



# Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs

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**WAMM(04)(O)2**

## **COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POA AND ITS UPDATE SINCE 6WAMM**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. Gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth as laid out in the Harare Declaration from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in 1991. Subsequently, the Aso Rock Declaration of the 2003 CHOGM envisioned: a 'Commonwealth committed to development, democracy' and underpinned by gender equality, seen as mutually reinforcing goals for Commonwealth governments and the network of Commonwealth institutions. This was preceded in March 2002 by the Commonwealth Heads of Government's re-affirmation at Coolum, Australia, of their commitment to gender equality and the recognition that the issues of governance and democracy, socio-development and peace cannot be divorced from gender equality. The Millennium Declaration signed by 189 world governments, with a focus on poverty, shelter and hunger, makes an explicit commitment to gender equality and reiterates that women must be recognised as key agents of economic and social development. The Millennium Development Compact provides an important framework for governments to work towards sustainable development and attain basic thresholds in several key areas: governance, gender equality, health, education, infrastructure and access to markets. All these areas are inextricably linked and the attainment of one goal depends on the others.

### **COMMONWEALTH PROGRESS IN ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY**

2. The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development (PoA) and its Update (2000-2005) presently guide Commonwealth action. The 1995 PoA is based on the strategy of gender mainstreaming<sup>1</sup>, and complements the gender policies and plans of national governments, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action process. The PoA was updated in 2000 to reflect emerging gender equality issues in the new millennium. The Update provided a framework for strategic interventions grouped under two main policy priority areas: i) human rights, peace and political participation; and ii) macroeconomics and social development. The 2003 *Commonwealth Secretary-General's Report on the progress on implementation of the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development and its Update (2000-2005)* highlights the main achievements and challenges

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<sup>1</sup> The gender mainstreaming approach takes into account women's as well as men's concerns and experiences within the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality (UN ECOSOC, 1997/2).

facing member governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat in advancing gender equality across the Commonwealth and beyond. (The attached colour publication, *Building on Achievements*, 2003<sup>2</sup>, is an integral part of the paper.)

3. The 1995 PoA and Update are in line with the Commonwealth Secretariat's Mission Statement to 'work as a trusted partner for all Commonwealth people as a force for peace, democracy, equality and good governance; a catalyst for global consensus-building; and a source of assistance for sustainable development and poverty eradication'. Gender equality will be further mainstreamed in the Secretariat's new governance structure and its 2004–2008 Strategic Plan. It will seek to strengthen the capacity of governments and civil society to achieve gender equality and equity in political, legal, social and economic policy, planning and programme implementation.

4. The Gender Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat has facilitated the work of national women's machineries (NWMs) within the framework of the PoA and its Update, through:

- developing innovative resource materials, tools and methodologies for use at national level on gender mainstreaming, women's rights as human rights including the elimination of violence against women, gender-responsive budgeting, and gender, globalisation and trade.
- organising regional and national workshops, symposia and colloquia on the above areas, bringing together NWMs with other relevant groups such as parliamentarians, trade unions, local councillors, the judiciary, finance and trade ministries, national HIV/AIDS commissions, women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs), tertiary institutions, the media, church groups, et al;
- facilitating partnerships between women, men and young people from a wide range of organisations, to contribute to peace building and post-conflict reconstruction in countries in conflict;
- promoting the Commonwealth's 30 per cent target of women in parliament and local government;
- developing a knowledge-based network, which operates a website, provides policy briefs to enable NWMs to lobby relevant ministries in preparation for Commonwealth official meetings (Heads of Government, Education, Health, Finance, Law and Youth), publishes a newsletter, and responds to individual requests from NWMs for information, policy advice, etc.;
- building partnerships with Commonwealth, international and regional agencies to better deliver programmes of support.

5. The Gender Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat forms part of the Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD), which resulted from the merger of the former Gender Affairs Department with the Human Resources Development Division. The STPD comprises three sections: gender, education and health. It has the lead responsibility for the programme to mainstream gender in the policies and activities of member countries and the Secretariat, and for the Secretariat's human development programme as it relates to capacity building in education and health. The Division works at the national, regional, pan-Commonwealth and international levels to address gender, education and health issues,

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<sup>2</sup> Available on the website: [www.thecommonwealth.org/gender](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/gender)

which are relevant to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). For a detailed account, please refer to Table 1: *6WAMM Mandates from the New Delhi Communiqué and Actions Taken by the Commonwealth Secretariat*.

## **WAY FORWARD**

6. Consultation and sharing of experiences lie at the heart of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Gender/Women's Affairs Ministers' Meeting (WAMM) remains an integral part of the consultative and consensus building to advance gender equality in the Commonwealth. Hence, it was agreed that an annual consultation was critical to allow Commonwealth Heads and senior policy-makers working on gender to meet, in the wings of the yearly meetings of the United Nations' (UN) Commission on the Status of Women. In addition, it was recommended that a Commonwealth Gender Reference Group should be set up. Each region would be represented on this group by the Heads of NWMMs from two or three countries. These representatives would be requested to make strategic recommendations to the Commonwealth Secretariat based on feedback from member governments and key partners in their respective regions. The Commonwealth Foundation would co-ordinate the contributions from civil society groups within the regions into the consultative process. Regional agencies such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the Pacific Forum, and the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC) will all be consulted. Members of the Commonwealth Gender Reference Group will be selected on a rotational basis at WAMM.

7. The four critical areas to be considered for the new Commonwealth PoA for the next ten years<sup>3</sup> were identified by Commonwealth Heads of NWMMs at the 7WAMM preparatory meetings, held in New York in March 2003 and February 2004 respectively. These were:

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

8. It was agreed that actions to address these important areas need to be deepened further. The Commonwealth gender mainstreaming approach, introduced in the 1995 PoA and its 2000 Update, was confirmed as a valid strategic framework particularly when addressing persistent challenges. The critical issues of gender and development are seen as inter-related within the Commonwealth and thus should be strategically integrated for maximum impact. More stringent strategies such as generating and sharing knowledge and information, capacity building and monitoring, evaluation and reporting, both by governments and their development partners, are required. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting should be harmonised with national, regional and international processes. To date, three of the Secretary-General's biennial reports have been presented to Heads of Governments. Annual and triennial consultations by senior officials and ministers responsible for gender affairs, including linkages and collaboration with key UN, national, regional and international agencies, have served to build consensus and advance the gender equality agenda.

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<sup>3</sup> Refer to document: WAMM (04) (PoA) 1: Draft Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality, 2005-2015.

## CONCLUSION

9. In many countries, women are not benefiting fairly from the development process, and in others they are becoming poorer in absolute terms. Efforts to promote productivity of the poor are still largely targeted at men, while women are expected to carry on contributing to household livelihoods and caring for the family with little or no support for their efforts.

Gender inequality still remains the most pervasive form of inequality and is most severe among the poor.

10. Gender equality is essential to building long-term, sustainable and equitable development. Increasing women's access to education and literacy, paid work, particularly waged employment, and political representation can bring real change to the lives of communities throughout the Commonwealth. All Commonwealth governments must seek to increase their efforts and provide a solid foundation for the advancement of gender equality.

11. The Commonwealth as a whole must move beyond rhetoric to an active commitment to the empowerment of women if gender equality is to be translated into reality. 'The real challenge facing governments is bringing about a better integration of social, economic and environmental issues – the three pillars of sustainable development.' (Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Rt. Hon Don McKinnon, 2002)

12. The Commonwealth has a good record of contributing to improvements in the current international political, economic and social climate, including its strong stand on gender issues and support of the UN gender equality goals. Members of the Commonwealth, as the largest intergovernmental, inter-regional group within the UN system, continue to play an active role in the UN and particularly in the Commission on the Status of Women and the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

13. Greater and more systematic collaboration with all types of partners, for example NGOs, community-based organisations, public sector institutes, universities, and other educational institutions, would lead to greater outreach and a higher profile for Commonwealth organisations. It would also result in greater success in influencing both key policies and development programmes.

**TABLE 1: 6WAMM MANDATES FROM THE NEW DELHI COMMUNIQUÉ 2000 AND ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT OVER 2000-03**

*The last Commonwealth Women's/Gender Ministers' Meeting (6WAMM) in New Delhi, April 2000, discussed a range of issues focusing on gender mainstreaming (GMS), macro-economic policies and globalisation, women's human rights, conflict and peace, political participation and HIV/AIDS. The following is a summary of 6WAMM mandates from the New Delhi Communiqué and actions taken to date by the Commonwealth Secretariat. Significant progress has been recorded in the 15 critical areas for action of the Beijing Platform for Action.*

**GENDER MAINSTREAMING: OVERCOMING CONSTRAINTS AND ACHIEVING RESULTS**

**1. Ministers emphasised the need for political will, policies, processes and partnerships. They underscored that GMS is central and involves all sectors at all levels of government, civil society and the private sector.**

**Actions Taken**

The Commonwealth Secretariat supported government efforts to achieve gender mainstreaming by providing strategic policy advice and expertise as follows:

- Consensus-building and advocacy programme to promote a Commonwealth voice at regional/global fora dealing with agenda setting on critical gender and development issues (high-level meetings of CARICOM/ECOWAS and the Southern African Development Community [SADC]; UN Beijing Plus 5, annual meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); and global conferences such as the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002).
- Mainstreaming gender into Commonwealth ministerial meetings – e.g., the Finance Ministers' Meeting in 2002 had gender-responsive budgeting on the agenda with another review planned for 2004, Law Ministers discussed strategies for enhancing democracy by eliminating legal barriers and women's property rights.
- Policy strengthening and capacity-building activities at regional and national levels through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) and the Commonwealth Services Abroad Programme, e.g. sector-wide training for Uganda's Women's Ministry, national and district gender focal points to equip participants with the requisite skills to support the implementation of gender-responsive policies and programmes as well as the provision of a CFTC gender adviser; supporting the development of the ECOWAS gender mainstreaming policy process and implementation in 2002 and beyond.
- Providing policy advice and the services of expert and related resources for the 'engendering' of the policy reduction strategy paper in Sierra Leone (2003-04).
- Ensuring that the SADC/Botswana public sector management and leadership programme for member countries appropriately integrated a gender perspective, including related capacity building in gender analysis and policy making (2003). As a result, a series of similar workshops will be undertaken.
- Engendering Commonwealth Observer Missions to ensure that the political leadership and contribution of women are promoted.
- Distributing Link-In newsletters (now *Link-In to Education, Gender and Health*) to more than 4,000 practitioners and partners; the Commonwealth gender website has over 8 million hits per annum, with a selective web-based Commonwealth Gender Resources.
- Policy advice facility/help desk providing 'hands-on' gender advocacy and policy advice to governments, partners and Secretariat divisions.
- Gender policy briefs on ministerial meetings and global conferences, e.g. the Monterrey Conference on

Financing for Development and the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, the economic paper, *Gender Impacts of Government Revenue Collection: The Case of Taxation* (2004), two reports on gender mainstreaming workshops (Asia and the Caribbean), and case studies of good practice being disseminated.

- Target-setting and monitoring - since 2000 the computerised information system of the Commonwealth Secretariat (using a simple computerised coding system) has facilitated monitoring and evaluation of the Secretariat's programmes and resources, in collaboration with the UN Statistics Systems and other partners, as well as proactive analysis of global and national developments by the Secretariat.

**2. Ministers commended the Secretariat for the series of Gender Management System (GMS) publications and encouraged it to continue the development of user-friendly training materials adaptable to the different needs of member countries.**

### **Actions Taken**

The Commonwealth Secretariat deepened its leadership in the development of gender mainstreaming resources in priority areas identified by ministers/governments. A new Gender Mainstreaming and Development series has been developed as follows:

1. *Mainstreaming Gender in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals* (2003)
2. [\*Gender Budgets Make More Cents\*](#) (2002)
3. [\*Gender Budgets Make Cents - Understanding gender responsive budgets\*](#) (2001)
4. *Commonwealth Business Women: Policies, Best Practices and Success Stories* (2002)
5. [\*Gender Mainstreaming in Health: Country Experiences\*](#) (2002)
6. *Gender Mainstreaming in HIV/AIDS - Taking a Multi-Sectoral Approach: A training manual* (2002)
7. *From Tragedy Towards Hope: Men, Women and the AIDS Epidemic* (2001)
8. [\*Promoting an Integrated Approach to Combat Gender Based Violence\*](#) (2002)
9. [\*Gender Mainstreaming in Legal and Constitutional Affairs\*](#) (2001)
10. [\*Gender Mainstreaming in Science and Technology\*](#) (2001)
11. *Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture and Rural Development* (2001)
12. *Gender Equality and the Judiciary – using international standards to promote the human rights of women and the girl-child* (2000)
13. *Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System* (2003)
14. *Gender and Debt* (2004)
15. *Mainstreaming Informal Employment and Gender in Poverty Reduction* (forthcoming August 2004)

The series of 12 gender mainstreaming handbooks and sectoral guides covers diverse sectors including: information and communications, development planning, trade and industry, education, finance, public service, science and technology, and using gender-sensitive indicators. These are now included in the *GMS Toolkit: A Training Manual for Gender Trainers and Change Managers* (2004). Other publications include the *Secretary-General's Report on the Implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development* (2001) and (2003), the Reports from the Caribbean and Asian Gender Mainstreaming Workshops (2002) as well as other Commonwealth publications.

**3. Ministers agreed to urgently intensify initiatives around HIV/AIDS, including an analysis of the differential impact of HIV/AIDS on developing countries, as well as to encourage ongoing dialogue**

**and research on HIV/AIDS.**

**Actions Taken**

A more coherent multi-sectoral programme has been adopted by the Commonwealth Secretariat, with a stronger gender mainstreaming perspective to HIV/AIDS. HIV and AIDS remain a priority area for Commonwealth action for the next decade.

The merging of the education, gender and health sections has also brought potential synergy between these departments in areas of policy, advocacy and awareness, and capacity building.

Work has been undertaken with individual governments in Africa e.g. Botswana Ghana, Kenya and Namibia, as well as through CARICOM, COMESA, ECOWAS and SADC. A collaborative summer institute on HIV/AIDS is being organised for 2004 with the University of Dalhousie, Halifax, Canada. A training manual on gender mainstreaming in HIV/AIDS was published in 2002 (see above).

**4. Ministers strongly endorsed and urged the speedy implementation of measures addressed to Commonwealth governments and the Secretariat contained in the Update to the 1995 Plan of Action and the Fancourt Declaration for the achievement of sustainable economic growth and equitable social development for both women and men.**

**Actions Taken**

The new mandates and directions for the Commonwealth Secretariat's work will focus on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in particular the concern for poverty eradication. The work that has been initiated on gender-responsive budgets and gender and trade will have positive results for poverty eradication and women. The programme on gender and poverty eradication is being strengthened with a new focus on employment-related aspects and increasing the visibility of the informal sector. The recent work by Naila Kabeer commissioned for the Secretariat in 2003 reviews strategies and makes recommendations for further actions for poverty eradication.

Another lead project, the Commonwealth Business Women's Network (CBWN), is now fully operational within the framework of the Commonwealth Business Council. The CBWN identifies key issues in trade which affect women in business, is developing a network of businesswomen, shares and promotes best practice, and promotes the spirit of entrepreneurship. A range of activities undertaken with private sector partners and networks has included a National Workshop in Nigeria for Female Parliamentarians and Entrepreneurs; high-level conferences on Gender and NEPAD, Women in SMEs: Women in Innovative approaches for Growth in the Commonwealth, and Promoting women in Business – Key to Sustainable Development.

The Secretariat has collaborated with national and regional agencies to promote the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to empower women at all levels, especially for public education, media and entrepreneurial activities for sustainable development.

**5. Ministers agreed that special attention needs to be given to women in the informal sector where appropriate, through a range of measures which may include protective and promotional legislation, better working conditions, provision of support services for child care and health care,**

**credit and market access, and the enhancement of the technical, managerial and entrepreneurial capacity of women.**

### **Actions Taken**

Parallel work with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) is being developed to assess the role of women's unpaid work in the care-economy, as well as the impact of HIV/AIDS on the world of work (both formal and informal). Case studies on global value chain (GVC) analysis are being developed with the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) at Sussex University, UK, and the Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO), a global network of institutions and individuals concerned with improving the status of women in the informal economy.

The Secretariat supported the first African Regional Workshop on Food Processing and Minor Forest Product Global Value Chains which was held from 10 to 12 December 2002, in Kampala, Uganda. The Commonwealth Secretariat has also supported WIEGO in the production of brochures on the informal economy. It has sponsored the production of two other publications on the informal economy, i.e. *Chains of Fortune: best practices in linking producers and workers with global markets* edited by Marilyn Carr (IDS/UK) and *Mainstreaming Informal Employment and Gender in Poverty Reduction: a handbook for policy-makers and other stakeholders* (2004) by Martha Alter Chen, Marilyn Carr and Joann Vanek (forthcoming August 2004).

### **GENDER, MACROECONOMIC POLICIES AND GLOBALISATION**

**6. Ministers noted the need to focus on the inter-relationships between macroeconomic and social development imperatives, and recognised this as critical to women's economic empowerment and the attainment of gender mainstreaming objectives.**

Commonwealth initiatives to profile these critical linkages took place at different levels: at both Heads of Government and ministerial meetings. The Finance Ministers' Meetings in 2002 reviewed Commonwealth experiences in gender-responsive budgeting. This was endorsed as a process for determining the impact of government revenue and expenditure policies on women and men. Nearly half of the 50 known initiatives are from the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Secretariat has been centrally involved in the production of tools, methodology and capacity building materials for this programme area. The Commonwealth country experiences have highlighted the importance of ministries of finance and women's affairs being involved in these initiatives, and the added value of participation by law-makers and civil society groups. New research areas included revenue analysis and expanding the methodology for monitoring the MDGs.

**7. The Ministers endorsed the need for a framework to respond effectively to the impact of macroeconomic policies on women; and for governments to apply a gender analysis in the negotiation and implementation of liberalisation processes.**

## **Actions Taken**

The Commonwealth Secretariat, in collaboration with the Pacific Islands Forum, organised a Symposium for Trade Officials in Suva, Fiji Islands, from 12 to 14 February 2003. The symposium's objectives were to maximise opportunities and minimise the negative impacts of multilateral trade on women, and build capacity for member governments in the areas of gender and multilateral trade – an integral part of the process of poverty elimination and sustainable development. The symposium is a direct response to addressing the negative effects of globalisation and trade liberalisation, particularly on weak and vulnerable economies, and on women and children.

Collaboration has taken place with partners from the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and Trade at the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and with key female ambassadors and senior trade officials who are involved in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations. The Commonwealth Secretariat's publication on *Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System* has been recognised as a pioneering work in this area.

## **WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS**

**8. Ministers requested their governments to comply with their international human rights obligations and encouraged those countries that have not yet ratified CEDAW to do so, and to work towards its effective implementation. They encouraged governments to take specific actions to promote women's economic and social rights.**

## **Actions Taken**

The Commonwealth continues to advocate for the ratification of CEDAW and its Protocol, and the removal of reservations, as well as to promote their implementation at national level.

An Expert Meeting on Gender and Human Rights was held in February 2004 to discuss a number of key gender and human rights issues, evaluate progress in the Commonwealth, and make strategic recommendations for new areas of research and work.

These issues encompassed the following: CEDAW's implementation and legislation; gender and human rights in the life-cycle including the girl-child; gender-based violence and the trafficking of women and girls; land and property rights; gender, culture and law; and indigenous people's rights.

The development of a gender and human rights toolkit is being undertaken by the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association (CMJA) for magistrates and judges to provide guidelines for the delivery of a more 'engendered' justice system (2004).

## **POLITICS, CONFLICT AND PEACE**

**9. Ministers recommended that countries should take steps as appropriate to accelerate the increase in women's political participation, including actions by governments, political parties, electoral bodies and civil society. Ministers recommended that the Commonwealth should take action in collaboration with other international organisations and civil society to include women at the**

**highest levels in peace building, peace keeping, conflict mediation, resolution, and post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction activities.**

### **Actions Taken**

Since 2000, the Secretariat, through a series of regional (Asia/Africa/Caribbean/Europe/Pacific) and pan-Commonwealth workshops, has been working towards ensuring that women in societies affected by war and armed conflicts are placed in strategic positions of decision-making and trust, and that their voices are heard and heeded. It will ensure that the interrelated processes of development and democracy, rule of law and peace-building, political participation and socio-economic empowerment will more effectively take on board gender issues.

The Secretariat continues to work towards a 50:50 gender balance on the Commonwealth Observer Groups (COGs) to ensure that the political leadership and contribution of women is recognised and reflected in the composition of these high-level groups. Its strategy is to ensure that the necessary rounds of broad-based consultations with organisations will establish a multi-stakeholders' approach to political transparency and democracy in member countries.

A Commonwealth workshop in London in 2002 looked at the role that women play in international criminal tribunals, as judges, lawyers and witnesses, and in truth and reconciliation commissions. The Commonwealth has various initiatives, such as the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) and the Good Offices Programme, which encourage consensus building and actions regarding the issues of democracy, conflict resolution and peace for women and men in member countries.

A consultative workshop: Partnership for Post-Conflict Reconstruction was held in post-conflict Sierra Leone in May 2001, when the Commonwealth Secretariat collaborated with a range of national and international partners on a workshop for women and men in post-conflict reconstruction and political participation. This was followed by a pan-Commonwealth workshop on Gender, Peace and Post-Conflict Reconstruction in London in 2002. Consultations jointly organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Sri Lankan Government took place in 2003-04 with a view to integrating women, men, and young people more fully in the Partnership for Sustainable Peace.

In February 2003, the Secretariat with the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) held a workshop on political participation, young people and voter education. Another workshop, organised jointly with the CPA, the British Council and the Commonwealth Foundation on Engendering Development and Democracy was held in Abuja, Nigeria, from 3 to 5 December 2003, in the wings of the CHOGM.

**10. Ministers expressed strong support for the range of activities undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat, particularly the development of training and resource materials on women's human rights, as well as a model framework for an integrated approach to eliminate and prevent violence against women.**

### **Actions Taken**

The Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meeting in 2002 profiled the briefing paper, Gender Mainstreaming in Legal and Constitutional Affairs, and a policy brief was circulated to NMWs/governments. In addition, the Secretariat's Land and Development programme will assist countries to review land policy and tenure to establish appropriate legislative frameworks, where necessary. Land and property rights have been identified as critical issues in the draft Commonwealth PoA for Gender Equality (2005-2015) for the empowerment of women and poverty eradication.

Trafficking in persons, especially women and children, for commercial sexual exploitation is one of the fastest growing areas of international criminal activity and of increasing concern to the international community, including the Commonwealth. To that end, a Commonwealth Expert Group has focused on strategies to combat unlawful trafficking of women and children.

In addition to the development of the framework and training manual on the integrated approach to violence against women developed in 2002, three regional workshops have been organised in the Africa/SADC, Asia/Malaysia and Pacific/Fiji regions in 2002 and 2003. The strategy adopted was to attempt to institutionalise the Commonwealth's integrated approach, in partnership with the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other partners, to ensure maximum impact, national capacity through training of trainers and sustainability in regions.

Resource materials have been produced and widely disseminated as free global public goods. Trainers in the Southern African, Asian and Pacific regions have been exposed to the approach and materials. Governments are encouraged to develop national policies and action plans on eradicating gender-based violence. Partnerships with key civil society partners have been put into place to ensure that the integrated approach becomes the norm in countries.