

Commonwealth Secretariat



Consultation of Commonwealth National Women's Machineries

Helmsley Hotel, 212 East 42nd Street, New York
Sunday 24 February 2008, 08:30 a.m. - 16:00 p.m.

Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House
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July 2007

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Acronyms

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CHMM	Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women
DYB	United Nations Demographic Yearbook
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
IWM	Indicators of Women and Men, United Nations Statistics Division
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
OPB	Commonwealth Secretariat's Operational Plan and Budget for 2004/05-2005/06
PoA	Commonwealth Secretariat's Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015
SP	Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2004/05-2007/08
SID	Social Indicators, United Nations Statistics Division
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WHO	World Health Organisation
WISTAT	Women's Indicators and Statistic Database, United Nations Statistic Division
WWseries	The World's Women Series, United Nations Statistics Division

1. Background

This report is intended to assist the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Section in the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework for the implementation of the *Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015* (PoA). Section four of the PoA notes that monitoring and evaluation are required to review progress and to understand the challenges in implementing the PoA. This in turn will assist Women's Affairs Ministers in making recommendations to Heads of Governments for more effective implementation of the PoA, and it will help guide the work of the Gender Reference Group (COMSEC 2005, 56). A M&E Framework is in line with the Commonwealth Secretariat's *Strategic Plan 2004/05-2007/08*, and the *Operational Plan and Budget 2004/05-2005/06*. It also supports the Commonwealth's international commitments to the Beijing+10 Global Review, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the principles enshrined in CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action 1995, the Beijing+5 Political Declaration and Outcome Document 2000. Ultimately, a M&E Framework can help the Commonwealth Secretariat contribute to the development of an equal world for women, men, and young people (COMSEC 2005, 4.23).

Advancing gender equality and equity is a fundamental principle of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The PoA will guide Commonwealth action for the decade, providing a framework within which the Commonwealth can work towards advancing gender equality. The PoA focuses on four critical areas for Commonwealth action:

- i. gender, democracy, peace and conflict;
- ii. gender, human rights and law;
- iii. gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment;
- iv. gender and HIV/AIDS.

The Plan of Action outlines specific actions that Governments and the Secretariat can take in addressing the four critical areas for action.

Building upon past Commonwealth achievements and attempts to close the gap between women and men, the PoA integrates the Commonwealth's Mission Statement and values: democracy and good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law, equality between women and men, girls and boys, and sustainable development and the eradication of poverty; the two goals outlined in the *Strategic Plan 2004-2008*: Democracy and Peace, and Pro-Poor Growth and Sustainable Development; and, the program statements and measurable indicators in the *Operational Plan and Budget 2004-2006*. The PoA also builds on the Commonwealth's areas of comparative advantage, and reflects the priorities set out in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2002 Coolum Declaration and the 2003 Aso Rock Declaration.

Section two of this document establishes the conceptual background behind developing a M&E Framework. Section three presents the M&E Framework, and Section four provides guidance on use of the Framework.

1.1 Methodology

Development of the M&E Framework involved the following:

- An extensive review of international and national M&E frameworks and data collection systems.
- A review of data availability from international and regional agencies.
- Presentation of a first draft of the M&E Framework to the Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group in New York in February 2007, which included input from government and civil society representatives.
- Presentation of a final draft of the M&E Framework to the 8th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM) in Uganda in June 2007.

2. Conceptual background for developing the monitoring and evaluation framework

2.1 Definition of gender equality and the monitoring and evaluation framework

Most M&E frameworks are not developed or designed with any specific conceptual underpinning. However, articulating the conceptual background can help to guide the composition and focus on a monitoring and evaluation framework, and the selection of indicators. For the Commonwealth Secretariat, agreed upon concepts concerning gender equality can create the foundation for a M&E Framework.

The Commonwealth Secretariat perspective is that gender equality refers to equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men, and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that individuals' rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both men and women are taken into consideration, recognising the diversity of different groups of women and men. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centred development (COMSEC 2005,18).

Gender equality goes further than equality of opportunity to look at outcomes. Treating women and men, or girls and boys, equally does not automatically ensure that they obtain equal outcomes and benefits, since there are many structural factors that may militate against this. Work towards gender equality therefore looks at structural power relations in society as well as material resources, and may include taking positive or affirmative action to ensure that policies and programmes benefit women/girls and men/boys equally (COMSEC 2005, 18).

This definition suggest that in order to measure gender equality, a M&E Framework should direct its focus towards:

- gender equality (rather than only on women)
- human rights
- outcomes (benefiting equally from results)
- diversity (race, ethnicity and disability)

These principles are reflected in the proposed M&E Framework, in particular in the selection of indicators, where the focus is on gender equality, and on outcomes rather than inputs.

2.2 Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

Table 1 sets out five relevant M&E frameworks, so as to ensure that the Commonwealth Secretariat M&E Framework follows current good practice. Further details on each of the frameworks can be found in Annex 1.

Table 1: Comparative Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

Report	Focus	Type of Report	Reporting Tool(s)	Data Source
United Nations. 2006. United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report	International	Progress Report	Each of the eight MDGs are connected with their respective target goals, the indicator used to assess the progress towards the target goal, and the quantitative findings from different regions over time.	National statistics provided by Governments, adjusted for comparability
United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2004. Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century.	International	Review and appraisal	Questionnaire responses organized into 4 areas: 1) Major trends in national level implementation, 2) Achievements and challenges in each critical area of concern, 3) Institutional arrangements used by Member States, 4) The challenges, obstacles, and priority areas for future action	Questionnaire responses and information provided by Member States
Economic Commission for Africa. 2004. African Gender and Development Index.	Regional, Africa	Composite Index	The AGDI is a tool that maps the extent of gender inequality in Africa and assesses government performance. It consists of two parts: 1) Gender Status Index (GSI) 2) African Women’s Progress Scoreboard (AWPS)	Nationally available data
Women and Gender Equality Unit. 2002. Key indicators of women’s position in Britain.	Regional, United Kingdom	Progress Report	A set of indicators used to assess gender equality and to establish baseline measurements for future assessments	Nationally available data

Report	Focus	Type of Report	Reporting Tool(s)	Data Source
Statistics Canada. 2006. Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report.	National, Canada	Progress Report	A set of indicators used to assess the status of women and gender equality	Nationally available data

Breitenbach and Gilligan (2004, 84-85) note that gender equality indicators are a relatively new area of policy development, and there are limited examples and experiences to draw on. However, as these reports demonstrate, there are common elements in these frameworks that can be considered good practice:

- M&E frameworks are usually organized around a results chain, from inputs, through outputs, to outcomes and/or impacts, with indicators developed at each level. The equivalent terms in the Commonwealth Secretariat Framework in Section 3 are short, medium and long-term.
- Results statements and indicators have to be carefully crafted to ensure that accountability and tracking are possible. Indicators need to be developed that connect directly to the intended results, and that are easy to understand.
- Baseline data needs to be in place against which progress can be measured. The date of sources for indicators is likely to vary dependent on data collection cycles. There is almost no guidance provided in the literature reviewed on baselines. However, it makes sense to use data from the most recent surveys, and when comparing different countries to use data that is comparable. In measuring intended results over a period of time, drawing indicators from data sources that are updated on a regular basis would allow for a clear understanding of the progress made and it would help to identify trends and problem areas. This principle is reflected in the UK's Women and Gender Equality Unit report, and in the Statistics Canada report.

2.3 Developing indicators

In the past three decades, the development of global gender statistics has been moving forward (UNSD 2006.1), but the United Nations report, *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*, noted that this varies nationally and regionally. This report notes that statistics for critical areas of concern for gender equality are lacking in both conceptual and methodological guidelines, but that since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, there has been increasing demand "for sex-disaggregated data and statistical information that adequately reflect the situation of women and men in all aspects of their life" (DESA 2006, v). An important problem or gap impacting M&E frameworks is the lack of gender statistics that can be used to measure fundamental policy goals, such as poverty reduction (UNSD 2006, 2).

A review of national level indicator sets developed by Status of Women Canada (2006), and adapted as Table 2, suggests that there are common principles for developing indicator sets.

Table 2: Principles for developing indicator sets

Bellagio Principles (1996) ¹	US Developing Key National Indicators (2004) ²	ILO Measuring Decent Work (2002) ³	Commonwealth Secretariat Using Gender-Sensitive Indicators(1999) ⁴	Status of Women in the States (2004) ⁵
Guiding vision and goals	Significance	Conceptual relevance	Comparison to a norm	Relevance
Holistic perspective	Objectivity	Easily communicated interpretation	Disaggregation (by socio-economics)	Representativeness
Essential elements	Accuracy	Availability of data	Ease of access	Reliability
Adequate scope	Timeliness	Reasonable comparability	Availability	Comparability of data
Practical focus	Accessibility		Reliability	
Openness	Clarity		Measurability	
Effective communication	Efficiency		Time-frames	
Broad participation	Comparability		International comparability	
Ongoing Assessment	Contextual sophistication		Measuring impact	
Institutional capacity			Participation	

Experience to date would suggest that national level indicator sets should be: accessible, understandable, available, developed through a participatory process, relevant, reliable, measurable over time, and internationally comparable. Although the Commonwealth Secretariat M&E Framework will not operate at the national level, these principles are generic and have been used in determining which indicators to use in the Framework.

¹ Developed by the International Institute for Sustainable Development which brought together an international group of measurement practitioners and researchers to review progress to date and to synthesize insights from practical ongoing efforts. Overarching principles were sought that would provide a link between theory and practice. <http://www.iisd.org/measure/principles/bp.asp>

² <http://www.gao.gov/npi/usadkni.pdf>

³ http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/integration/download/publicat/4_3_124_paper2.pdf

⁴

http://publications.thecommonwealth.org/publications/html/DynaLink/pages/20/cat_id/58/category_details.asp

⁵ <http://www.iwpr.org/States2004/SWS2004/index.htm>

2.4 Qualitative Indicators

While quantitative indicators are typically used in monitoring and evaluation, qualitative indicators have received more attention as of late. Qualitative indicators are subjective measures, and include people's perceptions or views, usually gathered by surveys. Of the five comparative frameworks in Table 1, three employ some qualitative indicators. In the case of the African Gender and Development Index, the second component of the composite index, the African Women's Progress Scoreboard (AWPS), deals solely with qualitative indicators.

While many commentators point out the importance of combining qualitative and quantitative measures, in practice the default is to fall back on quantitative indicators. However it must be noted that using qualitative indicators to assess gender equality is particularly important, as it allows voices that are often silenced to be heard. One cautionary point is that if the focus on qualitative indicators is too great, the M&E Framework may be criticised for its lack of 'traditional' objectivity.

In the Commonwealth Secretariat's *Operational Plan and Budget 2004/05-2007/08*, the issue of quantitative and qualitative indicators is addressed. For each Programme, there is typically a mix of quantitative and qualitative indicators, which aim to capture the extent and scope of the work undertaken during the period. Qualitative measures of assessment by stakeholders will be incorporated through feedback reports, as this is considered to be a useful indicator of project value and performance, while quantitative indicators include country and regional targets, and reporting on these will usefully define the scope of likely programme outcomes (Commonwealth Secretariat 2004a, 18). In the M&E Framework below, qualitative indicators have not been used included as the burden of collecting and reporting on such indicators was considered to be too heavy for this exercise.

3. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

This section presents the Commonwealth Secretariat M&E Framework. In the Framework each of the four critical areas of the PoA is listed, along with corresponding indicators and data sources.

The core principles for the design and operation of the framework were set out by the Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group during its meeting in February 2007. The Monitoring Group decided to focus on a few core areas, mindful of the special role of the Commonwealth and aiming to supplement and add value to current reporting, but avoiding undue burden on states.

Core principles set out were as follows:

- To ensure the PoA is implemented effectively.
- To assist in accelerating and focusing implementation on core areas of greatest importance.
- To enable reliable reporting on progress.

The Monitoring Group also set out the parameters of the M&E Framework as follows:

- The performance of the Commonwealth Secretariat will be assessed through a separate process.
- A simple, feasible and manageable monitoring framework is essential.

- The distinctiveness of each country will be respected and no internationally comparative results will be expected.
- Feedback from civil society is an essential component of the monitoring and evaluation approach.
- Harmonisation with all other key processes and frameworks is crucial, reducing duplication and the burden on any stakeholders.
- The focus will be on outcome/results measures, and measures that indicate progress towards the achieving of the outcomes by 2010.
- The framework will not be dependent upon any additional data collection.
- About three indicators should be developed for each area of focus.

In terms of selection of intended outcomes, the Monitoring Group focused on areas which would be indicative of the most material significance for the status of women and girls.

Following this guidance, the indicators in the following Framework have been selected to demonstrate both progress towards gender equality and the status of women and girls, and which are readily available from international sources (see Annex 2).

Plan of Action Critical Area: I. Gender, Democracy, Peace and Conflict		
Intended outcomes by 2010	Indicators	Data source
Leadership, political representation, and participation in decision-making Women fully and equally participating in leadership in all sectors and levels	1. Percentage increase in the proportion of seats held by women in parliament in a. lower or single house and b. upper house c. local bodies/authorities 2. At least 30 percent of decision-making positions at all levels occupied by women in the public and private sectors	WISTAT Inter-Parliamentary Union World's Women UNDP UNIFEM Inter-Parliamentary Union African Development Bank
Peace and conflict resolution Effective participation of women in conflict resolution, peace processes and reconstruction, with all human rights for women and children protected	1. Existence of national plans of action on UN Security Council Resolution 1325. 2. Percentage of women in governmental peace-related decision-making committees and bodies 3. Percentage of military observers, peacekeeping troops and civilian troops sent by troop contributing countries, who are female	OSAGI National Statistics Office OSAGI OSAGI

Plan of Action Critical Area: 2. Gender and Human Rights and Law		
Intended outcomes by 2010	Indicators	Data source
Violence against women and children Violence against women and girls is eliminated	1. Reported incidence of rape/defilement and percentage of reported cases resulting in prosecution 2. Reported incidence of domestic violence and percentage of reported cases resulting in prosecution	WISTAT National Machineries/ National Statistics
Protection of rights in law Women's rights are protected, not only in the existence of laws, but in the effective implementation of this laws	1. Existence of laws prescribing specific legal action against domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape/defilement and sex trade. 2. Codification of customary laws which discriminate against women	CEDAW National Women's Machineries/National Statistics

Plan of Action Critical Area: 3. Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment		
Intended outcomes by 2010	Indicators	Data source
Access to economic resources, capital, land and information technology All women have access to the fundamental resources essential for economic well being	1. Existence of enacted laws on equal pay and against labour discrimination for reasons of sex 2. Women's labour force participation (as a percentage) and percentage of employees in agriculture, manufacturing services sectors who are female 3. Percentage of land owners who are female in: rural urban sectors	ILO National Women's machineries ILO/ National Statistics National Women's Machineries National Statistics

<p>Macro economic conditions are gender sensitive Women are empowered through a systematic system of resourcing and planning which ensures resources are allocated to them</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Existence of policies to provide access to credit to self employed women and women entrepreneurs 2. Percentage increase in women's access to credit 3. Existence of gender responsive budgeting 	<p>National Women's Machineries National Statistics</p>
<p>Maternal Mortality Reduction of maternal mortality by three quarters (2015)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percentage of births attended by skilled birth attendants 2. Number of emergency obstetric care functional units per 500,000 and appropriate figures for smaller nations 	<p>National Women's Machineries National Statistics</p>
<p>Education Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education 	<p>UNESCO National Statistics</p>

Plan of Action Critical Area: 4. Gender and HIV/AIDS

Intended outcomes by 2010	Indicators	Data source
<p>HIV/AIDS –gender sensitive policy Women and those who care for those with HIV/AIDS, receive appropriate, accessible and quality services for HIV/AIDS including preventive services</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Estimated number of women living with HIV/AIDS (females/100 males) 2. Percentage of HIV-positive pregnant women receiving antiretroviral prophylaxis 3. Percentage of women in vulnerable groups as defined by National Policies, accessing HIV/AIDS counselling, testing and educational programmes. 	<p>UNAIDS UNFPA</p> <p>UNAIDS National Statistics</p> <p>UNAIDS National Statistics</p>

4. Operationalising the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

National plan of action

The Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group has advised that all countries should have a national action plan to report against the programme of action, in the areas specified in the M&E Framework.

Note on data sources

The *World's Women 2005* (DESA 2006) includes an extensive discussion of gender equality related data availability in all of the areas in the M&E Framework, by region. This was the main reference point in deciding which indicators to select. The advantage of having this publication to hand is that it was possible to select indicators for which data is most readily available for Commonwealth countries. A further useful global resource has been the UN Statistical Division inventory of Gender Indicators (UNSD 2006).

There are a number of data gaps in international statistics in key areas of the Commonwealth Secretariat PoA. For example, in relation to data on violence against women, the *World's Women* notes (DESA 2006: 69)

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, as a result of national and international resolve to improve data concerning violence against women, there have been considerable improvements in statistics on intimate partner violence, that is, violence perpetrated by an intimate partner (whether married or cohabiting), a boyfriend or a former intimate partner or boyfriend. However, reliable statistics on many other forms of violence against women, including trafficking in women and girls and violence against women by agents of the State, remain scarce. This lack of data continues to be a concern at the national, regional and international levels.

Similarly in relation to employment data, the same publication notes (ibid: 47):

On the basis of what has been reported to the international organizations, it is apparent that the worldwide availability of statistics on economic activity, employment and unemployment is far from satisfactory, with slightly more than half of all countries providing data by sex and only roughly a third of all countries doing so with fair regularity.

Nonetheless, employment data need to be taken as a proxy for economic well-being, given the scarcity of data for other indicators such as access to finance or land ownership. A paper by Honohan (2005), prepared for an international workshop on 'Data on the Access of Poor and Low Income People to Financial Services' notes a number of gaps in data in this area.

Geographically, data is less available for African countries, particularly those in conflict, and the Pacific, and for small island states. Data is also not available in any systematic fashion below the national level, in particular in countries of the global south.

As noted in Section 2, ideally indicators would be broken down into different groups of women, in particular to attempt to capture the situation of marginalized groups such as indigenous women, poor rural women and women living with HIV/AIDS. However, these groups are not well covered in statistical systems, as DESA (2006) notes, so disaggregation may for the time being remain a desire rather than a reality.

Establishing baselines and measurement systems

2007 should be the year when baselines are established for all of the indicators in the M&E Framework. Once the baseline is established, data can be collected on a basis to be decided by the Plan of Action Monitoring Group. The situation in 2010 for each indicator would then be measured against the baseline.

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Comparative Monitoring and Evaluation Frameworks

International monitoring and evaluation frameworks

The United Nations, *Millennium Development Goals Report 2006*, assesses the progress made in achieving the eight MDGs and the 17 specific targets for regions throughout the world, and for the world as a whole. The quantitative indicators developed to assess the achievement of the MDGs are employed, and national statistics provide the data that the indicators require.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council's *Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"* compiled and organised responses from a questionnaire and relevant information provided by Member States. Its purpose was to assess the national level progress made in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by Member States at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000. The report highlights the major trends in national level implementation; it discusses both the achievements in and challenges facing each critical area of concern; it outlines the institutional arrangements Member States use; and, it concludes with actions, challenges and the priority areas that are likely to emerge in the future, in order to achieve the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome document.

Regional

The Economic Commission for Africa's report, *the African Gender and Development Index*, is a composite index designed to measure the performance of African states in implementing policies and programmes aimed at ending women's marginalisation. The purpose of the African Gender and Development Index (AGDI) is to provide data and information for African governments on the status of gender equality and the effects of their gender policies in reducing women's marginalisation; to monitor the progress made on regional and international agreements and ratified documents; to democratise statistics and to provide both gender planners and NGO's with a monitoring tool that is effective, valid, reliable and easy to use; and, to measure progress in both quantitative and qualitative ways, an approach that is thought to be best suited to capture the complex and dynamic reality of the lives of African women.

The AGDI combines two different methods to assess gender equality and women's advancement. The first is the Gender Status Index (GSI) which uses 42 indicators to measure relative gender inequalities. It is based on readily available data from areas like education, health, income time use, employment, access to resources, and political representation. The second approach that is used is the African Women's Progress Scoreboard (AWPS), which takes a qualitative approach in order to assess the gap between political commitment and the implementation of gender policies. The AGDI has been piloted in 12 countries, 5 of which are part of the Commonwealth: Cameroon, Ghana, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda, and the United Republic of Tanzania.

National

The United Kingdom's Women and Gender Equality Unit report, *Key indicators of women's position in Britain 2002*, provides a set of indicators which will establish a benchmark against

which progress in the position of women can be assessed over time. The report uses quantitative indicators and qualitative indicators (that cover a variety of aspects of women's lives) and ties them directly to macro level government goals. Data is gathered from existing sources, and the report makes recommendations for filling in gaps caused by insufficient data. By generating a baseline against which improvements in the position of women can be measured, the report's purpose is to provide factual material to feed into public debate and policy making to ensure that women's issues are given proper priority.

Statistics Canada's report, *Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report 2006*, is the fifth edition in a series that began in 1985 to assess the position of women in Canada. Canada is viewed as a leader in the development of national indicators (Farnsworth Riche 2003), and in this particular report, the status of women in Canadian society is documented by presenting the most recent and relevant data on a wide range of issues critical to gender equality. Quantitative and a handful of qualitative indicators are used, and the report presents detailed chapters on the status of aboriginal women in Canada, immigrant women, women in a visible minority, senior women, and women with disabilities. The purpose of the report is to provide current data and information on the status of women in Canada, and to assess gender equality in the country.

Data sources for Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

International

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