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# Guidelines for Implementation

The Whole System Approach in addressing Violence  
Against Women and Girls in the Commonwealth

June 2022



The Commonwealth

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# Foreword



Gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental principles of the Commonwealth, based in the commitment to promoting a rights-based approach in all areas of its work. The Commonwealth has a strong foundation of commitments, conventions and treaties that it acts upon to achieve gender equality. This commitment is also reflected in the 2013 Charter of the Commonwealth, which recognises that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential components of human development and basic human rights.

In 2015 and 2018, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs) reaffirmed their commitment to mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women and girls into development, and to prioritising the issue in line with the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and within the work of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Two years into the global COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that, besides the economic and social shocks, the consequences of COVID-19 have worsened existing gender inequalities and triggered an even more challenging environment for women and girls. There has been an alarming rise in violence against women and girls, and in cases of harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; child, early and forced marriage; and human trafficking. The pandemic has also exacerbated problems related to employment trends, social development, economic empowerment, the digital divide, women's health, girls' education and the particular vulnerabilities of small states, among other areas.

There remains much more to do to achieve gender equality in the Commonwealth, and to deliver Sustainable Development Goal 5. As the full impact of the Covid-19 pandemic widens inequalities experienced by women and girls, laws and policies to support women's empowerment are needed now more than ever before. It is vital that we are not diverted from this priority by other competing demands. Ministers for women and gender affairs established a Ministerial Action Group as a mechanism to monitor responses to Covid -19, as well as other emerging issues related to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the Commonwealth. The Secretariat has further designed several programmes to accelerate progress on critical issues impeding women's progress, including the Commonwealth Says NO MORE campaign against domestic and sexual abuse, a project on eliminating gender- discriminatory laws and a methodology to measure the cost of gender-based violence.

The contribution of women and girls will be vital as we work together to build back better and to shape a common future that is fairer, more inclusive, more equal and more sustainable.

I encourage the use of this implementation guide focusing on the Whole System Approach to support the efforts of governments, agencies and organisations to prioritise prevention of violence against women and girls through collective action. This will contribute to building a solid foundation for the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment across the Commonwealth, with the potential to save lives.

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland, QC

Secretary-General of the Commonwealth  
June 2022

# Acknowledgements

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# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
<b>CHOGM</b>	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>CWF</b>	Commonwealth Women's Forum
<b>CWP</b>	Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians
<b>DAW</b>	Division for the Advancement of Women
<b>DFID</b>	UK Department for International Development
<b>DV</b>	Domestic Violence
<b>ECOSOC</b>	United Nations Economic and Social Council
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
<b>FGM</b>	Female Genital Mutilation
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence
<b>GCF</b>	Green Climate Fund
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>GR</b>	General Recommendation (CEDAW)
<b>HBV</b>	Honor Based Violence
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HSV</b>	Herpes Simple Virus
<b>ICT</b>	Information, Communication and Technology
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organization
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate Partner Violence
<b>LGBT</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
<b>MDG</b>	Millennium Development Goal
<b>MEWC</b>	Make Every Woman Count
<b>MSME</b>	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise
<b>NAP</b>	National Action Plan
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NWM</b>	National Women's Machinery

<b>OHCHR</b>	United Nations Human Rights Office
<b>RAPCAN</b>	Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
<b>SACO</b>	Savings and Credit Organisation
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SDGC/A</b>	Sustainable Development Goals Center for Africa
<b>SDSN</b>	Sustainable Development Solutions Network
<b>SRH</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UN DESA</b>	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNESCAP</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>VNR</b>	Voluntary National Review



# 1. How to use this guide



The guidelines for Implementation: The Whole System Approach in Addressing Violence against Women and Girls provides a collaborative framework between Commonwealth member country governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Associations, partner organisations, experts on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and civil society organisations (CSOs).

The aim is to create an easily accessible pathway by means of which Commonwealth member countries can evaluate their current progress, set realistic targets and create a framework to support and enhance gender equality and women's empowerment within the Commonwealth. The Guidelines aim to:

1. **Raise understanding and build the competencies** of Commonwealth member country government staff, alongside women's affairs ministries, partners and experts; this can assist with more effective implementation of further good practice to help achieve SDG 5
2. **Support the enhancement necessary** to meet SDG 5, focusing on effectively addressing violence against women and girls

(VAWG), enabling those involved in the work to optimise ways to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment.

3. **Draw out good practice and support** the development of efficient SDG 5 partnership platforms around the Commonwealth.

These Guidelines are aimed at practitioners, policy-makers, government officials, multilaterals, CSOs, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and individuals who wish to create positive action on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The Guidelines are structured to provide the reader with an easy way to obtain knowledge on the frameworks for change, the current situation, case studies that illustrate good practice, tools to assist in enhancing work in this area, how to engage in partnerships and campaigns, and how to measure success and evaluate the work.

Here is where to find key elements of these Guidelines:

- **Section 3 - Good Practice**
- **Section 4 - Good Practice**
  - Case Studies
  - Partnerships and Campaigns
- **Section 5 - Good Practice**
  - Measuring Success

## 2. Examining the issues

### 2.1. Understanding violence against women and girls



'Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression... Our endeavours must be about the liberation of the woman, the emancipation of the man and the liberty of the child.'

**Nelson Mandela (Majange, 2015)**

Gender equality and women's empowerment are cornerstones to a just, thriving and sustainable world. Gender equality means that women and men, girls and boys have equal power and equal opportunities regarding education, personal development, access to political machinery, the rule of law and financial independence. One of the most crucial aspects in achieving gender equality is the empowerment of women and girls.

Many forms of inequality face women and girls around the world – regarding access to education, healthcare, financial freedom, ability to work, recognition of informal work, freedom of choice to leave the home, property ownership, independent travel and access to technology. One of the most profound and insidious inequalities women and girls face is endemic and escalating violence and abuse.

Globally, one in three women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by any

perpetrator in their lifetime. In 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) published key facts on the current status of VAWG. These include the following:

- Violence against women – particularly intimate partner violence and sexual violence – is a major public health problem and a violation of women's human rights.
- Most of this violence is intimate partner violence. Worldwide, almost one third (27 per cent) of women aged 15–49 years who have been in a relationship report that they have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.
- Violence can negatively affect women's physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health, and may increase the risk of acquiring HIV in some settings.

'There has been a great deal of injustice done to more than 50 per cent of the world's population. And we need to do something about it. I mean it's stupid! It's stupid for us to sideline 50 per cent! What is wrong with your mathematics? Fifty per cent you shove to the side. It doesn't make sense at all!'

**Desmond Tutu (Majange, 2015)**

'COVID-19 proved to be a time of exponential increase with respect to violence against women and girls. As we move beyond the initial COVID -19 crisis, we see that multistakeholder collaboration is more important than ever.'

'The COVID-19 pandemic, which necessitated isolation and social distancing, enabled a second, shadow pandemic of violence against women and girls, where they often found themselves in lockdown with their abusers.'

**Sima Bahous, UN Women Executive Director (2021)**

The UN Women report *Measuring the Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during COVID-19*, published in 2021, reported that:

- Almost one in two women reported that they or a woman they knew had experienced a form of violence since the COVID-19 pandemic. Women who reported this were 1.3 times more as likely to report increased mental and emotional stress as women who did not.
- Approximately one in four women are feeling less safe at home, while existing conflict has increased within households since the pandemic started. When women were asked why they felt unsafe at home, they cited physical abuse as one of the reasons (21 per cent).
- Some women specifically reported that they had been hurt by other family members (21 per cent) or that other women in the household were being hurt (19 per cent).
- Within the Commonwealth, it was reported that:

**It is important to remember that VAWG is preventable. One of the most important levers we have to combat this violence and abuse is the SDG 5.**

## 2.2. COVID-19 impact on gender equality in the Commonwealth

The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that people, organisations and governments coming together can make a difference in saving lives and communities. An appreciation of the interconnectedness of humankind has emerged. However, the impact of COVID-19 has also caused untold damage to people, societies and economies. This has affected progress in attaining the SDGs.

The hidden pandemic of domestic and sexual violence escalated and intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Containment measures to address the coronavirus saw workers furloughed, schools closed, and women and children trapped at home with their abusers. This resulted in high incidence of calls to domestic violence helplines, increased from 25 to 500 per cent across Commonwealth countries. In response, governments have called for global campaigns such as the Commonwealth Says NO MORE in collaboration with the NO MORE Foundation.

The unequal impact of the pandemic on women and girls has threatened to roll back decades of progress achieved by the global community. Concerns include women's jobs being twice as vulnerable to the impact of COVID-19 than those of men; increases in the rates of gender-based violence; and higher numbers of girls compelled to leave school to work and pushed into sex work or forced marriages as families seek to recoup lost income.

Following the outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020, Commonwealth Ministers met virtually on 3 September 2020 and resolved to establish a Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Action Group as a mechanism to monitor the responses to COVID-19, and other emerging issues, as well as commitments and implementations in accordance with the four Commonwealth gender priorities: (i) women in leadership; (ii) women's economic empowerment; (iii) ending violence against women; and (iv) gender and climate change.

Ministers reconvened virtually on 26 April 2022 to continue their efforts to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on gender inequality in the Commonwealth. Of particular concern for Ministers was the increased levels of violence, and the disproportionate burden of the economic downturn borne by women and girls.



'It is important to remember that VAWG is preventable. One of the most important levers we have to combat this violence and abuse is the SDG 5. We are seeing surging numbers of emergency calls to helplines – with rises between 25 and 500 per cent, dramatic increases in internet searches for support for those affected by domestic violence, and higher numbers of domestic homicides. These are extremely disturbing trends, which must not be ignored.'

**Commonwealth Secretary-General Patricia Scotland (2020)**

The critical role of Ministers for Women and Gender Affairs in strengthening gender equality and the rights of women and girls cannot be understated. To address gender-based violence, countries are establishing or expanding helplines, crisis centres and one-stop shops, and boosting country-wide advocacy. Furthermore, to ensure that the COVID-19 recovery leaves no one behind, it should include women and diverse voices from the onset, to enable inclusive and sustainable recovery at the local, national and international levels.

Inclusive COVID-19 recovery programmes undertaken by member countries have highlighted a wide range of initiatives rolled out across the Commonwealth to support gender equality and the rights of women and girls. These have included cash transfers, childcare subsidies, resource provision, job support schemes and training for strengthened economic empowerment.

### 2.3. The Sustainable Development Goals and the Commonwealth

The UN SDGs are based on five key principles that can also help measure progress: a plan of action for 'People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships.' These goals aim to mobilise global efforts to end poverty, foster peace, safeguard the rights and dignity of all people, and protect the planet. There

are 17 SDGs, designed to meet these key principles. (For further information and historical context, see Appendix A). These Guidelines look at ways to meet SDG 5.2, which requires governments to 'achieve' gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by 2030.

The Commonwealth Charter promotes human rights and also commits governments to eliminating 'all forms of discrimination, whether rooted in gender, race, colour, creed, political belief or other grounds' (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2013). Gender equality and women's empowerment are recognised as essential components of human development and basic human rights.

An inclusive society aims at empowering and promoting the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic or other status. It is a society that leaves no one behind. The Commonwealth strives to ensure that societies are open and inclusive to all.

Empowerment of women and girls is a necessity for the very development of a society, since it enhances both the quality and the quantity of the human resources available for development. Empowerment is one of the main procedural concerns when addressing human rights and development.

There is a global equality disparity between men and women. In health, education, work and access to technology; with regard to participation in elections; in their access to justice and the rule of law and to leadership positions; in terms of recognition of their unpaid work and of their subjection to harmful practices, women and girls face barriers to achieving their potential simply because of their gender.

These barriers manifest in many ways and can look different for different women. Some women lack access to money let alone mobile bank accounts, some are unable to own their own land, some cannot get the healthcare they need. These and a myriad of other barriers facing women make inequality and poverty deeply intertwined. As a result, women earn less, own fewer assets and are underrepresented in the economic and political decision-making process. Consequently, they remain unequal in society and enjoy fewer benefits.

The Commonwealth faces unique challenges with regard to the implementation of and reporting on the SDGs. The SDGs have a date for completion of 2030, with set targets to implement, including establishing appropriate systems and procedures to monitor, evaluate and report on the outcomes of this work. Challenges in implementing the SDGs differ from country to country. Meanwhile, COVID-19 has waylaid progress through population isolation, immediate healthcare needs and issues with access to vaccines. That being said, the most commonly cited challenges in attaining the SDGs are insufficient financial resources, lack of adequate and high-quality data, and incomplete sets of indicators.

Achievement of the SDGs will require creative ways to collaborate using good practice as well as cost-efficient and effective services, programmes and campaigns. Also imperative will be investments in effective data collection and alternative methods of funding programmes, including through both private and public and international and domestic resources. Countries are facing financial meltdown as a result of fuel costs, rapid inflation and the outcomes of COVID-19. In the face of this, good practice financing and budgeting should form a part of any strategising for SDG implementation if possible.

Member countries may wish to conduct a quantitative assessment of the economic costs of violence as well as the capacity to support gender-responsive financing to achieve the SDGs, including implementation and delivery, in their national budget documents.

The Commonwealth has committed itself to the attainment of gender equality and women's empowerment in member countries. International commitments and treaties such as the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are vital components to achieving SDG 5.

Gender equality, and thus efforts to combat VAWG, is a human right. In 2015, Commonwealth Heads of Government reaffirmed their commitment to gender equality and empowerment, through prioritising an end to VAWG along with the eradication of poverty and the right to education and health (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2015: 7; Commonwealth Secretariat, 2017a: 4).

These are also illustrated in:

- The Commonwealth Charter 2013
- Commonwealth Priorities for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment 2017–2020 and Beyond
- The Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21
- The Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2021/22–2024/25

The Commonwealth seeks to build on these instruments by promoting and implementing a variety of ways to achieve SDG 5, including the Whole System Approach (WSA), seen as a cost-effective and efficient route for member countries to follow to tackle the shadow pandemic of VAWG.

## 3. The Whole System Approach to address VAWG

### 3.1. A new approach



The methodology, the Whole System Approach (WSA), has proven particularly successful in addressing VAWG. This is demonstrated in the evidence base built in research and studies and in the case studies that follow. This incorporates a recommended approach to interact with all sectors of society, a whole systems approach, both within and outside government.

The WSA, incorporating the public, private and voluntary sectors, creates the bedrock for integrating sustainable, proactive, innovative and straightforward processes and protocols that save lives. This is within the context of the Commonwealth's focus on prioritising an end to VAWG and eradicating poverty while promoting gender equality and economic empowerment under the Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21.

This innovative methodology is designed to highlight the situation that millions of women and girls in the Commonwealth are in, along with manageable, straightforward steps that can be taken in member countries. The WSA process is flexible to adapt to different national requirements and the changing landscape for women and girls and to make it possible to measure the true results of this work. This process is a journey, and takes time; it is inclusive and dynamic, responding to the needs of each Commonwealth country, mission and local cultural aspirations. The difference this work makes has been seen in Commonwealth countries that have applied the models and case studies included in these Guidelines. The work will impact all sectors of society. The integrated partnership approach has been successful in countries already and will help foster discussions between governments and local and Commonwealth missions.

### 3.2. The Whole System Approach: components for strong multi-agency partnerships and advocacy in addressing violence against women and girls

This guidance covers the components shown to be integral to a successful response to VAWG, including good practice examples that may be applied locally. Preventing and responding to VAWG effectively should be a priority for governments, agencies, voluntary organisations, businesses, employers and donors. It is important to consult young people to inform policy making.

The COVID-19 pandemic, the climate emergency and humanitarian crises have exposed and fuelled the worsening inequalities and discrimination experienced by women and girls. There have been increased reports of gender-based violence, and an estimated additional 13 million girls are at risk of forced marriage (UNCHR, 2022).

According to WHO (2019), one in three women around the world experience physical or sexual violence, mostly from an intimate partner. Children in violent households are three to nine times more likely to be injured and abused, either directly or while trying to protect their parent (Hall and Lynch, 1998). Violence and the threat of violence can stop girls from going to school, from being able to choose if and who they marry, and from reaching their full potential. VAWG is a fundamental human rights violation, affecting all countries, from low-to middle- and high-income countries (Ki-Moon, 2014).

Governments that have ratified relevant international treaties such as CEDAW have clear obligations to protect their citizens. The active and meaningful participation of women and girls in the decisions that affect their lives, families and communities is essential for upholding their human rights, ensuring their effective protection and supporting their empowerment.

Beyond the immediate and devastating human impact, VAWG also runs up billions of dollars a year in direct and indirect costs, whether in lost work, healthcare costs, hospital fees or police time. The global cost of VAWG was estimated at US\$1.5 trillion in 2016, equivalent to approximately 2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) of Canada. (UN Women, 2016). The Commonwealth Secretariat applied its methodology to the

Seychelles economy in 2018 and estimated that the country loses over \$65 million each year to VAWG – 1 per cent higher than the country's annual education budget (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019).

Empirical studies suggest a high return to combating VAWG and provide a strong economic case for preventative and co-ordinated action. Every US\$1 spent on preventing VAWG generates between \$5 and \$20 in social returns (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2020). Studies have shown that preventing violence against women can also lead to productivity gains in the private sector (CARE Report, 2018).

VAWG has significant impacts on victims/survivors, families and communities. The service provision available for victims/survivors may be fragmented, with poor communication and collaboration between professionals, agencies and organisations.

#### The benefits of implementing the Whole System Approach

The pioneering WSA encourages co-ordination and integration of law enforcement, justice systems, healthcare, child services, educators, researchers and advocacy responses. Training is provided to ensure that VAWG policies, protocols and procedures are in place, increasing victim/survivor safety and improving the assistance provided. This strengthens the ability of services to work together, to provide better support, keeping the survivor at the centre of the process.

There is a clear understanding of what each agency and organisation can deliver, including roles, resources and protocols. Protocols help ensure accountability, and usually include information-sharing. Risk and contextual information is collected, analysed and shared at the very earliest opportunity so that decisions and urgent referrals can be made based on essential information. This may include working in small groups or having risk assessment meetings across agencies, enabling rapid mobilisation to reduce the risk of serious harm.

Early evidence in interagency collaboration involving several sectors responding to domestic and family violence shows benefits to service systems and providers as well as service users (Macvean et al., 2018). The NO MORE Foundation, in collaboration with global partners, allies, civil society, individuals and NGOs, has worked over the past nine years to



foster ways for different sectors to create positive change addressing SDG5, specifically ending VAWG. They have found that working effectively across sectors has helped to mobilise action and transform service provision.

### Multi-agency risk assessment

After an agency undertakes a risk assessment, the information is shared on the highest- risk domestic violence cases (high risk of serious harm/homicide) between police, health, child protection, housing and specialist advisers, and other specialists from agencies and organisations. After sharing the information, the agencies work together to discuss options to increase the safety of the victim and any children affected, and develop a co-ordinated action plan. Many vulnerable children are identified through the risk assessment process.

### Specialist Domestic Violence Courts

Significant international evidence suggests that dedicated Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs ) offer a better way to prosecute domestic violence perpetrators and keep victims safe. In the UK, the SDVC Programme was developed following several independent evaluations. These included two evaluations of seven specialist court systems that demonstrated that, by adopting particular working practices, significant improvements could be made to outcomes. Existing court systems are utilised, at little cost, with clustering of court listings or a combination of cluster and fast-track court processes.

Good training and dedicated staff, safe court facilities and strong multi-agency partnerships improve the criminal justice response.

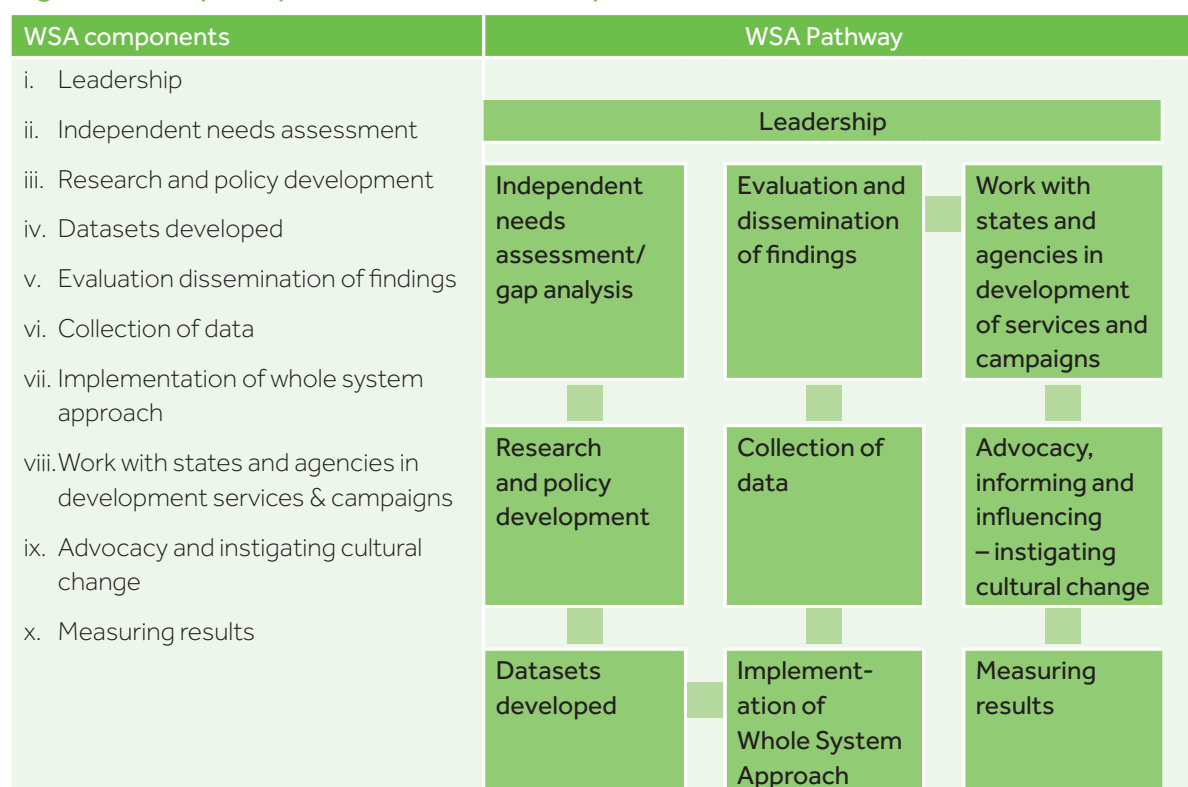
### WSA components

The strategic focus for the WSA is aligned with the obligations of the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development, recognising the ambitions and challenges of the 54 member countries of the Commonwealth.

The WSA recognises emerging contextual issues and challenges related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the existential threats of climate change, as well as global, social, economic, health and social shocks affecting the rights and empowerment of women and girls in the Commonwealth.

### The WSA pathway

There are ten steps required for the successful implementation of the WSA, as indicated in Figure 3.1. The pathway builds on strategic partnerships with development agencies, governments, the private sector, civil society and interested parties at all levels of decision-making. It aims to increase the skills and expertise of professionals, including practitioners and policy-makers. The pathway will be results- focused and encompass policy advocacy, consensus-building, digital and in-person campaigns, risk assessment, research and knowledge production.

**Figure 3.1 Steps required for successful implementation of WSA**

### Success factors

Implementation of the WSA pathway aims to build new relationships, strengthen existing partnerships, facilitate communication, and provide tools and resources to improve delivery on SDG 5.2, as well as share information, widen sensitisation and increase programme reach.

Over time, implementing the WSA has the potential to bring about sustained change to the social and economic status of women and girls within member countries. This can be facilitated through supportive partnerships and coalitions, ownership and commitment by all actors to the envisioned change.

Moreover, the WSA aims to address digital inequality, as the pathway will be delivered within existing resources, capacity and ability available on the ground within member countries. Furthermore, the WSA will facilitate the design and development of appropriate monitoring and evaluation methodologies to share knowledge and best practices.

The WSA has proved effective in reducing the prevalence of VAWG in specific contexts. The WSA has been successfully applied in the UK, Cyprus, New Zealand and Australia in co-ordinated community responses. It is also applied across national NO MORE chapters to address the impact of VAWG (Buzawa et al., 2015).

Member countries may wish to adapt the WSA to support their delivery of SDG 5.2. To achieve equitable outcomes for women and girls in the Commonwealth requires decisive, targeted and co-ordinated actions with international organisations, governments, public authorities, business and civil society bodies.

In the face of limited financial resources as member countries prioritise their domestic COVID-19 responses, the WSA provides a valuable opportunity for collaboration, learning and sharing of expertise across different policy areas. The WSA pathway further provides a roadmap for intervention that can be measured to enhance programmes and projects to deliver on SDG 5.2.

Agencies and organisations are often responding to one aspect of an issue and often have their own processes and responsibilities. The WSA enables a joined-up approach to enable agencies and organisations to work more effectively together to help keep survivors and their children safe from harm.

Going forward, outputs and milestones for the WSA should be periodically monitored, reviewed and updated in collaboration with strategic partners to improve data and enhance planning and programme performance for the delivery of SDG 5.2.

## 4. Guidance to create change

### 4.1. Guidance for implementing the Whole System Approach for gender equality



The Whole System Approach is framed as a holistic way of working in partnership between national and local government, civil society and the voluntary sector to deliver a national reduction in VAWG. Inspired at a local level by the co-ordinated community response model, it understands that, to succeed, it needs joint working and leadership at a high government level.

The WSA is defined as working in partnership collaboratively in a non-partisan, apolitical way with organisations, states and bodies to eliminate the incidence of VAWG and domestic violence and deliver SDG 5.2. Outcomes prove the validity of the approach, with culturally sensitive solutions that include the private, public, government, voluntary and civil society sectors. At the core, the approach recognises that, to achieve sustainable results, the main areas of delivery are protection, provision and prevention, which must be addressed in equal measure.

Through the WSA, we can create a strategy that generates the changes needed to support member countries to advance towards SDG 5. Ten principles make up the WSA. Briefly described below, this chapter goes on to explore these principles in depth.

1. Leadership – the aspiration to address and deliver SDG 5.2 in a Commonwealth member country must come from the highest levels of government;
2. Developing a legal framework for SDG 5.2 – ensuring that all sectors of society, in and outside of government, understand the definitions, deliverables and legal frameworks supporting SDG 5.2 ;
3. Creation of an independent needs assessment and gap analysis – the proposed self-assessment will generate a gap analysis of needs;
4. Developing datasets and monitoring instruments;
5. Setting national strategy and action plans;
6. Allocation of a gender-responsive budget;
7. Research and policy development;
8. Co-ordination of a multisectoral response;
9. Implementing the strategy and developing and delivering services; and
10. Evaluating the work and measuring success.

The WSA has a distinct process that will assist member countries towards meeting SDG 5.2 objectives. This process enhances the WSA principles and ensures a robust delivery plan. Delving into the WSA principles is vital to have a robust understanding of how to achieve SDG 5.2.

### Leadership

The aspiration to address and deliver SDG 5.2 in a Commonwealth member country must come from the highest levels of government. It is important that countries and their constitutive elements lead interventions to work towards delivering SDG 5.2. Many departments and areas will be impacted by VAWG, from including health, maternal and children services, criminal justice, education, legislation, the judiciary and others. Departments should be engaged and agree on the strategies and action plans necessary to address VAWG. Without commitment from government bodies, as well as partnership working across the public, private and

voluntary sectors, proposed initiatives may lack impact. Such an effort often requires visionary and dynamic leadership.

The chart below examines the different areas of work under the various departments of government with regard to SDG 5 deliverables, in this case related to SDG 5.2.2 on VAWG. Not all institutions have these exact mechanisms for delivery.

### Areas of work towards SDG 5.2 – VAWG – by department

Leadership goes beyond government. It also comes from and must be cultivated throughout society, which is reflected in the WSA. Partnership is key, with strong leadership to help involve organisations and people in the approach. Leaders should come from all sectors of society, reflecting the cultural elements that work in a particular country or constitutive element where the WSA is being applied. An example of good practice leadership is demonstrated in Box 4.1.

#### Box 4.1 Case Study: The Whole System Approach to end domestic violence in the UK – the role of The Rt. Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

Facing the stark reality of VAWG, and the imperative of making a real change in the way millions of women and children live in the world, has been the life's work of the Secretary-General. She has actively sought solutions to difficult and overwhelming issues for more than 25 years, ensuring the centre of her work has always been the voice of the victim. In response to the overwhelming need to bring all sectors of society together and co-ordinate a unique response to provide prevention, protection and provision for victims of VAWG, the WSA was created by the Secretary-General to address domestic violence. The work began comprehensively in 2003, when the Secretary-General was made Minister of State for the Criminal Justice System and Law Reform at the Home Office and Deputy to the Home Secretary.

Traditionally in the UK, there had been no systematic assessment of risk faced by domestic violence victims, nor had there been a co-ordinated response from agencies as a result of sharing information about risk. As Minister, the Secretary-General launched pioneering work streams that included multi-agency risk assessment conferences, a 24-hour helpline on domestic violence, risk assessments to assist the police and first responders on the risk of lethality for each victim, and training of the police, the prosecution, judicial, healthcare (including midwives) and education providers, employers and government on VAWG and domestic violence.

Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) were established, where fast-tracking and clustering of domestic violence cases on a designated day each week or each month enhanced the effectiveness of the court and the support services. Dedicated prosecutors were created, along with specially trained magistrates and legal advisers. Separate entrances, exits and waiting areas were provided for victims, so they did not face the risk of being confronted by their attackers while attending court. Screens were provided for testimony, as well as video links. Frontline police officers were trained on investigating domestic violence, while accredited independent domestic violence advisers

offered victims one point of contact during and after their case. Special measures were provided for vulnerable victims giving evidence in court including behind a screen, or via video link. This has been made available in all courts.

The Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 (c 28) was an Act of Parliament concerned with criminal justice and legal protection and assistance to victims of crime, particularly domestic violence. It also expanded the provision for trials without a jury, bringing in new rules for trials for causing the death of a child or vulnerable adult, along with domestic violence homicide reviews. All pregnant women in the UK were routinely asked about domestic violence, helping identify potential victims as early as possible. Standardised data-gathering and evaluation led to more robust data-gathering processes to evaluate successes and failures. These programmes, along with the creation of the Forced Marriage Unit; Youth, Ministerial, National and Local Justice Boards; and improved evidence-gathering schemes for the police, were central to improving the UK's response to VAWG.

For example, in the UK between 2001 and 2008/09, reported incidents of domestic violence went down by 50 per cent (British Crime Survey); the costs of domestic violence went down from £23 billion to £15.5 billion – saving the UK economy £7.1 billion; the number of homicides went down to the lowest level since 1998/99; incidents of domestic violence went down by 50 per cent in Family Intervention Projects; domestic violence perpetrator prosecution rates increased from 47.5 per cent to over 72.5 per cent; there was a reduction by 40 per cent of repeat incidents involving high-risk victims; and successful prosecutions of perpetrators went up from 47 per cent to over 74 per cent. The cohesive approach across all sectors has fundamentally changed the UK approach and saved thousands of lives. We continue to learn and develop the evidence base.

## Developing a legal framework

One of the foundational elements of the WSA is the requirement for agreed guiding principles on gender equity and national legislation on VAWG. Each element of SDG 5.2 will require a common definition. This may be a difficult process, given some of the issues surrounding gender equity and some cultural traditions and behaviours. Each definition should be drawn from the International Standard Definitions, as set by the UN and other international bodies. Taking the time for all participants in the WSA to agree to a common definition is important. The understood definition will lead to a coherent and inclusive strategy and delivery of gender equality both nationally and locally.

## Independent needs assessment and gap analysis

Independent research is important to understand the country situation and what is needed to achieve SDG 5.2. The research should be objective, seeking to report accurately on what is happening in the country to start developing a baseline evidence base, where the barriers are and how to create pathways for change. This independent research

will lead to a gap analysis and, finally, a needs assessment – a roadmap for the government to follow from the starting point to the destination.

Criteria for the assessment should include a review of:

- Policies and legislation targeted at gender equality and the principles of SDG 5 and establishing gender-based rights in a country;
- Up-to-date academic research conducted in-country with stakeholders, including examination of key trends, incidence and prevalence;
- Cultural normative behaviours around gender equity and equality;
- Policy and evidence gaps and examples of best practice, and the level and capacity of current support systems available, along with integration and collaborative working;
- Estimated economic costs of gender equality to society, public services, government and the economy, including employment and gender economic empowerment;



- Highlights of social, cultural, religious and traditional practices and differences in attitudes including harmful traditional practices ; and
- Methodology and data sources readily available – for example use of existing country surveys, academic research, NGO/ UN reports and in-depth interviews with in-country civil society actors, diplomatic and policy stakeholders, and women and girls impacted by the practices addressed under SDG 5.2.

These assessments are essential for:

- The development of strategic goals, gender responsive budget allocation and programme implementation for national governments;
- The production of data and indicators that can be used by governments and Commonwealth organisations, NGOs and other partners may design and implement monitoring and evaluation of policy interventions that have been designed to enable the relevant country to realise its SDG 5.2 targets; and
- Developing and delivering important advocacy tools and campaigns that contribute to national research and knowledge.

### Development of datasets and monitoring

Standardised datasets represent a common way to measure action on the different elements of SDG 5.2 across sectors and countries. Datasets

themselves can be understood as a collection of similar data, sharing a structure that covers a fixed period. Datasets will be set out after the independent research and needs assessment process. This allows for production of a cohesive strategy.

Lack of standardised data-gathering and evaluation has contributed to a lack of information on decreases in repeat harm to women and girls that SDG 5.2 seeks to redress. Centralisation of data collection will enable more robust data-gathering processes to evaluate successes and failures. Having common datasets enables policy- makers to inform courses of action, including setting national strategies.

### Setting national strategy and action plans

A national gender equality strategy reflecting the aspirations and goals of SDG 5.2 will set out agreed targets, and an action plan will detail ways to meet these targets. Strategies are made as a blueprint, and an action plan is the step-by-step process of how to go about that blueprint.

Success in establishing a country-wide programme to meet these goals requires full co-operation, commitment and motivation between all key stakeholders, levels of government, agencies, organisations and the charitable sector. The provision of facilities, processes and legislation to ensure safety for victims and vulnerable family members should form a prominent part of this

### Box 4.2 Principles of good strategy-making

1. Investment of time and energy for ministers to create an 'appetite' for strategic thinking;
2. A definition of long-term national interests, both domestic and international;
3. Consideration of all options and possibilities, including those that challenge established thinking and settled policies;
4. Consideration of the constraints and limitations that apply to such options and possibilities;
5. A comprehensive understanding of the resources available;
6. Good-quality staff work to develop strategy;
7. Access to the widest possible expertise beyond government;
8. A structure that ensures the process happens;
9. Audit, evaluation and critical challenge; and
10. Parliamentary oversight to ensure scrutiny and accountability.

planning. It is best practice to have all stakeholders working on the principles of SDG 5.2 collaborate towards a common strategy.

National action plans are ideally built on research, a needs assessment and a national strategy. This can help governments to attain progress on gender equality with timeframes for deliverables and assessment. A good national action plan integrates with all sectors of society.

For a national action plan to be successful, its production and implementation must be led by national government with the co-operation, contribution and commitment of all other key stakeholders, including society at large. The same is true when all sectors of society are working on gender equality goals.

Laws may need to be written or strengthened, with goals, actions and timelines set and funding sources established. It is advised that all key stakeholders monitor and evaluate progress, gather information,

### Allocation of a gender responsive budget

'Budgeting any government activity is both technical and highly political. A government's budget reflects priorities influenced by the political and socio-economic situation of any given country. Budgets are one of the most important statements a government can make regarding priorities, and efforts should be made to evaluate the impact they have on citizens' lives.'

#### UN Women (2013)

and provide analysis and feedback mechanisms to identify good practices or failures. Ideally, reports will also be made available to the general public.

In order for country strategies to be successful and for action plans to be implemented, it is recommended that they be funded. In these times of financial challenges and global uncertainty, it is good practice to have an accurate understanding of all costs, to allocate gender responsive funding

where possible and to seek creative means of funding these programmes, including through utilising free and shared services.

Costs associated with implementing action plans may include:

- A mapping exercise to identify gaps in service provision;
- Training for all key stakeholders, including judges, police, healthcare workers, educators and other members of civil society;
- Funding of NGOs whose work directly affects those impacted by VAWG;
- Ensuring that court systems have the capability to deal with the complexities of VAWG cases, including the safety of the victim;
- The possible requirement for additional police teams;
- Increased spread of awareness programmes for different parts of society; and
- Increased funding for new projects that will help meet the action plan targets.

These initial outgoings can result in significant cost savings in the long term. The WSA can decrease duplication across services, and early intervention and awareness can reduce health and criminal justice costs to all sectors of society. Some interventions can be carried out at low or no additional cost, by using existing facilities such as specialist court services.

### Research and policy development

This stage involves working with Commonwealth missions; governments; and the public, private and voluntary sectors to identify effective policies, strategies and legislation to address gender equality. In terms of research, it is important for countries to develop their own datasets to create a baseline against which to measure impact and construct policies/strategies.

### Co-ordination of a multisectoral response

This type of response ensures that all parties (government, civil society and the private sector) needed to take the work on the SDG 5.2 agenda

forward are part of a wide consultation process. This will ensure that all sectors have the tools to work together to move the strategy forward.

### Work towards gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming has been embraced internationally as a strategy towards realising gender equality. It involves the integration of a gender perspective into the preparation, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, regulatory measures and spending programmes, with a view to promoting equality between women and men and combating discrimination, resulting in higher equity and greater relevance for society. Gender mainstreaming ensures that policy and legislation respond more effectively to the needs of all citizens – women and men, girls and boys. Gender mainstreaming makes public sense and ensures that inequalities are not perpetuated.

Gender mainstreaming aims to avoid the creation or reinforcement of inequalities that can have adverse effects on both women and men. Gender mainstreaming also implies the need to analyse the existing situation, with the purpose of identifying inequalities and developing policies that can redress these inequalities and undo the mechanisms that have caused them.

### Evaluation and accountability

Implemented plans, strategies, projects and initiatives need to prove they make a difference and so must be evaluated for effectiveness. The regular gathering of information and the preparation of statistics can help in measuring any changes that have taken place and result in appropriate responses.

Details on the causes, consequences and frequency of all forms of gender inequality should be collected. The effectiveness of measures to prevent, punish and eradicate inequality and to protect and support victims should also be identified. Further, the safety of those being questioned (e.g. victims) and those doing the questioning should be considered. This statistical data should be disaggregated by sex, race, age, ethnicity and other relevant characteristics.

The aim of monitoring and evaluation is:

- To assess impact and value for money;
- To enable and promote learning from successes and challenges in programme design and implementation; and
- To ensure accountability to the taxpayer, governments and beneficiaries.

When carrying out monitoring and evaluation, the safety of those being questioned and doing the questioning should be considered.

## 4.2. Practical applications: case studies on the Whole System Approach to end violence against women and girls

Practical applications demonstrate how working collaboratively and holistically makes a tangible difference in achieving SDG 5.2. Commonwealth member countries have worked diligently to achieve SDG 5.2. Many of these countries have made significant strides using many of the principles and processes of the WSA in tackling VAWG. The case studies shared in this section provide a good practice model and demonstrate the practical application of the WSA.

### Rwanda

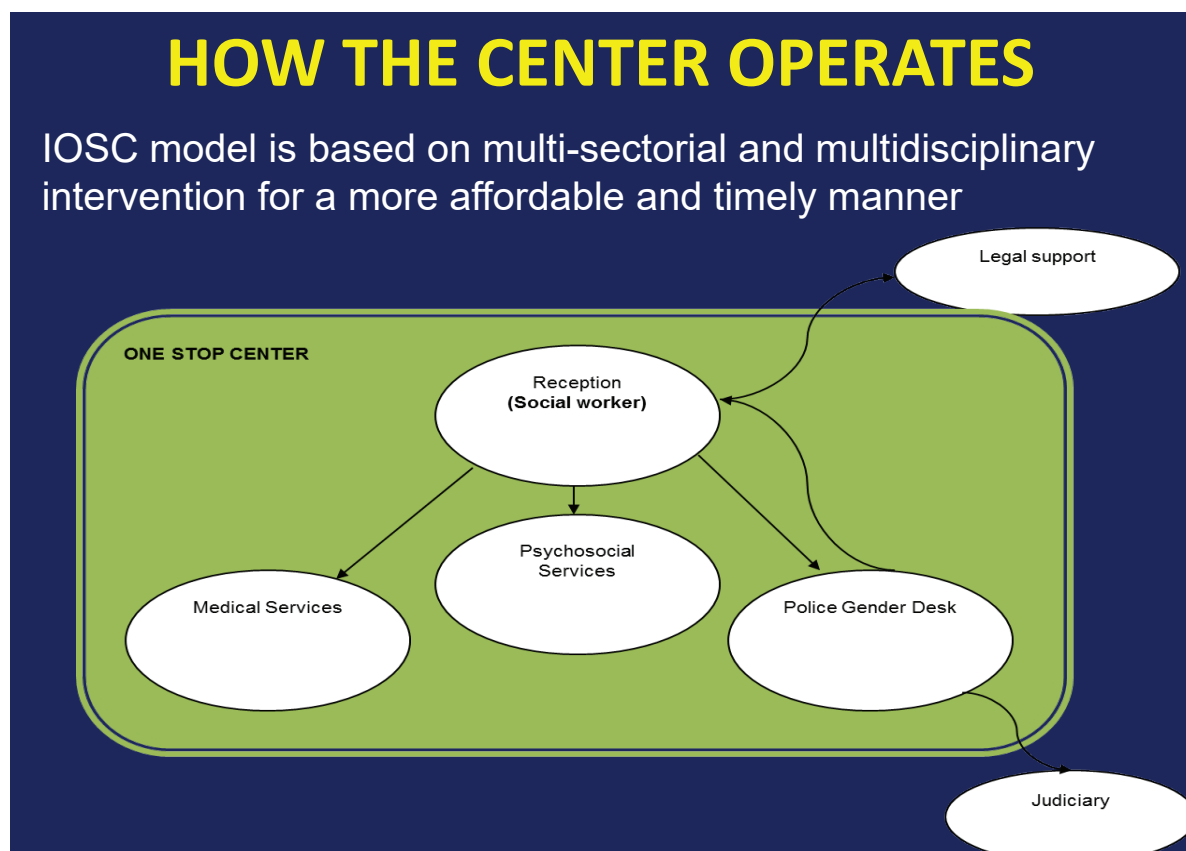
Isange One-Stop Centres for Gender-Based Violence

The Isange One- Stop Centres (IOSCs) for Gender-Based Violence are national police-led centres where victims of VAWG receive treatment and protection, through psychosocial, medical, police and legal services (Figure 4.1). The centres provide 24/7 multidisciplinary free services to adult and child survivors of VAWG and child abuse occurring in the family or in the community, covering the entire territory of Rwanda.

Having all services in one centre increases collaboration between service providers and reduces the number of interviews (and possible trauma) for the victim, who is free to choose to report the incident officially or not.



Figure 4.1 The Isange One-Stop Centres (IOSCs) for gender-based violence



Source: Rwanda National Police (2017) 'ISANGE ONE STOP CENTER MODEL'. 15 June 2017 available at: <https://darpg.gov.in/sites/default/files/Rwanda.pdf>

The initiative is being replicated throughout Rwanda; the UN office reports that there are currently 44 operating IOSCs in the country. (Rwanda National Police, 2017)

### Kiribati

The Enabling Rights Project to end VAWG in Kiribati

Kiribati's judiciary has been working to build the capacity of lay magistrates to ensure that the justice system is responding efficiently, fairly and comprehensively in cases involving violence against women and children. They are reaching out to some of the most remote communities in the country to raise awareness on issues related to procedural fairness in domestic violence cases and access to justice for women and children who have experienced violence. Magistrates' courts deal with the majority of cases involving violence against women and include more than 150 lay magistrates. They have important decision-making responsibilities in their communities, with the support of court clerks, despite receiving no formal legal training.

The Enabling Rights Project has included interactive training to give lay magistrates a better understanding of relevant laws and court procedures that exist in Kiribati. The project uses case studies, role plays and reflections in face-to-face consultations. As well as working with lay magistrates, the project has engaged with the public to allow them 'to see, feel and understand positively' their roles in ending violence against women, particularly with respect to legal responses to the violence and how to access and use the justice system.

(Source: Pacific Women Annual Progress Report, 2015– 2016 : 63)

### India

Improving women and girls' access to justice in India

For the past 2 years, members of Sheffield Hallam University's Helena Kennedy Centre for International Justice have been working in India, leading a project to improve access to justice for women and girl victims of violence. Justice for Her



is a collaborative effort with the Indian police across the vast and densely populated states of Delhi, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh and Punjab.

The aim of the project is for police to prioritise the protection of women and girls who have been victims of violence, so they can be fully supported at their most vulnerable time and not fear being victimised again. The goal is also for the police to have full ownership and feel empowered and fully equipped to deliver appropriate support and protection to female victims. With this in mind, police officers, lawyers, NGOs and members of civil society have been brought together and encouraged to share their experiences of dealing with female victims of crime. This has helped challenge police strategies – many of which now prioritise VAWG. It has also created an empowered police force able to perform their duties more effectively, without prejudice and discrimination.

The training was informed by individual stakeholders and involved a wide range of approaches, including role play, group discussions, lectures, simulation exercises and self-reflection workshops. The programme has now been successfully delivered in the four states to senior police trainers working across a range of police training academies. Such has been the success of the project, the training will now be included in the curriculum for many new police recruits in the four states, as well as being rolled out to existing officers in the field. This means

that potentially tens of thousands of police officers will be able to better support women and girls who seek justice<sup>1</sup>.

### 4.3. The Commonwealth Says NO MORE global campaign

The Commonwealth Says NO MORE is a global campaign that brings together the Commonwealth Secretariat and the NO MORE Foundation to promote a positive partnership for change by building a coalition of governments, businesses, civil society and citizens committed to ending VAWG. NO MORE works to amplify and grow the movement to stop and prevent domestic violence and sexual assault, in homes, schools, workplaces and communities around the world, by creating innovative campaigns, partnerships and tools that leverage the power of the media, entertainment, sports, technology and collective action.

#### Commonwealth says NO MORE digital portal

The Commonwealth Says NO MORE (CSNM) campaign and web portal was presented at the High-Level Leaders meeting on 24 June 2020. The first Pan-Commonwealth Says NO MORE digital portal was launched on 9 September 2020<sup>2</sup> in response to the alarming spike in cases of domestic violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The portal provides vital training resources to support national campaigns and survivors of domestic violence and complements the efforts of the 54 Commonwealth countries by compiling national directory services, national laws and relevant data to help government agencies, communities, organisations, individuals and bystanders end VAWG.

The Commonwealth digital portal is freely accessible and provides countries with the tools and resources needed to help end this silent pandemic through :

- DELIVERY - governments can download toolkits to plan local campaigns that support survivors, educate communities and help end violence (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2018);

<sup>1</sup> (Source: [https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/hkcindia/our-projects/improving-access-to-justice-for-women-girls-in-india/about-us/project-summary/?doing\\_wp\\_cron=1533375470.0475699901580810546875](https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/hkcindia/our-projects/improving-access-to-justice-for-women-girls-in-india/about-us/project-summary/?doing_wp_cron=1533375470.0475699901580810546875))

<sup>2</sup> <https://commonwealthsaysnomore.org/>

- **DISPLAY** – countries can share good practices on preventing abuse, delivering services and protecting survivors;
- **SUPPORT** – citizens can find emergency helplines, bystander guidance and support services, wherever they are in the world;
- **PARTNERSHIP** – non -profits, governments and businesses can join forces to support on grassroots and national efforts;
- **PLEDGE** – anybody can commit to taking an active role in their communities with a digital pledge. Proposed action: member countries have pledged to the campaign and used the resources available on the portal to address VAWG.

Member countries have visited the digital portal and taken the pledge, and reviewed and updated their national emergency helplines and support services on the portal.

### High-level advocacy : #JoinTheChorus campaign

Several activities have been convened to highlight the impact of domestic and sexual violence on the margins of the UN General Assembly, the UN Commission on the Status of Women and commemorative global events to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. On the margins of the 76th Session of the UN General Assembly, the Secretariat, in partnership with the NO MORE Foundation and Gentle Forces, launched the #JoinTheChorus campaign on 20 September 2021.

This campaign aims to increase awareness of domestic and sexual violence and call for collective action on leaders and bystanders to raise their voices against violence in their communities, stressing that ' while one voice might go unheard, a chorus cannot be ignored.' <sup>3</sup> The new initiative (including short films and a resource pack) was led by a host of globally recognisable celebrities representing Commonwealth regions – namely, FKA twigs (UK/Caribbean), Joselyn Dumas (Ghana/ Africa ), Mahira Khan (Pakistan/Asia), Rose Byrne (Australia/Pacific) and Thandiwe Newton (UK / Europe). Member countries have responded

to the #JoinTheChorus to-do-list and shared the campaign with networks, friends, family and colleagues.<sup>4</sup>

### Blog series on eliminating VAWG

As part of the 16 days of activism for the elimination of VAWG from 25 November to 10 December 2020, the Secretariat wrote 16 blogs for the Women in My Life campaign in partnership with the NO MORE Foundation. The blogs included both thematic and country- specific strategies and good practices as commendable models from Commonwealth regions and countries, as lessons learnt to complement national efforts at addressing VAWG.

### Setting up NO MORE national chapters

The natural progression of the CSNM work is to set up national chapters within Commonwealth member countries. Once a commitment is received from a member country, an official team in-country should be identified to initiate the process. Once confirmed, jointly with the Commonwealth Secretariat and NO MORE Foundation, a meeting will be arranged to detail the campaign, and present other national examples, responsibilities and obligations. In the government's pursuit to end violence against women and girls, the discovery meeting will provide steps for action plan to arrange the setting up a country chapter. See 4.5 for the benefits and process of setting up a NO MORE chapter.

## 4.4. The NO MORE Foundation Chapters – Creating a global network of support and leadership in tackling SDG 5.2

The NO MORE Foundation developed 'chapters' which help engage local and national communities in the global initiative to end domestic violence and sexual assault. NO MORE has over 40 global chapters. Each chapter is unique, reflecting the needs and desires of the communities while embracing the principles of collaboration and shared services.

3 <https://thecommonwealth.org/press-release/commonwealth-says-no-more-launches-initiative-prevent-domestic-and-sexual-violence-54>

4 <https://nomore.org/campaigns/jointhechorus/>

### Box 4.3 Cyprus Says NO MORE – a national chapter of the NO MORE Foundation

Cyprus Says NO MORE was created and is operated under the initiative of The Body Shop Cyprus team. It is dedicated to ending domestic violence and sexual assault by increasing awareness, inspiring action and fuelling change, across the country.



Cyprus Says NO MORE has achieved remarkable things since opening in 2020.

NO MORE Virtual 5K Walk/Run 2021

The Cyprus Says NO MORE team walked 5K in Nicosia raising awareness of domestic violence and sexual assault. This inspired many communities to talk about the shadow pandemic and work with this chapter.



### Building a playground for children in a shelter





### Leadership in collaboration with business

- Cyprus Says NO MORE has used The Body Shop's 20k+ members in order to promote NO MORE activities, using strong marketing to do this.
- It has created lanyards for the staff members to wear in stores to promote NO MORE.
- It has created 'first aid' bags from The Body Shop and has donated them to the national domestic violence service provider. These bags have products that an abused woman leaving her house will need (shampoo, cream, soap, make-up from The Body Shop inventory).
- Cyprus Says NO MORE collaborated with a life coach to create a one-hour film to talk about domestic violence and sexual abuse. The film is actively being broadcasted to the national media and within all Cypriot The Body Shop stores.
- Cyprus Says NO MORE has created a fictional character called Fiona who posts on social media on issues related to violence. This initiative has the full backing of The Body Shop International.

### Supporting legislation to end VAWG

Cyprus Says NO MORE was instrumental in supporting the framework for legislation in the Cypriot Parliament to end sexism against women. This was done by reviewing all proposed pieces of legislation and synthesising these into one piece of legislation. The parliamentarian who proposed the final piece of legislation requested that Cyprus Says NO MORE attend the formal launch of the work in Parliament. During this formal session, the creator of the bill commented:

**'Many thanks to Cyprus Says No More, whose help in the preparation of this legislation was priceless.'**

**Mrs. Anita Demetriou ( 2021 )**

This demonstrates that the local support of a NO MORE chapter, in this case backed by a business partner, The Body Shop International, was a catalyst to change legislation as well as societal views of VAWG.

## 4.5. How to set up a National Chapter

The NO MORE Foundation is dedicated to ending domestic violence and sexual assault by increasing awareness, inspiring action, and fuelling culture change.

We work to amplify and grow the movement to stop and prevent domestic violence and sexual assault, in homes, schools, workplaces and communities around the world by creating and supporting innovative campaigns, partnerships and tools that leverage the power of the media, entertainment, sports, technology, and collective action. With more than 1,400 allied organisations and over 40 state, local, and international chapters, NO MORE sparks grassroots activism, encouraging everyone — women and men, youth and adults, from all walks of life — to be part of the solution.

### About NO MORE Chapters

NO MORE chapters engage locally by providing community members with opportunities to volunteer their time, contribute to campaigns, and challenge the culture that allows domestic violence and sexual assault to persist. Chapters act as a force ensuring that communities are united by a shared sense of purpose to address domestic and sexual violence both locally and globally.

NO MORE Chapters have the opportunity to:

- Belong to an international network of change makers collaborating to create a future free of gender-based violence locally and globally.
- Initiate and contribute to local, regional, and global initiatives towards improving the creation of a world with 'NO MORE' domestic violence and sexual assault.
- Gain in-depth exposure to thought-leadership and knowledge of global, regional, and local issues related to domestic and sexual violence.
- Further develop leadership skills and capabilities through custom programs, workshops, informal gatherings, mentorship, etc., led by other local campaigns.

## How to set up a Chapter

Creating a NO MORE Chapter is a way to create cultural change while addressing local and national needs to end violence against women and girls. The process is very easy.

If a Commonwealth member nation is interested in setting up a chapter, it is essential to identify who will be the official/team in-country moving this idea forward to start the process. This can be managed by an NGO or within civil society - in collaboration with the national infrastructure.

The first step in the process of setting up a chapter is for NO MORE to meet with an organisation and invite them to put forward a proposal on their plan and scope for the chapter. Once the proposal is approved by NO MORE, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) will be signed by both parties. Then the organization is welcomed into a global network of leaders ending domestic and sexual violence.

### NO MORE Chapter deliverables

The following section outlines the key deliverables for the program and the four key benefits to organisations that become a NO MORE chapter:

1. Network
2. Branding
3. Campaign in a box; and
4. Training.

### Global Network:

NO MORE chapters are invited into a global network of allied organizations collaborating to create a future free of domestic and sexual violence both within their communities and globally. Organizations vary significantly in the forms of violence that they tackle and their approaches - from frontline service providers to mayoral offices to multinational organizations. NO MORE provides a platform for these organizations to meet, learn from each other, share resources and open dialogue to accelerate progress to eliminate violence.

NO MORE has significant global engagement and following across its social media channels. We leverage this reach to showcase the work of chapters and amplify their messaging to a global audience. In addition, NO MORE regularly supports chapters to host events and/or invites chapters to speak at NO MORE and its partners' events to

promote their work further. In particular, NO MORE Week is a time each year in early March when NO MORE and its chapters and allies shine a spotlight on the importance of stopping and preventing violence through special events, activities, and promotions. This event is an opportunity for chapters to showcase their work through blog posts, videos, webinars and more to our global audience.

The main deliverables for the NO MORE Chapter network are chapter meetings and social media support:

- NO MORE hosts Chapter meetings on a regular basis and schedules additional meetings before the launch of a new campaign or resource. These are held via zoom and are a platform for global exchange of ideas, resources.
- In addition, NO MORE provides social media support for these chapters when they launch their own events, campaigns, research etc. This includes support in writing social media copy, as well as re-sharing content on our channels.

### Branding:



Like the red AIDS ribbon or the pink breast cancer awareness ribbon before it, the blue NO MORE symbol is the first overarching, unifying symbol to express universal support for ending domestic violence and sexual assault. Survivor-inspired, developed in consultation with top marketing and branding pros and tested with diverse audiences, the symbol's signature blue "vanishing point" evolved from the concept of zero – as in zero incidences of DV/SA. Our chapters and partners use the NO MORE symbol to amplify the power of the domestic violence and sexual assault movement.

Use of NO MORE branding sets organizations apart as it provides them with the power and reputation of a globally recognized brand without any cost. This is crucial for small and medium-sized organizations that lack the capacity to invest in marketing and communications. NO MORE provides organizations with an open-source toolkit including brand and visual guidelines to maximize use of NO MORE branding to enhance their communications effort.

### Campaign in a box:

In addition to the NO MORE logo, chapters have complete access to the NO MORE Toolkit. The open-source toolkit features free, customizable prevention resources that enable organizations to kick-start their prevention campaigns - a campaign in a box. NO MORE aims ensure resources are available and to enhance the toolkit with new bilingual resources including:

- Activism pack
- Fundraising pack

Chapters will get exclusive access to new resources available in the toolkit and can work with NO MORE to co-brand or customize these for their local communities.

### Training and mentoring:

During the inaugural year of each chapter, the chapter will be mentored by the NO MORE Foundation. NO MORE will:

- Provide assistance in securing additional opportunities for engagement, especially in projects with global impact.
- Provide outreach, support, and media training that strengthens local leadership and equips NO MORE Chapters with tools to create change in their local communities.
- Provide support through social media, campaigning and offer expertise on projects

NO MORE also provides training that strengthens local leadership and equips NO MORE Chapters with tools to create change in their local communities. Training content is tailored to the needs of each new chapter, but topics may include:

- Partnership building
- Measuring global impact
- Coordinated community response

### Contact Info

To discuss setting up a NO MORE chapter, please contact:

Email: [info@nomore.org](mailto:info@nomore.org)

Website: [nomore.org](http://nomore.org)

EIN: 83-3491251

## 5. National checklist on implementing the Whole System Approach

### 5.1. What is the Whole System Approach national assessment tool?

The WSA assessment tool has been designed to facilitate an understanding of the progress made by a country or its constitutive elements on efforts to deal with VAW G and also to understand the different areas of development that it needs to work on in order to achieve the eradication of VAW. The tool therefore represents a voluntary process that may be used to understand what stage of development a country is at in its aspiration to end VAW.

The proposed methodology is based on the principle that many areas of government and policy have to come together in order to ensure not only that we are working with victims but also that our future generations see a decline in this pervasive form of abuse. The work is aligned with implementation of the SDGs and is part of a worldwide movement to create lasting change, prevent VAW and save the lives of millions of women and girls. The tool is to be used in conjunction with the Commonwealth WSA method.

The assessment tool will reflect on the work achieved and lay out a gap analysis. The result generated by this list has to be inclusive and dynamic, responding to the needs of each Commonwealth country, mission and local cultural aspirations. The process to deal with the result is a journey that every country will address based on their current work, future elimination of VAW strategies and political commitment. This self-assessment can help foster discussions between government and local and Commonwealth missions through partnership working.

The assessment will be useful to the following:

- Commonwealth key stakeholders, including human resources, gender and diversity experts within each Commonwealth mission, staff members and champions to support those impacted by VAW;
- Government (including executive, judicial and legislative officials);
- Cultural traditional leaders and institutions;
- NGOs, businesses, religious groups and any other civil society stakeholders;
- Media and press outlets.

### 5.2. The Whole System Approach national assessment tool

The purpose of this assessment tool is to reflect on good practices and examine areas for development. The tool is a voluntary process by member country that has no ramification for any current programmes.

#### International, regional, sub-regional framework

- Is there a country study on VAW that includes harmful and/or traditional practices?
- Is there a national study of the economic costs of VAW to society?
- Is there a national gender study/protocol to get women involved in politics and leadership?
- Is there a data- gathering system to monitor VAW and evaluate interventions?
- Is there a country demographic health study that includes VAW?



## National laws and policies on VAW

- Is there a national inter-ministerial group that meets consistently to tackle VAW?
- Is there a national strategy to tackle VAW?
- Does the country have a legal definition for VAW?
- Does the country have a law against VAW?
- Is there a national allocation of budget to eradicate VAW?

## Prevention

- Are there national awareness campaigns on VAW?
- Do schools offer health relationship education to young people at primary and secondary level?
- Are there local community groups supporting those impacted by VAW?
- Are there youth groups working to address VAW?
- Are there economic and politically led initiative programmes to support women to be financially independent and empowered?
- Are there boys and men leadership groups that stand against violence?

## Provision

- Does your country have a national helpline where people can get support if they are victims of VAW?
- Is there, at a local level, a group of agencies that come together to discuss high- risk cases of domestic violence?
- Are there centres where victims of domestic violence and/or sexual assault can meet different agencies to get support?
- Is there access to safe accommodation for victims?
- Are there mental health support programmes that support victims of VAW?
- Are there support programmes for perpetrators of VAW?
- Are there programmes for women in prison who have been victims of VAW?

- Are there independent VAW advocates available to support victims?
- Is there access to programmes for drug and alcohol support for victims of VAW?
- Do victims of sexual assault have centres that assist them after an abuse incident with forensic and emotional support?
- Are there specialist training programmes available to schools, courts, police, local authorities, healthcare professionals, employers and others to tackle and eradicate VAW?

## Protection

- Do you have dedicated VAW courts or specifically fast- track and cluster VAW cases with trained court personnel and safety measures in place?
- Is there a justice office that looks at criminal reform?
- When victims of VAW access a court, are there any measures put in place to guarantee their safety and support them, such as video links, providing evidence from different rooms, etc.?
- Is there free advice and support for victims of VAW?
- Are there legal orders the police or a court can extend promptly against a potential perpetrator in order to guarantee the immediate safety of a victim?
- Are there special protections for disabled victims of VAW?
- Is there a mechanism to protect the victim as an employee at work and keep her in work?
- Does your court system have special trained advisers to help victims navigate through the criminal justice system?
- Does the law include as an offence:
  - Stalking;
  - Child/early enforced marriage;
  - So-called 'honour' - based violence;
  - Female genital mutilation;

- Any form of sexual assault, such as marital rape;
- Economic abuse;
- Psychological abuse;
- Trafficking;
- Prostitution;
- Online abuse against women;
- Online abuse against children?

### Civil society and local areas

- Does your country have civil society alliances for VAW that bring together:
  - Faith-based organisations;
  - Employers;
  - NGOs;
  - Health;
  - Education;
  - Justice;
  - Media;
  - National human rights institutions;
  - Local government;
  - Traditional and cultural institutions?
- Are women's rights and youth organisations among the civil society stakeholders consulted in developing VAW policy and implementation?
- Are there boards at a local level for VAW?

### Children

- Is there a national definition of violence against children ?
- Is there specialist provision for child victims of gender-based and sexual violence?
- Do safeguarding laws for children take gender-based violence explicitly into account?
- Do child custody laws take VAW into account?

### Media and technology

- Is there a national strategic plan for how the media represents gender and women and girls?

- Is there technology available in your country to combat VAW, such as web pages, apps, etc.?
- Is there training/technology available to support victims to use technology safely?
- Is VAW seen as a priority for media coverage?
- Does the news media (paper, social, TV broadcast) label crimes against women as gender violence or VAW?
- Does the media report on traditional cultural practices that may be VAW?
- Does the media solicit the views of the most marginalised, disenfranchised and vulnerable?
- Are these populations represented with dignity and respect?
- Is the language of reporting pejorative?
- Are men and women described in ways that either promote or challenge gender stereotypes?
- Is social media engaging with men and women equally?

### Measuring results

- Is there an independent report on the effectiveness of the VAW work done annually?
- Is there a government department responsible for generating VAW data?
- If so, is this data disseminated to all government sectors?
- Is the work reviewed as standalone or in the context of gender equality?
- Are victims of VAW consulted on how they feel the work has impacted them?



Launch of the Commonwealth Says NO MORE Campaign and Chapter, November 2019

### 5.3. Implementing big, bold goals, by Prajapati Trivedi, Commonwealth Secretary-General's Envoy for SDG Implementation

*In September 2015, the UN adopted a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. Each goal has specific targets to be achieved over the next 15 years. How will countries go about implementing them? This is the third and last in a series of blogs that outline a path that I proposed at a UN-sponsored meeting in Switzerland in April 2022.*

**How can countries make and document progress towards the multinational Sustainable Development Goals?** The **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs) build on the progress made with regard to their predecessors, the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs). Just like the MDGs, eventually the UN will have to monitor the progress made with respect to the SDGs. While the UN has published an aggregate regional **progress report**, each country is expected to produce its own report. After all, what gets measured gets done!

While comparative progress reports have motivated policy-makers in developing countries to action, lack of cogent, coherent guidance on

implementation strategies for the MDGs was one of the main reasons for the uneven progress made by various member countries. If these countries have to do better with regard to the SDGs, then they need to apply lessons about effective implementation of the SDGs from now significant international experience in this regard.

Since countries have agreed to implement the SDGs, the real issue is how to do so. The following three actions provide the necessary steps to convert the SDG vision into reality.

**Step 1: Develop a national strategy for implementing the SDGs.** Policy-makers have to integrate the SDGs in their national strategic plans. All 17 SDGs and policies to achieve them should be prioritised along the following three dimensions:

- **Level of priority:** Policies, programmes and projects should be classified on the basis of their potential impact on the achievement of the 17 SDGs. The following three categories can be used for this purpose: HIGH, MEDIUM and LOW. The basic message is that it is not wise to worry about the low-priority recommendations at the cost of the high-priority policies.
- **Degree of influence:** Governments do not have the same degree of influence on all areas of public policy. In some areas, all

actions are within the scope of their powers. In others, they can play only a facilitating role as a catalyst. Again, the following three-way classification can be used here: HIGH, MEDIUM and LOW. The high category includes those areas of public policy that are fully within the control of the government. Medium and low imply a lesser degree of influence.

- **Sequencing:** Sequencing of policies is as important as the policies themselves. For example, it is advisable to allow competition and privatisation only after implementing a transparent and effective regulatory framework. Also, it is advisable not to attempt everything at the same time. This again requires sequencing of various actions and programmes to get the best results in the shortest possible time.
- When these three dimensions are put together, the result is the matrix shown in Figure 5.1. This matrix is three-dimensional and thus the total number of cells is 27 (= 3 x 3 x 3). Each cell in the matrix has three attributes. For example, Cell # 1 represents high priority, high degree of influence and need to implement in the short term.
- In most cases, the classification is a matter of judgement on the part of experts and policy-makers. It is not written in stone. Rather, this prioritisation is indicative of the collective experience as understood by national policy-makers at the time of writing the SDG implementation strategy. This matrix is, in essence, a signalling device for those charged with implementing this strategy.
- All policies to achieve SDGs should be prioritised using this matrix. This classification, in turn, makes it possible to identify the core strategic policies.

**Figure 5.1 Matrix to prioritise and act on the SDGs at country level**

	Priority level			
	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	
HIGH	1	10	19	SHORT TERM
	2	11	20	MEDIUM TERM
	3	12	21	LONG TERM
MEDIUM	4	13	22	SHORT TERM
	5	14	23	MEDIUM TERM
	6	15	24	LONG TERM
LOW	7	16	25	SHORT TERM
	8	17	26	MEDIUM TERM
	9	18	27	LONG TERM

**Step 2: Align departmental strategies with national priorities for SDG implementation.** Once the national SDG Implementation Strategy (SIS) is in place, then government departments should formulate a departmental SIS. Each department/agency has to ask what it can do to help implement the national SIS. Each has to undertake a similar exercise as that undertaken at the national level.

Departmental SISs should be aligned with national priorities for SDG implementation. They should be integrated with other department priorities and a comprehensive view of the departmental mandate should be taken. Much inspiration can be drawn

from **Section 3 of the GPRA Modernization Act**, which outlines succinctly how each agency of the US government is required to develop four-year strategic plans. This is not an optional exercise and is a necessary condition for creating annual operating plans.

Most performance measurement efforts in government are partial. They tend to focus on a project, a policy or a few select government departments. Experience suggests that this piecemeal approach hardly ever succeeds. Thus, governments must ensure that the national SIS is an integral part of the overall departmental strategy.

**Step 3: Use implementation agreements.** The concept of an implementation agreement is straightforward. It is, in effect, a performance agreement between a principal and an agent. It is proposed that each government department will enter into an 'implementation agreement' with the head of government. In this agreement, each department will specify the goals and objectives that it wishes to achieve during the fiscal year. It will also specify any specific assistance it needs from the government during the relevant period to achieve its objectives. These implementation agreements will include performance indicators and target levels expected from the concerned government department.

It is proposed that each agency will assign a weight of at least 50 per cent to targets that address their respective responsibilities for implementing elements of the 17 SDGs.

Government departments will then be able to assign 50 per cent of the weight to other strategic goals relevant to their departments. Table 5.1 gives an illustration of the relative priorities in designing the contents of these implementation agreements. Against each strategic goal, government agencies will be asked to provide specific policies, programmes, projects and activities. Here, we do not wish to go into all the details involved in designing the implementation agreement. However, it is proposed that these agreements be designed based on relevant international experience and best practice.

The performance of each government agency will be measured against the targets for the various commitments made in the implementation agreements. It is proposed that these results be published as part of the annual progress report on the implementation of the departmental strategy.

**Table 5.1 Illustrative example of the contents of an implementation agreement**

RELATIVE PRIORITY	STRATEGIC GOALS	Government Agency A	Government Agency B	Government Agency C
50%	SDG # 1	Action 1	Action 1	Action 1
		Action 2	Action 2	Action 2
		Action 3	Action 3	Action 3
	SDG # 2	Action 1	Action 1	Action 1
		Action 2	Action 2	Action 2
		Action 3	Action 3	Action 3
	SDG # 3	Action 1	Action 1	Action 1
		Action 2	Action 2	Action 2
		Action 3	Action 3	Action 3
	SDG # ...	Action 1	Action 1	Action 1
		Action 2	Action 2	Action 2
		Action 3	Action 3	Action 3
	SDG # 17	Action 1	Action 1	Action 1
		Action 2	Action 2	Action 2
		Action 3	Action 3	Action 3

RELATIVE PRIORITY	STRATEGIC GOALS	Government Agency A	Government Agency B	Government Agency C
50%	Other goals of government department	Action 1	Action 1	Action 1
		Action 2	Action 2	Action 2
		Action 3	Action 3	Action 3
	Other goals of government department	Action 1	Action 1	Action 1
		Action 2	Action 2	Action 2
		Action 3	Action 3	Action 3
	=	Implementation agreement content	Implementation agreement content	Implementation agreement content

The proposed concept of implementation agreements is a new and improved version of Performance Plans/Performance Agreements under the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. If the UN is serious about implementing the SDGs, it must insist that its

member countries convert this grand vision into 'effective' plans. The proposed concept of *'implementation agreements'* is one such effective instrument supported by evidence from a diverse set of countries.

These points were first raised during the **United Nations Evaluation Group's** Evaluation Week, entitled Evaluation Fit for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Leaving no one Behind, 26 April 2016, Geneva, Switzerland



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# Appendix A.

## Sustainable Development Goal 5 targets and indicators

The SDGs and specifically SDG 5 requires governments to 'achieve' gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as opposed to its predecessor's requirement to 'promote' both. SDG 5 proposes nine targets on a range of themes.

The chart below presents all 17 SDGs, and the grid provides the targets and indicators for SDG 5.

### SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Target	Indicator/s
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere	5.1.1 Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation	<p>5.2.1 <b>Proportion</b> of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age</p> <p>5.2.2 <b>Proportion</b> of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence</p>

<p><b>5.3</b> Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation</p>	<p><b>5.3.1 Proportion</b> of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18</p> <p><b>5.3.2 Proportion</b> of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age</p>
<p><b>5.4</b> Recognise and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate</p>	<p><b>5.4.1 Proportion</b> of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location</p>
<p><b>5.5</b> Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life</p>	<p><b>5.5.1 Proportion</b> of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments</p> <p><b>5.5.2 Proportion</b> of women in managerial positions</p>
<p><b>5.6</b> Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences</p>	<p><b>5.6.1 Proportion</b> of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive healthcare</p> <p><b>5.6.2 Number</b> of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, information and education</p>
<p><b>5.7</b> Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws</p>	<p><b>5.7.1 (a) Proportion</b> of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) <b>Share</b> of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure</p> <p><b>5.7.2 Proportion</b> of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control</p>
<p><b>5.8</b> Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women</p>	<p><b>5.8.1 Proportion</b> of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex</p>
<p><b>5.9</b> Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels</p>	<p><b>5.9.1 Proportion</b> of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment</p>

# Appendix B.

## The Commonwealth Charter

The Commonwealth Charter is a document of the values and aspirations which unite the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Charter expresses the commitment of member countries to the development of free and democratic societies and the promotion of peace and prosperity to improve the lives of all the people of the Commonwealth.

The Charter also acknowledges the role of civil society in supporting the goals and values of the Commonwealth.

### We the people of the Commonwealth

Recognising that in an era of changing economic circumstances and uncertainty, new trade and economic patterns, unprecedented threats to peace and security, and a surge in popular demands for democracy, human rights and broadened economic opportunities, the potential of and need for the Commonwealth – as a compelling force for good and as an effective network for co-operation and for promoting development – has never been greater,

Recalling that the Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent and equal sovereign states, each responsible for its own policies, consulting and co-operating in the common interests of our peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace, and influencing international society to the benefit of all through the pursuit of common principles and values,

Affirming that the special strength of the Commonwealth lies in the combination of our diversity and our shared inheritance in language, culture and the rule of law; and bound together by shared history and tradition; by respect for all states and peoples; by shared values and principles and by concern for the vulnerable,

Affirming that the Commonwealth way is to seek consensus through consultation and the sharing of experience, especially through

practical co-operation, and further affirming that the Commonwealth is uniquely placed to serve as a model and as a catalyst for new forms of friendship and co-operation in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations,

Affirming the role of the Commonwealth as a recognised intergovernmental champion of small states, advocating for their special needs; providing policy advice on political, economic and social development issues; and delivering technical assistance,

Welcoming the valuable contribution of the network of the many intergovernmental, parliamentary, professional and civil society bodies which support the Commonwealth and which subscribe and adhere to its values and principles,

Affirming the validity of and our commitment to the values and principles of the Commonwealth as defined and strengthened over the years including: the Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, the Langkawi Declaration on the Environment, the Millbrook Action Programme, the Latimer House Principles, the Aberdeen Agenda, the Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation of Commonwealth Values and Principles, the Munyonyo Statement on Respect and Understanding, the Lake Victoria Commonwealth Climate Change Action Plan, the Perth Declaration on Food Security Principles, and the Commonwealth Declaration on Investing in Young People,

Affirming our core Commonwealth principles of consensus and common action, mutual respect, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness,

Reaffirming the core values and principles of the Commonwealth as declared by this Charter:

1. Democracy
2. Human rights
3. International peace and security
4. Tolerance, respect and understanding

5. Freedom of expression
6. Separation of powers
7. Rule of law
8. Good governance
9. Sustainable development
10. Protecting the environment
11. Access to health, education, food and shelter
12. Gender equality
13. Importance of young people in the Commonwealth
14. Recognition of the needs of small states
15. Recognition of the needs of vulnerable states
16. The role of civil society

We are committed to ensuring that the Commonwealth is an effective association, responsive to members' needs, and capable of addressing the significant global challenges of the future.

We aspire to a Commonwealth that is a strong and respected voice in the world, speaking out on major issues; that strengthens and enlarges its networks; that has a global relevance and profile; and that is devoted to improving the lives of all peoples of the Commonwealth.