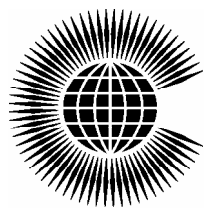


Commonwealth Secretariat



Consultation of Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers

Helmsley Hotel, 212 East 42nd Street, New York
26 February 2006

Terms of Reference for the Commonwealth Secretariat Gender Audit

Activity

The Strategic Planning and Evaluation Division (SPED) in collaboration with the Gender Section of the Social Transformation Programmes Division are currently undertaking a performance audit of the implementation of the Secretariat's gender equality and gender mainstreaming strategy. The study will review the principles guiding the development of the approach to gender mainstreaming across the Secretariat and the effectiveness of the policy and practices in implementing the strategy in the Secretariat's programmes and projects.

Background

The Secretariat's commitment to mainstreaming is informed by the fundamental principle of equality and non-discrimination, the Commonwealth Plans of Action¹, and measures adopted by the Secretariat to ensure its administrative and programming procedures are examples of good practice in gender mainstreaming. The Secretary-General is mandated to report to each CHOGM on progress made by governments and the Secretariat in implementing the POA.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's gender mainstreaming strategy has been operational since 1996. The Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD)² has the overall responsibility to spearhead the gender mainstreaming process within the Secretariat, though Programme Divisions take responsibility for integrating gender into their respective programmes and projects. The role of the Gender Section within STPD is to provide technical assistance to governments to mainstream gender equality in their policies, programmes and activities and to support gender mainstreaming within the Secretariat.

The 1995 Plan of Action on Gender and Development represented the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing. It defined a clear link between gender equality and the wider development agenda, made a shift from the 'women in development' to the 'gender and development approach, and established the mandate for gender equality issues to be mainstreamed by both member governments and the Secretariat.

The current Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015, places gender equality efforts within the priorities of the Secretariat's four-year Strategic Plan (2004/05-2007/08). This means the key focus of work is in the areas of democracy; peace and conflict; human rights, the law and constitutional reform; and on social development, with a strong orientation towards the economic sectors. The specific thrust is to work through the national women's machineries and other

¹ The 1995 Plan of Action on Gender and Development which was the Commonwealth's contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, provided the initial impetus and was subsequently updated in 2000. The current Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 was approved by Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers at their 7th Meeting in 2004, and presented to the UN Beijing+10 Global Review in 2005.

² Formerly the Gender and Youth Affairs Division, STPD was formed to incorporate the gender, education and health programmes in 2001.

mainstream ministries in support of gender equality. In recent years the Secretariat's work in gender has been to take a lead in some difficult areas such as gender in national budgeting and planning; gender, enterprise development and the multilateral trading system; women and men in partnership for post-conflict reconstruction; gender and human rights; and gender and HIV/AIDS.

The approach to gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat has been multi-pronged, including reporting at the organisation's key governance meetings, e.g., CHOGM, Executive Committee Meetings; ensuring that gender is a cross-cutting issue across the 4-year Strategic Plan; establishing structures including the Gender Steering Committee and Gender Focal Points within each Division. Gender training workshops for staff have been undertaken and tools and procedures developed to record and review the effectiveness of programmes in integrating gender issues. The Gender Section has undertaken collaborative projects with Divisions to facilitate their gender mainstreaming efforts. Internal cross-agency committees and reviews have periodically assessed the effectiveness of these efforts.

The 1995 Plan of Action sets out the Secretariat's internal gender mainstreaming strategy; guidelines for implementation of the strategy have also been documented³. These two documents provide the policy and procedural framework for the Secretariat's approach to gender mainstreaming and, with the new 2005-2015 Plan of Action, is the core set of reference statements for the study.

The Operational Plan 2004/05-2005/06 commits to the conduct of a performance audit during 2005 of Secretariat gender equality and mainstreaming programmes. The study will focus on activities implemented from 1996 forward when the gender mainstreaming strategy was operationalized. Since the development of the gender mainstreaming strategy there has not been an examination of the effectiveness of the programme and it is timely for a re-think of the overall approach and direction to be undertaken. A review of gender mainstreaming efforts and programmes will be helpful in generating lessons from gender mainstreaming efforts to support future work. These lessons may also be useful in guiding the Human Rights mainstreaming efforts. In this regard, the findings and recommendations of the study need to be practical and feed into organisational concerns.

Objectives of the Performance Audit

The study has the following objectives:

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

1. Activity Description

The audit will consist of two components.

Component 1 seeks to assess the effectiveness of the Secretariat's current structures, mechanisms, tools, procedures and guidance for mainstreaming gender across the Programmes.

³ *The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development (1995) and A strategic Guide. Implementing the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development and its Update (2000-2005) (2000).*

Component 2 seeks to:

- a. Assess the quality of mainstreaming of gender equality policy and principles into projects at both design and implementation stages;
- b. Assess the impact and outcomes for beneficiaries of the Secretariat's gender equality policy and programmes; and
- c. Make recommendations as needed to strengthen gender mainstreaming across the Secretariat and within its programmes.

2. Detailed outputs

Component 1

This component will involve a review, using document analysis, interviews and focus group discussion, of the procedures, processes and tools used to integrate gender policy and principles into the Secretariat and its programmes.

Output 1.1: A report analysing the integration of gender mainstreaming policy and principles into the programmes and Secretariat systems and procedures.

The report will be an analysis of the effectiveness of the tools, procedures and management approach in mainstreaming gender issues across the Secretariat and its programmes. The analysis will be based on a good appreciation of how the Secretariat's current tools are utilised to integrate gender objectives and an understanding of the project management procedures and of approaches to staff development and organisational strengthening in gender and development issues.

This may require a series of interviews with staff and a desk study of the relevant documents, systems and tools including:

- Mandates, including ministerial mandates, and policy statements on gender equality and equity;
- The Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2005-2015) as well as previous PoA;
- A Strategic Guide. Implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action and its Update (2000-2005) 2000.
- The Strategic Plan (2004/05-2007-07) and Operational Plan (2004/05-2005/06);
- The PMM;
- CFTC and ComSec budget expenditure;
- The Commonwealth Secretariat Procedures Manual;
- The PIMS, including the Gender codes;
- Records and minutes of the Gender Steering Committee, the Project Development Committee and relevant Management Committee minutes;
- Annual Work Plans for the Gender Section within STPD;
- Management targets for achieving gender mainstreamed projects, staff and expert specialist recruitment;
- The SG's progress report to CHOGM on gender and the PoA;
- Secretariat technical publications and publicity material, such as the SG's Reports to CHOGM, Ministers Reference Books, Commonwealth Currents, CNIS, and various expert group reports;
- Staff training and workshop reports on gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat;
- Recruitment and staffing policies and procedures relating to gender equality;
- Reports on staff skills training and competency standards and procedures for gender analysis;
- Review reports of the Gender Focal Points;

- Gender reporting in monitoring and completion reports (BTOR and PCR);
- Gender Section management reports (quarterly and annually);
- A selection of Secretariat evaluation reports;
- Gender information networks, newsletters and website; and
- The Secretariat's Annual Performance Reports for the last four years.
- Records and reports of the work of the Commonwealth Reference Group on gender equality

In consultation with the SPED Task Manager the consultant team will develop an appropriate sample for interview and focus group discussion. This sample should include Secretariat staff and, as appropriate, Secretariat consultants. In developing the sample the following should be taken into consideration:

- The sample size should be significant;
- It should include representation across the Secretariat at all levels and in terms of programme responsibilities, experience in project design and implementation and technical specialisation;
- Gender of participants;
- It should include individual contractors and key partner organisations or those with whom the Secretariat most frequently collaborates.

The focus of analysis should be on those priority areas in which the Secretariat has worked in recent years and identify the key issues relevant to gender mainstreaming. The key programme areas have included: peace and conflict prevention, democracy, HIV/AIDS and poverty alleviation and macro economic issues that affect women's poverty.

The team leader for the study will develop a questionnaire for the interviews in discussion with SPED and STPD. Without sacrificing quality the questionnaire should be as brief as possible. In some cases interviews may need to be conducted by phone or electronically where consultants or key stakeholders are based outside London.

The study team leader will also develop an approach and methodology for the focus group process for approval by SPED. The consultation process should incorporate, as appropriate, the views and comments of Regional Groups, the Gender Expert Group and select UN agencies.

The approach and methodology should detail:

- the duration of each meeting and how the time will be used and the agenda if appropriate;
- how groups will be structured (by level, by function or by technical specialisation or by division);
- the tools to be used by the facilitator and how information will be collated; and
- the number of persons per group.

A timetable for the focus groups will also be developed; SPED and STPD will arrange the times for individual interviews.

Following the completion of the interviews and focus groups process, and the review of relevant documents and operational systems, the consultant team will undertake an analysis and complete a report addressing the following questions:

Gender equality guidelines

- How well are they utilized?
- How effective are the current guidelines in assisting mainstreaming?
- Do the guidelines need to be modified, simplified or expanded?

- How well have experiences, good practices and project strategies have been shared across the Secretariat programmes?

Gender coding and PIMS

- How are the gender codes used to support mainstreaming?
- Are the questions adequately formulated to identify variations in the focus on gender?
- How clear and understandable are the gender codes and the associated questions?
- Are the gender codes being applied effectively or accurately?
- Could the gender coding system be used more effectively to strengthen gender awareness on projects, including through better linkages to other elements of the project design process?
- Does the PIMS provide adequate means to assess and monitor gender mainstreaming and gender targeting across the programme?

Programme strategies:

- Has a coherent gender matrix been effective in supporting divisions to incorporate gender policies into the programme?
- How are gender equality and gender equity policies, practices, outcomes and indicators integrated into programme strategies?
- How well are gender issues incorporated into programme monitoring and review processes?
- How effective has the Plan of Action been in supporting the development of a forward-looking approach and preparation of Divisional Plans of Action on gender mainstreaming?

PMM:

- How does the PMM assist staff in defining gender issues and in clarifying the gender parameters of project management?
- What additional information or tools are required to implement the Secretariat policies and principles relating to gender mainstreaming?
- What modifications to the PMM guidance would be required to enhance the value of the manual as a guide to staff to more effectively address gender issues?

Gender training for Staff and Focal Points:

- How relevant has been the gender awareness and gender training provided to Secretariat staff?
- How effective is the gender training for staff in terms of using gender analysis tools and concepts at the desk?
- How effective has the Focal Points system been in implementing gender mainstreaming across the Secretariat?

Gender advice, information and technical support:

- How do the Gender Section advisers promote gender equality policies and mainstreaming practices?
- How well are the gender advisers able to integrate advice on gender issues into sector programmes and strategy development?
- What is the relationship of the gender advisers to other technical advisers in mainstreaming gender?
- How useful have been the various information strategies used to inform and strengthen staff understanding about gender issues?
- How effectively have the management committees been able to promote and support gender mainstreaming?

Evaluations:

- How gender concerns are mainstreamed into the current evaluation methodologies for evaluations?

- How can the review of gender issues be integrated into ongoing monitoring and evaluation activities across the programmes?

Output 1.2: Draft guidelines on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

The report from Component 1 will include as a separate annex guidelines on gender analysis, gender assessment and monitoring for incorporation into the revised project management manual. The current PMM is being revised under the Performance Management Improvement Project (PMIP) (being undertaken under a separate consultancy contract). The gender performance audit consultant will coordinate with the PMIP consultant team to provide drafts of appropriate guidance notes for inclusion in the revised manual.

Output 1.3: Design and methodology for a rapid panel review of projects

At the completion of Component 1 and prior to commencing Component 2, the consultant will prepare and finalise a checklist of quality criteria relating to gender equality and gender mainstreaming to be used in a rapid review of a sample of projects. The checklist and the rapid review methodology (as briefly outlined below) will be reviewed in consultation with the SPED task manager and the PMIP consultant team and trialled prior to the commencement of Component 2.

Rapid Review of Projects

It is proposed that a sample of projects be reviewed as a rapid desk study to generate a broad-brush assessment of the quality of Secretariat activities in support of gender equality and gender mainstreaming. Using a panel of experienced programme managers under the direction of the study consultant a representative sample of about 20 to 30 projects drawn from the last five years of the CFTC programme will be reviewed to assess their quality against a number of key criteria. The development of these quality criteria, and the source documentation for the assessment, will be undertaken as part of Component 1. The sample of projects will be representative of a range of sectors and regions.

Component 2

Component 2 includes a rapid desk review utilising a panel approach and a field evaluation of a sample of projects to assess the integration of gender equality policies and principles during design and implementation and the effectiveness of the Secretariat in supporting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in Commonwealth members.

Output 2.1: A brief report outlining the panel rapid desk review discussions and findings.

A short review report on each project reviewed will be prepared, based on the panel discussions and assessment of the project. This should be presented in an easy to read format, noting the strengths and weaknesses of the project against the quality criteria, and provide suggestions for improvements. A summary of the key findings of each assessment and the process will also be prepared.

These reports will then be discussed with the relevant programme area or task managers who have an opportunity to review the assessment and the project report before finalisation. The final

version of the project reports, representing the panel's consolidated view of each project, will then be prepared, taking into account comments from the project manager or division, as appropriate.

Output 2.2: A report on the overall findings of the rapid panel review

A consolidated report on the rapid panel review which brings together individual project assessments and provides an overall assessment of the quality of the gender equality and mainstreaming activities across the sampled projects will be prepared. It must be in a clear and concise format and include an executive summary. It should contain comments, as appropriate on the following:

- Project design including terms of reference, logframe, inclusion of gender indicators, monitoring and data collection;
- Sustainability analysis with respect to gender outcomes;
- Partnerships, networks and collaboration to achieve gender outcomes- how effective these are and with reference to sectoral objectives;
- The approach to institutional and organisational analysis to determine gender issues;
- Whether different modalities of delivery achieve outcomes of differing quality regarding gender objectives;
- The use of best practice and lessons from previous experience in design and implementation;
- Measurement and monitoring – outputs, outcomes and impact;
- Sectoral or regional differences in achieving gender objectives and outcomes;
- The quality of gender targeted projects compared to gender mainstreamed; and
- Areas for skills upgrading for staff and development of tools to support good practice and quality in project design and implementation.

Field Assessment

Following completion of the rapid panel reviews field missions will be conducted. The purpose of the field assessment will be to:

- Gather additional information on the quality of gender mainstreaming projects in relation to in-country or organisational aspects of project implementation, including on gender partnerships and networks and monitoring and sustainability;
- Validate the panel's desk assessments of in-country or in-organisational aspects of project implementation.

The field missions will focus on a sub-set of the sampled projects, the selection of projects to be reviewed in the field to be made in terms of those most likely to demonstrate practical lessons for forward programme development and offer important guidance on priority sector and regional dimensions of the programme. It is anticipated the field mission will review up to ten projects. The methodology and schedule for the field mission will be prepared by the consultant for the approval of the SPED task manager and SPTD Gender Section. (See Annex 2: Implementation Schedule.)

Outputs 2.3: A report on the field missions discussing key findings.

A draft field mission report will be presented to SPED task manager no later than five business days after the completion of the field missions covering, inter alia, the above listed issues and topics. After incorporating reasonable changes to the draft report a final electronic version and hard copies (3) will be submitted to SPED within three business days of receiving the comments. The electronic copy must be on CD using software compatible with current Secretariat usage.

Output 2.4: A consolidated report on the findings and recommendations of the Performance Audit.

The final report will draw on the rapid panel assessment and field mission review of projects and provide a detailed assessment of the quality of gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat, an assessment of the validity of the approach to gender mainstreaming as a strategy and an

assessment of the effectiveness and impact of the gender equality and gender mainstreaming programmes and projects on Commonwealth partner governments and organisations.

In addition to commenting on the issues outlined under Output 2.2 above the report should also comment on the following:

- The perception of achievement on gender equality among key stakeholders;
- Current gender issues, gender debate and relationship of the Secretariat with national gender machineries and women's organizations in the context in which the Secretariat programmes are implemented;
- Existing gender expertise and competence and capacity building within the Secretariat;
- Resource allocation for gender equality and mainstreaming;
- Measuring and monitoring the impact of the Secretariat efforts through its advocacy and catalytic work;
- Information and knowledge management on gender across the organisation;
- The Secretariat gender equality policy as reflected in products and public image; and
- The organizational culture within the Secretariat.

This report will also contain recommendations on how to strengthen gender equality and mainstreaming into project design and implementation, including into programme strategy formulation and reporting. It shall also make recommendations for revision of guidelines, training, tools, coding and other systems for analysis and review of gender issues in Secretariat programmes.

The reports must be presented in clear and concise format and as agreed with SPED, and include an executive summary. Three copies of the draft final report will be provided to the SPED task manager within ten (10) business days of the completion of the final field mission report. After incorporating reasonable amendments or changes provided by the Secretariat, a final version of the report will be presented to SPED within five (5) business days of the presentation of the seminar. The final report will be in electronic CD format using software compatible with current Secretariat systems (Microsoft Office 2002). Three bound copies will also be provided.

Output 2.5: A half-day seminar

The consultant team shall present a half-day seminar in the Secretariat in London at the conclusion of the presentation of the draft final report. Comments and feedback provided during the seminar will be incorporated, as appropriate, into the preparation of the final report.

3. Phasing, Duration and Reporting

Component 1 will be conducted over a period of not more than four months. A report will be prepared on Component 1. Subject to the satisfactory completion of Component 1, Component 2 will follow and be designed to focus on those issues identified from Component 1 which are considered to have the strongest bearing on the quality of the Secretariat's gender equality efforts. The work programme for Component 2 should commence early in 2006 and be completed within a period of no more than nine months. A presentation seminar of findings and recommendation will be held within one month of the completion of the field work and the draft final report, incorporating findings of both Components 1 & 2 and recommendations across both

areas of the study should be submitted within three weeks of receipt of written comments from the Secretariat.

An implementation schedule has been prepared showing the timing and relationship of activities and the key output deliverables (see Annex 2).

Annex 1: Summary of Gender Performance Audit Design:

Purpose:

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

Component 1: Objective

To assess the effectiveness of the Secretariat's current tools, procedures and guidance in mainstreaming gender across the Programmes.

Outputs:

- 1.1: A report analysing the integration of gender mainstreaming policy and principles into the programmes and Secretariat systems and procedures.
- 1.2: Draft guidelines on gender equality and gender mainstreaming.
- 1.3: Design and methodology for a rapid panel review of projects

Component 2: Objectives:

1. To assess the quality of mainstreaming of gender equality policy and principles into projects at both design and implementation stages;
2. To assess the impact and outcomes for beneficiaries of the Secretariat's gender equality policy and programmes; and
3. To make recommendations as needed to strengthen gender mainstreaming across the Secretariat and within its programmes.

Outputs:

- 2.1 A brief report outlining the panel rapid desk review discussions and findings.
- 2.2 A report on the overall findings of the rapid panel review.
- 2.3 A report on the field missions discussing key findings.
- 2.4 A consolidated report on the findings and recommendations of the Performance Audit.
- 2.5 A half-day seminar.

Annex 2: Implementation Schedule for Gender Performance Audit

See separate file in Excel.

Annex 3: References

1. The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development.
2. Fifth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, Conclusions and Recommendations, Trinidad and Tobago, November 1996.
3. Learning by Sharing: The Secretary-General's Report of 1999 on the Implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, Commonwealth Secretariat, March 2000.
4. A Strategic Guide: Implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development and its Update (2000-2005), Commonwealth Secretariat, June 2000.
5. Advancing the Commonwealth Agenda into the New Millennium (2000-2005) – An Update to the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2000.
6. Towards Gender Equality: Report of the Sixth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, India, Commonwealth Secretariat, April 2000.
7. Meeting the New Challenges: Report of the Commonwealth Secretary-General on the Implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development, Commonwealth Secretariat, August 2001.

8. Building on Achievements: Report of the Secretary-General on the Implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development and its Update (2000-2005), Commonwealth Secretariat, November 2003.
9. Communiqué of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs, Seventh Meeting, Fiji Islands, May/June 2004.
10. The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005 – 2015, Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005.
11. Newsletters of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Section, Social Transformation Programmes Division (February 2001 – March 2005).