

Foreword

The involvement of Commonwealth countries in gender responsive budgets is both long and substantial: it began with Australia in 1984 and spread to Canada and South Africa in 1993 and 1994, respectively. The Commonwealth Secretariat's programme began in 1995 and since then nearly half of the forty known country initiatives on gender responsive budgets are in the Commonwealth. The issue has been discussed in depth at the Fifth and Sixth Meetings of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs and it was on the agenda of the September 2001 Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting which, like a number of other international meetings, was cancelled following the tragic events in the USA.

The Commonwealth's involvement in gender responsive budgets takes its genesis from a number of discreet but interconnected factors:

- ◆ The Commonwealth's commitment to the fundamental principle of equality and non-discrimination, first affirmed in the 1971 Singapore Declaration and reaffirmed in the 1991 Harare Declaration, which creates the need to develop public expenditure tracking systems to measure how consistent national decisions on resource allocation are with these and the other fundamental principles of the Commonwealth.
- ◆ Reaffirmation of the commitment to gender equality by Heads of Government when they endorsed the *Ottawa Declaration (on Women and Structural Adjustment)* at Harare in 1991, the 1995 *Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development* and its 2000–2005 Update in 1999.
- ◆ Exploitation of the Commonwealth's comparative advantage in the area of encouraging governments to integrate gender concerns into economic policy dating from the report of the 1989 Commonwealth Expert Group on Women and Structural Adjustment, *Engendering Adjustment for the 1990s*, a pioneering work that advocated incorporating gender

concerns into a broad range of economic policy areas: public expenditure, taxation, credit policies, exchange rate policies, pricing policies, wage policies, trade liberalisation and privatisation.

Gender Budgets Make Cents provides the conceptual framework for the Commonwealth's work on GRB initiatives, the outcomes to date of work in the Commonwealth and beyond and an assessment, based on practical experiences, of what has worked. The contributors draw on initiatives that have been undertaken at national, provincial and local levels. This publication will be of use to anyone interested in strengthening the linkages between economic policy and social outcomes. It is our hope that it will be used by government officials, policy-makers and planners, multilateral and bilateral agencies and civil society groups, especially women's organisations.

The work done by the Gender Affairs Department in the area of gender responsive budgets has been a collective effort among many individuals and groups. Their contributions to the conceptualisation and implementation of this programme are gratefully acknowledged. In particular, I wish to thank the following: the Commonwealth member countries who have sought to implement gender responsive budgets, especially the five 'pilot' countries; Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs for their leadership; the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) for funding this work and also the Department for International Development (DFID) and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) for their contributions to this programme; Debbie Budlender, Diane Elson and Rhonda Sharp, our primary consultants and subsequent friends, for their continuous involvement and invaluable inputs; colleagues in the Commonwealth Secretariat, especially Ranee Jayamaha; and the staff of the Gender Affairs Department (including Eleni Stamiris and Sabhita Raju), particularly Guy Hewitt, the programme manager, who has coordinated this work from its inception. Finally, I would like to recognise the significant contributions of our new programme partners: the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

This publication is part of the Commonwealth's contribution to the global agenda of attaining gender equality and the Commonwealth vision of 'a world in which women and men have equal rights and opportunities at all stages of their lives to express their creativity in all fields of human endeavour'. We hope that it will provide inspiration and guidance to those already involved in or considering work on gender responsive budgets.

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