

Foreword

Gender inequality is now generally recognised not only as a human rights issue but also as a barrier to poverty reduction and economic growth. Evidence from around the world shows that investments in women pay off in terms of both their own and their families' health, education and wellbeing. Moreover, as contributors to this publication show, involving women in post-conflict reconstruction is more likely to result in sustainable peace processes; increasing the number of women in politics can reduce corruption and have significant benefits for society as a whole; and addressing social and cultural norms that allow continued unequal and exploitative power relations can reduce the spread of HIV.

It is important to recognise, however, that putting in place the policies and programmes that will bring about gender equality requires that sufficient financial resources are available. Indeed, in the Communiqué from the 8th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting, held in June 2007 in Uganda, Ministers agreed that increased investment in gender equality was a priority for sustained economic growth, democracy, peace, security and development and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). This was affirmed and endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government in their 2007 Kampala Communiqué.

Small Change or Real Change? Commonwealth Perspectives on Financing Gender Equality presents the latest thinking from experts around the world on key aspects of financing gender equality. These include implementation of the aid agenda, the implications for gender equality of financing HIV and AIDS interventions, the impact of trade policies on key sources of financing, and women's need for equal access to affordable finance. Of particular importance is tracking the gender impact of aid resources (including post-conflict aid) through mechanisms such as gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) and aid effectiveness modalities. GRB initiatives were pioneered by the Commonwealth, and it is significant that Commonwealth Finance Ministers now call for biennial reporting to their Ministerial Meeting on the progress made in implementing these initiatives in member countries.

The papers in this volume cover a wide range of issues. We would like to thank all the contributors - who come from diverse backgrounds - for sharing their insights and experiences. We are also grateful to Sarojini Ganju Thakur, Head of the Gender Section, for co-ordinating the publication; to Diane Elson, for her assistance in selecting the papers; to Tina Johnson for her editing skills; and to Guy Bentham, who facilitated the publication process.

Despite international commitments and promises of increased aid, progress towards improving the lives of women around the world, especially poor women, has been slow. It is hoped that *Small Change or Real Change?* will contribute to a better understanding of

how vitally important financing gender equality is for achieving sustainable development from which both women and men will benefit.

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