

# Preface

This report documents the Commonwealth's 53 member countries' progress towards achieving the 2030 Agenda's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for gender equality and women's empowerment. In doing so, the report will focus largely, but not exclusively, on progress towards meeting SDG 5, that is, to 'Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls'. The strong association this goal has with many of the other 16 SDGs and the goal's inter-connectedness means that any assessment of progress in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment will necessarily involve an analysis of how the Commonwealth regions and their member states are faring on meeting a number of the other SDGs.

The report will review progress against SDGs under the four themes endorsed as the Commonwealth Priorities for Gender Equality 2017–2020 by the women's affairs ministers at their 11th meeting, hosted by the Government of Samoa in September 2016. These themes are: 1. women in leadership, 2. women's economic empowerment, 3. ending violence against women and girls, and 4. gender and climate change.

The need for an annual review of Commonwealth countries'

progress against the SDGs arose from an end-of-term review of the 2005–2015 Commonwealth Plan of Action (PoA). The review found that monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the PoA's implementation had been difficult, and while evaluators had been able to establish what had changed using the plan's quantitative indicators, the causes of such changes remained elusive. The absence of a rigorous results framework guiding the plan meant that accountability measures gauging its implementation progress were lacking, leading to the recommendation that a post-2015 framework undertake regular and effective reviews. This first *Annual Report* on gender equality and women's empowerment in the Commonwealth represents a baseline review of the extent to which Commonwealth countries are meeting the SDGs: most notably SDG 5 and other SDGs closely connected with achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls.

The report will analyse progress in meeting SDGs in each Commonwealth region: Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. The sections provide an analysis of baseline information that

can be returned to in future *Annual Reports*, together with reference to any historical or emerging trends. They also include performance highlights concerning good practice and areas requiring improvement for Commonwealth member countries. Good practice will also be designated in feature boxes throughout the report. Each report section will conclude with a summary and a review of Commonwealth countries' results, formulated as a series of conclusions to assist readers to absorb the large amount of information presented in this report.

The report will not repeatedly disaggregate affected groups and examine issues and country performance through an intersectionality lens by considering how particular issues affect the disabled, indigenous people, LGBTI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender, intersex plus) or other groups of difference, due to limitations concerning resources, including a lack of time to do justice to these dimensions. The lack of an intersectionality dimension in this report constitutes a gap that could productively be addressed in future reports, should the resources required to satisfactorily do so be made available.