

Preface

In 1996, the Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs mandated the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop the concept of the Gender Management System (GMS), a comprehensive network of structures, mechanisms and processes for bringing a gender perspective to bear in the mainstream of all government policies, programmes and projects. The success of the GMS depends on a broad-based partnership in society in which government consults and acts co-operatively with the other key stakeholders, who include civil society and the private sector. The task of gender mainstreaming has both technical and managerial dimensions, as well as the political and socio-cultural aspects of creating equality and equity between women and men as partners in the quest for social justice. The establishment and strengthening of Gender Management Systems and of national women's machineries was the first of 15 government action points identified in the 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development.

This reference manual has been produced to assist member governments in meeting their commitment to implementing the Plan of Action. It is hoped that it will be used by development policy-makers, planners, field staff and others, in conjunction with other publications relating to the particular national context. It is intended to serve as an accessible reference manual to aid users in setting up a GMS and managing problems encountered in advancing the goal of gender equality and equity in legal and constitutional affairs. As part of the Gender Management System series, it can be used alone or in conjunction with other titles, particularly the *Gender Management System Handbook*, which presents the conceptual and methodological framework of the GMS.

The development of the GMS series has been a collective effort between the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender and Youth Affairs Division and many individuals and groups. Their contributions to the thinking behind the GMS are gratefully acknowledged. In particular, I would like to thank the following: Commonwealth member governments who supported the development of the GMS and encouraged us to move the project forward; participants at the first GMS meeting in Britain in February 1997 and at the GMS Workshop in Malta in April 1998, who provided valuable input and feedback; and the Steering Committee on the Plan of Action (SCOPA). I would like to thank especially the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) Gender Equality Division, Policy Branch, for co-funding this manual. I am also most grateful to Professor Christine Chinkin of the London School of Economics, who wrote the text of the manual; Florence Butegwa, contributing author; Tina Johnson, Editor; members of the Guest Editorial Committee; and the staff of the Gender Affairs Department, Gender and Youth Affairs Division, particularly Dr Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen, GMS Series Co-ordinator, who conceptualised and guided the series of reference manuals through to publication.

We hope that this resource series will be of genuine use to you in your efforts to mainstream gender.

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