violence survivors with multiple services under one roof and facilitates their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. Canada’s anti-trafficking programme has improved prevention and detection, increased services, and strengthened national and international partnerships. Grenada’s multidisciplinary approach involves new gender-based violence (GBV) laws and policies, establishment of response mechanisms, putting in place training responders and sensitising the public. In Namibia, special police units to tackle GBV have been added to women and child protection units, and Trinidad and Tobago is piloting a central registry on domestic violence.

Section Five: Working with Men for Gender Equality – Botswana mobilised men around gender-based violence in collaboration with Men Sector, a government initiated HIV/AIDS intervention organisation, partnered prominent men in the promotion of gender equality and elimination of GBV, and created discussion platforms on issues affecting women and men. The Pacific Women’s Network against Violence against Women engaged men as potential agents of change while the Tanzania’s CHAMPION involved men in preventing the spread of HIV and AIDS. The project promoted dialogue on HIV, reproductive health and gender equality; engaged community members and leaders in GBV sensitisation; and developed behaviour change communication tools and messages at various levels.

A final section, **Key Factors for Success**, brings together the main lessons that run through the case studies.

Notes

- 1 Gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) Harare Declaration of 1991. Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women’s/Gender Affairs took the lead in developing the Plan of Action, with strong contributions and support from the heads of Commonwealth national women’s machineries and members of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group. The Ministers agreed the final PoA at their 7th meeting in Fiji Islands, June 2004.
- 2 Sustainable Development Goal 5: ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.’