

Acknowledgements

This handbook takes advantage of existing reports from the Commonwealth's 25-year election observation history, to gain an appreciation of the trends in women's participation in electoral processes and politics more generally in Commonwealth Africa.

As a starting point, all available Commonwealth Observer Group reports (COGs)¹ were examined for an overview of trends and recurring themes on women's political participation over the organisation's 25-year election observation history. In total, 34 COG reports on Commonwealth Africa were then examined in greater detail. The earliest COG report examined for this handbook was on Zambia's 2006 general elections and referendum, with the latest on Ghana 2016 parliamentary elections. To date, the Commonwealth has observed one election each in Botswana, South Africa and Namibia, and is yet to observe an election in Mauritius.

The COG reports reflect a mixture of presidential, parliamentary and local government elections observed by the Commonwealth Secretariat in this period. This body of work was examined in tandem with a literature review. Relevant publications generated by the Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Unit provided secondary evidence to affirm the findings of the COG reports. The outcomes of two separate surveys of Commonwealth election management boards (EMBs), including of members of the Commonwealth Electoral Network, provided further validation, and are cited in various parts of this handbook.

This handbook benefits from the voices of women in politics, parliaments, civil society and EMBs, who have generously contributed their own experiences on some of the issues raised, referenced in the text: Samia Suluhu Hassan, Vice-President of Tanzania; Honourable Rebecca Kadaga (MP), first woman Speaker of the Parliament of Uganda; Honourable Zainab Athman Katimba (MP) of Tanzania; and Beauty Katebe, Board Chairperson, Zambia National Women's Lobby Group (ZNWL).

Geraldine Joslyn Fraser-Moleketi, former Special Envoy for Gender at the African Development Bank and former Minister of Public Service and Administration, South Africa, moderated a joint Commonwealth and African Union gender dialogue

in New York in March 2015, which spurred the production of this handbook. A reference group comprising representatives of Commonwealth Africa High Commissions, experts and civil society organisations reviewed and validated the handbook at a meeting in London on 7 July 2017. The group comprised: Her Excellency Ms Yamina Claris Karitanyi, High Commissioner of Rwanda to the United Kingdom; Honourable Emma Kowa, Member of Parliament, Republic of Sierra Leone; Advocate Notemba Tjipueja, Chairperson, Electoral Commission of Namibia; Reverend Bongani Finca, Commissioner, Electoral Commission of South Africa; Julie Ballington, Policy Adviser on Political Participation, UN Women; Tazreen Hussain, International Foundation for Electoral Systems; Holly Ruthrauff, former Project Director, EU Election Observation and Democracy Support; Meenakshi Dhar, Director of Programmes, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; Lucy Pickles, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; Reineira Arguellosanjuan, Commonwealth Foundation; and Claire Frost, Commonwealth Local Government Forum.

Dr Josephine Ahikire conducted the initial research for the handbook, with additional research by Lindsey Adjei. Gender Links' CEO Colleen Lowe Morna edited and contributed to the handbook, with assistance from Gender and Governance Manager Mariatu Fonnah, Media Coordinator Tarisai Nyamweda and Alliance Coordinator Lucia Makamure.

Yvonne Apea Mensah, Adviser and Head of Africa at the Governance and Peace Directorate of the Commonwealth Secretariat, conceptualised and managed this project, providing oversight and strategic guidance with Kemi Ogunsanya, Adviser, Gender Section in the Secretary-General's Office.

Note

- 1 For convenience, the terminology 'COGs' or 'COG reports' is used for all the other forms of election observation conducted by the Commonwealth. These include smaller teams, sometimes constituted by staff only, whose reports are not made public, such as Commonwealth Expert Teams (CETs) and Commonwealth Observer Missions (COMs). COGs and CETs are constituted by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the request/invitation of a member country. Observers' terms of reference can be found on the website of the Commonwealth Secretariat. All COG reports mentioned in this handbook can also be found on the website of the Commonwealth Secretariat.