
Foreword

At their 7th Ministerial meeting in Fiji on 2 June 2004, Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers adopted a new ten-year Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015. The Plan reflects a strong rights-based approach in all four critical areas of concern – Democracy, Peace and Conflict; Human Rights and Law; Poverty Eradication and Economic Empowerment; and HIV/AIDS. The Plan places emphasis on *implementation* and the critical partnerships that are needed to achieve its goals over the next decade.

The Human Rights section of the Plan of Action has been developed through wide consultation and the involvement of experts, policy-makers and civil society organisations to reflect the key Commonwealth priorities for action in the next ten years. The gender and human rights issues addressed in the Plan are wide-ranging – including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), gender-based violence, culture and the law, indigenous peoples, trafficking and migration, land and property rights, diversity and a life-cycle approach. Much of the conceptual work that informed these issues came out of a pan-Commonwealth Expert Group Meeting on Gender and Human Rights that took place at the Commonwealth Secretariat's Headquarters in London in February 2004. Participants came from all regions of the Commonwealth, and the experts included government policy-makers, judges, lawyers, academics, leaders of civil society organisations and specialists from multi-lateral agencies and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

This book comprises the papers commissioned for this Expert Group Meeting, together with some other key background papers that informed the discussion on these topics. Appendix 1 is a mini-report of the meeting – including the agenda, discussant notes, key recommendations made by the experts and a list of participants.

The purpose of this book is to contribute to current policy-making and programme action on gender and human rights. It is intended for a wide audience of policy-makers, members of the judicial system (judges, magistrates and lawyers), academics

and civil society organisations grappling with these issues. In addition, its intention is to provide a conceptual/policy-oriented resource for those committed to implementing and supporting the human rights goals of the new *Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015*. It must be emphasised that this publication is a contribution of ideas, concepts and policy recommendations that served to inform the development of the human rights section of the *Plan of Action* and that it does not purport to address these issues in a detailed or comprehensive way; certainly each issue (e.g. gender-based violence, trafficking, etc.) could be – or has been – the subject of one or more books on its own. We hope this work will be useful for partners and stakeholders who are engaged in promoting and supporting the implementation of gender and human rights in the Commonwealth and globally.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to the Experts who contributed their best thinking, professional and personal experiences, time and energy to this effort. Thanks also to Cindy Berman, Gender, Human Rights and HIV/AIDS Programme Officer, who had primary responsibility for planning and chairing the Expert Group Meeting and for co-ordinating the production of this publication; to Rawwida Baksh, Deputy Director and Head of the Gender Section of the Secretariat's Social Transformation Programmes Division; to Justina Mutale, Musonda Mwila, Margarete Gittens and Greta Fernandez for their administrative support; and to Tina Johnson, not only for contributing an excellent expert paper on gender-based violence but also for her superb editorial skills on this publication overall. We also thank Rupert Jones-Parry for providing publishing support.

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