



Ninth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting

*"Gender Issues in Economic Crisis, Recovery and Beyond: Women as
Agents of Transformation"*

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For the information of Delegates

**DELIVERING GENDER MANDATES: STRATEGIES FOR
WOMEN'S AFFAIRS MINISTERS – RESEARCH PROJECT**

(Paper prepared for Launch on 9 June 2010)

Delivering Gender Mandates: Strategies for Women's Affairs Ministers

Research Project



Executive Summary

The Commonwealth Secretariat is in ongoing consultations with the World Economic Forum and the Council of Women World Leaders to collaborate on a world-first project: researching determinants of success for the role, functions and strategies of Women's Affairs Ministers (WAMs). The research will bring together the unique and compatible strengths and constituencies of the Partners, with a view to delivering a resource that will inform national policy frameworks, advise corporate gender strategies, add to the global gender debate and, crucially, ensure that current and future WAMs and women leaders have access to practical guidance on promoting women's affairs and empowering women through their role in cabinets.

The Proposed Partners

The Commonwealth Secretariat (COMSEC), the London-based principal intergovernmental agency for the 54 Commonwealth member countries.

The World Economic Forum (WEF), the Switzerland-based international organisation that promotes values-based corporate governance and 'entrepreneurship in the global public interest'.

The Council of Women World Leaders (CWWL), a policy programme of the Washington DC-based Aspen Institute, comprising 37 current and former women Heads of Government, and several global networks of women Ministers.

The Background

WAM portfolios often include social sectors significant to human welfare and economic development such as Health, Family and Children, Education and Community Development.

The problem: The Women's Affairs brief can become marginalised by sectors which are perceived as greater determinants of economic and electoral success. This can skew policy and funding priorities.

The Women's Affairs brief is uniquely multisectoral at all levels (administrative, programmatic, policy and budgetary) and touches on several cross-cutting issues.

The problem: The Women's Affairs brief is extremely complex in itself, while Ministers are forced to become technically competent in all the relevant sectors like Trade, Energy and Finance.

The promotion of economic growth with equity is still contested terrain in most cabinets.

The problem: WAMs find it difficult to justify spending and strategy with cabinet colleagues who are often seen to be doing work that is more central to growth and development.

More established portfolios such as Finance, Trade and Foreign Affairs have access to plenty of resources/templates on strategic performance.

The problem: No such template exists for WAMs.

The social impact of budgets across sectors and their reciprocal effects on gender are directly linked to WAM portfolios.

The problem: No global gender sensitive social impact indicators exist.

WAMs do not generally have a dedicated gender equality research department.

The problem: Disaggregated data about gender makes it difficult for Ministers to construct evidence-based arguments that will allow public resources to be devoted to gender equality.

Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs often preside over sectors in which the public sector workforce has limited technical skills.

The problem: There is a lack of standardised professional codes of practice to guide actions and measure outcomes and few senior public officials have qualifications which promote the use of gender analysis.

The Research

The research project will be the first of its kind and will seek to document and compare the experience of WAMs within Commonwealth member governments, as well as within other countries with valuable perspectives e.g. Nordic countries. In particular it will aim to identify and highlight:

- Strategies consistent with success in Governance and Accountability.
- Ideal configuration of the WAM portfolio, and accompanying institutional arrangements for gender equality.
- Effective coordination of multi-sectoral policies across government.
- Successful strategies in influencing cabinet priorities and budgets in the interests of socio-economic development.
- Challenges of portfolio marginalisation.
- Successes in effecting positive change.
- Optimal placement of the Ministerial portfolio in the cabinet and within the government infrastructure.
- Gender performance and Social Impact indicators for appraising relevance and reach of Ministerial portfolios.

The Results

The research will be used to provide WAMs with:

- A template for managing the complexity of multi-sectoral challenges.
- An analysis of how best practice gender analysis and equity principles can assist with effective governance.
- Guidance on shared portfolios of WAMs and the effective coordination of multiple priorities and resource allocations.
- A global template for strategic performance and evaluation to enable WAMs to function with the same structural assistance that more established portfolios are able to draw upon.
- A battery of gender social impact indicators for tracking effectiveness of ministerial strategies in achieving equitable and sustained growth and development.
- Critical knowledge to develop gender analytical capacity within Women's Affairs Ministries.
- Potential strategies for raising awareness of gender equality and women's empowerment among the public sector workforce, and to help establish standardised professional codes of practice.

Proposed Distribution

- COMSEC to ensure that the report is available to all Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers and their senior officials, as well as to its peer network of international development agencies, NGOs and civil society, and other stakeholders.
- Partners will use their networks and platforms to disseminate the findings of the report.

The Proposed Partnership

The gender related work of COMSEC and the proposed partners WEF and CWWL collectively provides some of the most important and current global thinking on women's affairs, gender equality and female empowerment. Collectively the Partners deliver access to, and the wisdom of, an unparalleled aggregate constituency, comprising:

1. Women in positions of leadership in government and business;
2. Ministers, senior officials, business leaders and civil society organisations (both men and women) dedicated to promoting gender equality.

The Commonwealth Factor

- The Modern Commonwealth of 54 member countries represents the largest grouping of countries within the UN systems, and contains approximately one-third of the world's population.
- There are over 90 Commonwealth organisations, ensuring that all sectors – government, business, civil society, academia, young people, women – can collaborate to influence national and global development agendas.
- Commonwealth countries work together in a spirit of cooperation, partnership, respect and understanding.
- Given their highly similar systems of administration, education and law, as well as the status of English as an official language in all member countries, successful Commonwealth strategies, policies or projects can be effectively benchmarked and relatively easily replicated across multiple jurisdictions.

COMSEC & Gender

- Gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth, guided by the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015.
- COMSEC's dedicated Gender Section has, since 1995, pioneered analysis, influenced policy work, and developed frameworks to promote gender equality and mainstreaming.
- Gender Sections main programmes are: Gender, democracy, peace and conflict; Gender, human rights and law; Gender, poverty eradication and macroeconomic policy; gender responsive budgeting; gender and trade and Gender & HIV/AIDS.
- COMSEC has convened Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meetings (WAMMs) triennially since 1985, and therefore has unparalleled access to WAMs and their senior officials, as well as a profound understanding of the challenges they face.

WEF & Gender

- WEF's Women Leaders and Gender Parity programme aims to monitor, benchmark and showcase best practices in the business world for increasing gender diversity.
- Global & Regional Gender Parity Groups and Women Leaders Community bring male and female business leaders together to engage gender and diversity issues.
- Global Gender Gap Report and Corporate Gender Gap Report are flagship tools for benchmarking and tracking gender inequalities.

CWWL & Gender

- CWWL draws on the valuable experience of female leaders of government, at the level of President and Prime Minister and, via its Ministerial Initiative, Ministers of Environment, Health, Culture and Education.
- The CWWL council seeks to: mobilise women leaders to act on issues of importance to women; promote good governance and gender equality; create mechanisms to shape global and national policies towards women; foster greater gender awareness among the international community.

Project Funding

Research will be undertaken with support from:

- Internationally oriented foundations and other bodies active in governance, gender equality, or social affairs.
- Funders and Donors which have a vested stake in Women's Affairs Ministerial portfolios.
- Organisations with a demonstrable commitment to empowering women in leadership.
- Stakeholders with an interest in social impact investing.

Partners will be:

- Invited to be a member of the global steering group of the project.
- Encouraged to contribute to the final research proposal.
- Acknowledged on all research collateral.
- Acknowledged and profiled in the final report, which will receive substantial global exposure.
- Invited to the launch of the Report(s).

Further information

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