Strategies for Increased Participation of Women in Leadership across the Commonwealth

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'We recognize that gender equality and women's empowerment are important for sustaina-ble development and our common future. We reaffirm our commitments to ensure women's equal rights, access and opportunities for participation and leadership in the economy, society and political decision-making.'

UN General Assembly 2012, paragraph 31

'We recognise that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development and basic human rights. The advancement of women's rights and the education of girls are critical preconditions for effective and sustainable development.'

Section XII, Charter of the Commonwealth, 2013

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Introduction

The United Nations' focus on the post-2015 development goals strongly aligns women's empowerment and gender equality with women's leadership in economic development.[1] Commonwealth Heads of Government have affirmed the importance of women's leadership, including in enterprise, and have urged the acceleration of gender mainstreaming efforts to promote the holistic empowerment of women as a driver of gender equality, economic growth and inclusive sustainable development.[2]

The case for decisively tackling the obstacles that prevent women from accessing leadership positions equally with men and for nurturing the pipeline of women leaders has been made in global research. The presence of women leaders has a positive impact on governance, reputation, financial success and encouraging other women to become leaders.

Governments and the private sector in a growing number of countries are introducing decisive measures to drive up women's share of leadership positions, including through legislation, regulation, governance arrangements, new policies and approaches, consciousness-raising on bias and empowerment programmes.

Positive action measures are slowly making a difference in some countries in relation to women's share of political leadership and positions on private and public boards. However, there is little change evident in women's executive leadership or in investment to sustain the women's talent pipeline. The priority now is to focus on agreeing and implementing strategies and actions that speed up the pace of change and make a substantive difference.

Change is more likely to be successful when it is led from the top; focuses on institutional, structural and cultural change; and is accompanied by a results framework with robust accountability. Timely reporting on the basis of comprehensive sex-disaggregated data is essential; and this needs to be comparative across the Commonwealth for benchmarking, lesson sharing and mutual support.

International organisations, national women's machineries and equality and human rights commissions need to extend the debate on women's leadership into the public and private sectors more consistently (in addition to the political sphere) as well as explicitly integrate women's public and private sector leadership into the concept of and strategies for women's empowerment and agency.

Various global data sources map the progress of women in politics and in the private and public sectors. Each source uses its own definitions and carries limitations, often making it difficult to make comparisons across countries. In 2015, the Commonwealth undertook a study of women in government and in leadership in member countries across the private and public sectors, including in state-owned enterprises. While data from each of the sources are generally not collected on a similar basis and direct comparisons are not always valid, patterns within each and consistent trends are highlighted in this report.

1. Overview of Women's Leadership Globally and in the Commonwealth

The progress of women into political roles has been positive but slow, and based on current trends the UN Millennium Development Goal of gender equality in political representation is likely to take another half century to achieve.[3] Similarly, women's progression into senior executive positions in the public and private sectors remains sluggish. An increasing number of countries both within the Commonwealth and elsewhere have introduced, or are in the process of introducing, legislation to boost women's participation in strategic roles. Emerging data from across the globe are beginning to show the impact of legislation and regulation.

International organisations such as the United Nations and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have gender equality monitoring mechanisms in place and report on these regularly, although not all refer to women's leadership. These data are supplemented by data published by individual nations and organisations. The World Bank, the OECD, the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap*[4] and large consultancy firms have all collated information and data on public and/or private sector leadership positions.

The Commonwealth also recently commissioned the collation of comparable data on women in leadership roles across political, private and public sectors for the first time. As with all data collated across nations, there are challenges to the validity of comparisons in terms of definitions and availability of data. Nonetheless, and accepting the caveats, the data do provide a broad picture of the position of women who operate at the top of the business world and within the public sector.

1.1 Private sector

Doubting the business case for gender diversity You don't need more proof, you need a small leap of faith.[5]

Studies have demonstrated that boards on which women are represented are more likely to be financially successful, have less likelihood of governance scandals and are less likely to operate in tax havens.[6] Moreover, when women are in leadership positions – for example, as a chief executive officer (CEO) – then it is more likely that there will be a subsequent increase in women directors. This suggests that the pipeline for the future supply of women leaders might be enhanced once women are in senior positions.

A McKinsey review of 100 companies against the Organizational Health Index (OHI) found that companies with three or more women in top positions (on the executive committee or board) scored higher than their peers.[7] Dow Jones concluded that the 'overall median proportion of female executives was 7.1% at successful companies and 3.1% at unsuccessful companies, demonstrating the value that having more females can potentially bring to a management team… for start-ups with five or more females, 61% were successful and only 39% failed'.[8]

Nonetheless, achieving gender-balanced leadership within the private sector remains a challenge for all countries. Globally, there are fewer women CEOs, fewer women members of boards and only a small proportion of organisations with three or more women on the board. While progress has been made in recent years, it remains slow. For example, few countries can demonstrate that, on aggregate, positions on public or private boards have reached the 30 per cent mark. The range of studies and analysis lead to the conclusion that fairness will not prevail for women in the short term without legislation for targets and/or quotas. More than 20 countries have adopted this path;[9] a measure that began in the political realm is gradually extending into the private sector.

Women hold over 12 per cent of board seats at the world's best-known companies, a rise of only 3.1 per cent since 2009. Among these top companies,

64 per cent have at least one female director and nearly 13 per cent have at least three.[10] Women make up a higher percentage of directors in developed markets (13.4%, up from 11.8% last year) than they do in emerging markets (8.8%, up from 7.4% last year). The percentage of women on boards of companies in tax havens is relatively low.

These overarching global figures mask considerable variation between regions. The 2014 MSCI survey shows that Nordic countries (29.5%) have almost nine times the percentage of women on boards that industrialised Asia (3.5%) has. Industrialised Europe (18.6%), Australia/New Zealand (16.7%), the Middle East/Africa (15.1%) and the United States/Canada (13.1%) are all quite some distance behind the front-running Nordics. Emerging Europe (8.9%), emerging Asia (7%) and the Americas (6.3%) are several percentages below. Three regions are primarily responsible for the slowly increasing numbers of women on boards: industrialised Europe (up 10.3%); Australia/New Zealand (up 8.1%) and the Nordic countries (up 6% from a higher baseline). The United States/Canada (1%) and other region (1%–2.5%) have moved very little in five years.[11]

Europe is recognised as the world leader on gender-diverse boards, but even within this region there are different approaches that have led to different results. Over a nine-year period (2003–2012), the proportion of women on boards in countries with legislated quotas increased on average by 16 percentage points; in countries operating corporate governance codes (CGCs) to effect change the increase was 7 percentage points; and in countries where there was no action the increase was just 1 percentage point, with a number of countries in minus figures.[12] The MSCI study of global trends confirms that the 'vast majority of the gains are coming from markets that have instituted mandates and regulations to boost the ranks of women on boards, while in markets lacking the regulatory "stick" the gains are minimal'.[13]

Nordic countries lead the way, with Norway seeing women comprise 39 per cent and Sweden 29 per cent of board positions. France and Italy rocketed up the rankings once they had legislation mandating quotas in place, at 28 per cent and 22 per cent respectively. Most of these countries, along with a number of other European Union (EU) members, have seen a burgeoning of boards

with at least three women. Over 80 per cent of French boards and two thirds of those in Italy now have at least three female directors.[14] While the proportion of women on boards in Europe, the Nordic countries and Australasia has risen by between 6 and 10 per cent in four years, the rest of the world is almost static at under 2 per cent in the same period.

Put another way, 100 per cent of the companies in Finland, Norway and Sweden have boards with at least one women, and for several other European countries the figure is 95 per cent (Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy) – considerably above the industrialised average of 66 per cent.[15] Industrialised Commonwealth countries that score above the average include the United Kingdom (86%) and Australia (70%), while Canada (65%) and Singapore (62%) fall just below. Industrialised countries' average for companies with at least one woman director remained static over the year while emerging countries increased their average by 7 per cent to 52 per cent. Commonwealth countries in this category whose company boards have at least one women are South Africa (94%), Malaysia (71%) and India (61%).

In most Asian countries, the percentage of women on boards is about half that in Europe, Australia and North America.[16] This is a region where young women are becoming more educated than young men and will soon constitute a larger proportion of the professional workforce; for example, there are 36 per cent more women than men in tertiary education in Malaysia. Commonwealth countries surveyed for a report on boards in Asia averaged 3 per cent in chief executive and 2.6 per cent in board chair positions.[17]

The proportion of female chairs of boards is just over 3 per cent globally, and there is virtually no difference currently in the proportion held by women in industrialised and emerging markets. The number of women assuming this role is moving at a glacial pace – women increased their share in industrialised countries by just 1.5 per cent over five years while the improvement for women in emerging markets was zero.[18]

Looking at 1,500 companies, MSCI points out that just 67 of them (4.5%) have female CEOs – a figure that has remained low throughout the five years of tracking. What is noteworthy is that the companies with female CEOs have on average 29 per cent more women directors compared to boards led

by men. This, and examining the companies that appointed female CEOs during the period of study, led MSCI to the conclusion that having a woman in executive leadership is likely to contribute to an increase of women on the board.[19]

1.1.1 Targets and quotas

Research by Adams and Kirchmaier (2012) also make clear that women are significantly under-represented among executive directors who sit on boards of publicly traded companies (private listed companies). They analysed the board composition of such companies in 21 OECD countries and India and found that in 2010 on average women accounted for 11 per cent of non-executive directors but only 5 per cent of executive directors on the boards.[20] Improving the gender balance at the top of companies is seen as one way of fostering wider gender equality within firms, but policy approaches differ across countries on how this objective is pursued, whether by promoting self-regulatory corporate governance codes (CGCs) and other soft measures or by imposing board quotas by law.[21]

Self-regulated targets

Reference to gender in CGCs, for example in Australia and the United Kingdom, is deemed to have some influence on the composition of boards in listed companies. Since January 2011, the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) CGCs have required that companies set measurable objectives for the increased representation of women on boards, among executives and throughout the organisation. Companies are also required to address pay equity and to report publicly against their targets on a 'comply or explain' basis. These policies brought about an immediate change at board level, with the percentage of women on boards rising slowly but steadily from 8.3 per cent in July 2010 to 10.9 per cent in March 2011, 13.4 per cent in December 2011 and 18.2 per cent in May 2014. Women comprised 31 per cent of new appointments to ASX 200 boards by 28 May 2014.[22]

In the United Kingdom the government-commissioned Davies Report asked the top 100 UK companies (known as the FTSE 100) to aim for a minimum of 25 per cent female representation by December 2015.[23] Lord Davies decided on balance not to recommend quotas but suggested

that Government should reserve the right to introduce prescriptive alternatives if there was not significant change led by business. By March 2015, women's representation on the FTSE 100 boards had reached 23.5 per cent, with 18 per cent on the FTSE 250 boards – although 23 of these latter remain all-male boards.[24] Lord Davis anticipates the 25 per cent target being met by the end of 2015.

There is no shortage of aspiring, talented women for boards,[25] but it is acknowledged that without a driven approach and the support of chairmen, search firms and businesses, many would not have been appointed to a board position – with the consequent loss of their talent to the economy. Given the considerable distance to go to reach gender parity on boards, the breadth of talent and the diversity of background and sectors from which women can come are factors that must be taken into account. In the United Kingdom at least it appears that there is little evidence of the supply of talent diminishing.

Regulated quotas and targets

So far, the introduction of targets and/or quotas through legislation has gained most momentum in Europe, where gender board quotas for publicly listed companies have been established in Belgium, France, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain.[26] But three of these countries tell different stories:

- In Spain, the law required 40 per cent female participation on boards by 2015 but the rate in 2014 stood at 12.8 per cent, most likely because there are no sanctions for non-compliance.[27]

- Italy introduced legislation in 2011 governing the election of board members by setting targets to increase the number of women nominees to 20 per cent in the first election and 30 per cent in the subsequent two elections. The result has been a sharp increase in the proportion of women board members from 8 per cent to 22 per cent, and 11 per cent of Italian boards are now chaired by women. Italy's legislation included sanctions for non-compliance: fines in the first instance and then, should non-compliance continue, elected directors lose their offices.[28]

- Even the anticipation of legislative quotas seems to propel change: before final enactment of the law in France, percentages of women on boards rose from 8.4 per cent in March 2009 to 12.7 per cent in March 2011, 16 per cent by January 2012 and 30 per cent in October 2013.[29] France's January 2011 legislation set out to achieve 20 per cent women directors by 2014 and 40 per cent by 2017.[30]

Still, the picture in the EU-27 countries is mixed, with 11 countries having no regulation or self-regulation, and more than half with less than 15 per cent female non-executive directors.[31] The slow pace of change prompted the European Commission to put forward a Directive in 2012 for a procedural quota establishing an objective for a minimum of 40 per cent of each sex among non-executive directors by 2020. The European Parliament voted to support the proposed Directive in November 2013, but it is still under discussion by the Council of the European Union in 2015.[32]

According to the World Bank's Women, Business and the Law 2014, six economies have established quotas for women on boards of publicly listed companies, although these quotas vary. For example, Rwanda's Constitution sets a minimum of 30 per cent for women and men on boards of publicly listed companies. Norway introduced mandatory quotas of 40 per cent in the Public Companies Act 2005 following less successful voluntary quotas. These are enforceable by fines, then de-registration from the Oslo Stock Exchange and finally dissolution. By 2008 more than 80 per cent of listed firms had complied.[33]

Legislating for quotas can have unintended consequences, however, or fail to bring about the impact intended. Some Norwegian companies changed their legal status with the aim of avoiding complying with the new legislation.[34] India introduced legislation in 2013 requiring stock exchange listed companies to have at least one women on its board, but it appears that some companies are not following the spirit of the law, choosing to appoint women with close personal ties to company personnel instead of qualified outsiders.[35] This raises the question of inserting review clauses into quota and other positive

action legislation in order to improve or re-direct measures for greater effect. Unlike Norway, India has not set severe penalties for non-compliance.

1.1.2 Commonwealth baseline

Work is ongoing to establish a baseline for women in senior leadership roles in the Commonwealth across the public and private sectors as well as the political sphere.[36] As many international bodies have found, beginning the task of compiling information to develop comparative datasets is challenging, especially when data are not always available, are generally not collected on a similar basis in each country and there are differences in definitions. Yet doing so would allow each country to benchmark progress against its baseline and against those of sister countries in the Commonwealth on its journey towards the globally recognised 30 per cent minimum requirement for women in leadership or the more stretching 40:40:20 (40 per cent of each gender and the remaining 20 per cent of either gender) or 50:50 targets favoured by some countries.[37] When established, the data will assist the monitoring necessary to ensure forward momentum and maintain success once targets have been reached. Currently, the information is partial.

Among Commonwealth countries, in addition to India only Malaysia and South Africa have quotas.[38] Malaysia's quota legislation has been in place since 2011 and is supported by women's leadership training and a database of those trained, which has led to 12 per cent women on boards. South Africa's legislation targets 50:50 male:female representation on boards, and although the legislation includes sanctions these do not seem to provide a deterrent given that the actual representation of women on boards is 18 per cent. India, too, has fines for non-compliance up to £0.5m, but it has struggled to reach its targets and women sit at 11 per cent.[39]

In Africa, Kenya, Malawi and Nigeria have regulatory bodies overseeing voluntary targets in CGCs. In Europe, the United Kingdom has instituted voluntary targets. In June 2014, a federal panel in Canada proposed that the Government should require 30 per cent female directors on boards by 2019, and in October securities regulatory authorities in nine Canadian provinces instituted new regulations for greater transparency and disclosure on women on boards, including targets

Commonwealth countries with 30+ private companies listed	
20% – 30%	United Kingdom (23%), Australia (22%), Vanuatu (22%), Nauru (21%), Ghana (20%)
15% – 20%	Jamaica (19%), Kenya (18%), South Africa (18%), Namibia (17%), Bangladesh (17%)
10% – 15%	Canada (12%), Malaysia (12%), Cyprus (11%), India (11%), Nigeria (10%), Singapore (10%)
0% – 10%	Sri Lanka (9%), Mauritius (7%), Pakistan (5%)

for their representation and policies on term limits for directors so as to create rotation to refresh the board.[40]

Only Rwanda (32 per cent) has exceeded the 30 per cent target in the Commonwealth, but on a very small number of private sector boards (five). Below is the percentage of women on boards for those Commonwealth countries that are represented by 30 or more companies in the data.

Globally, business remains broadly split on quotas, but the momentum is in their favour. In 2013, 55 per cent of global business respondents surveyed would not support the introduction of quotas to get women onto executive boards of large listed companies, versus 37 per cent who would, and female executives interviewed also expressed some unease.[41] In China, which led the percentage of women in senior management in Grant Thornton's International Business Report 2013, 72 per cent of respondents favoured quotas, which were seen as respecting 'the market value' and 'very helpful for avoiding risk and making good business decisions'. By 2015, those in favour of quotas overall had risen to 47 per cent, with the suggestion that it is 'not surprising that more people are seeing it as the best tool we have at this point in time, give the absence of progress'.[42]

1.1.3   Private sector executives

The Norwegian experience shows that while introducing quota legislation affects board membership, it does not immediately change the number of women in top management positions.[43] As indicated previously, just 4.5 per cent of the 1,500 companies worldwide that MSCI examined have female CEOs, virtually unchanged over five years, which chimes with the 3 per cent found for Asian chief executives.[44] Grant Thornton estimates that about 22 per cent of senior managers in mid-market business globally in 2015 are women, down from 24 per cent in 2014, itself a stagnant figure since 2007.[45] The Davies Report indicates

the next challenges to be fixing the low numbers of women chairs and executive directors as well as the loss of senior talented women from the executive pipeline.[46]

The most recent Grant Thornton study, *Women in Business: The Path to Leadership*, indicates Europe is bucking the trend slightly when it comes to executive leadership.[47] Globally, top jobs held by women have gone up just 3 per cent (19% to 22%) in 10 years. Across the EU, 26 per cent of top jobs are held by women compared with 17 per cent in 2004. Countries that have made the most progress over this period include two that have introduced their own national quotas – Spain (increasing from 14% to 26%) and France (21% to 33%) – as well as Sweden (18% to 28%). The United Kingdom, by contrast, has made relatively little progress (18% to 22%) and Germany has gone backwards (16% to 14%).

South Africa was the only Commonwealth country to appear in the top 10 countries, with 27 per cent of senior management roles held by women.

Little has changed in North America since 2004 with neither Canada (25%) nor the United States (21%) showing significant progress. Latin America seems to have reversed, with senior roles falling from 28 per cent in 2009 to 18 per cent today, while those with no women have risen from 34 per cent to 53 per cent. In Asia-Pacific, the proportion of senior roles held by women fell from 25 per cent in 2009 to 20 per cent today. The figure drops to just 13 per cent in the region's advanced economies, driven by Japan's very low 8 per cent – 66 per cent of Japanese businesses have no women in their senior leadership teams. The figure in Australia (22%) has not moved from a decade ago.

The Commonwealth's collated figures show that Botswana, at 37 per cent, was the only African country with more than 30 per cent female private sector executive leaders. Dominica (50%) and St Lucia (37%) were the only other countries to meet the 30 per cent mark.[48]

1.2 Public sector

Globally and within the Commonwealth, governments can lead by example on achieving gender equality at leadership levels in a number of ways, including enhancing the role of women at senior levels within the public service and in agencies and enterprises that are fully or partially state-owned. Governments increasingly recognise that diversity in the public sector, including gender diversity, helps to achieve fairness, transparency, impartiality and representativeness and improves service delivery through a better understanding of citizens.

Those in leadership positions in the public sector make decisions that affect the well-being and security of millions of citizens. Such decisions affect, for example, health (and how ill-health is treated), the education of children and young people and the degree to which economies are successful. Many of these issues pose complex challenges for governments and require a full range of talent to find new and innovative ways of addressing them. Governments across the globe are increasingly recognising the value of harnessing the full contribution and participation of women in such strategic decision-making arenas.

1.2.1 Cabinet ministers

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and UN Women summary of women in politics across the globe indicates that at 1 January 2015 women were 6.6 per cent of elected Heads of State, 7.3 per cent of Heads of Government and 15.8 per cent of speakers in parliament.[49]

Finland topped the rankings of countries with women holding ministerial positions at 62.5 per cent, and those countries that had 30 per cent or more women included Commonwealth members Canada, New Zealand, Rwanda, South Africa and United Republic of Tanzania. The ministerial portfolios held by women ministers were more likely to be in areas such as social affairs, the environment, family and children and women's affairs, while their least likely responsibilities were human rights, defence, finance, transport and parliamentary affairs.

The following table, based on the Commonwealth's collation of data, shows the proportions of women cabinet ministers in member States.

Rwanda topped the IPU/ UN Women rankings for women in parliament, one of three with over 50 per cent women; its lead over the next country was 10 per cent.[50] Eight Commonwealth countries had 30 per cent or more women parliamentarians in the lower or single house parliaments: Rwanda (63.8%), Seychelles (43.8%), South Africa (41.5%), Mozambique (39.6%), Uganda (35%), New Zealand (31.4%), Guyana (31.3%) and Cameroon (31.1%). Five Commonwealth countries had less than 5 per cent.

Percentage of women cabinet ministers, Commonwealth countries		
Region	No. of countries with 30% or more	Countries
Africa	6 out 18	United Republic of Tanzania (45%), South Africa (43%), Uganda (37%), Rwanda (35%), Kenya (33%), Ghana (30%)
Pacific	0 out of 11	The highest were New Zealand (25%) and Australia (20%)
Europe	0 out of 3	The highest was the United Kingdom (24%)
Caribbean/ Americas	1 out of 13	Canada (31%)
Asia	0 out of 8	India at 5% and Sri Lanka at 3% were the lowest figures for any of the countries in the Commonwealth

Women in senior civil service roles in the public sector, Commonwealth countries		
Permanent secretary		
Region	No. of countries with 30% or more	Countries
Africa	3 out of 13	Mauritius (37%), Seychelles (33%), Mozambique (30%)
Pacific	1 out of 5	Kiribati (50%)
Europe	0 out of 3	The highest was Cyprus (27%)
Caribbean/ Americas	12 out of 13	Grenada (86%), Antigua & Barbuda (69%), Jamaica (63%), St Vincent & the Grenadines (58%), Trinidad & Tobago (58%), The Bahamas (52%), Barbados (50%), Dominica (47%), Belize (44%), Canada (41%), St Kitts & Nevis (32%), St Lucia (30%)
Asia	1 out of 8	Malaysia (32%)
Directors and heads of departments		
Region	No. of countries with 30% or more	Countries
Africa	7 out of 12	Mauritius (58%), Lesotho (57%), Namibia (57%), Botswana (47%), Seychelles (45%), South Africa (38%), Mozambique (31%)
Pacific	5 out of 6	New Zealand (50%), Australia (40%), Kiribati (40%), Tonga (36%), Fiji (30%)
Europe	2 out of 3	United Kingdom (35%), Cyprus (30%)
Caribbean/ Americas	11 out of 12	Jamaica (65%), St Lucia (63%), St Vincent & the Grenadines (58%), Trinidad & Tobago (58%), Guyana (54%), St Kitts & Nevis (48%), Barbados (46%), The Bahamas (42%), Canada (42%), Dominica (40%), Belize (38%)
Asia	3 out of 7	Singapore (45%), Sri Lanka (37%), Malaysia (30%)

1.2.2 Civil service / public sector executives

There is less collated information globally on public sector leadership than the growing sources on private sector boards and executives. An Ernst & Young study of women public sector leaders documents the position across the G20 countries using data from official publications and governments sources.[51] The data are the most up to date and relevant available; they are mainly for 2011–2012 but some relate to 2005 or 2008. Six countries had more than 30 per cent women public sector leaders, the top four of which are Commonwealth countries: Canada (45%), Australia (37%), the United Kingdom (35%) and South Africa (34%).

On average, women in OECD countries occupy over 50 per cent of central government jobs but only 29 per cent of top managements positions in the 15 countries for which data are available,

including the United Kingdom. The highest share of senior positions (about 40%) is seen in Canada, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden. When they reach senior management positions, women are more likely to hold top posts in 'soft' portfolio ministries such as in socio-cultural ministries as opposed to ministries of defence, justice, interior and foreign affairs.[52]

Women fare better in senior positions in the public than in the private sector, particularly in countries with strong gender policies where there are more conducive working conditions across government departments, the civil service and state-owned enterprises.[53]

The research commissioned by the Commonwealth in 2015 showed that 'numbers for permanent secretaries are significantly higher for women in the Caribbean, where all but one country have reached and exceeded the 30 per

Women on state-owned enterprise boards, Commonwealth countries		
Region	No. of countries with 30% or more	Countries
Africa	7 out of 15	Seychelles (45%), Lesotho (34%), Namibia (34%), South Africa (33%), Uganda (31%), Rwanda (30%), United Republic of Tanzania (30%)
Pacific	2 out of 8	Australia (43%), New Zealand (37%)
Europe	0 out of 3	The highest, the United Kingdom, had 27%
Caribbean/ Americas	4 out of 12	Antigua & Barbuda (39%), Belize (33%), The Bahamas (31%), Dominica (31%)
Asia	0 out of 6	The highest, Malaysia, had 16%

cent benchmark. The figures for women holding positions as directors or heads of departments show a substantial presence. Among the 37 countries that submitted data, 70 per cent have at least 30 per cent of these roles held by women'.[54]

It is important to note that while Canada and the Caribbean have exceptionally high levels of women in public sector senior management, many countries in other Commonwealth regions have some way to go, especially in relation to permanent secretary posts. Their progress in leadership diversity may call for innovation in tackling the slow turnover in senior posts and traditional monopolies over roles.

1.2.3 State-owned enterprise boards

The OECD has published guidelines on state-owned enterprises (SOEs)/ supervisory boards,[55] recommending that boards should be composed to exercise independent and objective judgment. In its explanation, it states that 'diversity preferences may add value to Boards, but should not rise to the level where the ability to attract candidates with the right skills and capabilities is imperilled'. It reports that a number of European countries have added gender preference to their SOE board nomination process: for example, Austria has a minimum quota of 25 per cent and Sweden has a target of 40 per cent representation for both genders.

Insufficient attention is paid to collecting data on SOES and public boards. Commonwealth-collated data suggests a healthy position in some regions, with women comprising 30 per cent or more on these boards in 13 countries. Africa followed by the Caribbean are the strongest regions. However, the number of boards in Caribbean `countries is not high – for comparative purposes, the United Kingdom (27%) and Kenya (28%) have significantly larger number of public enterprises.

2. Successful Strategies, Impact and Reasons for Effectiveness

The following are different types of strategies that have been adopted by governments, public sector organisations and the private sector to advance women into leadership positions. The examples illustrate the rationale, the actions taken and the impact observed as well as deducing the reasons for their effectiveness. They are strategies that are proven to be successful and have been catalysts for similar action in other places. The strategies should not be seen as country specific but are chosen for their relevance to other organisations and jurisdictions.

2.1 Legislating for change – Norway

In 2000, only 5 per cent of board members in Norway were women and their earnings were 20 per cent lower than those of their male counterparts.[56] The Norwegian Government, supported by other political parties, took the innovative step of infringing on the private economic sphere to advance gender equality. The Minister of Trade and Industry steered a quota law through Parliament in 2003 that amended the Companies Act to require companies to appoint 40 per cent of the under-represented gender to their boards. It took effect in 2004 for all publicly owned companies (private sector listed companies), with a two-year transition period. New public limited companies were added in 2006 and by 2008 all public limited companies were covered. The regulations were later expanded to include the boards of all municipal and cooperative companies and then, under the Local Government Act, private limited companies where municipalities own two thirds or more of the shares.[57]

Strategy: Social democratic parties supported the innovative proposal by the conservative-centre government; both the unusual coalition of parties and committed political leadership were important. Politicians were the main proponents and industry the primary opponents in the major debates that took place around justice, skills and democracy. Women's organisations within political parties were active advocates, with important support from conservative women behind an intervention in

business affairs that was seen as controversial. The quota law was strongly promoted in the media and there was support from trade unions.[58]

Companies had a period of time to adjust and equip themselves to meet the quota requirement. To assist, a number of national, regional and sector-specific databases were established, some by state directorates. Some databases had open registration while for others there were requirements such as undergoing board training or prior board experience. The largest Norwegian employers' association recruited companies to a Female Future programme where their CEOs identified talented women in their companies for training and networking opportunities towards leadership and board positions. However, companies did not make as much use of the databases as they could have, preferring to recruit board members they knew personally.[59] Effective sanctions, identical to the customary sanctions for breaches of company law, were part of the legislative package, right up to forced dissolution of non-compliant companies. These were critical to successful implementation; when there were no sanctions during the initial phase, many companies did not voluntarily implement the policy.[60]

Impacts: Between 2002 and 2009 the percentage of women on boards increased from 6 per cent to 40 per cent; over the same period the representation of women on private limited companies that were not subject to the new law varied very little, rising from just 15 per cent in 2002 to 17 per cent in 2009. There has been no real impact on women holding positions as chairs of boards or company CEOs. A survey in 2009 indicated improvement in board functioning with new perspectives around the table, additional agenda items and more discussion and new competences that were formerly lacking.[61] Other improvements are said to include nomination committees widening their hunt and being more thorough, criteria widening not weakening to bring in members with specialisms new to the board, enhanced professionalism and positive impact on private companies not covered by the law.[62]

While some firms switched corporate status to avoid compliance,[63] most boards rose to the challenge of securing female candidates. The risk taken by politicians to 'push the envelope' has been rewarded with general consensus that a legislative quota is an effective approach. Norway's leadership on quotas led to a Europe-wide debates on quotas, with several countries following its lead.[64] A draft directive for a minimum of 40 per cent for the under-represented sex by 2020 has been passed by the European Parliament (but awaits support form the Council of Ministers representing national governments).

Reasons for effectiveness: The quota law provided the initial step up that women needed to break the cycle of exclusion from corporate ranks. The sea change in women's representation on boards was due primarily to the legal underpinning of government policy, particularly the inclusion of effective sanctions that encouraged compliance. The transition period gave companies lead-in time to seek qualified women, train potential female candidates and prepare for conformity with the law. The quota helped to overcome business prejudice by giving exposure to talented women and showed that fears of not being able to find qualified women candidates for boards were unfounded.[65]

2.2 Comprehensive strategy – Canada[66]

The Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) recognises that diversity and inclusion provide an intellectual capital advantage and create a stronger market presence, which can help ensure continued company growth. RBC set up its first task force on the status of women over 40 years ago. With offices in several Commonwealth countries,[67] it has a solid record in Canada of attaining a significant proportion of women in executive roles as well as in middle management to feed the pipeline to senior posts.

Strategy: RBC adopted an integrated multi-level approach to diversity led from the top, complimented with activities generated further down the organisation. This includes:

1. Diversity is stated as a core value in corporate values and business strategies.

2. A strong commitment to diversity is signalled by top leadership, who champion diversity across the organisation though

the RBC Diversity Leadership Council (DLC) established in 2001, chaired by its President and CEO and comprising senior management representatives globally.

3. The DLC meets regularly to set and review strategy, action plans and progress toward specific diversity and inclusion targets; the model is replicated in RBC regions and business areas.

4. A Diversity Blueprint identifies priorities, goals and commitments with specific timelines across three pillars.[68]

5. A rigorous approach is taken to monitoring and data analysis to understand impact, and includes transparency on women's progress with gender-disaggregated data.

6. Quarterly results reporting provides accountability with trends and actions reported to the board.

7. A Diversity Centre of Excellence operates at the heart of the bank, supporting managers and initiatives on diversity.

8. Employee resource and networking groups connect with management's diversity initiatives and are encouraged to support career development.

9. Work/life balance initiatives and flexible working options are promoted.

Impacts: In 2013, with 63 per cent of its Canadian workforce female, women held 31 per cent of RBC board positions, including chair, and 38 per cent of executive and 46 per cent of middle management positions; senior executive roles included chief officers for finance and for brand and communication. Senior managers in different business areas have responsibility for diversity objectives, and diversity has become integral to business planning, decision-making and practice. New initiatives have been spawned, such as a Women in Leadership programme launched in 2013 to extend high-level development and networking opportunities. RBC has strengthened its reputation and brand and is recognised for its good practice.

Reasons for effectiveness: Convinced that diversity is integral to business success, RBC leaders acted decisively to align diversity and business strategies and transfer the results-

oriented approach normal in business to achieving progress on diversity. They demonstrated solid and consistent commitment to gender diversity, put in place an implementing structure and adopted clear policies and targets to embed diversity within regions and business areas. Changing organisational culture was high on their agenda, including through female role models at senior levels to evidence and reinforce culture change and inspire other women to seek executive and board positions. Executive and management were expected to dismantle barriers, provide leadership development opportunities, build a sustainable talent pipeline and be accountable for reaching diversity targets.

2.3 Male Champions of Change – Australia

The Australian Human Rights Commission prompted the establishment of Male Champions of Change (MCC) in 2010 with 21 CEOs, department heads and non-executive directors from across business and federal Government. The aim is to achieve a significant and sustainable increase in the number of women in leadership positions through influencing and mobilising senior male leaders to lead action across a framework of four themes:[69]

1.   Stepping up as leaders.

2.   Creating accountability.

3.   Disrupting the status quo.

4.   Dismantling barriers for carers.

Strategy: Senior male leaders are expected to signal and create momentum for change, lead on breaking traditional patterns and integrating gender equality across business, stand for accountability in reaching targets, counter negative presumptions and low expectations by asking '50/50: if not, why not?' and positively address the challenges facing family carers.

In 2014, Chief Executive Women (CEW)[70] and MCC together launched The Leadership Shadow,[71] a model of actions and behaviours for strengthening leader effectiveness in driving progress on equality. The purpose is to get a clear perspective on the shape, clarity and reach of the 'shadow' one casts as a leader in order to be more effective in making a difference. To achieve the multiplier effect, CEW and MCC invited their colleagues to reflect on their leadership shadow, seek feedback from peers, understand and prioritise opportunities for improvement, set goals and take action – and then restart the process.

MCC members also piloted and implemented a number of initiatives. For example, they worked with a group of chief purchasing officers and business leaders to find simple ways to build momentum by encouraging action among their suppliers and more opportunities for women in a market with the potential of impacting on 54,000 suppliers and $30 billion of procurement spending.[72] They launched a supplier multiplier initiative outlining clear actions that could effect change. One result was that the Commonwealth Bank of Australia introduced a change to its

Model of individual actions and behaviours for senior leaders	
What I say	• Develop a compelling case for gender balance
	• Provide regular updates and celebrate progress
How I act	• Be a role model for an inclusive culture
	• Build a top team with a critical mass of women
	• Call out behaviours and decisions that are not consistent with an inclusive culture
What I prioritise	• Engage senior leaders directly
	• Play a strong role in key recruitment and promotion decisions
	• Champion flexibility for men and women
How I measure	• Understand the numbers and levers and set targets
	• Hold self and team to account
	• Get feedback on own leadership shadow

supplier conditions, including equal pay and parental/carers' leave, and developed a database of women-owned business from which to facilitate increased procurement.

MCC provides opportunities to share lessons on innovative initiatives and good practice. The Australia and New Zealand Banking Group's (ANZ) 'Notable Women' programme supported mid- to senior level women to increase their public profile through speaking engagements and media appearances. Citi's 'Reverse Mentoring' programme provided mentorship for senior men by mid-level women and created sponsorships, while its 'Just One More' approach set goals to hire a minimum of one senior woman into an approved open role in different parts of the business. The impact of the last was significant – in 2011, 75 per cent of Citi's business achieved the goal with a 9 per cent year-on-year increase in female senior vice president roles and above. Momentum continued with a 24 per cent increase in 2012.[73]

The Citi scheme was a model for the Plus One initiative,[74] where ANZ's CEO sought to inspire his team to increase women in management by at least 1 per cent in 2013 towards a long-term goal of at least 40 per cent. The CEO committed to increase the number of his female 'direct reports' by at least one. His senior team then asked their 'direct reports' to make a similar commitment, and so on. The Plus One initiative opened discussion in the ANZ on the importance of gender balance, the CEO's and senior team's commitment to gender targets, and the need for all managers to actively reverse the trends that favoured men so that ANZ's aspirations could be reached. Conversations created momentum and provided insight into resistance and barriers to be tackled.

The initiative was launched on International Women's Day 2013 with a number of pledges already banked. Pledges were made publicly and tracked, with a simple online sign-up process that allowed managers to make their pledge and view the list of colleagues who had signed. More than 500 leaders signed up within six weeks and this grew to 2,000 pledges. Teams with lower representation of women in their management ranks were seen to be making the most pledges. The pledge helped shift representation at senior levels, and momentum was built among mid-

level managers who make the majority of hiring decisions within the organisation. The initiative created personal engagement and accountability.

MCC member Telstra introduced 'All Roles Flex', a company-wide innovative approach to flexibility following a pilot in one of its business units. The pilot repurposed recruitment forms, encouraged approaches from applicants to explore flexible working, held training workshops for recruiters and managers on leading teams with flexible workers, and role modelled flexibility among executives. Women's share of the applicant pool rose by more than 15 per cent and of job placement by 35 per cent. Flexibility is now considered the 'starting point' for all roles, and managers must present a clear business reason that flexible working is not possible in a role instead of employees proving the need for a flexible arrangement.

Impacts: MCC monitors its own progress and progress among its members.[75] The leadership shadow model was shared with 2,200 Australian Securities Exchange (ASX)-listed entities, more than 350 leaders were briefed directly and the model is part of a workplace gender equality toolkit. MCCs have undertaken more than 100 speaking engagements on gender equality and committed to the 'Panel Pledge' to increase women's representation in public forums, panels and taskforces. They piloted a practical guide to replicating the MCC strategy at national, state and sector level. MCC convinced the ASX Corporate Governance Council, which sets the governance principles for the 2,000 public companies in Australia, to adopt a new reporting approach that includes gender diversity.

On a company basis, 27 per cent of MCC corporations achieved gender balance across their key management personnel, 91 per cent exceeded the benchmark for their industry and 100 per cent of those that have not achieved gender balance have a strategy in place to build leadership capability in gender equality. Thirteen corporations provide development programmes on inclusive leadership to company leaders, while 75 per cent of MCC organisations have embedded targets to improve women's representation in leadership in senior executive key performance indicators.

Almost 70 per cent of MCC organisations achieved gender balance in graduate recruitment programmes, while 58 per cent of those with talent development programmes achieved 40 per cent

female representation in mid-management level programmes and 25 per cent achieved balance in senior level programmes; there is recognition that more progress is needed here. In other areas, 71 per cent of MCC companies improved the gender balance of external hiring; 76 per cent have formal sponsorship programmes ensuring women's equal access to opportunities; 93 per cent completed a gender pay gap analysis, with 85 per cent taking action as a result; and 100 per cent have a formal policy on flexible working.

A number of MCCs changed their supplier codes of conduct to include gender-balance expectations, and two MCC members are tracking spend with women-owned enterprises in their supply chain.

Reasons for effectiveness: MCC is comprised of powerful men from some of Australia's most prominent organisations who 'don't want to take no for an answer'.[76] As men with hands on the levers of power, they are well placed to disrupt the status quo to create change and have access to influential governance and other bodies to drive change more widely from a higher level (e.g., through the ASX Corporate Governance Council). Regular face-to-face meetings are a critical component, with key men personally invited and delegation of representation not permitted. Honest dialogue and courageous leadership is expected. MCC members adopt a practical approach, apply business skills to problem analysis, target setting and reporting for diversity, and see progress as a matter of line management and relentless execution. They learn and replicate from one another and appreciate thinking through how to implement change as a form of personal coaching by peers. As 'leaders in charge' they create the space for innovation and pilots. Their capability in gender equality is strengthened by support from the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), which initiated the MCC, and their partnership with CEW, which represents senior women across all sectors and is committed to 'women leaders enabling women leaders'.

3. Analysis of Baseline Data and Identification of Strategies for Universal Application across the Commonwealth

While women's share of senior management roles in business globally rose by 3 per cent from 2012 to 2013, they still held just 24 per cent of such positions;[77] and movement is not always forward but can slip back, as 2015 showed with a 2 percentage point drop.[78] Moreover, the figure masks variation among regions, among countries within regions and among sectors within countries. No Commonwealth country has cracked the glass ceiling for women across all sectors.

The research evidence points to women making a difference when they are at senior executive and board level. McKinsey indicated in 2007 that companies with three or more women in top management functions delivered 10 per cent better return on equity;[79] while Grant Thornton showed in 2013 that companies with more women in top positions achieved 16 per cent higher return on sales and 26 per cent higher return on invested capital.[80] Alexander Mann estimated the value of improving the talent pipeline for women to be worth around £5 billion per year to the United Kingdom.[81]

3.1 Leadership from the top

As articulated clearly by MCC and CEW in Australia, 'the path to lasting performance improvement on any priority – like gender balance – starts at the top'.[82] The critical factor in bringing about substantive change is solid leadership commitment that is visible in behaviour and practice. It is essential for top leaders to sustain their engagement in driving change, especially if it is to happen at a satisfactory pace. This is the reason that MCC made responsibility personal to the most senior executives in organisations and developed a checklist of questions for these CEOs to direct at themselves on speaking out, acting, prioritising and measuring what gets done (and does not get done).

3.2 Speeding up change

Despite the spotlight on women's leadership, the situation remains resolutely stuck with little change in the position of women in business in some regions and retrenchment in others. There was no progress in Canada, little in South Africa and Botswana is dipping. In Asia-Pacific women's share dropped 5 per cent in five years, and Australia has not progressed in a decade. The reversal in Latin America has been dramatic, with the proportion of senior roles held by women having fallen by 10 per cent in five years and businesses with no senior women jumping by 20 per cent to more than 50 per cent.[83]

The evidence reveals that legislated change, especially when underpinned with penalties, brings results. There has been progress in EU countries where women have advanced 9 percentage points in 10 years to a 26 per cent share of top jobs. Countries with quota provisions are making the most improvement – France, Spain and Sweden increased by 10–12 percentage points while the United Kingdom made 4 per cent. Norway shows that the fastest progress is made when quotas are legislated as women's share there leaped 34 percentage points in a similar 10-year period. Germany slid back, but is expected to move forward now that its quota law has been passed. At the same time, 59 per cent of businesses in Europe still have no female leaders, so the EU directive is awaited from the European Council.

MCC members are of the opinion that change is happening too slowly, at least in Australia, which is still a long way off meeting the ambition of 50 per cent women in leadership. Simply, 'the numbers are the numbers and when we miss a diversity target, it's no different than if we missed a customer-satisfaction target or any other target'.[84] Christine

Lagarde, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, who was once opposed to quotas, is now an advocate.

3.3 Changing culture

It has been suggested that gender quotas are not a global solution as they need to fit within a country's cultural expectations of authority, with talk about 'tight' cultures and 'loose' cultures: 'tight' is where authorities are more likely to strictly enforce policies and demand higher levels of compliance and people are more likely to accept and adhere to top-down policies such as gender quotas; 'loose' is where countries are less likely to reinforce egalitarian practices even where they believe in equality.[85] For Commonwealth comparison, Pakistan is regarded as 'tight' and New Zealand as 'loose'.

Yet the examples of successful strategies and practice demonstrate that interrupting the status quo and challenging and changing culture is exactly what is required in order to remove unconscious as well as conscious bias and other barriers to diversity and inclusion that prevent women from moving easily through the pipeline to the most senior posts. This realisation is perhaps part of the reason why quotas are becoming less controversial, along with acknowledgement that the pace of change is too slow. The International Business Report indicates an 8 per cent increase in business support for quotas, putting it at almost 45 per cent globally in 2014 and up another 2 per cent in 2015. The support is highest in Asia Pacific (71%), Latin America (68%) and South East Asia (55%).[86]

The challenge is enormous, and the Hay Group suggests that setting targets is necessary but not sufficient to stimulate the scale of change required. Workforce modelling in the United Kingdom shows that 'if the Civil Service were to insist that from today the proportion of new roles to be filled by female candidates be increased by 5 per cent per annum (assuming 5% turnover) then parity would be achieved in 2025 by which time 80 per cent of all promotion successes/posts would need to be filled by women. If we were to be even more aggressive and insist that the proportion filled by female candidates increase by 10 per cent per annum then parity would be achieved by 2022 by which time 96 per cent of all posts would need to be filled by women.'[87]

3.4 Organisational change

In examining the examples of successful strategies, it is clear that it is not necessary to choose between them to improve the position of women's leadership – they are not mutually exclusive options. There is no contradiction between having strong legislation; developing comprehensive integrated strategies with deep reach across and down into organisations; and senior leaders taking up the role of champion to model, drive and hold accountable those to whom they delegate responsibility for implementing change. In fact, an approach that connects all three can be a more powerful instrument for change.

What is significant about the examples is that they focus on legal, cultural and structural change in organisations and their surrounding environment. Whether the approach is to prompt dramatic change or to introduce change in phases, effective strategies can be characterised as more 'root and branch' than tinkering with a few policies and initiatives. Regulating and compelling people to act or taking a results-based business approach to delivery on a voluntary basis both require leadership, drive and accountability. Furthermore, consequences are considered in all cases – whether these are sanctions and penalties for non-compliance or less effective corporate performance that loses market share because the company has not availed itself of all the available talent.

Quotas or targets on their own are not a sufficient answer. For examples, quotas drive necessary change at the top but they do not solve the supply of women coming through the pipeline further down the organisation. To be consistent and sustainable, diversity and gender equality must be rooted deeply in the organisation. However, quotas and women who are successful in getting onto boards or into senior positions should not be scapegoated for failures and problems in the structure and system further down. Nor should capable women have to wait until the downstream is fully sorted out. As the Commonwealth Bank of Australia found in setting targets, it takes longer to improve on the averages lower down because of the larger numbers involved.[88]

3.5 Changing behaviour and practice

The dynamics of discrimination can be subtle, and attention is now being devoted to understanding and tackling unconscious bias in both the public and private sectors, starting with senior people, managers and those engaged in recruitment exercises. The research finding that every female focus group raised the topic of unconscious bias among leaders in the civil service and among ministers is not likely to be confined to a few countries.[89] Progress on this front cannot be left in the realm of 'changing attitudes' but should be evidenced in changed behaviour and practice that results in improved performance.

RBC is an award winner for gender equality whose strategy for change can be universally applied. It has multiple elements that are connected, co-ordinated and activated at many levels and across regions. Diversity is a stated core value in corporate values and business strategies. Strong commitment to diversity by leaders is evident in their actions as diversity champions, ensuring that targets are met. Action plans have goals, targets and specific timelines. There is a systematic and consistent multi-level management responsibility that reaches across geographical areas and cascades down through the organisation. Transparent and accountable systems are in place for disaggregated data collection and analysis with reporting against targets. To these can be added sharing lessons and good practice, celebrating success and making women leaders visible.

3.6 Supporting women

A further suite of strategies focuses on women themselves, as individuals and as a group. This is an important piece of the jigsaw but not a substitute for the driven systemic approach to organisational and cultural change that is a hallmark of successful initiatives. Strategies focused on women's development include mentoring, coaching and sponsorship, peer networking and power networking. Women enabling women is an important strand that includes women's networks, making women leaders more visible and creative use of female role models as well as sharing career stories and successful tactics. Executive training is an element but, as has been noted, the assumption is that women alone need to be trained for board

membership while men have long been board members without having to attend courses that qualify them for their positions.

In countries where there have been efforts to drive up women's share of board positions, fears that there would not be enough experienced, capable women to fill the seats have proved unfounded, and there is little evidence that the supply of talented women is diminishing. Initiatives have developed to fill what was a perceived (rather than real) gap: databases of women (e.g., Global Board Ready Women Database), profiles of capable women and showcasing women ready and willing to serve. The breadth of female talent and diversity of background and sectors have expanded.[90]

4. Stakeholder Roles

The first of the Women's Empowerment Principles – the result of a collaboration between the UN Global Compact and UN Women and adopted by almost 1,000 business leaders around the world – is 'to establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality'.[91] This includes affirming high-level support and directing top-level policies for gender equality; establishing company-wide goals and targets for gender equality and including progress in manager performance reviews; engaging internal and external stakeholders in the development of policies, programmes and plans to advance equality; and ensuring gender-sensitive policies and an inclusive corporate culture. Responsible leaders are expected to ensure a minimum of 30 per cent participation of women in decision-making and governance, lead by example and leverage influence to multiply impact.

Whatever the sector of society, the essential element needed for effecting change is deep commitment; that is, the will to change and the will to make change. Lack of political will, and of leadership will generally, is often identified as the main failure in making progress on women's leadership. The 'will' must be more than a statement of principled support; it must be a solid commitment that is evident in behaviour, practice and performance whether in the public or private sector. Change may happen eventually without leaders taking responsibility, but it takes much, much longer.

4.1 Government's enabling environment

Government must establish the enabling environment through legislation and public policy; for example, ensuring gender equality in all aspects and at all levels of the education system, including in non-traditional areas, career advice and programmes that root out gender stereotyping and conscious and unconscious bias. On employment, legislating for employment-protected paid maternity/paternity/parental leave is crucial along with an effective strategy that will actually be implemented for comprehensive, accessible and affordable childcare that meets the needs of working parents and employers.

Of course, governments must ensure that there are laws in place that are effectively enforced to tackle discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, including indirect discrimination, and legislation to extend working possibilities through flexible and part-time work. This includes ensuring that the discriminatory gender wage gap is eliminated through strong legal frameworks covering all forms of discrimination in pay, recruitment, training and promotion; these must be both enforced and seen to be enforced.

Tackling discriminatory practices is not sufficient but must be supplemented with positive action on developing and extending opportunities to redress the legacy of disadvantage arising from gender inequality. Attention is needed to reducing barriers to and positively acting in favour of women's entrepreneurship, including access to finance, benefiting from public and private sector supplier lists and procurement opportunities, and participation in business networks and trade delegations.[92]

Essentially government ministries must mainstream gender in the design, development and evaluation of policies and budgets and in departmental practices on management, staffing and appointments to public boards and SOEs.

Political leaders must consider the implications of stagnation and backsliding in relation to women's access to leadership. The implications for women are obvious, but there are also concerns surrounding the quality of any leadership talent pool with 50 per cent of its potential members missing, stunted business growth and the appropriateness of public policy design when exclusionary practices exist. Grant Thornton notes that every year they publish results on women's leadership in business, the result disappoints.[93]

The actors with their hands on the levers to change the framework must ask themselves: 'How long can we wait for significant change in women's share of leadership positions across political, economic and social life in our nation, the Commonwealth, globally?' Is it time to legislate for change through quotas or target-setting, even with legislation that contains a sunset clause?[94] At the very least, governments should set stretching targets

for corporate boards and work with corporate governance machineries to ensure leadership in delivering results;95 where significant forward movement is not forthcoming, stronger measures with sanctions should be taken.

4.2 Government ministries and commissions

A **public service ministry** (or equivalent) has a central role in setting diversity targets, gender strategies and action plans aimed at reaching gender balance in the organs of the state. In the United Kingdom, for example, expert opinion suggests that the Civil Service (CS) is losing significant talent due to culture and ways of working; this is a deep-seated and systematic challenge requiring a profound change in leadership capability; and there is a risk that the CS will be no longer fit for purpose if this is not addressed.[96] Given the level of women in public sector leadership in other Commonwealth countries, it is safe to assume that this rigorous study points to lessons for others.

A public service ministry (or equivalent) should lead a 'whole of government' approach to gender equality that includes tackling organisational culture and practice. It calls for a senior CS team of champions led by the head of the service and reporting to the minister, and with access to gender expertise, to tackle institutional bias including the tendency of senior people in organisations to recruit in their own image. The team should agree, lead and monitor implementation of an action plan to deliver women's access to senior CS roles and to retain and promote women at various levels within departments to secure a sustainable pipeline of women coming through. This should be complemented by the head of the public service introducing personal responsibility with a clear accountability mechanism for meeting gender diversity objectives for top leaders and managers in the CS, public bodies and SOEs.[97]

The **ministry for women's affairs** (or equivalent) should have both 'inward-facing' and 'outward-facing' responsibilities with the necessary resources attached. It should act as the 'conscience' for gender equality inside government and across the public sector. This includes working in partnership with the public affairs ministry, pushing up gender equality standards and access

to leadership in the CS, keeping pressure on implementation, and monitoring and 'calling out' successes and failures in process, progress and meeting targets. The women's affairs minister should not only speak out publicly and support initiatives on women's leadership but also work with the public affairs minster and the prime minster to instil the responsibility to be a gender champion on leadership in all government ministers.

As the lead on women's affairs, the ministry should pay special attention to working with ministries of trade, development, investment and finance (and equivalent) to influence the inclusion of strong gender components and highlight government expectations of companies in relation to gender targets in boardrooms and executive leadership, in SOEs and in all work with private sector corporations and businesses. The ministry, or a public appointments commission if one exists, should also issue a code for ensuring gender diversity in public appointments. It should pay regard to scrutinising gender balance in government supplier lists and procurement processes and contracts, along with driving gender budgeting to the heart of government.

Sitting as an independent public body outside government, an **equality and human rights commission** (or equivalent) has several avenues for action. It could develop programmes around gender, democracy and good governance and instigate, support and advise creative partnerships such as male champions and women's leadership networks.[98] It should pursue cases of gender inequality in appointments and promotions and lay down legal markers. It might use appropriate investigative powers, perhaps conducting strategic investigations into inequalities in governance arrangements within sectors where they fail on gender. It should track and audit performance on gender equality plans, including specifically women in decision-making and leadership, and publish findings and/or report to parliament or parliamentary committees to increase transparency. It should include progress on women's rights and equality in decision-making, leadership and governance in its regular reports to the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and in its universal periodic review (UPR) to the UN Human Rights Council, as well as to any regional rights and equality reporting mechanisms and in its own annual reports.

4.3 Corporate governance machineries

A proper corporate governance framework is of fundamental importance to exercising board responsibilities for stewardship and accountability. Corporate governance institutes make major contributions to national and international debates on the formulation of policy and development of best corporate governance practice. They bring together a critical mass of expertise and interest to bear on subjects and provide training and good governance standards.[99] Boardroom diversity and gender equality in the corporate sector should be an integral part of their considerations.

Corporate governance codes (CGC) should be used to promote gender-balanced company boards by setting measurable objectives for the increased representation of women on boards, among executives and throughout the organisation. They should address pay equity, gender equality policies and term limits for directors so that boards can be refreshed. They should require companies to report publicly against their targets on a 'comply or explain' basis. Where this has been done, it has brought about an immediate change at board level.[100]

Key world economic bodies, such as the IMF, World Bank, International Finance Corporation and OECD have an important role in strengthening corporate governance capacity at institutional level, with regulators at market level and at firm level in regions around the world. In strengthening their gender equality and diversity work, they should specifically highlight women's leadership as one of the strands in women's economic empowerment.

4.4 Private sector

'Gender diversity is one of the greatest organisational challenges of our time. Everyone accepts the business case, everyone agrees it is the morally right thing to do yet very few, if any, major employers have made sufficient progress to reap the identified benefits.'[101]

Private sector chairs of boards and chief executives must step up to the challenge in their firms and networks and in public. As business leaders, they can champion change; set targets and strategies; measure progress and expect accountability for results; disrupt the status quo to challenge presumptions about standard working arrangements; make recruitment practices more inclusive; insist on gender-disaggregated data; create space for innovation and take risks; introduce equality, diversity, inclusion and unconscious bias training; provide flexible working arrangements; encourage men as well as women to take parental leave; and see childcare as a company issue. 'If you open the dialogue, they [managers] will figure out how it can be done. If you wait until everyone agrees, then it will never happen. In the end, it's up to leaders to take a stand.'[102]

Business leaders can promote women seeking leadership roles and enable them to become more visible through mentoring and sponsorship, nominating women for public events and speaking out about female invisibility on all-male public platforms. It is their responsibility to encourage the corporate world and the business environment to become more women-friendly and to enable it to work as well for women as it does for men. A network of prominent businessmen can instigate, influence and multiply effects through peers, shaping corporate governance codes to include diversity and ensuring accountability.

4.5 Civil society

Women's business and senior executive networks are important to the growth and development of new waves of women leaders. They can provide experience and guidance on gender diversity in business, databases of qualified and competent women, leadership and governance training and networks of support and solidarity that empower women as leaders. Their members are inspiring role models for other women, and they are advocates for women and women's leadership to government, business and the media

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are an asset in advancing women's leadership. They advocate women's rights and gender equality across a range of priorities and concerns, with a key area being decision-making and leadership in the community, politics (national and local government) and public life. Many CSOs worldwide promote women's economic independence through providing training and encouraging their employment, entrepreneurship and access to credit. Women's organisations are consistent campaigners for flexible working arrangements, childcare and ending violence against women, of which sexual

harassment at work is part of the spectrum – issues identified as central to transforming workplace culture and women's chances of reaching the top.

Increasingly the link between the leadership and economic empowerment agendas is being made by women's organisations who advocate for gender-sensitive budgets and economic planning and press for gender equality in government appointments to public boards. Expert in consulting women and representing their views, CSOs' important monitoring role helps the UN's CEDAW Committee and Human Rights Council hold governments to account by submitting shadow reports to the treaty bodies.

Stronger connections between women's CSOs and women's business networks would help to increase mobilisation and advocacy on gender-balanced public, private and not-for-profit leadership. Senior women in CSOs should consider, and be considered for, appointments to public and private sector boards as they often manage complex organisations and have governance skills from sitting on voluntary and charitable boards. In common with other sectors, CSOs must also address the leadership position of women among their own ranks. While CSO staff is largely female, the highest positions in many organisations are held by men.[103]

5. Recommendations to Bring about Change

5.1 Regulating targets for diversity

Recommendation 1: Government should introduce legislation to provide for representation of the under-represented gender on the corporate boards of companies that are wholly or partly owned by the state or municipalities and all listed companies to a minimum of 30 per cent, or 40 per cent of either sex or 50:50 parity. The legislation should include sanctions similar to normal company law sanctions up to dissolution for non-compliance.

OR

At the very least, government should review diversity in corporate boards and set out the diversity targets it expects companies to achieve in their board composition. This target should rise to a minimum of 40 per cent representation of the under-represented gender within a period of no more than eight years. Clear interim targets should be set, with government indicating its intention to legislate if progress is not being made on a voluntary basis.[104] Government should monitor and review company progress annually.

Recommendation 2: Corporate governance councils should include diversity guidelines and recommendations in their corporate governance codes on which companies should be required to 'comply or explain'. This should include meaningful disclosure of the proportion of women on boards and in senior management, search and nomination processes, term limits for directors, the company's gender diversity policy and progress on meeting gender objectives. Companies should be expected to set up committees for devising strategies for gender diversity, regularly review the ratio of women to men at all levels and use advertising and outreach strategies to reach a wider audience. Companies should be expected to raise the achievement bar year on year until gender balance is reached in leadership positions at all levels.

Recommendation 3: Executive search firms should have a voluntary code of conduct that includes standards and requirements for gender equal selection for the board and senior executive recruitment exercises they assist companies with. This should be supplemented with seminars, workshops and other initiatives. Such firms should be accredited by the corporate governance councils.

Recommendation 4: Government supplier lists and procurement processes should include gender diversity requirements, and corporations' supplier codes of conduct should expect gender balance of their suppliers and review progress regularly. In addition to seeking gender balance within supplier organisations, the public and private sector should actively seek to include and track spending on women-owned enterprises in their supply chain.

Recommendation 5: Government should ensure gender balance in all public bodies and government committees. These should have term limits so that they can be refreshed with new talent. Women should comprise a minimum of 50 per cent of all new appointments so that public boards and committees are progressively re-balanced equally.

Recommendation 6: Government appointments to all its public bodies should be inclusive and transparent. A central appointments unit should be established to hold information on all public board vacancies and to work with ministries on best practice and reviewing job specification and advertising strategies to improve transparency and accessibility. Where there is not one in place, consideration should also be given to appointing a commissioner for public appointments outside government to provide a public appointment code and to monitor, review and report on public appointment performance in meeting the principles of fairness, openness and transparency and the application of diversity quotas or targets.

5.2 Leadership-led comprehensive integrated strategy

Recommendation 7: The drive for diversity must be led from the top. The board chair, chief executive and senior executive team should be trained on equality and diversity issues and develop clear governance and accountability mechanisms to deal with gender equality across the organisation. The leadership should regularly articulate and demonstrate personal commitment to equality and diversity. A committee comprised of senior leaders should meet regularly to set and review strategy, action plans and progress. Leaders and managers should take personal responsibility for delivering on equality and diversity targets and objectives and these should be included in their individual performance assessment reviews. This approach should be cascaded down through management levels in the organisation.

AND

In the case of the public sector this should be led by the permanent secretary/ head of civil service in the public service ministry (or equivalent central department) working with the chief secretaries of other ministries and reporting to the minister.

Recommendation 8: There must be a comprehensive strategy in place to integrate diversity into operations across all regions and levels. There should be a clear framework of gender equality principles signed off by the board, senior executives and managers in the organisation. Diversity should be stated as a core value in corporate values and business strategies. The strategy should encompass action plans that have clear objectives, measurable targets, timeframes and accountability mechanisms. There should be key performance monitoring indicators.

Recommendation 9: A timeframe should be established of no more than eight years to reach a 30 per cent or 40:40:20 balance on the board. Director term limits should be introduced to ensure member turnover and a refreshed board. Effective outreach and nomination strategies should be established, especially to women's business and executive networks, women entrepreneurs, female executives of cooperatives and senior female executives in the public, not-for-profit and charitable sectors. A skills audit is needed and recruitment should be undertaken against identified need, considering different specification categories and backgrounds to bring diverse expertise to the board. Women should be considered for key roles on the board such as board chair, chair of audit and risk committee, etc.

Recommendation 10: The board should specifically address the representation of women in its senior executive team and establish a time-bound plan for redressing imbalances. It should consider first steps such as adding 'one' to senior executive and management teams; offering 'shadow' roles to emerging women leaders where there is not an immediate opportunity to add to the team; and fast-tracking high-potential candidates by giving them the right job experience and profile. It should plan for succession by ensuring it is nurturing a strong supply of qualified and talented women throughout the company to act as a sustainable pipeline to senior leadership. It should make certain that effort is sustained to avoid slowdown.

Recommendation 11: Reporting should be transparent and include monitoring on the basis of sex-disaggregated data, as well as collection of qualitative information from women.[105] This should cover all levels and opportunities, including monitoring of appointments, promotions and allocation to important projects and opportunities, to ensure that women are not losing out on opportunities downstream that limit their chances for success in applying for executive roles.

Recommendation 12: An effective enabling framework should be provided through operational policies and adjusting and remodelling workplace practices. Robust anti-discrimination measures should be in place and be applied. Recruitment, promotion and development processes should be continually evaluated and adjusted. Working practices should be critically reviewed and approaches evolved that are more conducive to retaining and assisting women in their career progression – for example, demonstrating senior level approval by making work-life balance enablers[106] available to senior managers, regardless of gender and family status, and flexible work arrangements standard practice for everyone rather than the exception unless there are clear business reasons why not. There should be active encouragement and support to return to work after career breaks for maternity and caring. Opportunities should be offered to undertake and lead short projects while on leave to

maintain skills and career pathway. Shared caring responsibility between women and men should be promoted, and employees who are parents should be consulted to find solutions to caring responsibilities.[107] Positive action approaches could be applied to improve under-representation or to remove barriers that negatively affect one gender more than the other should be creatively explored. There should be a presumption and momentum for change by thorough interrogation of policies and asking 'If not, why not?'.

Recommendation 13: Organisational culture should be transformed. A model should be developed for senior leaders and managers to use to examine and improve their individual commitment and approach to delivering on diversity. Training introduced on unconscious bias, equality, diversity and inclusion should prioritise leaders and managers in the first instance to raise awareness of the biases that influence perceptions, judgement and behaviour around what constitutes merit. Diversity expertise could be enhanced by, for example, developing an in-house diversity centre of excellence, calling on external diversity experts for guidance and support and introducing an external challenge function to the board and senior management by appointing an independent member charged with diversity oversight.

Recommendation 14: Incentives should be provided for aspiration, practical support and development opportunities for female executives, including potential new female executives, and learning for male executives. There should be in-house networks along with encouragement and time for women to join external women's executive and business networks. Both gender-balanced and women-only leadership development programmes should be offered. There should be opportunities for both young and more senior women executives to be noticed through appearing on conference panels, being part of government or business delegations and being spokespersons on the media. A combination of mentoring opportunities should be set up, where women are mentored by key men and by successful women, and men are 'reverse' mentored by women to improve collaboration and approaches to improving organisational culture, tackling unconscious bias and removing barriers in traditional workplace practices.

5.3 Change multipliers and public policy environment

Recommendation 15: Equality/women's ministries and/or equality and human rights commissions should support the development of senior women's networks such as women in business and women's executive networks as 'women leaders enabling women leaders' networks. Databases and profiles of board-ready women should be developed along with training in corporate governance skills, inspirational initiatives, role models and mentoring for emerging women leaders. These networks, as well as women's organisations, should be regarded as 'critical friends' to government, supporting positive gender equality initiatives, constructively critiquing strategies and advising on improvement.

Recommendation 16: Equality/women's ministries and/or equality and human rights commissions should initiate champions for change. They should encourage prominent male business figures to set up leadership networks with the aim of promoting women's leadership within their own organisations and through influencing and mobilising senior male colleagues. Male champions should work to break down barriers, disrupt the status quo, make business culture more inclusive and challenge leadership forums where women are invisible.

Recommendation 17: Networks should collaborate in leveraging support. Networks should work smartly together, sharing lessons, partnering on initiatives, prompting public opportunities to make women leaders visible and seeking to multiply their impact by drawing in like-minded organisations. The ministry for women (or equivalent) should bring together a cross-sectoral strategic advisory group of women and men.

Recommendation 18: Government must ensure that the right enabling environment is in place. This includes legislation protecting paid maternity/paternity/parental leave and outlawing discriminatory employment practices and sexual harassment. Government should exercise rigorous oversight to ensure that gender equality is practised at all levels of the education system from early years to higher education and careers advice. Attention should be paid to building the self-confidence and self-belief of young women and developing a portfolio of skills and competencies

for leadership. It should prioritise an effective childcare strategy, designed in consultation with employers and civil society stakeholders, that delivers accessible and affordable childcare to comprehensively meet the needs of working parents and employers.

Recommendation 19: The ministry for women's affairs should work with other ministries to establish robust gender-sensitive systems to track and analyse government budgets. Ministries should seek to understand the impacts of underinvestment in areas critical to women's employment, career advancement and access to executive leadership positions; and redirect funds towards childcare, women's entrepreneurship and areas affecting women's opportunities in the economic and productive spheres. Re-profiling budgets should include investment in women's civil society organisations that have expertise in government planning and budgeting processes.

5.4 Commonwealth acting together

Recommendation 20: The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) should encourage diversity targets in the public and private sectors on boards and in executive and management positions in all Commonwealth countries. A Commonwealth database should be developed to collect country data within a comparative framework and provide for benchmarking against other Commonwealth members, track progress and inform reports to the CHOGM on progress on women's leadership throughout the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth institutions should continue to support members in working towards gender-balanced leadership across all sectors and at all levels, with opportunities for sharing strategies, lessons and best practice as well as annual reports of progress and results.

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106. E.g., flexible working, part-time working, condensed/compressed work week, teleworking, measures to accommodate pregnant or breast-feeding women, carer leave.

107. E.g., subsidies for childcare; employer-provided childcare facilities, day care and after care.

The Commonwealth

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