



Message from the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Rt Hon Don McKinnon

International Women's Day – 8th March

International Women's Day focuses our attention on the key role played by women in development and democracy. Women's full involvement and leadership is central to democracy and human rights, ending conflict, economic growth, eradicating poverty and, combating disease, including HIV/AIDS. These are all pressing Commonwealth priorities. If you don't enable half the world to play their part in solving the problems our planet is facing, you're only going to get half the solutions.

Women have proven to be the driving force of growth and development. Educating women, for example, leads to better health for their entire family, a healthier population and workforce overall and, increase economic growth. As Samoa's Minister of Education, Fiamé Naomi Mataafa, said recently, "countries that have good representation by women are those with a healthy economy, an effective democratic government and an educated population." Men benefit too when women take their rightful place in politics.

Over the past few years, some progress has been achieved. Five years ago, Commonwealth Heads of Government set a target of 30 per cent of female representation in parliament. Since then, 12 Commonwealth countries have achieved women's representation of between 20 and 30 per cent.

In countries emerging from years of conflict, the Commonwealth Secretariat has been particularly active in ensuring that the voices of women are heard in the process of peace building and reconstruction. In Sierra Leone, a National

Consultation, in collaboration with the Government and UN agencies, was convened to encourage more Sierra Leonean women to participate in post-conflict reconstruction and become political leaders. Following this, at the May 2002 national elections, the percentage of women in the Sierra Leone Parliament almost doubled, from 8 to 15 per cent.

The Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meetings held in Fiji Islands, in June 2004, adopted a new 10-year Plan of Action for Gender Equality in the Commonwealth. It strengthens our ongoing work in support of governments and civil society to eliminate discrimination and inequality based on gender.

But too many women still live on the edge, suffering violence in all its forms. Worldwide, one in three women will suffer violence during her lifetime – she will be raped, beaten, trafficked or harassed. To help address this problem, the Commonwealth Secretariat has developed an integrated approach to eliminate violence against women, which brings on board a wide range of social actors and which has been widely applied in member countries.



2005 signals the 49th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, in New York which coincides with the Beijing+10 Global Conference. It will take stock of progress since the Beijing Declaration was adopted by 189 countries in 1995, when they pledged renewed action and commitment on Gender Equality, Development and Peace. The Commonwealth will be presenting its new Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 to the Beijing+10 Conference.

I urge all governments to increase their efforts and provide a solid foundation for the advancement of gender equality in this century. Let us harness the strength, courage and abilities of women throughout the world. It is time women are fully recognised as equal partners in building our common future.

Indian Ocean earthquake disaster

Commonwealth Secretary-General Rt Hon Don McKinnon issued the following statement on 27 December 2004 on the Indian Ocean earthquake and its after-effects: 'Of the seven most affected countries, five are Commonwealth members. The earthquake and resulting tsunamis have caused a humanitarian tragedy of epic proportions. Of the seven most affected countries, five are Commonwealth members: Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all. This tragedy therefore has a strong Commonwealth dimension to it, and our 53 member countries around the world are responding accordingly'.



For information and contributions to **LinkIn** newsletter or queries, please write to: The Editor, **LinkIn** Newsletter, Gender Section, Social Transformation Programmes Division, Commonwealth Secretariat, Marlborough House, Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5HX, UK.

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7747 6467 Fax: +44 (0) 20 7930 1647 Email: m.roberts@commonwealth.int gad@commonwealth.int Website: www.thecommonwealth.org/gender

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Director's Message



It is hard to believe that I have passed six years at the Commonwealth Secretariat, initially as Director of Gender and Youth Affairs and then as Director of the Social Transformation Programme Division. It has indeed been a privilege and a pleasure to work with our Commonwealth governments, most notably our Ministers of Gender, Youth, Education and Health.

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There have been many highs to remember. First, the successful merger of the Gender, Education and Health Divisions at the Secretariat which coincided with new strategies to synchronise Commonwealth programming with the needs of Commonwealth Governments in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. A simple scroll through these goals shows the inter-relationship and synergy of gender education and health issues for many of the MDGs targets.

Secondly, it is difficult not to remember the three recent and exciting Ministerial meetings held in Edinburgh for Education (October 2003); Health in Geneva (May 2004), and Gender in Fiji Islands (June 2004). I vividly recall the wonderful Minister for Gender from Uganda telling a hushed room about the ravages of HIV/AIDS on the female population. The Health Ministers' meeting stands out with the poems and testimonials about women's maternal mortality. At Education Ministers' meeting we heard from Professor Amartya Sen about the importance of education to democracy and peace, and from the UK Secretary of State for Education that education is the critical cornerstone of the Commonwealth.

We are proud that STPD, in collaboration with our UN and regional counterparts, has brought visibility to the Commonwealth through training and advocacy workshops that helped to ensure that important education, health and gender policies were put into practice by governments, and included civil society.

We are proud of the success of our publication series on gender mainstreaming, as it addresses a number of critical development areas such as trade, the informal sector and poverty.

Equal in scope is the niche developed by education and health in promoting the valuable human resources in education and health services from being depleted in small and vulnerable Commonwealth countries through our Health Code of Practice and our recent Teachers Protocol.

I must express my deep appreciation for the excellent STPD staff and the leadership at the Secretariat, in particular Mr Winston Cox, Deputy Secretary-General.

I hand over the Directorship of STPD to Ms Ann Keeling, currently at the Department of Foreign and International Development (DFID), and I wish her the similar success and pleasure that I have had during my tenure at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Farewell to Nancy!

It is now six years since Nancy Spence joined the Secretariat to take the helm of the Division, first for Gender and Youth Affairs and, since 2000, the Education, Gender and Health Sections of the Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD). We thank her for her sure guidance and leadership and for the inspiration she has imparted to her staff. Her capacity to keep the team together, handle complex management issues, and implement cross-cutting development programmes, though not always easy, has been greatly appreciated. She has made many friends, both here at the Secretariat and in member countries and regions. We join them in wishing her and her family, Randy, Samantha and Nick all the very best for the future.

STPD Staff

Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs

Seventh Meeting, Nadi, Fiji Islands, 30 May-2 June 2004

DENARAU STATEMENT



Recalling that gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) Harare Declaration of 1991;

Forty-three Commonwealth countries attended this historic meeting in Denarau, Nadi, Fiji Islands, on 31 May to 2 June 2004, that approved the new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA);

Being the first ever Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting to be held in the Pacific region, the Pacific Commonwealth members in particular, welcomed the holding of 7WAMM in their region, and called for the Commonwealth to strengthen its activities in addressing the special needs and vulnerabilities of small island developing states;

In a landmark decision, the Ministers agreed on civil society participation in 7WAMM and future WAMM meetings;

Noting the achievements of 53 member countries:

- Forty-five countries have developed national action plans on gender;
- Forty-nine have ratified CEDAW although only 14 have signed the Optional Protocol;

- Eleven have instituted constitutional or legislative reforms that address gender concerns such as land, property, citizenship, employment, family and spousal rights;
- Three countries have exceeded the 30 per cent target of women's representation in parliament;

Reflecting upon these achievements, Ministers agreed on the need to accelerate implementation of domestic plans and accession to international instruments and address emerging challenges related to gender, democracy, peace, conflict, human security, human rights and the law, globalisation, poverty eradication, economic empowerment and the HIV/AIDS pandemic;

Recognising the need for a long term perspective, Ministers adopted the PoA to advance their commitment to gender equality and equity. The PoA will guide Commonwealth action for the 2005-2015 decade with a mid-term review in 2010 and update as necessary;

Partnerships were stressed at all levels: between and within Commonwealth governments, civil society, parliamentarians, magistrates,

judges, lawyers, the private sector and multi- and bilateral agencies. Partnerships with men and boys were felt to be critical, as are changing attitudes and behaviours, particularly around conflict, gender-based violence, education, health and HIV/AIDS;

Having identified four critical areas of focus, Ministers called upon governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat to take the necessary action for the effective implementation of the Plan of Action;

Of particular concern is the need for adequate financial, human and technical resources to implement the PoA. The Commonwealth Secretariat is encouraged to continue and strengthen its engagement with governments, CSOs, parliamentarians, Commonwealth associations, international financial institutions and donor partners, to ensure that where possible priority is given to allocating resources to support the implementation of the PoA at the national level;

Heads of Government are called upon to allocate the required resources for the full and effective implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015.

Commonwealth's Response to Beijing+10

We 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.

Road Map for 2005-2015

The new Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005-2015 (PoA) provides the framework within which the Commonwealth will advance its commitment to gender equality and equity in the post-Beijing + 10 decade. The PoA builds on achievements, incorporates the Commonwealth's response to the differential impacts of global changes on women and men, seeks to close persistent gaps and engages with new and emerging challenges. The PoA will guide Commonwealth action for the 2005–2015 decade with a mid-term review and update in 2010 as necessary. It will form part of the Commonwealth's contribution to the Beijing+10 Global Review in 2005.

Gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) Harare Declaration of 1991. The framework on gender equality has been provided by Commonwealth PoAs on Women and Development (1987) and Gender and Development (1995). The 1995 PoA, which formed part of the Commonwealth's contribution to the Beijing Conference and Platform for Action (BPFA), made the paradigm shift from a focus on women to a gender-mainstreaming approach. The 1995 PoA Update of 2000 focused strategic interventions under two main policy priority areas:

- Human rights, peace and political participation; and
- Macroeconomics and social development.

Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality (2005-2015)

Highlights of the PoA

The PoA views gender equality not only as a goal in its own right but also as a key factor in enhancing democracy and peace, eradicating poverty, hunger and violence against women, ensuring education for all, improving maternal health, reducing child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS. Advancing gender equality across the Commonwealth will contribute to development, democracy and peace.

The PoA reinforces the Commonwealth's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), acknowledging that all these goals can influence the eradication of poverty, empowerment of women and improvement of women's and girls' access to health and education as well as to the principles enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the BPFA (1995) and the Beijing + 5 Political Declaration and Outcome Document (2000).

The PoA is committed to the promotion of a rights-based approach to gender equality by implementing the provisions of international, regional and national human rights instruments and mechanisms.

Focus of the new PoA

The new PoA for the next ten years will focus on four critical areas:

- 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 Commonwealth recognises the four critical areas as inter-related and aims to integrate its implementation through various strategies such as generating and sharing knowledge and information, capacity building and monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

Implementation and Monitoring of the PoA

Enhancing the rate of implementation and the sustainability of results at national and regional levels will be at the heart of the Commonwealth's work for the next decade. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting will be carried out in a variety of ways, and will include the Secretary-General's biennial report on the implementation of the PoA to CHOGM, and periodic meetings of Ministers Responsible for Women's/Gender Affairs. The Secretariat will integrate monitoring of the PoA into its four-year strategic planning and two-year operational planning cycles, and gender audits of the Secretariat's work will be undertaken to assess its impact in promoting equality between women and men in the Commonwealth.

Support for Governments and Partners

The Commonwealth Secretariat will continue to provide support to member governments in the implementation of the PoA. In addition, the urgency of strengthening the capacity of national women's machineries (NWMs) and line ministries to mainstream gender equality has been recognised. This can take the form of policy advice and technical assistance on the application of gender mainstreaming, especially gender analysis and planning, and related issues identified by governments.

Partnerships have been recognised as being one of the most effective ways of working towards gender equality in the context of the Commonwealth's areas of comparative advantage and the principle of common values in diversity. The Commonwealth will strengthen existing partnerships and forge new ones, especially with organisations that

have expertise in the four critical areas.

Focus will also be on the involvement of young persons as well as men. Over half of Commonwealth citizens are young persons under 30 years of age, and will most likely increase to 60-70 per cent by 2015 in many member countries.

The Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth associations will also work with other key constituencies, including ministries, parliaments, local governments, justice systems, universities, public service training institutions, and civil society organisations (CSOs), who are sometimes best placed as advocate, broker and catalyst in the promotion of gender equality and mainstreaming at the national level.

For the full copy of the PoA (2005-2015) visit: www.the.commonwealth.org/gender

What our Ministers say



In recent times we have seen changes that have enhanced opportunities for women to achieve in all facets of their lives but more needs to be done. The 7th Commonwealth Women's/Gender Affairs Ministerial Meeting will provide excellent opportunities for Australia,

together with other member countries, to showcase best practices and pursue priority issues to further advance women's equal participation throughout the Commonwealth.

Hon Kay Patterson, Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women, Australia

Women have always contributed to the public good in the conduct of their daily lives and contributions to the national economy. It is only fitting that they be provided with opportunities necessary to exercise their equal human rights to participate fully in the social, political and economic development processes. Given a chance, their ideas and creative solutions, borne of their own particular life experiences and knowledge as women, wives, daughters, sisters and mothers, can add immensely to the standard and quality of Gambian life.

H.E. Mrs. Isatou Njie-Saidy, Vice-President and Secretary of State for Women's Affairs, The Gambia

The Seychelles Government has always followed a national strategy aimed at developing all our human resources and has never lost sight of the importance of integrating both men and women at all levels of development and involving them equally in decision-making processes.

We acknowledge that equality of access to education through the adoption of our free and compulsory "Education for All" strategy guarantees schooling for all from the age of 3 to 16 years.

Hon Mr Vincent Meriton, Minister for Social Affairs and Employment, Seychelles

I believe that the biggest challenge we are faced with is the lack of technical expertise, to effectively implement the technical aspects of gender concerns like gender audit, training male advocates, effective use of gender management tools and especially insufficient funding sources to carry out programmes and activities.

I would like to endorse the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat ...in gender mainstreaming andfor providing the technical support despite the distance, and acting as a mentoring agent.

I am thankful to the Commonwealth Secretariat for providing opportunities to learn best practices and for organising the Ministers' meetings, which is an important avenue for Ministers to meet together, share experiences, learn from each other, and support each other to ensure that gender concerns and issues are effectively addressed in our own countries and in the community of the Commonwealth.

Hon Adi Asenaca Caucau, Minister for Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation, Fiji Islands

While Guyana's legislative framework has provided women with equality, there are yet many challenges to be met, such as cultural traditions and religious hurdles to be cleared, and the perennial constraints of inadequate finances and human resources to effectively pursue all the measures required.

Hon Bibi Shadick, Minister in the Ministry of Labour, Human Services and Social Security of Guyana



The Jamaican Parliament in the up coming legislative year will have an agenda which is committed to bringing about gender equality as well as giving more protection to the women and children within our society. In this regard, we have reviewed forty-two pieces (42) pieces of legislation, and seven (7) of the most pressing ones will be piloted during the upcoming legislative year. For example, the Property (Rights of Spouses) Bill seeks to equitably distribute matrimonial property upon the dissolution of marriage or cohabitation for a period not less than 5 years on an equitable basis.

Hon Dr Paul Robertson, Minister of Development, Jamaica

The Beijing+10 Regional Preparatory Meetings

Africa: Outcome and the Way Forward

The African ministers in charge of gender and women affairs met at the Seventh African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing+10), in Addis Ababa, October 2004, to review the status of implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action. They reaffirmed and renewed their commitment to gender equality, equity and women's empowerment as stated in the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994, and related UN and international, regional and sub-regional agreements.

Recent initiatives are noted as follows:

- i) Creation of the African Union (AU), which is committed to the principle of gender equality and equity, provides further opportunities for increased participation of women in national, sub-regional and regional decision-making.
- ii) The AU Commission was formed on a 50/50 gender parity basis. The first Speaker of the AU Pan-African Parliament (PAP) is a woman and at least one in every five national members of the PAP is a woman.
- iii) The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa has been adopted.
- iv) The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is also expected to enhance women's human rights through the social development indicators included in its African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM).



The Hon Mrs Gertrude Mongella, first President of the pan-African Parliament and Secretary-General of the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women, Peace and Development (seated 2nd from right)

Ten years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and BPFPA, governments have recognised that passing laws and policies alone does not bring about substantial gender equality and equity or respect for women's human rights. The national and sub-regional reports on the 10-year review of BPFPA, from both governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), identified the need to bridge the gap between commitments and their implementation.

(Extracts: Outcome and the Way Forward Document of the Seventh African Regional Conference on Women (Beijing + 10) Decade Review of the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, Addis Ababa, 12-14 October 2004).



The Hon Mrs Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, Minister of Women Affairs and Child Welfare, Namibia (1st right) chairs the Beijing + 10 Review for Africa, Addis, October 2004



African Peace Torch travelled from Rwanda to Addis, 2004

Asia and Pacific Prepare for BEIJING+10

Forty-eight countries participated in the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP) Beijing+10 meeting session, alongside UN Agencies, inter-governmental bodies, non-governmental organisations and invited observers. For the first time, several developed countries had 'speaking rights' in the Asia-Pacific negotiations, including USA, UK, New Zealand and Australia.

The 'Bangkok Communiqué' was adopted by member countries of the Asia-Pacific region, and called for the reaffirmation of commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action. Progress achieved in countries was highlighted as well as gaps and challenges identified.

The meeting recognised the importance of ensuring linkages and cross-fertilisation with commitments to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security, the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, the Millennium Declaration, the internationally-agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, which are recognised as effective in realising women's human rights and gender equality.

It called for the strengthening of co-operation and partnerships, and the commitment to allocating increased resources by governments, non-governmental organisations, development partners, and regional, international and intergovernmental agencies.

Caribbean on Beijing + 10

Advancement of gender equality in the Commonwealth Caribbean and Americas has been uneven. On the one hand, there has been clear progress in enshrining equality in countries' constitutions, the elimination of direct forms of discrimination, the adaptation of legal frameworks and the development of innovative laws on electoral quotas and domestic violence. On the other hand, it is evident that existing barriers facing women not only reduce their access to employment, but also to health care, education (though in some countries women attain a greater average level of schooling than men), social networks and participation in political, economic and social decision-making processes.

Gender socialisation, which impacts on traditional notions of gender roles both in and out of the home, as well as factors of gender inequality, and gender inequity, poverty and lack of employment, limited access to knowledge, resources and barriers to skill development can contribute to the spread of HIV/AIDS.

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)

The UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 10-year Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing +10) convened in Geneva from December 14 to 15, 2004. More than 300 participants from 42 countries took part in the NGO Forum on 12-13 December 2004. The meeting gathered representatives from 53 UNECE Member States, as well as representatives from UN agencies and civil society, to review and assess regional implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Member States of the UNECE reaffirm the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the UN General Assembly (Beijing +5).

The meeting emphasised: the strong links between the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; the full and effective implementation of both the Platform for Action and CEDAW as essential for advancing the implementation of the UN Millennium Declaration and achieving

internationally-agreed poverty reduction and development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration; and the need for strengthened government links with civil society, including NGOs, working towards gender equality.

While progress was made by most developed market economies, a deterioration of women's position was observed in many countries of Eastern Europe and the CIS, especially in the area of employability and social protection.

Overall, the importance of discussion, dialogue and discourse through which experiences, successes

and challenges of implementing gender equality commitments are shared, was stressed as a means to identifying innovative responses to ongoing challenges.

The country reports highlighted three areas of concern, particularly relevant to the UNECE member countries, to be discussed at this UNECE meeting: (i) women and economy; (ii) institutional mechanisms; and (iii) trafficking in the context of migratory movements. Emerging issues were also discussed in the context of changes in the geopolitical as well as the economic and social situation in the region.

Building Strategic Partnerships: The Commonwealth Secretariat and the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 1325) – A case of two firsts

By Ms Elsie Onubogu, Programme Manager, Gender Section

Resolution 1325 marked the first time that the Security Council has addressed the disproportionate and irrevocable impact of armed and other forms of conflict on women, their contributions, often underestimated and under-utilised in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, conflict resolution, and peace-building initiatives, and stressed the importance of women's equal and full participation as agents in peace and security processes. Similarly, 28th October 2004 marked the first time that the Commonwealth Secretariat addressed the United Nations Security Council. This participation was a good example of a 'strategic partnership' approach being advanced by the Secretariat through its Strategic Partnership Committee.

Since its adoption four years ago, UNSCR 1325 has created a positive shift in international understanding of the impact of conflict on societies, women and girls in particular. Similarly, the importance of women's participation as equal partners in all areas related to peace and security has been highlighted. Efforts by the international community, civil society and women in particular continue to dominate global news. However, women's participation and representation continues to be marginalised and under-utilised, thus denying and violating their basic human rights.

As the Rt. Hon. Don McKinnon pointed out, *"global stability cannot be achieved at the expense of human rights, allowing (all) citizens to voice their views freely and peacefully about matters that concern them (including in the areas of peace and conflict) helps to promote tolerance, stability and peace. No one in the world can ever be secure as long as individuals are denied their fundamental rights"*.

On 28th October 2004, the Commonwealth Secretariat, for the first time in its forty-year history, was granted an opportunity to address the United Nations Security Council at their four-year review of the landmark resolution on Women, Peace, and Security – UNSCR 1325 at its 5066th meeting in New York. The Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Mr. Winston Cox said that the Security Council resolution 1325 was particularly relevant, as it reaffirmed women's role and contribution to conflict prevention and resolution and the need to ensure equal participation essential for maintenance of global



Mr Cox, Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat, addressing the UN Security Council at the ten-year review on the UNSC Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

peace and security.

In highlighting the efforts of the Secretariat in the area of conflict, the Deputy Secretary-General explained that the Commonwealth addresses the root causes of conflict within its member states through its political, social, economic, and technical assistance programmes – an integrated and multi-sectoral approach. Such an integrated approach was necessary as experience has shown that the causes of conflict are deeply rooted in unequal power relations and inequalities in analysing post-conflict reconstruction and transformation of the war-torn societies, "the violence is not, at least purportedly, the objective, rather it is instrumental, used in order to achieve other ends. Usually, the declared objective is political – to secure or sustain power – while power is wanted for the advantages it offers, especially the possibilities or economic gains". (Nicole Ball, 2002).

The Commonwealth's preferred approach to conflicts is inclusive of all the factors that affect lives, which

may inform peace and sustainable development. [Promoting gender equality, peace and sustainable development through socio-economic, political and equal participation is therefore the key to conflict transformation, resolution and global peace.](#)

The President of the Security Council, Sir Emry Parry Jones, UK requested the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Kofi Annan, to ensure that human rights monitors and members of commissions of inquiry have the necessary expertise and training in gender-based crimes and in the conduct of investigations, including in a culturally-sensitive manner favourable to the needs, dignity and rights of the victims. He urged all international and national courts (tribunals) specifically established to prosecute war-related crimes to provide gender training and support programmes for all staff and victims respectively.

In his report, the UN Secretary-General, provided examples of progress made and identified gaps, challenges as well as recommendations for further action in the implementation of UNSCR 1325. It was noted that several initiatives had been taken by a broad range of actors to implement resolution 1325, *inter alia* by developing policies, action plans; increasing access to gender expertise; training; promoting consultation and participation of women; increasing attention to human rights issues; and supporting initiatives of women's group.

Despite such significant achievements, gaps and challenges remain, especially in the areas of women's participation in peace



No-one has escaped the impact of war – men, women or children. Women and girls have suffered in different ways. Men and boys have also been victims of war. Even where young men and women are perpetrators of war, they are also victims – of poverty and a lack of opportunity for training and employment. They are vulnerable to recruitment by the rebels or the military.

agreements and conflict prevention/resolution processes; and gender analysis in reconstruction efforts, including particular attention to the needs of women in humanitarian and decision-making processes. Finally, increased incidence of sexual and gender-based violence in recent years, such as in northern Uganda and Darfur, and the failure to provide adequate protection, remains a critical issue.

Post-conflict situations do present windows of opportunity. In Sierra Leone, community leaders and civil society enabled women, men and young people to define their own solutions for achieving sustainable peace. At an IDP camp in Gulu,

Uganda, the community came together to reintegrate and rehabilitate their lives and livelihoods.

Gender perspectives must be integrated in post-crisis situations to ensure accountability and justice, as these are critical components of the healing and peace process.

Three main areas are identified:

- a) legal justice – to address discriminatory laws, in particular against women, such as inheritance/property laws;
- b) restorative justice – to address violations of human rights and war crimes such as rape, sexual assault; and
- c) distributive justice – to address structural and systematic injustices

such as political, economic and social inequalities that often form the underlying causes of violence and conflict. (Ms Noleen Heyzer, Executive Director, UNIFEM).

Such root causes must be addressed through the enforcement of victim's and women's rights. Thus the real cure for violence lies in constitutions with strong and clear guarantees for gender equality. To prevent and/or resolve conflicts, promote peace and gender equality in all societies, it was essential not only to analyse women's needs and challenges in conflict situations, but to recognise their contributions and guarantee women's participation and protect their rights accordingly.

The UN Secretary-General's Report states that although much has been achieved since the adoption of UNSCR 1325, much still remains to be done. Given the gaps and challenges, the report outlined the following recommendations:

- i) Ensure full participation of women and incorporation of gender perspectives in all conflict prevention work, including in the analysis;
- ii) Develop guidelines and training initiatives based on framework of promoting gender equality in peace agreements;
- iii) Review peace processes and analyse obstacles to missed opportunities;
- iv) Establish a co-ordinated humanitarian response monitoring system with gender specific indicators;
- v) Systematically use the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) in post-conflict countries;
- vi) Review women's participation in Truth and Reconciliation processes and the integration of their needs;
- vii) Set indicators/benchmarks for women's equal participation in elections, based on a review of good practice;
- viii) Develop guidelines and integrate the needs of women and girls in all DDR programmes including gender justice;
- ix) Apply pressure on all actors to cease all violations of human rights of women and girls, including rape, sexual violations and other crimes against humanity.

Feature

The point was reiterated by the Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, Mr. Winston Cox, where he urged the Council to celebrate the “unsung heroes” – women whether from Bougainville, Fiji Islands, Uganda, Sierra Leone, East Timor, Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Afghanistan or elsewhere – by providing them with seats at all negotiating tables and continued implementation of the resolution.

One area in which resolution 1325 and the United Nations Secretary General’s report is silent is in the area of education in conflict and emergencies, especially from a rights-based perspective. Though post-conflict reconstruction efforts



Children symbolise our hope for sustainable peace and development

involve education and training activities, evidence has shown that

women and girls’ education is further disrupted and often ignored in post-conflict environments. The increased marginalisation occurs as a result of factors which include increased family burdens, household responsibilities for young girls and women who are forced to leave school to carry out chores such as family care, fetching firewood, water, cooking for surviving members of their household, or fear against attack including rape and sexual violations by rebels and civilians. The Commonwealth Secretariat’s work will strengthen strategic partnerships with key actors to facilitate the implementation of resolution 1325 globally.



Ministerial Roundtable on Education in Emergencies

The Mombasa Declaration 2004 re-committed African Ministers of Education to provide education for all, including in times of crisis, conflict and post-conflict reconstruction.

Education Ministers and senior officials from five Commonwealth countries and Liberia participated in a Ministerial Roundtable in December 2004. The Roundtable was hosted jointly by the Commonwealth Secretariat’s Education Section, in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE).



The Bahamas Attorney-General and Minister of Education, Hon Alfred Sears and Ms Elsie Onubogu, Gender Section, Commonwealth Secretariat and the Inter-Agency Network on Education Emergencies (INEE) Consultation, South Africa, December 2004

Eliminating Gender Disparities in Education

Gender parity and gender equality in education are prominent targets in both the Dakar Framework of Action (2000) and the Millennium Development Goals (2000) – the two major global commitments to removing gender disparities.

About 18 Commonwealth member countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, South and West Asia, are still not on target to remove gender disparities in education. Unless gender-responsive, innovative and catalytic interventions are accelerated in these countries, some of them will take many years to realise the MDG targets on gender equality in education.

However, evidence from the field shows that some sub-regions are currently moving towards the realisation of the said MDG targets, however slowly. Most importantly, some progress is evident in the transformation of individual, structural and social practices that are critical to the removal of gender disparities in secondary and primary education, thanks to the functioning partnerships in addressing gender disparities in education globally and the ABC (Advocacy, Brokering and Catalyst) role which the Social Transformation Programme Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat is playing.

The Secretariat has been working as an advocate with governments for effective policy and programme implementation through gender mainstreaming in education, as

a broker of partnerships that are addressing gender disparities, and as a catalyst of the availability and management of information relevant for scaling up, replication and gender mainstreaming in primary and secondary education delivery.

The ABC transformational concept was concretised following the Commonwealth Education Ministers' Conference that took place in Edinburgh, Scotland in 2003. The removal of gender disparities in primary and secondary education was identified as a key area that the Secretariat should address, in line with the MDG targets.

In the recent past, the Secretariat played a pivotal role in fielding studies to identify promising practices in girls' and boys' education. Subsequently, the Secretariat in partnership with UNICEF, the Forum for African Women Educationalists, and the Commonwealth Youth Programme, convened meetings of persons from different backgrounds in Nairobi, Kenya and Chandigarh, India in June and September 2004 respectively, to share and review promising practices in girls' education in the two regions. Lessons were drawn from these meetings.

These lessons are as follows:

- Transforming an ordinary school into a gender-responsive environment;
- Re-entry into school of the adolescent mothers;
- Empowerment of girls through affirmative dialogue;
- Turning an emergency situation into a positive environment for the rapid expansion of access to education for girls and boys;
- Expanding learning opportunities to out-of-school girls and boys;
- Accelerating girls' participation in education through a holistic Girls' Education Movement;
- Peer education to prevent girls from being infected by HIV/AIDS; and
- Addressing sexual maturation as a potential barrier to effective girls' participation in education.

Drawing from the information on good practices in girls' education, the Education Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat is currently working on a highly functional publication on gender mainstreaming in education.



Internship

My name is Bongani Nkosi from South Africa and I am currently doing my Masters in Leadership for Sustainable Development. This course is offered by Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) and Forum For The Future, and it is validated by Middlesex University. It is a work-based learning and requires that scholars do internships with government, business and NGO sectors. My past two days at the Commonwealth have been exciting and I am beginning to understand how the

Commonwealth Secretariat works and the challenges they are facing. People are very friendly and always greet you with a smile. I really feel at home and I am looking forward to learning more about this dynamic institution. There are two most exciting initiatives that the Social Transformation Programme Division is working on:

- Revolving Fund for the Procurement of Anti-Retroviral Vaccines (ARVs); and
- The International Response to Human Resource Challenge.

One of my internship activities will be to write a brief on the first initiative – the Revolving Fund. I also am looking forward to learning more about how the Commonwealth contributes to sustainable development, and to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Strategies for Girls' Education: Non-Formal Education Initiatives

The ADEA (Association for the Development of Education in Africa) Working Group on Non-Formal Education (WGNFE) was set up in response to the Education For All (EFA) challenge. ADEA is co-ordinated by the Commonwealth Secretariat who is an active partner in educational development in Sub-Saharan Africa, with both normative and practical projects such as promoting girls' education through the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative

(UNGEI) partnership for generating awareness about the Right to Education for All.

For further information:
a.osman@commonwealth.int www.adeanet.org/wgnfe

Dr Amina Osman, Co-ordinator, ADEA Working Group on Non Formal Education, Education Section, Commonwealth Secretariat

Considering that 60 per cent of out-of-school children worldwide are girls, more efforts need to be made to address the special concerns and issues of girls. Girls out of school are very often involved in uncounted and unvalued tasks such as household chores, domestic work, and agricultural work. They contribute to the household economy and parents, given the choice, often prefer to invest in their son's education rather than their daughter's.

It is therefore not surprising that in developing countries, the drop-out rate is higher for girls than for boys. Various factors are behind girls' dropping out: economic factors such as direct or indirect education costs where poor families cannot afford to send the children to school. The HIV and AIDS epidemic also affects more girls than boys and families frequently remove girls from school to take care of sick relatives or look after their siblings.

Universal Free Primary Education Programmes

(UFPE) in countries such as Malawi and South Africa provides incentives to send girls to school. Other Commonwealth countries such as Bangladesh, India and Pakistan have introduced special scholarships and monthly stipend programmes for girls in order to compensate for the loss in household income and reduce the girls' drop-out rate (World Bank, 2001).

However, child labour, particularly those forms that endanger children's health and general well-being, is common in many countries. In rural Andhra Pradesh, India, where families are highly dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, young girls aged 8-15 years are employed in the cotton seed industry. The girls, many of whom work as bonded labourers in exchange for loans given to their families by cotton farmers, are often exposed to the hazardous chemicals used on cotton, work long hours and receive meagre pay for their work (World



Education, 2004). The NGO World Education is working with a local NGO partner, the Center for Applied Research and Extension (Care) to run a non-formal education programme for girls rescued from the cotton seed industry.

Another viable option is second chance programmes that provide girls with different options and alternatives to pursue their education. Non-formal basic education (NFBE) provides a second chance to girls who are missing out on primary and secondary schooling. It is an important strategy for encouraging school enrolment and retention in poor rural and urban communities. Parents who receive some form of adult basic education become staunch supporters of education for their children as they understand better the multiple benefits of education for the family and a better life.

Alternative Forms of Learning and Schooling?

Non-formal basic education and alternative forms of schooling and learning provide children and young people with culturally and socially relevant programmes adapted to their socio-economic and educational needs.

A report on non-formal education in northern Kenya (Samburu District) points out that out-of-school programmes attracted large number of girls but that mothers escorted them when they attended the out-of-school programme in order to provide security on the way, and to make sure that what is taught at school did not in any way interfere with culture (Moest, 1999). Parental involvement in education can improve quality and access to education for their children. In some cases, out-of-school centres are combined with a Functional Adult Literacy (FAL) programme, providing some form of learning to both children and parents.

Another crucial issue which influences the choice of school-age children staying in or leaving school is that of the medium of instruction. The language of instruction, in particular during the first years of



schooling, impacts on the learning achievement. Indeed, studies have shown that when taught in their mother tongue, children are more likely to reach high levels of achievement as well as complete their schooling cycle.

Non-formal education is also seen as a transitional stage whereas older children need to be channelled in order to catch up before they re-integrate or join the children into the formal system.

Good Practice and Recommendations

Below are some examples of recent and on-going actions and practical activities in support for girls' education carried out in Sub-Saharan Africa by the ADEA Working Group on Non Formal Education and its partners:

- A stock-taking exercise on the impact and coherence of bilingual education on learning achievements and the use of local languages and foreign languages, with the main objective of facilitating policy dialogue on the issues of the use of African languages and bilingual education.
- A regional workshop on issues and current challenges regarding the production and distribution of textbooks and others reading materials in African languages;
- Policy development and implementation informed through a research project on Family Literacy where there is a cross-generational approach to learning;
- Incorporation of a gender equality perspective in policies and programmes of literacy and non-formal education. The project will take advantage of the Gender and Literacy theme for the first two years of the United Nations Literacy Decade (UNLIT), as well as the United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI);
- Review and Development of relevant Complementary Basic Education programmes;
- Regional conference on Nomadic Education to examine and draw up recommendations for fostering girls' education in pastoral societies where girls make up most of the out-of-school children; and
- Development of a multi-purpose community telecentre or Information Communication and Technology (ICT) projects which support basic and non-formal education in rural communities in Africa. This was a recommendation of the Sub-regional Ministerial Conference on Integration of ICT in Education organised by ADEA in 2004.

United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI)

Educating girls is key to a nation's development. To build a more healthy, peaceful and equitable world, we have to fill the world's classrooms with girls as well as boys. Yet, the majority of 115 million children out of school are girls. UNGEI's vision is a world where all girls and boys will have equal access to free, quality education.



What is UNGEI?

The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) was launched in April 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar by United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan. Its goal is to narrow the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to ensure that by 2015, all children complete primary schooling, with girls and boys having equal access to all levels of education.

UNGEI, the EFA flagship for girls' education, is a partnership that embraces the United Nations system, Governments, donor countries, non-governmental organisations, civil society, the private sector, and communities and families. UNGEI provides stakeholders with a platform for action and galvanises their efforts to get girls into school.

Mali Hosts ADEA's Conference on Contractual Teachers

by Virgilio Juvane, Adviser, Education Section

Teacher training and provision has become one of the key issues for quality universal primary education in Africa. It is one of the strategies for the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The emergence of different professional and non-professional categories of teachers today, is one of the challenges facing most African countries.

Contractual teachers is a new category of teachers emerging in most African countries to respond to increased demand of basic education in the context of Universal Primary Education. In general these teachers have no pedagogic qualifications and are contracted on an annual basis.

The Bamako Conference on contractual teachers for primary education in francophone African countries took place from 21 to 23 November 2004. The Conference aimed to: (i) undertake a stock-taking review exercise of the experience of contractual teachers in francophone African countries; (ii) identified the major challenges raised by these experiences; (iii) encouraged dialogue between the countries and the main stakeholders, namely between governments and trade unions, towards the search of sustainable solutions; and (iv) promoted co-operation between the various countries in order to exchange and share knowledge on good practices.

The conference was jointly organised by the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the World Bank, Education International and the Mali Ministry of Education, and brought together representatives of the Ministries of

Education, Finance, Employment and the Civil Society, as well as leaders of teacher unions and PTAs in 12 countries. Also attending were representatives of various development agencies and groups from civil society. The Commonwealth Secretariat was represented by the Co-ordinator of the ADEA Working Group on the Teaching Profession.

The conference highlighted certain recommendations concerning the recruitment, training, working conditions and future prospects of contractual teachers, to take into account the following:

- Ensuring that initial training of at least six months would be followed by a professional development plan that includes continuing education and various teaching supports targeting in-service needs;
- Offer an indeterminate contract that includes career planning, promotion opportunities, social protection, and the rights and obligations in accordance with the law;
- An effort to provide a fair salary that would allow a decent livelihood, while still being compatible with the resources

of the country and the obligation towards equity and thus education for all;

- To manage the simultaneous existence of different categories of teachers by standardising recruitment, initial training and continuing education so as to gradually reduce the disparities while also anticipating special conditions arising from constrained growth;
- To structure and regulate the transition in keeping with improvements in internal and external resources so that there is gradual convergence of salaries in the different categories – while also taking account of the enormous needs in recruitment and financial sustainability in a context of implementing a complete universal primary education for all children.

The emergence of new categories of teachers is a common feature in most African countries, for example, Uganda and Zambia. It should be seen as a consequence of the current move towards universal primary education. Regional Co-ordinators of the Working Group on the Teaching Profession pointed out similar trends.

Gender on the Human Rights Agenda

“Gender and Human Rights” generated a lively discussion at the meeting of Senior Officials of Commonwealth Law Ministries (SOLM), held in London from 18th to 20th October, 2004. The meeting was attended by thirty-eight countries and is important in taking forward shared Commonwealth concerns in the legal field. The inclusion of “Gender and Human Rights” on the SOLM agenda was momentous since this was the first time that a specific gender-related issue was discussed as a full agenda item. Delegations from Cameroon, Canada, Gambia, Ghana, Jamaica, New Zealand and Zambia welcomed the inclusion of gender issues onto the SOLM Agenda.

It was generally acknowledged that even though many countries had made progress in the area of gender and human rights, there was still a lot more to be done.

A special paper on: “Gender and Human Rights” was prepared by the Gender Section for the meeting. This was in recognition of the fact that achievement and gains made in international and regional treaties and conventions, as well as in national legislation and constitutional guarantees, can often be undermined by inadequate gender perspectives in the administration, application and interpretation of the law.

It is hoped that the issues raised and the whole Gender and Human Rights agenda will not just be moved forward at the next meeting of the Law Ministers of the Commonwealth, to be held in Ghana, in 2005, but would also become a normal agenda for both SOLM and the Law Ministers’ Meeting.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

One of the highlights of this committee meeting was the 25th Anniversary celebration of the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly, of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). This convention is one of the most significant achievements in the fight for women’s human rights.

From the 12th to 15th October, 2004, two staff members, Nancy Spence and Mbololwa Mbikusita-Lewanika, attended the Third Committee of the 59th session of the United Nations General Assembly, on the Advancement of Women, and the Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled ‘Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century. An address on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretariat was delivered during the meeting, and a paper was circulated to all the delegates.

CHAINS OF FORTUNE: Linking Women Producers and Workers with Global Markets



A Commonwealth Secretariat publication demonstrating how women on low incomes can benefit from globalisation, if opportunities are made available to them, was launched at Marlborough House, London, UK, on 7 December 2004.

‘Chains of Fortune: Linking Women Producers and Workers with Global Markets’ contains six case studies of women employed in Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Mozambique, Samoa and South Africa.

Speaking at the launch, Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General Winston Cox stated: “Globalisation has both positive and negative impacts on different sectors of the population in different regions of the world. But we found that, overwhelmingly, the debate focused more on the negative impacts of globalisation on marginal groups – such as women living in poverty – and their inability to respond to and benefit from changes in trade policies because of the numerous constraints they face.”

Mr Cox said Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers felt that it was important to find positive evidence from around the Commonwealth. This publication will hopefully enable marginal groups and their development partners to attain the benefits of globalisation if enabled to do so.

The book, which is edited by Marilyn Carr focuses on the positive experiences of women producers and workers in the informal economy who, in many parts of the world, comprise the majority of the economically active population and who could contribute much more to output and export growth.

At the launch, presentations were made on the case studies featured in the book : *From Tree-Minders to Global Players: Cocoa Farmers in Ghana* by Jacqui MacDonald; *Cashing in on Cashew Nuts: Women Producers and Factory Workers in Mozambique*, by Nazneen Kanji; *On the Threshold of Informalisation: Women call Centre Workers in India*, by Swasti Mitter.

Meeting the challenges of gender, poverty and globalisation – A Commonwealth response

by Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Adviser, Gender Section

The Policy Context

Internationally, the eradication of poverty has been at the heart of the development agenda. This has not only been recognised in the first overarching Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which pledge countries to the reduction of poverty by half by 2015, but was also equally recognised in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Beijing + 5 outcomes document which identified women's increasing and persistent burdens of poverty and unequal access to resources and various economic processes as two of its critical areas of concern, viz. Women and Poverty and Women and the Economy.

For the Commonwealth, too, this is a central concern. One third of the estimated 1.2 billion people who live on less than \$1 a day are Commonwealth citizens, as are 64 per cent of the 2.8 billion people who live on under US\$2 a day. Over two-thirds of these are women.

Over the last decade the Commonwealth's approach has been captured in the successive decadal Commonwealth Plans of Action on Gender and Development. The focus in the PoA of 1995 and its Update of 2000 was principally on the integration of gender concerns in macro-economic policies, and the main emphasis was to examine the differential impact of macroeconomic policy, economic reform, globalisation, and trade liberalisation on men and women. The national budgetary process was identified as an appropriate entry point and it was felt that member countries could benefit from the collation and dissemination of best practices among member countries.

This approach has been broadened in the recently approved Commonwealth Plan for Gender Equality (2005-2015). It seeks to encompass the macro, meso and micro-levels of the economy as

a continuum. What are the implications of this? At the macroeconomic level, this means building on and institutionalising initiatives to mainstream gender equality perspectives across critical areas related to the formulation of fiscal and trade policies. At the meso-level, the main thrust of Commonwealth activity will relate to the creation of an enabling environment for women workers, both self-employed and wage-employed, in the agricultural and non-agricultural areas, and influencing poverty eradication strategies and programmes. At the micro-level, efforts will be focused on increasing access to resources of all kinds for women: natural, material, financial and technological. The plans detail actions to be taken by various Commonwealth governments. However, in this article the focus will be to review the interventions and contributions made by the Gender Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Focus areas

- Gender Responsive Budgeting
- Gender and Trade
- Employment and support to women entrepreneurs

Gender-Responsive Budgeting

The Commonwealth Secretariat was the first international development agency to get involved in Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) work. It launched its Gender Budget Initiative in 1995 and has played a pioneering and instrumental role in the production of tools, methodologies and capacity building materials for the implementation of gender budgets. It has promoted and disseminated these concepts and tools internationally through a wide variety

of publications, including case studies and a practitioner's guide. Some of the more recent publications are:

- *Gender Budgets Make Cents* (2001);
- *Gender Budgets Make More Cents* (2002); and
- *Engendering Budgets: A Practitioner's Guide* (2003).

Until recently, the focus of most of the work was on the expenditure side of the budget, but the Commonwealth Secretariat is now pioneering new work on the revenue side. In 2003, it brought out a publication on *Gender Impacts of Government Revenue Collection: The Case of Taxation* which has developed a conceptual framework, and it is proposed to develop this further through the development of tools and some in-country work.

In addition, the Commonwealth Secretariat has provided technical assistance to several countries, viz. Barbados, Belize, South Africa and Sri Lanka, for pilot work on GRBs. In fact to a large extent it is the Commonwealth experience – primarily in Australia and South Africa – which have been adapted as the framework for capacity building in gender-responsive budgeting in many countries of the world.

In 2004, the Gender Section commissioned regional reports on the progress of Gender Responsive Budgeting within the Commonwealth. The reports were compiled and synthesised as a *draft* report on *Gender-Responsive Budgeting in the Commonwealth: Progress and Challenges* at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers' Meeting in September 2004. This was a preliminary report to form a basis for assessing progress. Next year, at the Finance Ministers' Meeting in 2005, a final report will be presented based on comments/updates received from member countries.

Gender and Trade

Commonwealth Women Affairs' Ministers saw globalisation as presenting new opportunities and challenges to policy-makers who should take steps to ensure that women and men benefit equally from liberalisation and are protected equally from negative effects.

However, in overall terms, there has been much less focus on the relationship of gender and trade. In order to create awareness about the various issues involved, the Commonwealth Secretariat supported the publication of *Gender and the Multilateral Trading System*, by Mariama Williams, as part of its series on Gender Mainstreaming. This book focuses on the need to mainstream a gender perspective while examining the impact of trade assessment, the trade policy review process, and the

implications of tariff structures amongst other issues. It also emphasises the important aspect relating to the contribution and participation of women and organisations that represent their interests in setting the agenda, formulating priorities and negotiations.

Employment and Support to Women Entrepreneurs

The Commonwealth Secretariat has also focused on the need to highlight on employment directly as an essential strategy for poverty reduction. As clearly stated in the book published in 2004, *Mainstreaming Informal Employment and Gender in Poverty Reduction* by Martha Alter Chen, Joann Vanek and Marilyn Carr, the vast majority of the poor work and most of them, especially

women, are engaged in the informal economy. The book examines the challenges presented by trade and economic liberalisation, technological change and industrial restructuring, resulting in global value chains. It also highlights some examples of good practice from around the world to deal with informal enterprises and protect informal workers.

Future Work

The Commonwealth Secretariat will continue to create awareness and build knowledge around issues related to poverty reduction. However, the thrust will be increasingly on capacity building at regional and national levels to ensure that the development of responses and activities to deal with some of the major current challenges of poverty and globalisation are adequately engendered.

Commonwealth Business Women's Network (CBWN)

'Bringing together businesswomen's network from across the Commonwealth'

Almost two years after its formal launch the Commonwealth Business Women's Network (CBWN) continues to grow in all the regions of the Commonwealth and to consolidate its relationships with partner organisations including intermediary organisations supporting women entrepreneur organisations and multilateral agencies.

The CBWN, a 'Commonwealth project' of the Gender Section at the Commonwealth Secretariat, was formally handed over to the Commonwealth Business Council at the Commonwealth Business Forum in London in 2002, at a gathering of prominent women business leaders including the dynamic Chair of the CBWN, Dato' Dr Jannie Tay of Singapore.

The CBWN draws its strength from the CBC's global network comprising political and business leaders in the 53 member states of the Commonwealth and beyond. The CBWN works with businesses and governments to support gender-mainstreaming initiatives. The CBWN mandate also extends to creating empowerment of women businesses through awareness on how global and local trade and agreements impact them; creating knowledge networks for small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs); promoting Gender Best Practice amongst stakeholders; and providing global outreach and networking opportunities for women.

The CBWN mandate extends to creating linkages between the private sector and governments and working with partners to set up 'knowledge networks' providing invaluable support and advice on funding, sustainability and growth for women entrepreneurs.



Left, Hon Samite Bulte, MP, Head of the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Women Entrepreneurship (Canada), and Dr Rawwida Baksh, Head of the Gender Section, Social Transformation Programmes Division, Commonwealth Secretariat

Strategic Outreach and Platforms

The CBWN had the opportunity to contribute on important policy platforms such as the Commonwealth Business Forum, which fed into the Commonwealth Heads of Governments Meeting (CHOGM) in Nigeria in December 2003, and the 7th Meeting of Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers (7WAMM) in Fiji Is. in June 2004.



The CBWN Roundtable June 2004: 'The Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Poverty Alleviation: Multi-stakeholder Partnerships' was supported by Fiji Islands' Ministry of Women Affairs, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation. The Hon Minister, Adi Asenaca Caucau, made the inaugural address at the meeting. UNDP, the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Commonwealth Secretariat hosted the Roundtable. The meeting was part of the CBWN effort to foster and develop productive linkages between the civil society, governmental and private sectors in the different regions.

For the first time, the CBWN Conference in Abuja in December 2003 fed into the parallel session on 'Role of Women Entrepreneurs in Sustainable Development' within the Commonwealth Business Forum. This was a major milestone in the work of the CBWN in mainstreaming the CBWN agenda within the work of the CBC. Private sector companies were unanimous in their support of the work of CBWN and pledged their support.

Upcoming Initiatives

January 2005 saw the start of LINK-IT, a collaborative project between the CBWN, Commonwealth Services Abroad Programme (CSAP) in the

Governance Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Gender Section at the Commonwealth Secretariat. In October 2004, CBWN and CSAP successfully undertook a joint-mission to four countries – Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania – together with the ACCESS Team of the Trade Facilitation Office (Canada), jointly supported by CIDA and International Trade Centre (ITC).

The CBWN is also collating research amongst its members in Africa for inputs into Tony Blair's Commission for Africa. The research will be collated and analysed and forwarded to the Commission in January 2005.

In March 2005 CBWN is partnering with Women in Business International to run an international conference for businesswomen in Cape Town. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) of South Africa and several private sector companies and NGOs are supporting the programme. 2005 also heralds an exciting new collaboration for the CBWN with the Global Women Inventors and Innovators Network (GWIIN) on an International Financing Corporation (IFC) project in Africa: 'Business Women Marketing a Wealth of Ideas'. GWIIN is now working in partnership with the



Amanda Natalie Ellis, International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank



CBWN Conference in Abuja, Nigeria, December 2004, Kusum Kalyan, Senior Business Development Adviser, Shell; Sudha Singh, Co-ordinator, Commonwealth Business Women's Network (CBWN), and Nancy Spence, Director, Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD), Commonwealth Secretariat

International Financing Corporation (IFC) – Gender Entrepreneurship Markets (GEM) – Women Mean Business in Africa. In May 2004 a highly successful First International GWIIN Awards Conference was held in Singapore.

The CBWN will launch an ambitious project across the Commonwealth on collating best practice amongst the private sector and the governments on Gender Diversity. The work with the private sector will concentrate on opportunities in procurement from the private sector. The organisation will collate data and conduct necessary research in the area.

Trade

For the first time, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Public Symposium in May 2004, had a session on Gender and Trade. The CBWN organised the session in partnership with Geneva Women in International Trade on 27 May 2004. The CBWN will continue to provide a platform for advocacy, discussion and capacity building about the WTO and Multilateral Trading Agreements with the support of its partners across the Commonwealth as well as the support and backing of the trade expertise at the Commonwealth Business Council.

For further information: Contact Ms Sudha Singh, Co-ordinator, Commonwealth Business Women's Network (CBWN), Commonwealth Business Council, 18 Pall Mall, London SW1Y 5LU; Tel: + 44 (0) 7024 8238/8200; Fax: + 44 (0) 20 7930 3944/8201; Email: sudha.singh@cbcglobelink.org; Website: www.cbcglobelink.org

South Asian Health Officials Discuss Loss of Skilled Workers

Health officials from several South Asian countries met in Singapore and discussed how they can minimise the loss of skilled human resources in health, particularly nurses, to international migration.

The Commonwealth Secretariat, in collaboration with the Singapore Ministry of Health, organised a workshop to 'Develop Strategies and Systems to Manage Health Human

Resources' which took place from 25 to 28 October 2004. It brought together 30 participants from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka. Professional organisations from two destination countries popular with migrant health workers – the United Kingdom and Australia – participated and this added to the dynamics of the workshop.

The workshop's aims were to develop strategies for attracting and retaining workers within the health sector.

Delegates exchanged information on how each of their countries was coping with the issue, shared best practice in human resource management, and developed country plans of action to address the loss of health workers. The agenda included discussion on understanding the causes and consequences of migration; policies for recruitment and retention of health workers; and different approaches to 'managing' migration.

Participants also focused on the Code of Practice for International Recruitment, adopted by Commonwealth Health Ministers at Geneva, Switzerland, in May 2003. The Code provides guidelines for the international recruitment of health workers in a manner that takes into account the potential impact of such recruitment on services in the source country.

Since January 2003, other similar workshops have been held for countries in the Western, Eastern, Central and Southern African regions, and for small island states.



Launch of the International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS

The Commonwealth Secretariat launched the virtual International Institute on Gender and HIV/AIDS on 7 June 2004 in Johannesburg, South Africa, to strengthen practice, policy and research to enhance existing efforts on tackling issues of gender and HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa and beyond. The project was a collaboration with the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health, Dalhousie University, Canada; the Social Aspects of HIV/AIDS Research Alliance (SAHARA); and the AIDS and Rights Alliance of Southern Africa (ARASA).

This Institute is without walls, without borders. It will move from region to region, acting as a catalyst in the sharing of knowledge and experience for effective strategies that address the multi-faceted and complex dimensions of gender and HIV/AIDS. The Institute will play a vital role in the ongoing response to HIV/AIDS across the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth Secretariat, together with its partners, intends to introduce this virtual Institute model in other regions of the African continent, the Caribbean, Asia and different parts of the world in the future to address the critical issue of gender and HIV/AIDS.



Centre for youth of Hope (CEYOHO) calls for positive living with HIV/AIDS, Botswana, November 2004



HIV/AIDS and CAMFED – Window of Opportunity

Today in Africa, it is vital for us to answer the call for a solution to the rising tide of HIV infections, especially among the most vulnerable: girls and young women. With 58% of AIDS infections in Africa being among women and with the rate of infection of young women and girls rising faster than that of any other group, we must address the root causes of women's vulnerability in a way that will not alienate women or their communities, but rather tap into their existing strengths.

Women suffer disproportionately from HIV/AIDS. AIDS thrives among the poor and the powerless. It is the women who, too often, are the poorest. As the primary carers, women's own sickness and death is traumatic, but the consequences for their families and communities are even more so. Women in sub-Saharan Africa speak of their terror of leaving their children orphaned. They also say that they are frustrated at being told to change their sexual behaviour – change requires choice and they have none. As Mary Robinson, former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has said, 'Economically vulnerable women cannot successfully challenge male sexual coercion, violence or infidelity. They may have little choice but to transact sex with multiple partners for basic necessities, such as food, school fees or help with the harvest.' (Speech in Gaborone, Botswana, September 2003)

Initiatives that address the impact of AIDS in Africa must begin by recognising the causes of women's disempowerment and their roles at the core of the communities' social fabric. The education of girls is critical to winning the battle against HIV/AIDS. It is their right and it can open a 'window of opportunity' (Education and HIV/AIDS, World Bank, 2002). Education gives girls the tools and the power to resist sexual pressure, to delay sex in relationships and protects them from early marriage – all factors in the spread of AIDS. As Carol Bellamy urged us to remember, '...until a medical remedy is found, the most effective tools we have for curbing infection are our schools.' (The Observer, 2002).

CAMFED's programmes do precisely this and are the proof of the success of this approach. Our holistic programme for girls and women in Africa ensures that girls complete school and that as young educated women they become agents of change

in their communities. We work with men and women, traditional chiefs, national and local government officials, national and international organisations, and young women from poor rural areas.

The ultimate proof of success is that those young women who have completed their education are now at the vanguard of change. CAMFED trains these young women in leadership, health and business and offers them the necessary tools and financial backing (through business start-up funds) to succeed. These young women, working in their own communities, are breaking the silence around stigmatised issues of AIDS-related deaths and illnesses, sex, rape, incest and women's economic and social empowerment.

Simply put, the work of these young women is effective because they have the respect and trust of men and women who know them and who are desperate for real solutions to AIDS.

CAMFED reaches tens of thousands of people in rural communities across Zimbabwe, Zambia and Ghana, and attitudes are changing. For example, in 2003, after we joined forces with senior chiefs to tackle the issue of child sexual abuse, they succeeded in bringing 12 cases of abuse to court in one district alone; we have openly discussed harmful cultural practices such as early marriage, virginity testing and female genital mutilation with traditional leaders and those leaders now speak from their own platforms about the need for change; and we have successfully lobbied Ministries of Education to revise policy with regard to reporting and punishing teachers who abuse their students.

There is one clear lesson from CAMFED's work: education and empowerment of women are lethal to the progress of AIDS. If we are going to win against AIDS – and we must – we have to commit ourselves to the women of Africa today.

For more details, contact CAMFED International, 22 Millers Yard, Mill Lane, Cambridge CB2 1RQ
Tel: +44 (0)1223-362648 www.camfed.org

West Africa Region

Evolving Strategies for Women's Empowerment

by Maryse Roberts, Adviser, Gender Section

Governance and gender equality are cross-cutting issues whilst enterprise development can provide a pathway out of poverty for many countries, especially for women. Total development and growth only come about when women are economically empowered, educated and able to look after themselves and their families. The concepts of democracy, good governance and gender mainstreaming mean nothing to poor women. Gender equity policies and investing in women bring in more development dividends.

(Mrs. Gladys Asmah, Ghana's Minister for Women and Children's Affairs, Akosombo, August 2004)

The Regional Workshop: Strategies for West Africa on Poverty Reduction, Gender and Enterprise Development, took place in Akosombo, Ghana from 3 to 6 August, 2004. It was hosted by the Government of Ghana (MOWAC) as a collaborative activity of the Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD) and the Gender Section of the Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD) of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Participating partners included the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA), SRO/West Africa Office and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Mano River Union, based in Sierra Leone. Over 75 delegates from Ghana, Guinea, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra

Leone and The Gambia attended the workshop. Cameroon was also represented.

The main objective of the meeting was to assess poverty reduction strategies and programmes in the region and to highlight and share successful experiments as well as best practice; promote and strengthen institutional linkages and capacity-building for the sustainability of programmes for good governance and gender mainstreaming. A special focus was on 'engendering' enterprise development in West Africa. Almost all of the West African economies have adopted Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), with assistance from the World Bank and the IMF, as the cornerstone of their development and growth model.

The keynote paper, Challenges and Opportunities for West African Economies, by the Hon Mr. Yaw Osafo-Mafo, MP, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, was delivered by Mr. Paul Agyiri, Chief Director of the same Ministry. The Hon. Yaw Barimah, Ghana's Minister for Manpower Development and Employment, chaired the closing meeting where the regional framework of action, with timelines and responsibilities for the countries and regional/international organisations, was developed. This action framework is scheduled to be reviewed in 2007 by ECOWAS member states.

Deepening Development and Partnerships

The Workshop provided a platform for countries to exchange experiences and to strengthen formal and informal networks among appropriate institutions in West Africa involved in income-generating activities and in promoting strategies for poverty reduction among women. It also helped to sensitise policy-makers, development practitioners and programme co-ordinators on alternative approaches to removing constraints to successful implementation of gender-mainstreamed economic initiatives.

The richness of the workshop was positively enhanced by the exchanges between an array of stakeholders (Economic Planning, Finance, Trade and Industry, Women's Affairs, Poverty and Planning Commissions, Training and Management Institutes, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), including private sector partners, mainstream and women's enterprise development organisations, chambers of commerce, and trade unions).



Mrs. Gladys Asmah, Ghana's Minister for Women and Children's Affairs and Ms Noreen John, Governance and Institutional Development Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat at the Opening of the Akosombo workshop, August 2004

Words are not enough

The Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa was adopted by the African Union on 11 July 2003. To enter into force, 15 African countries have to ratify the protocol. Ideally, every African country should ratify the protocol, as each one that does so will be legally bound by its provisions. Failure to ratify it will mean that women in Africa will once again be denied access to a comprehensive legal framework for exercising their rights. The Protocol is designed to protect the economic, social and political rights of women in Africa, and goes on to spell out women's rights in situations of armed conflict, violence and the right to peace and safety.

About the Protocol:

- Every woman will be guaranteed the right to peace. States must ensure the full participation of women in conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation
- The protocol calls for education to end harmful practices and stereotypes that adversely affect women
- States will adopt measures to promote equality of access to employment; promote the right to equal pay for jobs of equal value; ensure transparency in recruitment, promotion and dismissal of women; and punish sexual harassment in the workplace
- The reproductive rights of women must be protected through access to abortion in certain circumstances
- States will be required to guarantee equal opportunity and access for women to education and training
- Governments are obliged to promote the participation of women in governance

Wangari Maathai: 2004 Nobel Prize Winner

A legend among environmentalists and women's rights activist was selected last month as the recipient of the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize – one of the world's highest tributes. Now, Kenya's Deputy Minister for Environmental Affairs, Wangari Maathai, is a former college professor who saw the planting of trees in Africa as a way to address large-scale deforestation. She led a campaign that resulted in the planting of 30 million trees. For her, the project also provided a livelihood for rural women and limited the time that girls and women spent every day searching for wood for cooking fuel.

Ms. Maathai's green activism led her to battle for human rights, women's issues and democracy as a whole. However, her courage and willingness to take risks on behalf of the causes she cares about has enabled her to be successful and effective in all her activism.

(From: GLOBEWOMEN NEWSLETTER of 1 December 2004. Website: GlobeSummit@aol.com)

World Bank's Programme for Women Entrepreneurs

In the spring of 2004, the World Bank launched its Grassroots Business Initiative through its financial arm, the International Finance Corporation, with a pool of US\$ 3.5 million and six targeted organisations. While the IFC normally provides equity financing for far larger projects, the Grassroots Business Initiative extends grants of \$200,000 or less that focus on smaller scale efforts to improve the lives of the very poor, the majority of whom are women.

The well-known Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a trade union based in India, is one of the initial

recipients and it represents 600,000 illiterate craftswomen, who have developed viable livelihoods through micro-loans. Another recipient is the Irupana Andean Organic Food, which is an agricultural collective in Bolivia that markets the organic produce of 1,700 subsistence farmers. This type of funding represents a shift in IFC's philosophy of development, which now sees more clearly the value of fostering the growth of small and medium-sized businesses as a way of permanently growing developing economies. It also sees that improving the employment outlook for women – and removing gender-based obstacles facing women entrepreneurs in many poor countries – is essential to reducing poverty. For more information, please log on to <http://www.ifc.org/>

(extract: GLOBEWOMEN Newsletter of January 2005)

SADC Training of Directorates

The Extraordinary Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Summit in March 2001 led to the restructuring of SADC institutions. SADC institutions are being transformed in response to the new mandate of regional integration, moving from a decentralised framework to having all programmes and Sector Co-ordinating Units centralised at the SADC Secretariat in Gaborone, Botswana.

As indicated by Dr Prega Ramsamy, SADC's Executive Secretary, it is important that inter-governmental and regional organisations promotes the integration of gender issues in development policies and programmes, enhance gender-sensitive results through policy harmonisation and 'engendering' all country/regional programmes for the SADC Secretariat, member countries and region.

SADC member governments recognise that gender concerns should be addressed fully in the implementation of the new SADC Regional Indicative Strategic

Development Plan (RISDP) – framework for SADC policies and programmes. The RISDP re-affirms the commitment to good political, economic and corporate governance – prerequisites for sustainable socio-economic development for poverty eradication and deeper levels of integration for the sub-region. SADC has also developed a SADC HIV and AIDS Business Plan (2005-2009).

In support of the SADC Secretariat, the Commonwealth Secretariat provided some funding and resource materials for 'hands-on' informal training held for SADC programme staff in the key infrastructure and social sectors. They were able to better understand the concept of gender mainstreaming and its relevance to their work, and appreciate tools such as the Gender Management System (GMS), gender budgeting and gender analysis, as well as share project guidelines on integrating gender into the full cycle of project/programme management.



Members of the Directorates of Social Human Development and Special Programme (SHDSP) & Infrastructure and Services (I & S), Department for Strategic Planning, Gender and Development and Policy Harmonisation, SADC, Botswana, November 2004

Women's education produces significant social gains – lower fertility, better household nutrition and reduced infant, child, and maternal mortality. Studies also show that income controlled by women is more likely to be spent on nutrition, health and education of children than when it is managed by men.

Women's time burdens are an important constraint on growth and development. Women are an over-utilised, rather than an under-utilised resource. For example, women spend a lot of time in collecting water and firewood for fuel while they have poor access to transport facilities for carrying water, fuel, food and other produce. Better access to water and fuel as well as transport can considerably free up women's time for income-generating activities and also to look after the needs of family members or their own welfare and leisure. The economy, as a whole, therefore also benefits. For instance, a study in Tanzania shows that reducing such constraints in a community of smallholder coffee and banana growers increases household cash incomes by 10 per cent, labour productivity by 15 per cent and capital productivity by 44 per cent (Tibaijuka, A, 1994).



Welcome to our new Director – Ann Keeling

We warmly welcome Ms Ann Keeling to the Commonwealth Secretariat!

Ms Keeling is the new Director for the Social Transformation Programmes Division (STPD).

Ann was formerly Head of Policy and Senior Social Development Adviser for the Europe, Middle East and Americas Division at the UK Department for International Development (DFID). She has 25 year's experience as a social development professional, including 13 years spent in Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and the Caribbean. Ann has worked for the governments of Papua New Guinea, Pakistan and Britain (DFID and the British Council), and the United Nations. She has also undertaken short-term consultancies in Africa and the Middle East. Ann started

her international development career as an education planner in Papua New Guinea and has worked on health and HIV/AIDS programmes in several countries. She has also advised on gender equality, including working as Senior Gender and Poverty Adviser for the United Nations in Pakistan. Her husband Douglas Mackrell is from New Zealand, and the couple have two teenage sons, Alex and Andrew.



Welcome to Meena!

Dr Meena Shivdas joined the Commonwealth Secretariat in January 2004 as Adviser in the Gender Section of the Social Transformation Programmes Division. She is responsible for the Gender, Human Rights and HIV/AIDS programme. Meena has worked on gender issues, including research and training in Asia.

New Gender Mainstreaming Series on Development Issues

Gender and Debt

The linkages between debt and gender are not widely understood – debt practitioners are often unaware of impact of debt on gender, while gender practitioners are not generally aware of the intricacies of the debt issue. This book aims to bridge that gap. It is a valuable resource for debt and gender practitioners alike, in both developing and developed countries. Gender and Debt takes a critical look at how the main international development agencies and bilateral donors promote and integrate gender issues in development assistance. It suggests effective, practical ways for developing country governments to integrate gender equality into their debt and development resource management. The book also makes recommendations for Commonwealth Secretariat action.

2005, about 156 pages, GBP £11.99, 0-85092-776-5

The GMS Toolkit: An Integrated Resource for Implementing the Gender Management System Series (2004); ISBN 0-85092-784-4

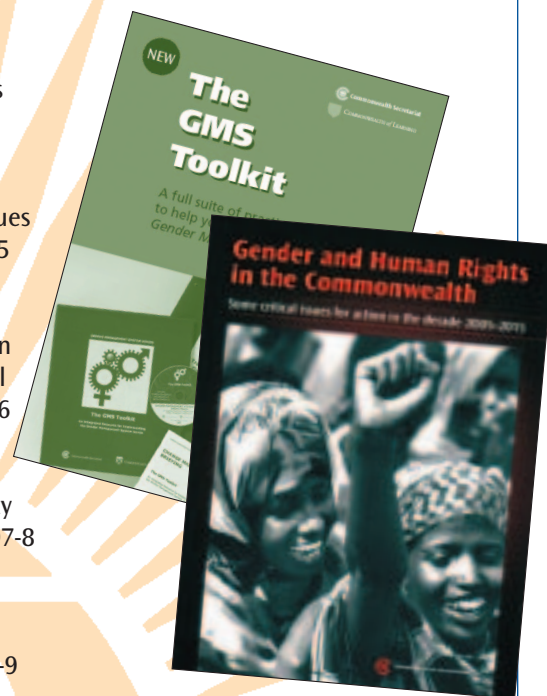
Gender and Human Rights in the Commonwealth: Some Critical Issues for Action in the Decade 2005-2015 (2004); ISBN 0 85092-808-7

Chains of Fortune: Linking Women Producers and Workers with Global Markets (2004); ISBN 0-85092-798-6

Mainstreaming Informal Employment and Gender in Poverty Reduction (2004); ISBN 0-85092-797-8

Gender Impacts of Government Revenue Collection: The Case of Taxation (2004); ISBN 0-85092-788-9

Gender-Sensitive Approaches to HIV/AIDS: A Training Kit for Peer Educators (2004)



Moving from Policy to Practice – Men can make a Difference: Reducing the Spread and Impact of HIV/AIDS through Constructive Involvement of Men (2004)

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