

Gender and Women's Rights

This session will consider issues and questions arising from the CHOGM 2011 Communiqué (<http://bit.ly/ueOhqK>) and the Commonwealth Civil Society Statement, also presented to CHOGM (<http://bit.ly/tbodl3>).

Problems

There are too few female voices in socioeconomic and political arenas at both the national and the international level. There is still widespread discrimination, violence and lack of access to resources. We should not forget young boys when trying to improve processes to empower women.

Commonwealth perspective

MDG 3: To promote gender equality and empower women. This has long been on the international agenda. It could in fact be argued that the Commonwealth has taken the lead, with its Plan of Action on Gender Equality and also with the 2011 Commonwealth theme: Women as Agents of Change.

However, more is needed, in particular in relation to areas such as access to education.

Plan of Action on Gender Equality calls for the implementation of a quota of at least 30% women in all levels of government.

Communiqué encourages states to implement programmes which will eliminate gender violence, etc – calling on member states to lead from the top down.

Implementation of international agreements and instruments such as the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Plan of Action on Gender Equality.

Questions

1. In order to have real gender equality, must all change come from the state – top down – or bottom up?
2. How important is higher education in the empowerment of women?

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