

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

GENDER SENSITISING PARLIAMENTS GUIDELINES: STANDARDS AND A CHECKLIST FOR PARLIAMENTARY CHANGE



About the CWP

The Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) was founded in 1989 to increase the number of female elected representatives in parliaments and legislatures across the Commonwealth and to ensure that women's issues are brought to the fore in parliamentary debate and legislation. The network provides a means of building the capacity of women elected to parliament to be more effective in their roles; improving the awareness and ability of all Parliamentarians, male and female, and encouraging them to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role and helping parliaments to become gender-sensitive institutions

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FOREWORD FROM THE CWP CHAIRPERSON

In the past decade, great progress has been made by many Commonwealth Parliaments towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality. Specifically, target 5.5, ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life.

Despite these developments, recent data obtained by the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network reveals that only 34 of the 180 CPA member Branches have at least 30% women's representation in their Parliament. This shows that there is still much more work to be done by parliaments to ensure that the institution is one that embraces both gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Parliaments must work to become gender sensitive institutions, meaning they ought to recognise the detrimental role of gender privilege and disenfranchisement and must actively champion gender equality for all. To do this, legislatures must first acknowledge that issues such as parliamentary cultures, governing structures, facilities and institutional resources have the capacity to limit the equal participation of women and other underrepresented genders. These obstacles can hinder a parliament's ability to be an effective democratic institution.

In 2001, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) produced a Gender Sensitising Parliaments Report. The Report identified strategies and mechanisms needed to make Commonwealth Parliaments as gender sensitive as possible but also recognised that, despite some exceptions, the voices speaking out for women's rights and concerns were predominantly women. It concluded that better co-operation between women and men is essential in any attempt at gender sensitising parliaments and removing all barriers which inhibit the fullest participation by women.

Now almost twenty years since this pioneering work, the CWP network continues to advocate and encourage parliamentarians, of all genders, to include a gender perspective in all aspects of their role - legislation, oversight and representation and to help parliaments become gender sensitive institutions. With a commitment to fulfilling the CWP's mission to promote the equal representation of women in CPA Branches and women's full and equal participation in political and parliamentary leadership at all levels, the updated Guidelines on Gender Sensitising Commonwealth Parliaments builds on the recommendations proposed in the 2001 report and provides Commonwealth Parliaments with an outline of gender sensitising standards that they should look to achieve.

In identifying priority areas that need to be strengthened to help parliaments become gender sensitive institutions, I am certain that the CWP will continue to fulfil its mandate to support women parliamentarians in maximising their efficacy as legislators, scrutineers, educators, representatives and advocates for the betterment of their societies and its commitment to support parliaments to meet the targets set out in SDG 5.

The CPA and CWP are committed to supporting CPA Branches that are looking to adopt gender sensitive practices to ensure they can successfully create and permanently maintain a culture and environment that responds to the needs and interest of all persons and genders.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your continued support and I look forward to working with every member of the CWP to achieve the network's mission.



Hon. Shandana Khan MNA,
CWP Chairperson and
Member of the National
Assembly of Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Gender Sensitive Parliaments: An International Norm

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) published its report on *Gender Sensitising Commonwealth Parliaments* almost twenty years ago in 2001. The report drew much needed attention to the political under-representation of women relative to their population across the Commonwealth, caused by ongoing patriarchal attitudes and structures. The CPA rightly declared this an unacceptable state of affairs. They welcomed the emerging international norm in favour of women’s equal participation in politics and outlined how Commonwealth jurisdictions, and their parliaments, might introduce gender sensitising reforms to turn the principle of gender equality in politics into reality. Crucially, as the report stated, women’s political participation could not be merely formal. It had to be substantive – women must gain ‘real’ power. Where there was ‘genuine power sharing’, ‘Commonwealth countries and their peoples as a whole’ would be the beneficiaries.

In the years since the 2001 report, the CPA has maintained its commitment to redressing women’s under-representation in electoral politics, working with and through the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP). The CWP was founded in 1989 to increase the numbers of women elected representatives in parliaments and legislatures across the Commonwealth and to ensure that women’s issues are brought to the fore in parliamentary debate and legislation. The CWP’s mission statement reads: ‘*The CWP, as an integral part of the CPA, is to work for the better representation of women in Legislatures and for the furtherance of gender equality across the Commonwealth.*’ Together, CPA and CWP have since engaged in a series of international, regional and local activities to champion gender sensitising efforts across Commonwealth parliaments.¹

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

COMMONWEALTH CHARTER, PRINCIPLE 13

In acting to advance women’s political participation and representation, the CPA and CWP are part of a truly global endeavour. The principle of political equality between women and men is enshrined in the UN Charter, UDHR, and other international treaties. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a timely reminder that signatories must deliver on their promise. Two Sustainable Development Goals, [SDG 5](#) and [16](#), directly address women’s right to political participation and representation (see Box 1 below).

BOX 1: UN SDGS ON GENDER AND POLITICS



GOAL: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

TARGET: Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life.



GOAL: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

TARGET: Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels.=



The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has played a key role in GSP work: identifying and showcasing international [best practice](#), developing a [self-assessment toolkit](#), one that has been taken up by 12 Parliaments, including in 2018 by the [UK Parliament](#), and devising a [plan of action](#) to assist parliaments in their reforms. The IPU define GSP as:

A political institution that responds to the 'needs and interests' of both women and men in terms of its 'structures, operations, methods and work'. It is one that has removed the 'barriers to women's full participation' and offers 'a positive example or model to society at large.'

[OECD](#) and [EIGE](#) provide similar definitions, and offer alternative audit approaches.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the [IPU](#) and [UN Women](#) have restated the principled case for gender sensitive parliaments (see Box 2 below). Moreover, they have identified additional initiatives and reforms that should be undertaken to ensure that parliaments respond to the crisis in a gender sensitive fashion. Whilst the full effects of the global pandemic are not yet known, without attention to its gendered

economic, social, cultural and health effects, there are considerable risks that women's needs and interests will be unmet, leaving women significantly disadvantaged. The [CPA](#) swiftly produced a COVID-19 toolkit that highlights ways in which parliaments can remain operational while upholding their democratic rights and responsibilities. Equally, the CWP have engaged in online discussions on gender and the pandemic, including highlighting best practice regarding executive scrutiny. The 2020 CWP Gender Sensitising Parliaments Guidelines - Standards and Checklist - constitute the CWP's contribution to contemporary debates about GSP in the era of COVID-19 and beyond. A short survey was also created and completed by 21 CPA parliaments in summer 2020.ⁱⁱ

The new 2020 CWP GSP Guidelines benefit from the extensive knowledge and experience gained by various international organisations concerned with parliaments and gender equality. This includes, as noted above, the CPA and CWP, and new (positive and negative) developments on the ground in terms of women's political participation and representation, as well as wider developments in the academic study of politics and gender.

BOX 2: GENDER SENSITIVE PARLIAMENTS & COVID-19

IPU

In times of pandemic, women and men are affected differently. Failing to take on board gendered dimensions of the emergency response will exacerbate existing and persisting inequalities and create new ones. This could amplify the crisis and increase its current and future impact and its costs for women and for society as a whole.

Placing gender equality at the core of the parliamentary response to COVID-19:

- Gender mainstreaming and women's participation and leadership in parliamentary decision-making on COVID-19;
- COVID-19 and gender-responsive legislation
- Overseeing the government's COVID-19 response from a gender perspective;
- Communicating and raising awareness on COVID-19 and its effects – the role of parliamentarians and parliaments
- Gender sensitive parliaments in times of COVID-19
- Parliamentary action today for a better tomorrow

UN WOMEN

Every public office holder has an obligation to serve the women they represent by addressing gender equality as part of their work; in a pandemic, this obligation is even more important. Response and recovery policies and budgets that benefit from women's contributions will lead to better informed decisions, more just outcomes, and greater resilience against health emergencies like COVID-19. The role of parliaments in legislating and scrutinising governments' policies and budgets during the crisis is key to curtailing deepening gender inequality.

What parliaments can do:

- Commit to a gender sensitive response
- Cultivate a gender sensitive environment in parliament during the crisis
- Prioritise women's involvement in the parliamentary response to the crisis
- Institute special gender mainstreaming procedures to the response
- Monitor and evaluate the gender sensitivity of the crisis response
- Prepare for a future 'business disruption'
- Share lessons with other parliaments

Developments in Women's Political Participation

The latest [IPU data](#) shows that the average percentage for women's political participation in national parliaments (Lower House) is [24.6%](#). This compares favourably with the figure at the time of the 2001 CPA Report, [14.1%](#). It represents a near doubling in little short of twenty years. However, the global world average is only half-way to 50: 50.

Illustration 1 below shows regional differences in the numbers of women parliamentarians for the same two time periods. The figures demonstrate improvements over time, with no region going backwards. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the increases vary in size and between regions, with only the Nordic

region returning percentages close to equality of participation. The latest [global ranking](#) shows that only four countries – Rwanda (61.3), Cuba (53.2), Bolivia (53.1) and UAE (50) – have women at fifty percent or more of their national legislatures.

Turning to Commonwealth parliaments (See Illustration 2 on the opposite page), current CWP data shows two distinct regional groupings: those averaging in the mid-20s and above, and those that average in the mid-teens. As with the global data, Commonwealth regional averages mask significant intra-regional differences, as the highest and lowest figures in the Table detail.

ILLUSTRATION 1: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENTS BY REGION, 2001 AND 2019

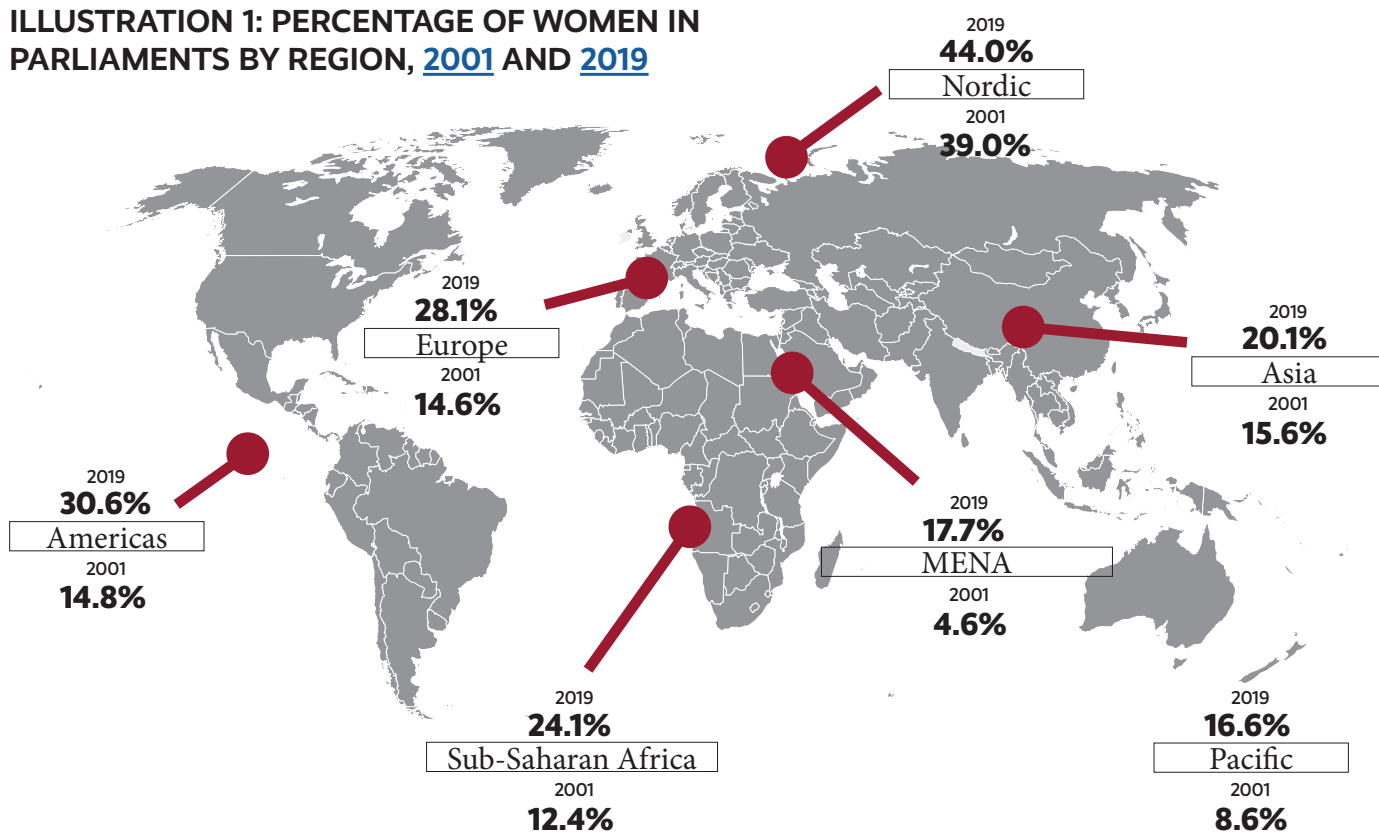
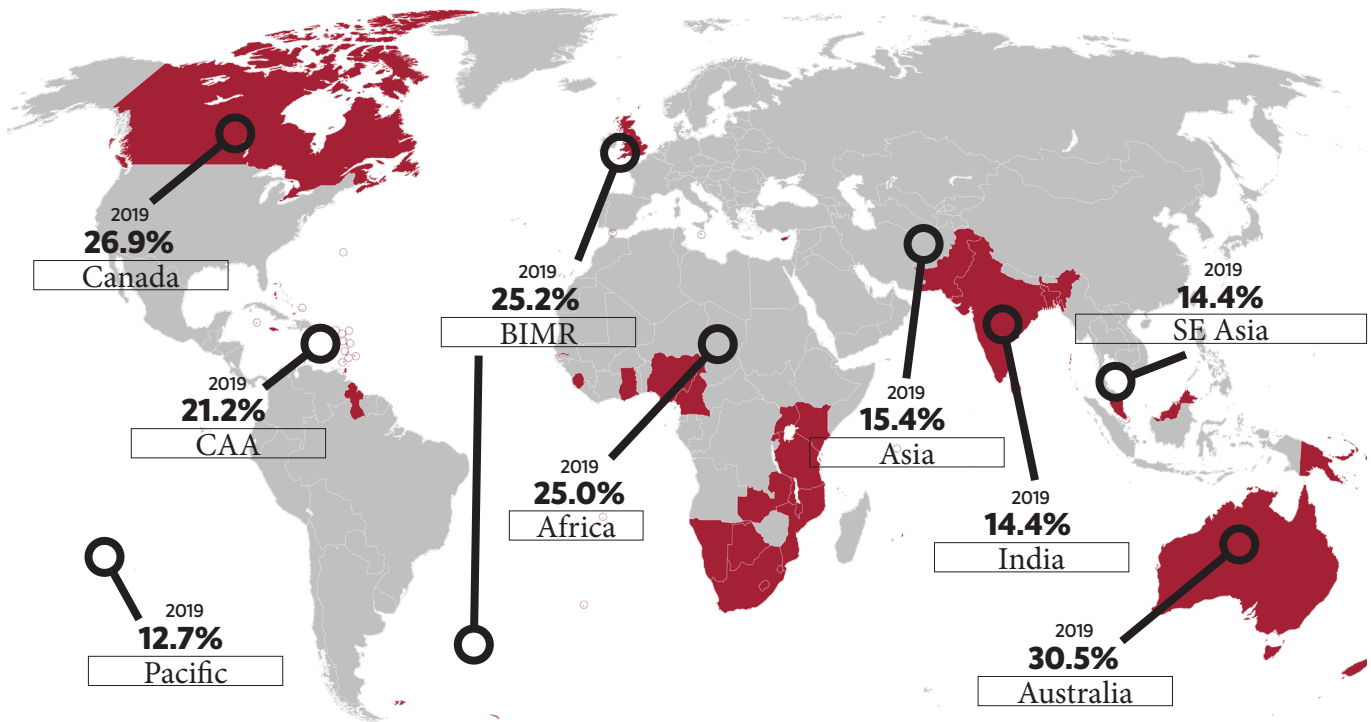


ILLUSTRATION 2: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN COMMONWEALTH NATIONAL AND SUBNATIONAL PARLIAMENTS BY REGION, 2019



Region	Highest/Lowest Cases
Africa	61.3% Rwanda; 3.4% Nigeria
Asia	20.6% Bangladesh; 5.3% Sri Lanka
British Islands and Mediterranean (BIMR)	46.7% Wales; 10% Alderney
Caribbean, Americas and Atlantic (CAA)	46.7% Grenada; 9.4% Belize
Pacific	40.8% New Zealand; 0% PNG and Vanuatu

Developments in the Study of Women and Politics

Counting the numbers of women parliamentarians elected to national, regional, and local parliaments continues to be the mainstay of both International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) and academic studies of women and politics. Without accurate data over time, it is impossible to determine whether there has been increase, stagnation or fallback in the numbers of women elected as representatives. Comparative studies are necessary too. Individual countries trajectories are frequently hidden by ‘snapshots’ of regional and global averages, which risks generating complacency, and misplaced assumptions based upon a perceived upward trajectory in the face of empirical evidence to the contrary. The findings presented in Box 3, based on the CWP 2020 survey, details which data is collected by parliaments sitting on the CPA Executive Committee, finding much less is collected for candidates than for parliamentarians, and that there is plenty of room for improvement in the collection of diversity data for parliamentarians beyond the more most common ‘identities’ based on gender, age, and profession.

BOX 3: CWP 2020 SURVEY - DIVERSITY DATA COLLECTED BY PARLIAMENTS OF THE CPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

	CANDIDATES	PARLIAMENTARIANS
Gender	1	18
Age	2	18
Profession	2	17
Education	0	13
Disability	0	8
Motherhood	0	6*
Sexuality	0	6
Ethnicity	0	5
Fatherhood	0	5
Other	0	5
None collected	17	1

(n=21) * New Zealand data on those who give birth whilst being a Parliamentarian

Counting the numbers of women parliamentarians, importantly does not tell us which women are successful in negotiating gendered barriers to participation in electoral politics (Lovenduski and Norris, 1995). Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991), highlights the necessity of attending to the diversity of women who are able to participate in politics (Smooth, 2011). Globally, it is elite ethnic majority men who dominate parliaments (Childs and Hughes, 2018). Efforts to rebalance politics between women and men, must be designed to ensure that a similar pattern is not otherwise replicated, with only majority ethnic women gaining increased political power. Recent research looking at gender quotas in politics has explored the way in which such devices have enabled some minority ethnic women to participate, even as they have privileged elite women more generally (Celis and Mügge, 2018). Other research has considered the representation of mothers in politics (Thomas and Bittner, 2017). Box 4 below drawing on the CWP survey in 2020, presents new data on parliamentary provisions for 'parent parliamentarians'.

Contemporary consideration of sex and gender have generated new questions and [debates](#) about women's political representation (see Paxton et al 2020): the descriptive representation of transwomen and non-binary people; whether quotas are transwomen inclusive or exclusive; how [parliamentary](#)

[facilitates](#) can respond to the needs of all its members, staff and indeed, visitors; and what additional obstacles and discrimination transwomen may experience.

Data on women's descriptive representation are the starting point for those studies that look at women's political representation in substantive and symbolic terms (see Paxton et al 2020; [GIWL](#)). In other words; are women's interests 'acted' upon in our political institutions, how are women and gender symbolised in and through politics, and how do women feel about their representation? There is still much to learn about the relationships between descriptive and other dimensions of political representation, not least how formal and informal rules and norms mediate - in positive and negative ways - the political 'space' that women representatives have to act for women, and to do so in a different style.

Over the last decade [feminist institutionalist](#) approaches have revealed the ways in which women frequently enter highly masculinised institutions where the formal rules and informal norms and practices - the everyday ways of doing politics - reflect the gendered norms of behaviour and historical preferences of men whom have long inhabited parliaments (Lovenduski, 2005; Krook and Mackay, 2011; Macrae and Weiner, 2017). Such approaches shift attention away from 'fixing women', to the more important task of 'fixing institutions'.

BOX 4: CWP 2020 SURVEY PARLIAMENTARY PROVISIONS FOR PARENTS

In 19 out of the 21 parliaments who responded, there is no provision made for the cost of parliamentarians' childcare

Breastfeeding is quite widely permitted: in special women's family rooms (10); and in Committees and the Chamber (3 parliaments each) (N=18)

Half of reporting parliaments make no leave provision for parliamentarians who have just had children (N=21)

	No provision	Same as national law	Parliament specific
Maternity	10	5	6
Paternity	10	3	6
Parental	11	1	5

In none of the parliaments is there job share for parliamentarians (N=17)
(N refers to the number of respondents).



Even though feminist institutionalist approaches recognise institutional resistance to gender sensitive changes, strategic questions have been opened up about who critical actors of feminised political change are, and how their efforts at institutional reform can be entrenched.

The increased recognition of violence against women in politics (VAW-P) is unquestionably the most prominent development in recent years in the study of women and politics. A global phenomenon, VAW-P is experienced in established as well as newer democracies ([Krook, 2018](#); [Bardall, Bjarnegård and Piscopo, 2019](#); [Holm, 2020](#)). Insights from INGO and academic studies must inform contemporary GSP initiatives to increase the numbers and effectiveness of women representatives. In brief, VAW-P is a serious barrier to women's participation as electoral candidates and their effectiveness as members of parliament. Box 5 below details findings from the recent CWP survey. VAW-P negatively impacts on women's full participation, takes multiple forms - in person and via social media, and exists on a continuum: micro-aggression, sexual harassment and bullying, sexual violence, rape, and murder. VAW-P must not be considered the [cost of women's participation](#) ([Krook, 2020](#)).

BOX 5: CWP 2020 SURVEY PARLIAMENTARY RESPONSES TO VAW-P

- Half (8) of the reporting parliaments had undertaken reviews regarding VAW-P (N= 19)
- Just over half (11) of the parliaments had consulted with parliamentarians regarding VAW-P
- Eight stated that no consultations had taken place (N=20)



2020 GENDER SENSITISING PARLIAMENTS GUIDELINES: GOALS

Building on the 2001 Gender Sensitising Commonwealth Parliaments Report

The CPA's Gender Sensitising Commonwealth Parliaments, The Report of a Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Study Group, 2001 included a series of formal recommendations, as well as informal suggestions, that Commonwealth parliaments might adopt. Box 6 on the opposite page translates these into what can be reconceived as GSP 'standards'. Yet, because they are far from exhaustive across the full work of a parliament and the full range of parliamentary actors and institutions, they are not in themselves sufficient to achieve GSP status today.ⁱⁱⁱ Nevertheless, and not least because too many parliaments have yet to meet even these standards, they remain highly relevant to the new 2020 GSP Guidelines.



The 2001 CPA Report stressed the importance of national and international 'political commitment' to GSP change. It also recognised that 'the legal regime has to reflect this commitment in letter and spirit'; and that 'affirmative legal actions' should flow from these commitments. Women parliamentarians were identified as the critical actors of political change, with an important role handed to the CPA Headquarters Secretariat to support women's gender sensitising efforts.

The Parliament of Grenada - a global leader in gender equality, with 46.7% women in the Lower House



BOX 6: STANDARDS FOR A GSP, BASED ON THE 2001 CPA REPORT^{IV}

- A. Commonwealth parliaments commit to gender-based analyses of all parliamentary documents, including policy proposals, legislation and committee reports, in order to assess their impact on the lives of women and men and to ensure govt policies, are equitable for both women and men
- B. Commonwealth parliaments provide maternity and paternity benefits for parliamentarians
- C. Proper facilities for the care of infants and young children are established in parliament buildings
- D. In those countries, due to size and distance, where it is necessary for parliamentarians to utilise temporary accommodation nearer to parliament, the parliamentary week should be narrowed with parliament
- E. Where applicable, constituency weeks should be free of committee work, removing the requirement for parliamentarians to travel away from their home territories and constituencies during such weeks^v
- F. Commonwealth parliaments are flexible in the amount of time allowed off for family purposes^{vi}
- G. Training and orientation programmes, sponsored by parliaments, and involving both men and women, are held on a regular basis throughout each parliamentary session to assist parliamentarians in a wide range of areas related to their functioning as parliamentarians
- H. Women are appointed to prominent government offices and to serve on, as well as chair, important committees
- I. The Standing Orders are regularly reviewed and amended, to ensure that the presence of women and issues pertaining to women are taken into account by parliaments, in order to encourage greater participation by women in the parliamentary process.
- J. Women parliamentarians get together to discuss issues common to women. Toward this end, formal and informal women's networks are set up within parliaments and women identify policy issues where cross-party cooperation can exist.
- K. As an inter-party grouping, women parliamentarians work with various groups in society, for example Non-Governmental women's organisations and [community] radio and TV, to promote awareness by the population of gender sensitising issues and create the environment for wider public support.
- L. All CPA Branches are mindful of the fact that women should represent at least 30% of the CPA Executive Committee
- M. Funding for meetings of the CWP Steering Committee is met by the CPA.

Informal: A critique of Westminster, adversarial-style Chambers, and their associated gender inappropriate parliamentary behaviour

- N. The CPA monitor the extent to which Member Branches fulfil their international obligations pertaining to the rights of women

Informal: Consideration of state funding, and by implication, the role of electoral law and/or party regulation in determining how political parties behave

Informal: demystifying parliamentary roles, functions and rules

**BOX 7: A REVIEW AND UPDATE OF THE 2001
RECOMMENDATIONS ASSIGNED TO THE CPA
HEADQUARTERS SECRETARIAT**

2001 Recommendation/ Suggestions	Review of Progress	'RAG' Assessment
M. Funding for meetings of the CWP Steering Committee is met by the CPA	In line with its wider CPA Travel Policy, and as of the 64th Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, CWP Steering Committee Members are recognised as official delegates to the wider Conference with full voting rights, removing the need for the Branch to pay an observer fee	Green
The CPA to continue to sponsor and support local, regional and international Youth Parliaments	The numbers of women and men participating at the three most recent (8th, 9th and 10th) Commonwealth Youth Parliaments are 29:34, 26:24 and 19:29 (numbers of men: women). The Government Leader and Leader of the Opposition were respectively, both female, both male, and male/female	Green
N. The CPA monitor the extent to which Member Branches fulfil their international obligations pertaining to the rights of women	Regions are invited, on an annual basis to share a report on the initiatives and strategies undertaken in their Branches to overcome gender inequality in the following areas: education; gender quota; leadership programmes; childcare; mechanisms to prevent political violence; equal access to party resources; coordination with other like-minded women's organisations. Discussion of these strategies is then invited at the annual CWP steering committee meeting prior to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference. As of 2019, the CPA Headquarters Secretariat has also invited regions to share information on any initiatives or resources made available to parliamentarians and/or parliamentary staff to combat bullying and harassment. The CPA over the past three years has received on average 5 to 6 formal responses in the form of reports from Branches. The remaining responses are tabled orally at the CWP Steering Committee meeting by the Regional Steering Committee Members	Yellow
There were lengthy discussions on the role that the CPA can play, particularly in regard to the representation of women on its Executive Committee	Box 8 on page 11 shows the numbers and percentages of women attending CPA Executive Committee meetings	Yellow
The CPA should sponsor an annual seminar with equal representation of male and female parliamentarians, representative of the various branches of the Commonwealth, with the major objective of promoting gender sensitivity, equality and inclusion. All delegations should have Members of both sexes included'. 'Full support' for this suggestion was noted in the Report	CWP Discussion meeting on 'Strategic Partnerships for politics in the 21st Century: Men and Women Working Together for Democracy', was held as part of CWP Steering Committee in Canberra, Australia September 2001. There are no records of any subsequent annual events	Red
Laws for the improvement of the status of women and other marginalised social groups and initiate new policy proposals favourable to women as well as to wider society'	Box 9 on page 12 details select democratic legislatures Benchmarks	Red

Box 7 on the preceding page provides an update on the specific recommendations and suggestions directed to the CPA Headquarters Secretariat back in 2001. The 'RAG' assessment indicates the extent to which individual recommendations and suggestions have been fulfilled in the intervening period by the use of **red** (poor), **amber** (fair) and **green** (good) 'flags'.

The RAG analysis presented in Box 7 is based upon an evaluation of how far recommendations and suggestions were formally implemented, monitored, delivered and/or achieved expected outcomes. The first green flag acknowledges that there is no fee for members to attend the CWP Steering Committee; the second green flag recognises the gender balance, and representation in women's favour at recent CPA Youth Parliaments.

The first amber flag reflects lack of data to show that 'invitations' to report on gender initiatives are widely and systematically taken up and/or reported upon. The second amber flag, further illustrated in Box 8, suggests only a limited success in women's equal participation in the CPA Executive Committee and draws specific attention to a reduction over the last five years. The average since 2015 is 26% with a noticeable and worrying decline from 29% to 22% by 2020.

The first red flag signals the failure of an annual CPA Seminar promoting gender sensitivity, equality and inclusion; the second red flag reflects the limited way in which CPA monitors gender equality laws and policies, although Box 9 overleaf does note some gender benchmarks as part of its wider democratic legislatures work.

BOX 8: WOMEN ATTENDEES OF CPA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2001-2020

Year	Numbers of women	Percentage
2001/2002	7	21 %
2002/2003	7	21 %
2003/2004	7	21 %
2004/2005	7	21 %
2005/2006	10	29 %
After 2005, the CWP Chairperson was included in the Executive Committee Membership		
2006/2007	11	31 %
2007/2008	7	20 %
2008/2009	6	17 %
As of 2009, the CWP Chairperson was included as a member of the CPA Executive Committee and recognised as an Officer of the Association		
2009/2010	7	20 %
2010/2011	6	17 %
2011/2012	5	14 %
2013/2014	6	17 %
2014/2015	8	23 %
2015/2016	10	29 %
As of 2017, the Chairperson of the CPA Small Branches was included as a member of the CPA Executive Committee and recognised as an Officer of the Association		
2017	10	28 %
2018	9	25 %
2019	9	24 %
2020	8	22 %

BOX 9: CPA BENCHMARKS FOR DEMOCRATIC LEGISLATURES

Gender Related Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures

- 1.2.1 Restrictions on candidate eligibility shall not be based on religion, gender, ethnicity, race or disability
- 5.1.5 The legislature shall take measures to ensure that women are represented at all levels of administration
- 5.2.2 The legislature shall have transparent and objective recruitment procedures that shall not discriminate in its recruitment of staff on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, or, in the case of non-partisan staff, party affiliation
- 8.1.1 The legislature shall be organised in such a way as to enable the substantive representation of women in its work

The Critical Importance of GSP Audits

The 2020 GSP Guidelines start from the fundamental premise that all Commonwealth parliaments undertake a GSP audit as soon as possible to establish an initial benchmark against which future efforts and developments can be evaluated. Gender (in)sensitivity is to be measured across four dimensions, as detailed in Illustration 3 opposite.

The questions embedded within the four GSP dimensions, acknowledge that parliaments are both places for democracy and places of work. To assist parliaments' self-reflection across the totality of their activities, the 2020 GSP Guidelines are designed to enable systematic and comprehensive examination of the ways in which institutional gender insensitivities mediate parliamentary activities, interactions and outputs, across interest representation, policy making, legislation, and scrutiny. In sum, the 2020 GSP Guidelines have been devised to help parliaments review an institution's formal and informal rules, norms, practices and procedures; parliamentarians' and parliamentary staff's experiences and preferences; individual behaviour and collective interactions that take place within the institution; as well as the wider parliamentary culture.



ILLUSTRATION 3: THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF A GENDER SENSITIVE PARLIAMENT

1

DIMENSION 1: EQUALITY OF PARTICIPATION WITHIN PARLIAMENT

Dimension 1 asks the question of how a diverse group of parliamentarians might be selected for, and elected to, parliament and how, once present, they are enabled to become effective participants across parliament's core activities: representation and interest articulation, legislative scrutiny, and executive accountability.

DIMENSION 2: PARLIAMENTARY INFRASTRUCTURE

2

Dimension 2 takes a critical look at the way in which parliament facilitates the work of Members and whether this benefits a particular type of parliamentarian – explicitly or implicitly. It covers everything from the buildings and furniture of parliament to the official rules and working practices that underpin the array of Members' parliamentary activities.

DIMENSION 3: PARLIAMENTARY CULTURE

3

Dimension 3 acknowledges that the official, written-down rules never tell the whole story about how institutions function on the ground – this is what might be thought of as the 'normal way of doing things'. It is, admittedly, frequently hard to pin down informal institutional norms, practices and culture. That said ...parliamentary culture... is not fixed but an evolving phenomenon, subject to change.

DIMENSION 4: GENDER EQUALITY POLICY/ WOMEN'S SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

4

Dimension 4 subjects the political work of parliament to gendered analysis. These would include legislation, policy, scrutiny and interest representation. It asks whether parliaments acknowledge the perspectives and address the needs and interests of women. Have women's experiences been taken into account? Are the gendered differentiated outcomes to women's disadvantage? Do they aim for gender equality between women and men? In so doing, such analysis will frequently be analysing a parliament's work in holding a government to account for its gender sensitivity.

Source: amended from The Good Parliament Report. The Good Parliament Report was not designed to address the GSP of the House of Commons in terms of policy/legislation. The 4th dimension reflects IPU [Action Areas 2 and 3](#) and [Toolkit Questions 2 and 3](#).

The Principle of Institutionalisation

The 2020 GSP Guidelines are especially designed to help Commonwealth parliaments create the necessary conditions to deliver on their responsibility to reach the standard of gender sensitivity. Here, the principle of institutionalisation is key. Successful institutionalisation involves not only determining necessary reforms relevant to a particular parliament and its circumstances but in identifying the actors and means through which reforms are implemented, and GSP Standards maintained. The responsibility to re-gender parliaments can no longer be left as an additional burden for women parliamentarians, nor to willing women and men parliamentarians; it is for the parliament as an institution, both political and administrative. In other words, the 2020 GSP Guidelines address how Commonwealth parliaments' leadership - political and administrative - can establish and embed new GSP procedures and parliamentary organisations, and how they can develop a supportive GSP culture. First, to identify where gender insensitivities exist, how they manifest themselves, and what changes need to be made. Secondly, to determine how GSP reforms can best be implemented, with their

effects monitored, reviewed, and revised over time. Institutionalisation also extends to the role of the CPA. The 2020 GSP Guidelines detail how the CPA Headquarters Secretariat, as well as the CWP Steering Committee and regional and individual CWP Members, can support Member institutions' efforts to make all parliaments gender sensitive.

Key to the 2020 CWP Guidelines is an accompanying Checklist that will enable parliaments, and especially their gender equality experts and champions, to determine how well-placed the institution is to successfully drive – and embed - GSP reform. The Checklist focuses on leadership capacity - political and administrative - as well as institutional capacity in terms of wider gender expertise. It will generate substantial new information regarding data collection, analysis and monitoring; the instances of GSP reviews – of parliamentary processes, norms, and behaviour; the presence and operation of any incentive and sanction regimes; and the wider personnel, cultural, and organisational capacity for realising gender sensitivity across the full 'work' of a parliament.

BOX 10: CWP 2020 SURVEY INSTITUTIONALISATION PRACTICES

The key actor or institution with formal responsibility for gender equality in the parliament is the Speaker and/or the Governing body, with 7 and 6 counts, respectively, and with five of these cases, the responsibility shared between the Speaker and the Governing body (N=17)

Of those parliaments that responded (N=21), 60 % (13) stated that their parliament had no 'gender quality plan', compared with 8 which did.

More than half (12) of the CPA parliaments (N=21) said that their constitutional law or equivalent legal framework did not directly refer to gender equality in political representation, compared to 9 that did.

Of the 19 parliaments that had undertaken some form of Gender Sensitive Parliamentary Review, the most widely reported addressed:

- o Parliamentary Facilities (13)
- o Standing Orders (10)
- o Behaviour Codes (10)
- o The dress code (9)
- o Sexual harassment and bullying (8)
- o Violence against women in politics (8)



A Checklist for a Gender Sensitising Parliament

Key to the 2020 CWP Guidelines is an accompanying Checklist that will enable parliaments, and especially their gender equality experts and champions, to determine how well-placed the institution is to successfully drive – and embed - GSP reform. The Checklist focuses on leadership capacity - political and administrative - as well as institutional capacity in terms of wider gender expertise. It will generate substantial new information regarding data collection, analysis and monitoring; the instances of GSP reviews – of parliamentary processes, norms, and behaviour; the presence and operation of any incentive and sanction regimes; and the wider personnel, cultural, and organisational capacity for realising gender sensitivity across the full ‘work’ of a parliament.



CWP New Zealand Branch Members marking International Women's Day 2020 with the Rt Hon. Jacinda Ardern in the New Zealand Parliament's Suffrage Room

THE 2020 GENDER SENSITISING PARLIAMENTS GUIDELINES: GSP STANDARDS

The 2020 GSP Guidelines are designed to transform GSP practice by (i) outlining ideal GSP Standards, to which all Commonwealth Parliaments should aspire, and can be applied to individual parliaments across the Commonwealth; and (ii) provide greater detail about how parliaments can and should establish new GSP internal organisations and processes, and develop the necessary political and administrative leadership and capacity to drive forward GSP change. This is what is meant by gender sensitising parliaments. The 2020 Standards and Checklist work with,

and importantly augment, existing GSP Audit toolkits, as a parliament undergoes its formal assessment. Parliaments should decide which existing toolkit is best suited to them; the CPA Headquarters Secretariat can assist in this determination.

Box 11 presents the CWP's GSP Standards that all Commonwealth parliaments should (aspire to) meet; these top-line Standards are organised according to the four dimensions of a Gender Sensitive Parliament.

BOX 11: THE CWP 2020 GENDER SENSITISING PARLIAMENT STANDARDS

Dimension 1: Equality of Participation within Parliament

- Women and men participate equally in politics, as candidates for elected office and as elected Members
- The ambition to, and the resources needed to participate in politics, are evenly distributed throughout society; gendered barriers to participation have been removed.
- Political parties have put in place appropriate supply - and demand - side mechanisms to ensure the successful recruitment of women and men
- Women politicians, like male politicians, reflect the wider make-up of society, in terms of other socio-economic, cultural or ethnic differences
- Mothers are equally as able as fathers to participate in politics
- As Members of the Parliament, women and men are effective actors, fully engaged across the range of parliamentary activities, and as skilled in the workings and ways of the parliament
- Participation rates by sex, across the House's activities, are regularly collected and monitored
- Political leadership, whether party or parliamentary are shared
- All committees have women and men members; Chairs are equally divided amongst the sexes; horizontal segregation is not a feature of committee membership or chairing
- Women and men are regarded, and regard themselves, as politically authoritative; the 'good' parliamentarian is not imagined as taking one bodily form nor adopting one particular gendered style
- In addition to Members, parliamentary staff – clerks and others - reflect the major social characteristics of those the parliament represents. There is no evidence of horizontal or vertical segregation in occupations, or of gender pay gaps



Dimension 2: Parliamentary Infrastructure

- House procedures, practices, and norms are straightforward; old-fashioned terminology, opaque practices and behaviours, antiquated standing orders, and mystifying rituals and ceremonies, will have been removed where they 'get in the way' of parliament's work, create unnecessary hierarchies, or negatively affect the public's engagement and identification with parliament
- Parliamentary rules (formal and informal) are accessible in minority languages and are disability sensitive
- There is certainty over the scheduling of parliamentary business; parliaments' sittings reflect 'core business hours'; parliamentary recesses match school holidays
- A range of women's parliamentary bodies are established – women's caucus, women's committees, Speaker's groups - are high profile, with sufficient formal powers and resources, coordinate with other committees, and are respected by other members, including, parliamentary and administrative leaders
- The physical needs of all who work or come into the parliament are met; the buildings and furniture are fully accessible and safe
- Parliamentarians are entitled to paid parental and caring leave; children are welcome and catered for; mothers' needs are met; parliamentarians on parental or caring leave are able to participate virtually or via proxies
- The business costs and expenses scheme support the needs of all Members (where appropriate, in both of their places of work, the constituency and in parliament)
- The use of technology is maximised to widen participation and engagement; there is no technology gender gap'
- Parliamentarians and staff are supported by bespoke mental and physical health services
- Parliamentarians and staff work/life balance is good; parliamentary families are resilient
- Security, engagement, external communications strategies are GSP

Dimension 3: Parliamentary Culture

- Parliament is recognised as a truly representative, transparent, accessible, accountable and effective institution.
- There is no longer a single image of who the parliamentarians, the senior clerk, or the 'important' parliamentary visitor is; members and staff look in their dress and in their manner like the societies they represent and work for
- Professional conduct between Members, between Members and parliamentary staff, and with other visitors to parliament is of the highest standard; the Parliament's code of conduct is exhaustive; all Members undertake GSP and wider equalities training.
- Unparliamentary behaviour explicitly includes sexism, sexual harassment, gendered bullying and violence against women (VAW-P)
- VAW-P is not tolerated within the institution or outside; sufficient resources are provided to protect women, Members, staff and visitors; there are independent complaints and grievances schemes, with strong sanctions for those who transgress; free from sexism and sexual harassment gendered bullying (and other discrimination based on additional social characteristics) a parliaments' performance is maximised
- There is a strong sense of belonging and efficacy amongst all who work in or who attend the House; all would feel that they had a 'right' to be present in parliament.
- Whether Member, staff or visitor, all are confident in their knowledge of the work of parliamentarians and of the institution as whole, recognise the enabling work of staff, and the democratic role the public play in parliament.
- The social spaces and public areas are open and attractive to women and men; meeting the needs of women Members, staff and visitors.
- The artwork reflects the role that women have played in parliament and in society.

4

Dimension 4: Gender Equality Policy/Women's substantive representation

- There is an institutional commitment to a gender sensitive parliament; this is widely publicised and championed by parliamentary leaders, Members and staff
- Gendered analysis runs through all parliamentary work, including, but not limited to, legislation, policy, scrutiny and interest representation.
- Parliament accepts it has a critical role in holding the government to account for its gender (in)sensitivity; formal and regular processes for monitoring and reconsidering government's responses to GSP scrutiny are in place.
- Parliament seeks gender equal outcomes; any gendered differentiated outcomes are not to women's disadvantage.
- All committees have a remit that includes gender equality/sensitivity
- There is 'in House' gender expertise available to all Members, committees and staff, supplemented where necessary by additional external gender experts.
- Any special/ad hoc committees or enquiries (or other such groups/bodies) are gender equal in composition and have gender equality/sensitive remits
- Substantive gender equality impact assessments and gender budgeting are normalised and routine
- Gendered analysis is intersectional; women's diverse experiences, perspectives, issues and interests are addressed as Members and staff undertake parliament's representation, scrutiny and legislative work
- Sex disaggregated data is produced automatically; wherever possible this is further disaggregated by other key social characteristics.
- Committee witnesses, including experts, are gender balanced and diverse, ensuring that parliamentarians and staff who support them receive a full range of perspectives. There is wide agreement throughout the institution that that better outcomes result from hearing diverse views.
- There are formal, routine and substantial links between Members, parliamentary staff and women's civil society organisations.

Source: amended from Childs 2016, private briefing to the UK Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion, and UN Women [Primer](#).



THE 2020 CWP GENDER SENSITISING PARLIAMENT CHECKLIST

The Gender Sensitising Checklist that accompanies the 2020 GSP Guidelines, Boxes 12 below, were developed to enable parliaments to identify how able they are to initiate and secure GSP reform. It identifies who has the authority, powers and resources to lead on GSP, and what new roles and processes need to be established to take forward the GSP agenda. In identifying the extent of current parliamentary capacity to deliver on both existing GSP initiatives, and the need to embed more systematic and comprehensive GSP interventions, this refers in particular to a parliament's formal rules and internal organisations, and the extent and nature of resources devoted to GSP, including data and gender expertise.

In working through the Checklist, a parliament will document the necessary

institutional augmentations that need to be in place to ensure that GSP becomes a permanent feature of its governance, and to do so in relation to all four GSP dimensions - participation, infrastructure, culture and gender equality/women's substantive representation. In other words, the Checklist is designed to establish parliamentary governance and organisation supportive of both an initial GSP audit and its accompanying reform agenda. This ensures that over the short, medium and long term, GSP Standards run throughout everything a Parliament does, and is reflected in how the Parliament works thereafter. To be clear, the Checklist does not replace a GSP Audit, rather it works in conjunction with, and supports, a formal GSP auditing process.



The 2018 Commonwealth Women's Forum Session on '*Women's Political Participation at All Levels*'

BOX 12: THE CWP 2020 GENDER SENSITISING PARLIAMENT CHECKLIST


Institutional Leadership

- Which, if any, parliamentary bodies or individuals have formal responsibility for gender equality within your parliament, and which is the most important? (these might include governing body/bodies, government, speaker, chief administrative operating officer; parliamentary clerk; other parliamentary body or official)
- Is the composition of your parliament's governing body/bodies gender balanced? (These might be called a Bureau or a Commission, for example) Are there formal rules to ensure gender balance on these governing body/bodies? Does it include a GSP 'champion'?
- Is there a parliament 'gender equality plan'? (This might be phrased in as gender sensitivity, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, amongst other terms) What does it cover? (rules and procedures, culture, facilities/infrastructure; the political work - legislation, scrutiny, representation) Finally, who has overall responsibility for its delivery, and what monitoring processes are in place?
- Does the constitutional law or equivalent legal framework directly refer to gender equality in political representation?
- Does your parliament have any formal requirements to debate the under-representation of women in plenary debates?
- Are there any formal rules requiring either (a) equality or (b) a minimum level of women's participation as committee chairs and committee members, and other parliamentary leadership positions?

Data

- Does your parliament (1) collect and (2) publish (makes publicly available), sex/gender disaggregated data regarding:
 - Parliamentary candidate diversity data (gender, ethnicity, education, profession, motherhood, fatherhood, age, disability, sexuality)
 - Parliamentarians diversity data (gender, ethnicity, education, profession, motherhood, fatherhood, age, disability, sexuality)
 - Parliamentarians participation in plenary debates
 - Parliamentarians participation in formal 'question times'
 - Parliamentarians participation in committee proceedings
 - Parliamentarians participation in delegation travel




- 
- o Parliamentarians in leadership positions in the Parliament
 - o Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff take up of gender/equalities training
 - o Parliamentary staff (clerks, officials, other workers), in leadership positions
 - o Parliamentary staff participation in parliamentary delegation travel
 - o Witnesses coming before committees
 - o External 'specialist advisers' attached to committees
 - o The gender pay gap amongst parliamentarians
 - o The gender pay gap amongst parliamentary staff
 - o The percentage of women journalists amongst media personnel given privileged access to the parliament (sometimes called lobby journalists)



Reviews

- Has your parliament undertaken consultations on gender equality/gender sensitive parliaments in the last 3 years? Was this with (a) parliamentarians (b) parliamentarians' staff; or, (c) parliamentary staff?
- Has your parliament undertaken a 'gender sensitive review' of any of the following?
 - o Electoral law
 - o standing orders
 - o Codes of conduct
 - o Parliamentary calendar and sitting hours
 - o Existing gender equality legislation
 - o The sex breakdown of committee 'witnesses' and committee external experts
 - o Informal norms and conventions, e.g. ceremonies, rituals, the use of masculine language and style of political interaction
 - o Parliamentary dress codes
 - o Parliamentary facilities (e.g. toilet capacity, artwork, social spaces, food and other amenities, e.g. chemists).
 - o Mentoring schemes for Parliamentarians and staff
 - o Parliamentarians' pay and expenses schemes
 - o Job shares for Parliamentarians
 - Provision for parliamentarians childcare costs
 - Maternity, paternity leave, parental leave and caring leave
 - Proxy voting, surrogate parliaments or other provision to cover parliamentarians' work in parliament and in the constituency



- 
- Full time childcare facilities providing permanent care (e.g. nursery)
 - Ad hoc childcare facilities providing temporary care (e.g. a crèche)
 - Office allocation
 - The right to breast/Infant feed and the provision of breastfeeding rooms
 - o The needs of parliamentarians and staff who are parents: including:
 - o The parliamentary gender pay gap for parliamentarians/parliamentary staff/ parliamentarians' staff
 - o Sexism, sexual harassment and gendered bullying and violence against women in politics (VAW-P)
 - Does your parliament's code of conduct address (a) sexist language and behaviour; (b) sexual harassment and gendered bullying; and (c) violence against women?
 - Does your parliament's code of conduct govern relations between parliamentarians, between parliamentarians and parliamentary staff, and between parliamentarians and their staff?
 - Is there an independent grievance scheme for those experiencing gendered inappropriate behaviour?
 - o Other parliaments GSP best practice

Gender Expertise

- Is data, disaggregated by sex, and relating to policy, routinely available within your parliament?
- Are gender experts present, and gender equality policies in place, in the following parliamentary departments and services
 - o The clerks' dept (i.e. the administrative department supporting Committees)
 - o Parliamentary outreach teams
 - o Parliamentary education teams
 - o The digital service
 - o Social media teams
 - o Security teams
 - o The human resources team
- Does your parliament provide training on the following, and is this compulsory for (a) parliamentarians; (b) parliamentarians' staff; and (c) parliamentary staff?



- o Gender mainstreaming
- o Gender budgeting
- o Sexual harassment & bullying
- o Leadership

- Is there a law requiring all government policy and legislation to be reviewed, with regard to:
 - o Gender equality impacts
 - o Gender budgeting
- Compatibility with international conventions (e.g. CEDAW, UNHCR, International covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and International covenant on Economic and Social rights.)
- Are there formal, regular links with the following: (a) academic gender experts; (b) women's movement representatives; (c) representatives from the 'women's media'?



Women's Parliamentary Bodies

- Does your parliament have any of the following 'gendered parliamentary bodies': a women's caucus, a women's committee, an equalities committee, women's networks or organisations, CWP?
- Which of your parliament's 'gendered parliamentary bodies' have a formal or an informal role in your parliament's efforts to 'gender sensitise' the institution?
- If your parliament has a formal women's committee, does it (a) scrutinise the work ('outputs') of parliament, e.g. laws, scrutiny, representation; (b) monitor and judge parliament as a gender sensitive institution; and (c) hold to account the responsible government Minister/Department dealing with women's issues
- Does your parliament provide funds to support women parliamentarians' visits to other parliaments to share international gender best practice, including via CWP?

THE ROLE OF THE CPA SECRETARIAT AND CWP

In signing up to the CPA's commitment to promote gender equality in parliaments – as well as being signatories to other international treaties and obligations - Commonwealth parliaments have already accepted the necessity to bring about GSP. Consequently, individual Commonwealth Parliaments bear the responsibility to establish GSP leadership, devote institutional resources, develop appropriate review procedures, and undertake a formal GSP audit.

The CPA Headquarters Secretariat is committed to supporting its member institutions in their GSP work. To back up this commitment, the CPA will:

- Continue to fund CWP Steering Committee meetings at annual conferences, and where financially possible, work to support (including financially) Branches willing to host additional CWP Steering Committee meetings outside of the annual conference
- Act as a champion of Commonwealth GSP
 - o Create a CPA GSP subcommittee, co-chaired with the CWP Chairperson to lead on GSP in the CPA; to co-opt additional CWP members
 - o Sponsor an annual CPA/CWP GSP seminar with equal representation of male and female parliamentarians, and representatives of the various Branches of the CPA
 - o Where possible, raise an awareness of the importance of GSP in CHOGM activities and seek to ensure GSP is included in the CHOGM communique
 - o Support the production of a CWP Annual Report on the progress of its own and member parliament's GSP work at the annual CPA/CWP GSP seminar; and formally review progress against the CPA 2020 Guidelines in 2025
- Support the development of CPA Headquarters Secretariat 'in house' GSP expertise
 - o Fund new online resources/GSP materials
 - o CWP network coordinator and Programme Managers to lead on GSP
 - o Create a network of INGO and academic GSP experts
 - o Maintain a 'bank' of GSP experts who can advise individual Commonwealth Parliaments on GSP reviews and audits
 - o Work more closely with other INGOs on the GSP agenda
 - o Collate, publish and monitor data from Commonwealth parliaments' GSP reviews and audits
 - o Share and publicise best practice
- Provide GSP resources to Commonwealth parliaments
 - o 'In kind' and other, where financially possible and subject to CWP/CPA budget should a Branch express interest or is in the process of GSP
- Support 2-3 Commonwealth parliaments in 2021-22 to undergo a GSP review process, according to the CWP 2020 Guidelines and Checklist, and including a formal audit
- Seek to undergo its own GSP review and audit within 2 years





Further Information about the Author

This report was produced by Professor Sarah Childs on behalf of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians (CWP) network.

Sarah Childs is currently Professor of Gender and Politics at Royal Holloway, University of London. Previously she was Professor of Politics and Gender at Birkbeck, University of London and at the University of Bristol.

Her research expertise centres on the theory and practice of women's representation, gender and political parties, parliaments and institutional change. Key articles have been published in Political Studies, Politics & Gender, Parliamentary Affairs and Party Politics. In addition to two single authored books (New Labour's Women MPs, 2004 and Women and British Party Politics, 2008) in 2012 she co-authored a book based on three-year ESRC grant, Sex Gender and the Conservative Party, with Paul Webb. In 2015 Sarah published two edited books Gender, Conservatism and Representation, and Deeds and Words with Celis and Campbell respectively, both by ECPR press. In 2020, and with Karen Celis (VUB), Sarah has published the Oxford University Press (US) book, Feminist Democratic Representation. For 2020-21 she has been awarded a Leverhulme Research Fellowship to write a monograph, Building Feminist Institutions, based on her experiences re-gendering the UK House of Commons. In 2015 Sarah was recognised by the UK Political Studies Association, receiving its 'Special Recognition Award'.

Sarah is an impactful academic: In 2009-10 she was the gender Special Adviser to the UK Parliament's 'Speaker's Conference' on representation and in 2014 the Special Adviser to the All Party Parliamentary Group, Women in Parliament Inquiry. Following a secondment to the House of Commons in 2015-2016 funded by the ESRC, Sarah published The Good Parliament (TGP) Report which identified a series of reforms to make the UK House of Commons diversity sensitive. On her recommendation a new group of MPs, The Commons Reference Group on Representation and Inclusion was established by Mr Speaker. Having advised this group during 2016-18, in 2019 Sarah was appointed advisor to the Women and Equalities Committee's inquiry into the UK Gender Sensitive Parliament Audit. In the years since publication of TGP, some 18 recommendations have been adopted by the UK Parliament; most notably in 2018, an IPU Audit of both Houses of the UK parliament, and in 2019, the introduction of proxy voting for MPs on 'babyleave'; in 2020 this change to the UK's Standing Orders was made permanent.

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Endnotes

- i. The annual review for 2019/20 can be read [here](#). The CPA Annual Report and Performance Review 2018 can be found [here](#), with references to CWP on pages 27-35). CWP has official [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) accounts that provide regular updates on CWP work and events.
- ii. The sample includes national and subnational parliaments from around the world, although no claims of representativeness are made.
- iii. This may in part reflect the 2001 Report's goals: (i) to share analyses, experiences and good practices of Standing Orders; (ii) to identify concrete strategies and mechanisms to make Commonwealth Parliaments as Gender Sensitive as possible; and (iii) to prioritize key areas for action. Only later were 'other aspects of parliamentary life in Commonwealth Parliaments' added to the first goal.
- iv. The letters refer to the listings in the original CPA text. The 2001 recommendation that conscience votes should be whipped is rejected; it is a moot point whether this engenders the substantive representation of women.
- v. A latter part of Recommendation E, 'if needed sitting longer hours' is not included here because this is inconsistent with other statements in the 2001 Report on late and night sittings. This is also in line with the IPU.
- vi. The second part of Recommendation F, '...and where possible the good convention of pairing should be introduced for dealing with necessary absences by MPs' is not included in this update, because it fails to recognize criticism of the operation of pairing, inter alia, that it is often informal, dependent upon good relations between parties/whips and members, is opaque rather than transparent to the public, and leaves members unable to register their vote. Read the UK debate on the adoption of proxy voting for baby leave [here](#).

Readers are also invited to access and utilise the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Anti-Harassment Policy Guidelines: A Toolkit for Commonwealth Parliaments, available online, via the CPA's website (www.cpahq.org)





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