



Ninth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting

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

Bridgetown, Barbados, 7-9 June 2010

SOM Agenda Item 3

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REPORT BY THE COMMONWEALTH GENDER PoA MONITORING GROUP (CGPMG)

(Presentation by the Hon Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, Chair of CGPMG)

Excellencies, distinguished participants and delegates attending the 9th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (9WAMM), a very good morning to you all.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Barbados for hosting this meeting in this beautiful country.

It gives me immense pleasure to be here attending the 9WAMM to which we were looking forward to since we met last in February this year. The 5th Meeting of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group Meeting (CGPMG) in New York paved the way for preparing the First Draft of Global Mid-Term Review Report, which will be presented shortly. I would like to congratulate Prof Barbara Bailey and Dr Afia Zakiya for their commendable effort and hard work in preparing the Report.

The meeting in February helped us review and identify the difficulties and challenges in implementing the PoA. It also facilitated the process of finding a way forward to meet the challenges by sharing best practices and learning experiences.

This has been an extremely busy year for the CGPMG in tackling everything that we set out in our work plan for 2009-2010 within our time schedule. At the meeting in February 2009 in New York, under Botswana's Chair, it was decided that the Group could best be served by a smaller 'Indicators' Sub Group' comprising one representative from each of the five regions of the Commonwealth and one civil society representative. This sub-group comprising Bangladesh, Barbados, Botswana, Ghana, and Tonga, worked closely with the two MTR consultants Barbara Bailey and Afia Zakiya to make progress on the Mid Term Review of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action. The following is an outline of the work we have undertaken.

1. Development of the indicators and questionnaire

In April 2009, the Sub Group met in Farnham UK to develop the MTR Indicator Framework in the context of global reporting requirements, national processes and PoA targets and timelines; and to provide guidelines for developing the questionnaire for the MTR process.

2. Review of MTR Instruments and Processes

In July 2009, the Sub Group met in Botswana where the MTR conceptual framework and indicator framework were adopted, amended the Guidelines and instructions for the Questionnaire, as well as the draft MTR questionnaire.

3. Pre Test of MTR Instrument

A pre-test of the questionnaire was undertaken with Botswana, Bangladesh, Jamaica and Tonga participating.

4. Dissemination of MTR Questionnaires

Working through the London High Commissions, Commonwealth Primary Contact Points in countries and National Women's Machineries, questionnaires

were distributed by post, fax and electronically. The questionnaire was sent to all countries in September, and over the next months, completed questionnaires were returned to the Secretariat.

5. Preparation of the Draft Final Report

In December 2009, Ghana, the four regional consultants and data input resource people met in Accra to assess the status of the MTR process and resolve challenges; to undertake training in data input; to agree the structure for the regional global MTR Reports; and to discuss how to integrate the findings of the Secretariat's internal review into the Global Review.

The group accomplished all of this in three days. In addressing the challenges the group decided that because insufficient questionnaires had been received, the consultants should use additional sources for collecting data including tapping into the Beijing + 15 country reports.

A timeline was set to ensure the Preliminary Global Report would be available for our New York meeting.

The **5th meeting of the CGPMG**, held on Saturday 27 February 2010, considered the preliminary findings of the Mid Term Review (MTR) of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 (PoA), reviewed its work plan and priorities in relation to the MTR, and considered the revised terms of reference of the Commonwealth Working Group on Gender, Peace and Security.

You will recall that I took over the Chair from Botswana to Bangladesh.

Professor Barbara Bailey presented preliminary finding of the MTR, looking at objectives, guiding principles, methodology and challenges. One of the latter had been that only 18 out of 53 countries (34 per cent) had responded. Reasons for this limited response that emerged during the discussion were the comprehensiveness of the questionnaire, the limited time frame, constraints around resources and capacity of NWMs, competing demands for data for other reporting processes and lack of adequate technical support. Civil society then presented highlights of their review process.

Since the February Meeting in New York, 29 completed questionnaires has been received by the Secretariat (Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belize, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Cyprus, Canada, Dominica, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Malta, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, St Lucia, Tanzania, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, United Kingdom, and Samoa). Submissions from South Africa, Samoa, Kenya, Singapore and Tanzania was received after the data deadline and is not included in the draft final report prepared to the Ninth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting. Data from these countries will be entered into the dataset by the data consultant post 9WAMM for inclusion in the final report.

Lessons learned

- Virtual communication remains a challenge and has contributed to low response to mails and review requests
- Limited resources and capacities for effective monitoring and evaluation

As a result, it has been a challenge to preparing the MTR report in time for submission to Ministers at 9WAMM.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the countries who have submitted the questionnaires, the consultants Prof Barbara Bailey and Dr Afia Zakiya who have helped us shape our ideas into frameworks and tools to help us and to thank their recently formed team of regional consultants. I would also like to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat who have assisted us greatly in this work.

Way Forward

It is hoped that the recommendations of the 9WAMM will help in steering forward the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action 2010-2015. Some of the proposed initiatives for year 2010-2011 are as follows:

- Implementation and follow-up of the recommendations of the 9WAMM.
- Produce status of women in the Commonwealth based on the grounds of commonalities.
- Score card on implementation of the PoA
- Annual rapid assessment on PoA implementation
- Regional Meeting of the CGPMG
- 6th Meeting of the CGPMG to be held in February 2011.

I look forward to working with you all in this important enterprise to promote gender equality for the women of the Commonwealth.

Thank you.