



# EnGENDERing Development and Democracy

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# **EnGENDERing Development and Democracy**

**A Workshop organized by  
the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association,  
the Commonwealth Secretariat  
and  
the British Council**

**in co-operation with  
the Commonwealth Foundation and  
the National Assembly of Nigeria**

**Abuja, Nigeria  
3-5 December 2003**



## INTRODUCTION

As part of its activities to ensure that public representatives develop the skills necessary to effectively carry out their role in Parliament, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association convened a three-day workshop for Commonwealth Parliamentarians on the theme “EnGENDERing development and democracy”, in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, the British Council, the Commonwealth Foundation and the National Assembly of Nigeria. Eighteen delegates from 11 Parliaments and Legislatures, including that of Nigeria, participated in the workshop, which took place immediately prior to the 2003 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Abuja. The objectives of the workshop were:

- to bring together new Parliamentarians to share experience as politicians on the barriers and challenges they face, and to consider strategic partnerships to engender development and democracy,
- to raise awareness of the position of civil society and the role it can play in collaboration with politicians in addressing policy issues, and
- to identify issues to be included in the Commonwealth Action Plan for the Women’s Affairs Ministers’ Meeting, and to chart progress towards meeting CHOGM targets in priority areas.

At the Opening Ceremony delegates were welcomed by Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA); Connie Price, Director of Multilateral Partnerships, British Council; Nancy Spence, Director of the Social Transformation Programmes Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives of Nigeria Hon. Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari. All the speakers confirmed that the effective participation of women in decision-making is essential to the survival of democracy and to ensuring sustainable development. Great efforts are being made within the Commonwealth to increase women’s participation in politics and decision-making and whilst



there have been some gains, it was pointed out that women make up little more than 15 per cent of the global parliamentary community. Only a few Legislatures in the Commonwealth have reached the 30 per cent of women in key decision-making positions by 2005 target that was set by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1997. The speakers also encouraged the building of pro-active

partnerships between Parliamentarians, governments, civil society and the private sector towards developing legislative initiatives that would foster the engendering of Commonwealth values. Hosting the workshop in Nigeria underlined the fact that the new Nigerian democracy needs increased nurturing and democratic impetus from older democracies, especially from the Commonwealth family.

## **SESSION 1: GENDER, DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY**

Keynote addresses were given by Colin Ball, Director of the Commonwealth Foundation, and Hajiya Halima Lawal representing the Nigerian Minister of Women Affairs and Youth Development, Hon. Obong Rita Akpan.

Participants heard that research carried out by the Commonwealth Foundation in both developed and developing Commonwealth countries revealed that citizens saw the following as attributes of a good society:

- A strong state and a strong civil society working in partnership, facilitating, listening, empowering and doing, in social, economic and democratic development and
- A deep and democratic culture, not just casting of votes periodically but a participatory democracy characterized by processes of “inclusive governance” and not “exclusive government”. A participatory and representative democracy should be parallel to a process that allows actual participation by women.

In Nigeria, women have been in the mainstream of politics since 1999, but with constraints including lack of campaign funding, timing of party meetings and other social and cultural barriers. With determination and political education these barriers are disappearing and in the last elections there was an increase in the number of women in the House of Representatives. The Ministry of Women Affairs is providing training for aspiring women politicians, and is also participating in electoral reforms and the sensitization of women to support other women in their political quest.

## **SESSION 2: PARLIAMENTARIANS AND THEIR ROLES IN ADDRESSING POVERTY AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGS)**

Parliamentarians from South Africa, India and Canada made presentations on the experiences of their various countries on addressing poverty and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The South African Parliament has contributed to the challenge of confronting poverty through the writing of responsive laws and monitoring the practical implementation of policy through the exercise of their parlia-

mentary oversight functions. Parliament uses the monitoring of the budget as a tool for assessing government response to poverty. The government has funded major programmes to alleviate poverty, including the extension of the child support grant, which was started in 1998, to assist parents and other care givers looking after young children from six years of age, to children from nine years old, and eventually 11 years in the next financial year. It has also provided free basic services such as electricity, water, sanitation and refuse removal to poor households. In 2003, the government made available US \$0.7 billion to enable municipalities to provide these services and to speed up of the process of settlement of land restitution claims and ensuring that it translates into economic activity and sustainable support through land use for communities. The implementation of these programmes in South Africa would not have been possible without the active involvement of faith-based organizations, business, labour, the media and civil society, as these groups ensure that the right beneficiaries are reached.

In Canada, Parliament conducts long-range studies on poverty. For example, it was as a result of the findings of an exhaustive study in the 1970s that poverty and illiteracy became an issue in Canada, and today the findings of that study are still being



used to measure recent achievements. The Parliament also uses international markers such as the ratifications of conventions on economic, social and cultural issues to measure whether the government is meeting the criteria of these instruments. An analysis of poverty even in Canada reveals that women are the most disadvantaged, especially single mothers, indigenous and older women.

Since independence, India has accorded primacy to the integration of sustainability considerations in all its developmental processes. It has formulated five-year plans to address social development, poverty reduction and provision of basic services. Parliament plays a pro-active role by ensuring that all plans and programmes are statutorily supported. Planning and implementation processes involve interaction between the central, state and local governments as well as consultation with and involvement of local communities and non-governmental organizations. The latter are closely involved in mobilizing people at the grassroots and effecting changes.

Participants agreed that electoral systems, population, resources, health and development problems and length/age of democracy differ from country to country and each of these factors can impact on the success or otherwise of poverty eradica-

tion programmes. Therefore, each government must consider its own unique circumstances when prioritizing policies. For example, participants agreed that countries that inherited huge debts from previous regimes can only implement limited programmes while these debt problems remain. As one of the youngest Commonwealth democracies, Nigeria's task is to create a democratic environment characterized by good governance, free and fair elections, and an effective opposition as a foundation for agitating for concrete poverty reduction/eradication programmes. It was also agreed that new democracies could learn from older Commonwealth democracies and workshops like the one in Abuja enable Parliamentarians to share and learn from experience in other countries.

Participants also agreed that Parliamentarians should scrutinize privatization programmes in their countries to avoid supporting programmes that enrich the affluent while alienating the poor and vulnerable. Adequate measures should be put in place to combat corruption, with Parliamentarians as the primary vehicle for creating the practices and institutions in which people have faith. Parliamentarians should ensure that governments are transparent in their policies for the achievement of MDGs by calling on them to put forward plans of action for achieving specific goals and by holding them accountable to reach set targets. In addition women should form caucuses to work together on an all-party basis and strive to be involved in policies for achieving the MDGs. They should also work with civil society organizations (CSOs) to ensure that targets are achievable.

The MDGs are part of Africa's development programme as set out in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Parliamentarians should take action to ensure the base criteria for its implementation are in place, although NEPAD was developed without involvement of Parliaments and citizens.

The discussions concluded with the recommendation that poverty eradication programmes should be created and implemented at all levels of government. The focus of Parliamentarians should be on what can be done to improve on yesterday's efforts while striving to make tomorrow better, emphasizing the need to build the capacity of the people for self sustenance as an effective poverty eradication tool.

### **SESSION 3: SHARING EXPERIENCES/CHALLENGES FOR THE FUTURE ON HIV/AIDS, GENDER BUDGETING AND CONFLICT AND PEACE**

#### **HIV/AIDS**

Participants learnt that the Ugandan government uses a multi-sectoral approach in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Members of Parliament have made critical contributions to this strategy through the establishment of specialized and sessional committees,

such as the Committee on HIV/AIDS, and through collaboration with parliamentary associations, such as the Uganda Women's Parliamentary Association, which trains women Members and women working at the grassroots on leadership skills integrating HIV/AIDS issues, and also the Young Parliamentarians Association, which integrates HIV/AIDS sensitization into leadership training of young people at the local government level. There is also collaboration between Parliament and civil society organizations, the media and the private sector.

Participants agreed that Parliamentarians need to support the campaign for funding for vaccines and for universal access to subsidized anti-retroviral drugs, and to support policies that discourage the stigmatization of people living with HIV/AIDS in order to encourage more voluntary testing.



Parliamentarians should also promote programmes of information, education and awareness on the use of condoms, and also especially the provision of safe and affordable female condoms. The Commonwealth is a source of information on how to address harmful cultural and traditional practices, and can assist with the preparation of policy briefs and laws to end such practices. Private and public partnerships can increase the impact of employee awareness programmes.

### **Gender Budgeting**

The South African Parliament, through the creation of a special standing committee, the Joint Budget Committee, conducts a gender analysis of all budgets to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to issues that affect women and that steps are taken to guarantee that they will benefit from such resources. The South African experience has showed that when considering expenditure it is important to: understand the situation of women and men in society; analyse sectoral policy in terms of its potential to exacerbate gender gaps; review the budget to ensure that adequate financial resources have been allocated to implement the policy, and assess performance, i.e. utilization of resources, whether for or against the purpose for which they are intended.

In discussion it was agreed that Parliamentarians should mandate their Ministers to ensure that in all memoranda to cabinet a gender based analysis of the policy, programme or legislation has been properly completed before discussion and decision by the cabinet. Gender sensitivity, equity and gender based analysis training should

be provided to Parliamentarians and legislators and to sufficient numbers of bureaucrats in the government. In addition, parliamentary oversight of budgets and departmental estimates, under the standing orders of the respective Parliaments, should encourage a gender lens perspective among the economic oversight procedures.

### **Conflict and Peace**

Parliamentarians heard that following the end of the war in Sierra Leone, there were high expectations on MPs to legislate conflict-sensitive reforms and to advocate for removal of those societal factors that lead to conflict such as social exclusion and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or religion.

In discussion, participants recommended that in post-conflict situations Parliament should develop partnerships with human rights organizations and civil society, and develop caucuses across party lines. Space should be created for regular and frank dialogue to enhance information gathering and exchange, but there should be a clear understanding of each other's roles and expectations. Collaboration with national and international think tanks should also be considered. Parliamentarians should ensure that legislation is conflict sensitive, inclusive and engendered. Domestication of international conventions is also crucial. Parliament should ensure that stakeholders in conflict resolution, including women, should be included in peace negotiations. Institutional and human resource capacities of Parliaments particularly human rights committees and women's caucuses should be enhanced and adequately resourced.



## **SESSION 4: GENDER, TRADE AND GLOBALIZATION**

While agreeing that trade liberalization has both benefits and disadvantages, participants noted that it is generally gender blind and thus creates severe challenges of access for women entrepreneurs, despite the fact that they form a majority in the informal sector. They also noted that Parliaments have not generally been involved

in international trade agreements as these are negotiated by governments and bureaucrats, rather than by Parliament. It was therefore recommended that Parliamentarians should be involved in negotiations on trade issues and international agreements either through constitutional reforms or amending rules of procedure.

Parliaments should also consult with civil society organizations (CSOs) and businesswomen to ensure that trade negotiations include a gender agenda and that the impact of trade agreements on women should be examined. To assist this there should be increased capacity building for Parliamentarians on trade, gender and globalization issues, so that they develop an informed perspective and can ensure equality of trade rules, policy, definitions and measurements. Parliamentarians, CSOs and entrepreneurs can also work together to help people understand the phenomenon transforming their society and their lives.

Parliaments should encourage banks and other financial institutions to help women access credit through changes to their financial facility policies. Parliaments can also use legal reforms to ensure that international microcredit schemes filter down to the rural market women or micro-business enterprises by lowering entrants' criteria. Parliaments should monitor implementation of policies targeted at small-scale industries to ensure access to loans for women and promote value-added crop production through small scale industries.

## **SESSION 5: WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING**

Drawing from statistics and personal experience participants agreed that the level of women's representation in decision-making was discouraging. It was agreed that there is a need for greater pressure on governments to ratify international conventions such as Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as this will encourage a stronger political will in government and Parliament to support the cause of affirmative action for women in politics and decision making. Parliaments should promote constitutional and electoral reforms for affirmative action such as quotas or proportional representation to increase the number of women in political decision-making.

It was recommended that women Parliamentarians should form a variety of alliances to advance the cause of women's participation with:

- *Civil society organizations* to increase capacity building for women in political life,
- *The media* to showcase their achievements as a strategy to popularize politics as a career for women and
- *Women entrepreneurs and donors* to set up "women's funds" to assist female political aspirants.

In addition women in Parliament and top government positions should identify credible and capable women aspirants and give them support and encouragement.

## **SESSION 6: STRATEGIES FOR PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN PARLIAMENTS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS**

Workshop participants were joined by representatives of CSOs for this session. In summarizing the issues and observations emerging from the Workshop over the past two days, the participants acknowledged the importance of partnerships between Parliamentarians and CSOs in supporting women for election, in co-operating on a gender agenda and in setting goals for ensuring women's development. They welcomed the achievements of CSOs in increasing women's representation in decision-making.

Civil society representatives reported on the outcomes of the Commonwealth civil society forum that had just concluded. CSOs had agreed that they must operate at the micro- and the macro-levels of politics. There should be government acknowledgment of, and respect for, the role CSOs play in improving any democracy by creating an interface between the government and the people. However CSOs need to increase their legitimacy and accountability, and they should not oppose legislation governing their operations. CSOs and Parliamentarians need to increase their joint efforts in lobbying governments and political parties to achieve 30 per cent representation of women in politics and decision-making.

In the discussion it was recommended that Parliamentarians and CSOs should seek to strengthen their partnerships. Parliamentarians should use the objectivity and



independence of CSOs as a source of information gathering and dissemination to inform and influence legislative decisions.

CSOs and Parliamentarians can work together in monitoring government implementation of international conventions such as CEDAW and achievement of Millennium Development Goals.



## SESSION 7: FINAL DRAFT OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMUNIQUÉ

A Communiqué to Commonwealth Heads of Government was drafted and given to all delegations to CHOGM (Appendix 1). The Workshop concluded that democracy and development cannot happen without women. The Communiqué proposes actions that governments should take in order to accelerate the achievement of development and democracy in the Commonwealth. The Workshop concluded that Parliamentarians should work in partnership with civil society organizations and with businesswomen to ensure that gender concerns are central and that women's participation in decision-making increases. It was also agreed that the Commonwealth provides a valuable forum for the discussion and resolution of these issues.

### Closing Ceremony

Closing remarks were given by: Sen. the Hon. Adolphus Wabara, President of the Senate of Nigeria; David Green, Director General of the British Council; Dr Rawwida Baksh, Commonwealth Secretariat; Meenakshi Dhar, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and Hon. Ralston Anson representing the delegates. In conclusion, Mr Wabara urged Parliamentarians to move beyond rhetoric when talking about democracy, human rights and sustainable development. In his words:

It is either that we are providing appreciable leadership for the people or we are not, either we are impacting directly on the live of the people or we are falling short of their expectations. There is simply no middle ground. Responsive and responsible governance should be the keyword. Indeed that should be our collective responsibility as it is the only instrument for promoting democratic values, wealth creation and people's empowerment.

## **APPENDIX 1: COMMUNIQUE**

**Commonwealth Parliamentary Association  
Commonwealth Secretariat  
British Council  
Commonwealth Foundation  
Parliament of Nigeria**

**A Commonwealth Workshop on EnGENDERing Development and Democracy  
Abuja, Nigeria, 3-5 December 2003**

**Communiqué to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting,  
Abuja, Nigeria,  
5-8 December 2003**

This Communiqué to the Commonwealth Heads of Government is derived from a three-day Workshop of Commonwealth Parliamentarians from a range of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Branches, including Nigeria, which took place in Abuja, Nigeria on 3-5 December 2003. Representatives of the Commonwealth Business Women's Network and the Civil Society Forum joined Members for some sessions.

The overall Workshop theme of "EnGENDERing development and democracy" was considered through detailed deliberations of the following sub-themes: Women in decision-making, conflict and peace, poverty and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), HIV/AIDS, national budgets and their impact on women, and trade and globalization.

Listed below are recommendations that have emerged from the Workshop. These recommendations do not form the full deliberations of the Workshop but represent actions which governments should take in order to accelerate the achievement of development and democracy in the Commonwealth.

### **Women in Decision-Making**

The Workshop agrees that the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development provides governments with the framework for the attainment of the target of 30 per cent representation of women in Parliament and other decision-making bodies by 2005. Parliamentarians note the progress that some countries have made in achieving this target, including through affirmative action. Parliamentarians express deep concern that the Commonwealth target is not receiving the attention it deserves from governments.

Parliamentarians urge Heads of Government to take immediate action to provide resources and practical strategies to make this goal a reality by 2005.

### **Conflict and Peace**

The Workshop expresses concern over the prevalence of conflict and in particular its impact on women and children. Women continue to be the most harmed by conflict and yet early warning systems, peace agreements and post-conflict legislation often fail to address their needs.

The Workshop strongly supports United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and recommends that governments take concrete steps towards its implementation.

### **Poverty and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**

The Workshop recognizes the efforts made towards reaching the MDGs and acknowledges that women are the most disadvantaged group in society. The MDGs are the most important response to the plight of the vulnerable in our societies. Governments must provide adequate resources for the achievement of these priorities.

The Workshop applauds the development of NEPAD as the vehicle for achieving the MDGs in Africa and urges African governments to give practical effect to the conditions for successful implementation of NEPAD programmes.

### **HIV/AIDS**

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has become an urgent problem to which Commonwealth governments must develop responses.

Governments should act in partnership with the private sector, civil society, communities and people living with HIV/AIDS, to address the causes and impacts of the pandemic.

Governments must pay particular attention to providing access to drugs for people living with HIV/AIDS, including anti-retrovirals and drugs to reduce parent-to-child transmission.

### **National Budgets and their Impact on Women**

Governments should incorporate and utilize the process of gender-based analysis and gender-responsive budgeting with respect to the development of legislation, policies and budgets.

## **Trade and Globalization**

The current international trade regime is deeply unfair to developing countries, most negatively impacts on poor women, and is largely developed without the involvement of Parliaments.

Governments must intensify negotiations to pursue a fair international trade regime and should not give up on subsidy reduction and access to markets for developing countries.

Governments should involve Parliamentarians in trade negotiations to ensure that agreements do not impact negatively on women.

Recognizing the critical role of women in the private sector in producing the growth needed for poverty reduction and national wealth creation, governments should provide an enabling policy and investment environment that supports the specific needs of women entrepreneurs.

In conclusion, the Workshop calls on Heads of Government to promote gender equality and equity as a central principle in the achievement of development and democracy for all Commonwealth peoples, recognizing the crucial part Parliamentarians must play in partnership with civil society organizations and the private sector.

## APPENDIX 2: PROGRAMME

### Wednesday, 3 December

#### Welcome and Opening Remarks

Hon. Denis Marshall, QSO, Secretary-General, CPA

Connie Price, Director, Multilateral Partnerships, British Council

Hon. Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari, MP, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Nigeria

#### Session 1

Opening address: Gender, Development and Democracy

Hon. Obong Rita Akpan, MP, Minister of Women's Affairs, Nigeria

Colin Ball, Director, Commonwealth Foundation

#### Session 2

Panel Discussion : Politicians and their roles in addressing poverty & Millennium Development Goals

Hon. Naledi Pandor, MP, South Africa

Sen. the Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Canada

Smt. Prabha Rao, MP, India

#### Session 3

Panel Discussion: Sharing Experiences/Challenges for the Future

HIV/AIDS - Hon. Betty Ongomi, MP, Uganda

Gender Budgeting - Hon. Naledi Pandor, MP, South Africa

Conflict & Peace - Dr the Hon. Bernadette Lahai, MP, Sierra Leone

Breakout groups : HIV/AIDS; Gender Budgeting; Conflict & Peace

### Thursday, 4 December

#### Session 4

Panel Discussion: Gender, Trade and Globalization

Ms Sue Barnes, MP, Canada

Ms Jacqueline Mneney Maleko, Commonwealth Business Council Women's Network

#### Session 5

Panel discussion: Women in Decision-Making

Dr Rawwida Baksh, Commonwealth Secretariat

Hon. Abike Dabiri, MP, Nigeria

Ms Memunatu Pratt, Civil Society Representative, Sierra Leone

**Friday, 5 December**

**Session 6**

Plenary: Strategies for Partnerships between Parliamentarians and Civil Society Organizations

Dr the Hon. Bernadette Lahai, MP, Sierra Leone

Ms Margaret Gill, Civil Society Meeting Representative (Chairperson, Caribbean Association of Feminist Research Associations)

**Session 7**

Final Plenary

Summing up of recommendations and outputs from the Workshop

Presentation of final Communiqué

Chairperson: Hon. Naledi Pandor, MP, South Africa

Closing Session

Sen. the Hon. Adolphus Wabara, President of the Senate, Nigeria

David Green, Director General, British Council

Rawwida Baksh, Commonwealth Secretariat

Meenakshi Dhar, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association



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