

## Preface

The 1995 Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development presents a 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, and in which women are respected and valued as equal and able partners in establishing values of social justice, equity, democracy and respect for human rights. Within such a framework of values, women and men will work in collaboration and partnership to ensure people-centred sustainable development for all nations.”*

Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995d

In order to assist Commonwealth governments in realising this vision, Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs mandated the Secretariat to develop the concept and methodology of the Gender Management System (GMS), a comprehensive network of structures, mechanisms and processes for bringing a gender perspective to bear on all government policies, plans, programmes and projects. The success of the GMS depends upon a broad-based partnership in society in which government consults and acts co-operatively with other key stakeholders, who include civil society and the private sector.

The *Gender Management System Handbook* 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 in conjunction with other publications in the Gender Management System Series, by development policy-makers, planners, field staff and others. The handbook is designed to be sufficiently flexible to allow users to adopt those elements of the GMS that are most appropriate to national circumstances and adapt others to their countries' specific needs.

The task of gender mainstreaming includes 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 handbook 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. It is also available in an abridged form under the title *A Quick Guide to the Gender Management System*.

The development of the *Gender Management System Handbook* 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: Meetings of Women's Affairs Ministers which 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 am also most grateful to: the various consultants who contributed inputs drafted and edited the handbook in collaboration with the staff of the Gender and Youth Affairs Division, including Daniel Woolford, Consultant Editor for the GMS publications, Audrey Ingram Roberts, and Carol Miller; and the staff of the Gender Affairs Department, Gender and Youth Affairs Division, particularly Ms Eleni Stamiris, former Director of the Division, who took the lead in

formulating the GMS concept and mobilising the various stakeholders in its development, Dr Judith May-Parker who provided substantive editorial input, and Dr Rawwida Baksh-Soodeen, Project Co-ordinator of the Gender Management System Series, who guided the project through to publication.

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

**Nancy Spence**  
Director  
*Gender and Youth Affairs Division*  
Commonwealth Secretariat