

# Introduction

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‘Women count. Count them up, and you reach 3 billion – half the people on this planet. Dis-count them, and you reach the state we’re in, where half of the people on this planet bear considerably more than half of its problems.... Our united voice must say that, for real development effectiveness, gender has to be at its heart.’

– Don McKinnon, Commonwealth Secretary-General (2000–2008)<sup>1</sup>

The theme of the 8<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM) – held in Kampala, Uganda, from 11–14 June 2007 – was ‘Financing Gender Equality for Development and Democracy’. This theme was chosen not only for its intrinsic importance but also in view of compelling evidence that gender equality can lead to poverty reduction and is linked to economic growth.<sup>2</sup> In addition, it was felt to be timely in view of the meeting’s links with and potential to influence broader international processes related to financing for gender equality: the 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Commission for the Status of Women in February/March 2008; the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Accra, Ghana, in September 2008; and the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to Review the Implementation of the Monterrey Consensus in Doha, Qatar, in November/December 2008.

8WAMM was significant in that it brought together 32 governments with multilateral and bilateral agencies and civil society organisations and created the opportunity to renew focus and share experiences on this issue. Its deliberations, messages and outcomes led to renewed political commitment within the Commonwealth to financing gender equality as reflected in the meeting’s final communiqué as well as the Kampala Communiqué from the 2007 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.<sup>3</sup> This volume brings together some of the key conceptual papers that informed the sessions and also fed into other international processes that focused on this subject.<sup>4</sup>

Internationally, commitments to gender equality and development goals establish a framework for action. The Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention for the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015 broadly set out the road map for the pursuit of gender equality and women’s empowerment for Commonwealth countries. The realisation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which define the current global development agenda, is also closely linked with ensuring gender equality. MDG 3 directly refers to ‘gender equality and women’s empowerment’, but there are at least five other goals – related to poverty reduction, educational achievement, maternal mortality, infant

mortality and combating AIDS, malaria and TB – that cannot be achieved without addressing gender-based constraints and issues. The Monterrey Consensus being reviewed later this year also refers to the need for sustainable, gender-sensitive, people-centred development. Most Commonwealth countries have signed up to these commitments, and have further developed national policies and plans of action for women. However, national and state budgets and overall development plans have not reflected the same priorities; in other words, inadequate resource allocation has meant that these plans have not been implemented.

The theme derives even greater significance in the current context for aid. Commitments since 2005 have been scaled up significantly and there is an emphasis on improving the processes and quality of aid. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness focuses on the principles of country ownership, harmonisation, managing for results, alignment and mutual accountability. While a mention of gender equality is tucked away in one of the sections (para. 42), the challenge in the context of the ‘new’ aid modalities – joint assistance strategies, direct budgetary support, sector-wide approaches (SWAPs) and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) – is to ensure that there are more resources allocated for gender equality.

Numerous studies highlight the links between gender equality and growth. Investments to reduce gender gaps in education and health are critical as inequalities in these areas affect women’s choices in family planning, their employment opportunities and the well-being of children. Their reproductive role and their lack of participation in decision-making at all levels within the family and community, combined with their lack of access to land, credit and information, inhibit women’s capacity to take advantage of economic opportunities. However, despite widespread recognition that these issues have serious costs to societies, progress in formulating and implementing gender-sensitive policies and programmes has not been very systematic. To successfully mainstream gender, all individuals and departments in government need to consider this part of their task and responsibilities and be held accountable, but the principal responsibility for gender mainstreaming at national level has frequently remained the province of the national women’s machinery, whose resources and influence have been limited.

Reviews of the success of gender mainstreaming in bilateral and multilateral organisations have also indicated the extent to which this agenda has been ghettoised within these agencies or there has been total ‘policy evaporation’. The renewed focus on the importance of gender equality has led all major funding agencies to re-examine their strategies. In this context, the World Bank has developed a Gender Action Plan – Gender as Smart Economics, and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has finalised a Gender Equality Action Plan. The UN system has also recognised the critical importance of enhancing resources for gender equality, and the High Level Panel on System-Wide Coherence has recommended the creation of a single agency – merging the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the United Nations

International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) – and providing it with appropriate status and funding.

Within the Commonwealth, Finance Ministers recognised at their 2005 meeting the critical importance of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), and agreed to report biennially on the issue. ‘Gender Responsive Budgets in the Commonwealth: Progress and Challenges’ (2005) presented a mixed picture of the degree to which member countries were able to track their investment in gender equality. The positive side was that in recent years some of the best practice and progress in GRB internationally had been in Commonwealth countries such as India, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania. But the other side of the picture was that of 52 countries in the Commonwealth, only 30 reported making any advance in GRB, and for the majority progress was extremely slow. Most countries at that time were in an environment-building and awareness-raising phase and had not taken the next steps towards capacity-building and then integration of gender into the budget process.<sup>5</sup>

The 2007 progress report at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (presented after 8WAMM) noted that while some countries – Bangladesh, Pakistan, Malawi – stood out as having made definite headway, this is not the time to be complacent.<sup>6</sup> Countries needed to go beyond the pilot stage, commit long term to the process and adopt a practical and task-oriented approach. They needed technical budget-related skills, such as those related to the development of indicators, and skills in gender analysis. Budgets are political documents and reflect spending priorities. Since achieving development goals depends on gender equality, it is clear that budgets need to reallocate resources to ensure that both women and men benefit from policies and programmes.

The purpose of this volume is to share more widely a selection of the papers that were presented at 8WAMM and/or prepared for *Financing Gender Equality: A Commonwealth Perspective*, an accompanying commemorative volume for the meeting that drew on contributions from many individuals and organisations.

The first section, Tracking the Money for Gender Equality, defines the challenges to financing gender equality, the macroeconomic and development context, the diverse mechanisms and sources for funding for gender equality and also how one can monitor and keep track of the nature of funding. The first paper, ‘Challenges to Financing Gender Equality’, strongly emphasises the need for macroeconomic policy to take into account more systematically the critical role that social reproduction plays in both the formal and informal economy. The care that women provide for children and other adults at various stages of the life cycle is critical to overall economic development and has major implications for economic policy, the nature of social spending and the priorities accorded to basic social services.

The next two papers on ‘Aid Effectiveness and Gender-Responsive Budgets’ and ‘Development, Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality’ examine ‘how’ to track financing for gender equality, also taking into account the ‘new’ aid modalities, the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the focus on country-led processes. The first emphasises the key importance of GRB as a means of promoting gender equality and monitoring progress,

while the second outlines strategies, priorities and opportunities at country level and for development partners.

This section recognises that although budgetary resources are critical, they represent only one aspect of financing gender equality. Micro-finance has been viewed by some as the magic bullet for the empowerment of poor women. The paper on 'Micro-finance and Innovative Financing for Gender Equality' reassesses its role and also focuses on private sector and innovative sources of finance as alternative routes to serving low-income women. The next paper on 'Gender and Trade: Impacts and Implications for Financial Resources for Gender Equality' looks at how the impact of the relationships between trade liberalisation and trade reform on resources available to finance gender equality. It also examines how the multilateral trading system can support the mobilisation of such resources, with a focus on the areas of trade reform, aid for trade and trade-related capacity building.

The last two papers in this section are 'Strengthening the Connection between Gender and Growth' (from DFID) and 'Gender Equality as Smart Economics' (from the World Bank) and describe the rationale for the renewed focus and emphasis on gender mainstreaming in development agencies, and the need for this to translate into investment in programmes and policies. As the first one puts it, gender is at the 'heart of development', and the paper outlines the clear evidence for the links between gender and growth – issues related to investment in human capital, education and labour force participation. The World Bank paper, an action plan for gender equality, is also based on the business case and links between gender equality, poverty reduction and improved well-being. It focuses on constraints to productivity and income because of failure to access labour, land, financial and agricultural product markets. It seeks to increase opportunities and access to make these markets work for women and to identify policy level interventions to make this happen.

The second section, Making a Difference to Gender Equality, examines how financing gender equality can make a difference to both development and democracy. The sectors and areas that are focused on in this section resonate with the areas that have been identified as critical in the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Gender Equality 2005–2015:<sup>7</sup>

- Gender, democracy, peace and conflict
- Gender, human rights and the law
- Gender, poverty eradication and economic empowerment
- Gender and HIV/AIDS

The first paper, 'Promoting Democracy, Peace and Development', sets out the importance of investing in women's political participation and empowerment for building and sustaining democracy, advancing development and building peace. It advocates the need to mobilise resources for the provision of incentives to promote affirmative action for women's empowerment, electoral reform and voter education. In the second paper, on 'Financing for Gender Equality: Post-conflict Reconstruction and Peace Building',

there is a strong emphasis on the need to track provisions in budgets to ensure investment is taking place to advance women's rights and empowerment and to build capacity of women parliamentarians, finance ministries and national women's machineries (NWMs).

The next two papers, 'Spreading the Gains of Globalisation: Linking Women with Global Markets' and 'Female Employment in Agriculture: Global Challenges and Global Response' focus on women producers and women workers respectively. They both reflect on the new opportunities that are arising from economic globalisation and how governments, non-governmental organisations and women's associations can help enable women to benefit from these.

The following paper, 'Financing HIV and AIDS Interventions: Implications for Gender Equality', examines how donor policy and national level programming need to take financing for gender equality into account when programming for HIV and AIDS and points to some of the lessons learned to ensure gender equitable programming.

'The Role of National Women's Machineries in Financing Gender Equality', the final paper, looks at the institutional mechanisms that have been established in many countries to take the lead on mainstreaming gender in planning, policy formulation and monitoring and evaluating projects and programmes. It is clear that they need to be strengthened if they are to play an effective role.

Overall, this collection of papers highlights some of the key issues and priorities for action in financing gender equality for development and democracy. As stated earlier, national, regional and international commitments to work towards the achievement of gender equality already exist. However, progress has been slow and on the whole performance has not measured up to the stated commitments. The story so far has been of small change for gender equality. For real change, investments for gender equality need to be stepped up and tracked by governments, donors and the private sector.

## Notes

1. Addressing the 8th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (8WAMM), Kampala, Uganda, June 2007.
2. While there are earlier studies of the subject, some of the latest literature includes the *Global Monitoring Report 2007: Confronting the Challenges of Gender Equality and Fragile States* (World Bank, 2007) and *Gender Equality and Growth: Evidence and Action* (DFID, February 2008).
3. 'Heads of Government reaffirmed that gender equality and women's empowerment, including greater progress in their economic empowerment, are fundamental for the advancement of human rights and the achievement of MDGs, development, democracy and peace. They welcomed the priority given by Women's Affairs Ministers... to financing gender equality, and endorsed their call for implementation of international, regional and national commitments to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment. Heads of Government also endorsed their call for the effective monitoring and tracking of resources for gender equality and women's empowerment through gender responsive budgeting and other gender analysis tools, and through strengthening aid effectiveness to improve accountability and the impact on gender equality. They also supported the call made by Finance Ministers in Guyana in October 2007,

to specifically incorporate a focus on gender equality in the aid effectiveness agenda during the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in September 2008.' Kampala Communiqué, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Kampala, Uganda, November 2007.

4. See, for instance, references in 'Financing for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women: Report of the Expert Group Meeting', Oslo, 4-7 September, 2007, paras 48 and 62; and in 'Financing for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Report of the Secretary-General', Item 3(a) of the provisional agenda, 52nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, 25 February-7 March 2008, E/CN.6/2008/2, para. 28.
5. 'Gender Responsive Budgets in the Commonwealth: Progress and Challenges', presented at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting, 2005.
6. 'Gender Responsive Budgets in the Commonwealth: Progress Report 2005-2007', presented at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting, 2007.
7. The section does not, however, focus on certain areas such as human rights and the law as these were not a primary focus of 8WAMM.

## References

Commonwealth Secretariat 2007, *Financing Gender Equality: Commonwealth Perspectives 2007*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

**Part I**

# **Tracking the Money for Gender Equality**

