Evaluation Series 114

Mid-Term Review of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2017/18 – 2020/21

Final Report

February 2020

The Commonwealth

EVALUATION SERIES 114

Mid-Term Review of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21

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Contents

Acknowledgements iii

Acronyms vii

Executive Summary x

Introduction xvii

Methodology xviii

Limitations xx

Presentation of findings and analysis xxi

1. The extent to which Commonwealth member countries benefited from the Secretariat's work between 2017 and 2019 1

1.1 The extent to which Secretariat interventions influence results 5

1.2 The effectiveness of the Secretariat's delivery model 6

1.3 Unintended outcomes 10

2. The extent to which projects are able to demonstrate evidenced-based progress towards achievement of Intermediate Outcomes 14

2.1 The use of partnerships to support the achievement of Intermediate Outcomes 15

2.2 The impact of CHOGM mandates on the achievement of Intermediate Outcomes 24

3. The efficiency and effectiveness of the internal systems and processes of the Secretariat in supporting delivery of the Strategic Plan and CHOGM mandates 27

3.1 Planning and budgeting 28

3.2 Project Design Document process 31

3.3 Quarterly, six-monthly and annual reviews 32

3.4 Project Management Information System 35

3.5 Monitoring, evaluation and learning 36

3.6 Corporate systems and processes 41

4. The extent to which objectives of the Strategic Plan align with the current global development agenda and environment 48

4.1 Shifts in the global development agenda in the first two years of the Strategic Plan 51

4.2 Secretariat strengths and weaknesses in supporting the delivery of the global development agenda 52

4.3 The role of the Secretariat in supporting member countries in delivering the global development agenda for the period 2020–2030 52

Annex 1: Evaluation questions 56

Annex 2: List of respondents to KIIs, FGDs and survey 57

Annex 3: Sampling criteria for project sample 61

Annex 4: In-depth project reviews 62

Annex 5: Commonwealth Secretariat strategic results 122

Annex 6: Commonwealth Secretariat results chain and definitions 124

Annex 7: Evidence sources in use across the project sample 125

Annex 8: Survey data 127

Acronyms

ACA	Anti-Corruption Agency
ACC	Anti-Corruption Centre
ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific
ACU	Association of Commonwealth Universities
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AfDB	African Development Bank
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
AU	African Union
BoG	Board of Governors
BTOR	Back-to-Office Report
CAACC	Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Centre
CADME	Commonwealth Accelerated Development Mechanism for Education
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCEM	Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers
CEC	Commonwealth Education Council
CEN	Commonwealth Electoral Network
CEPF	Commonwealth Education Policy Framework
CFAH	Climate Finance Access Hub
CFMM	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
CGF	Commonwealth Games Federation
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CHRI	Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
CMAG	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group
CMJA	Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSSO	Commonwealth Small States Office
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism
CYMM	Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme

DFID	UK Department for International Development
DFME	Designated Funded for Monitoring and Evaluation
EBR	Extra Budgetary Resources
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EMAG	Education Ministers Action Group
EU	European Union
EYSD	Economic, Youth & Sustainable Development
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GPD	Governance and Peace Directorate
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HR	Human Resources
HRC	Human Rights Council
HRU	Human Rights Unit
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IO	Intermediate Outcome
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IT	Information Technology
KII	Key Informant Interview
LDC	Least Developed Country
LIC	Low-Income Country
LMIC	Lower-Middle-Income Country
LTTA	Long-Term Technical Assistance
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MIC	Middle-Income Country
MINEPS	International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport
MOOC	Massive Open Online Course
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOV	Means of Verification
MTR	Mid-Term Review of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21
NAP	National Action Plan
NCD	Non-Communicable Disease
NDA	Nationally Designated Authority
NES	National Export Strategy

NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
NPNM	New Products New Markets
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PDD	Project Design Document
PICTs	Pacific Island Countries and Territories
PLF	Pacific Legislative Framework on NCDs
PMGs	Programme Management Guidelines
PMIS	Project Management Information System
PNG	Papua New Guinea
QPR	Quarterly Performance Review
RBM	Results-Based Management
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDP	Sport for Development and Peace
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SMG	Senior Management Group
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
SPPD	Strategy, Portfolio and Partnerships Division
SRF	Strategic Results Framework
STO	Short-Term Outcome
TOR	Terms of Reference
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
URG	Universal Rights Group
WEF	World Economic Forum
WHO	World Health Organization
YDI	Youth Development Index

Executive Summary

Overview

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent and equal sovereign states that was established in 1965. The Commonwealth Secretariat delivers support to member countries guided by its current Strategic Plan for 2017/18–2020/21. The current Strategic Plan was developed based on performance feedback from member countries, as well as internal audits and an external evaluation of the previous Strategic Plan.

The Secretariat commissioned a Mid-Term Review (MTR) of its Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21. The purpose of this was to assess progress in the realisation of the Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) as set out in the Strategic Plan and the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and to provide clear strategic and operational recommendations to improve the Secretariat's planning, performance and results going forward. The MTR took place between August and October 2019, when the Secretariat was two years into its four-year Strategic Plan.

A mixed-methods approach was used to gather robust evidence to answer four primary evaluation questions and a set of sub-questions (shown in Annex 1). A mixed-methods approach was chosen because it made it possible to offset potential weakness in one method by using another method. Methods for data-gathering included key informant interviews, focus group discussions, surveys and content analysis. All raw data gathered were coded according to the four primary evaluation questions and sub-questions, and then tagged according to emerging themes. The coded and tagged datasets formed the basis of the data analysis and the identification of findings and lessons learnt.

The Terms of Reference for the MTR required the selection of at least two projects from each pillar of the Strategic Plan for in-depth review. This provided for a minimum sample of 10 projects. In order to ensure a representative sample of projects, 12 were selected for in-depth review. Projects selected covered the following areas of the Secretariat's work: Election Observation and Electoral Processes; Countering Violent Extremism; Human Rights; Anti-Corruption; the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP); Maximising the Development Potential of Sport; the Commonwealth Blue Charter; Trade Competitiveness; Access to Climate Finance; Education; Consensus Building; and Gender Mainstreaming.

Findings and lessons learnt

This section presents the findings for the four primary evaluation questions and their sub-questions.

1. **The extent to which Commonwealth member countries benefited from the Secretariat's work between 2017 and 2019**

   - Commonwealth member countries benefited from the Secretariat's work across all pillars of the Strategic Plan between 2017 and 2019. Tangible outcomes can be seen in electoral reform; improved engagement in human rights mechanisms; strengthened policies in the areas of youth, education and sport; improved trade strategies; strengthened legal frameworks for natural resource management; pan-Commonwealth co-operation on meeting commitments for sustainable ocean development; and improved access to climate finance for small states. The Secretariat's work is responsive to member countries' demand for support and programming is taking place in all areas of the Strategic Plan.
   - In several areas of work, including economic policy, youth and democracy, resource constraints hinder the Secretariat's ability to deliver work in response to member country demands.

The extent to which the Secretariat's interventions influence results

- Results at member country level are influenced by Secretariat interventions and the work of some projects (e.g. Maximising the Development Potential of Sport and the CYP) influences changes at a regional level. The Secretariat is working towards complex, high-level changes that often take years to surface and mature. The influence of the Secretariat's interventions often spans Strategic Plan periods and may become clear only through evaluation work undertaken in the years following.

- Where the Secretariat influences changes in member countries, its work is often complemented by that of other development actors and relies on commitment from the member country itself.
- Continued investment in monitoring and evaluation, along with efforts to strengthen the evidence base for Secretariat achievements, will strengthen the organisation's ability to identify its influence in the Strategic Plan period.

The effectiveness of the Secretariat's delivery model

- The Secretariat utilises a range of different methods to deliver member country benefits under the Strategic Plan, and there are strengths and weaknesses to each of these. Given that the Secretariat is a multi-mandate organisation, operating across a large membership with modest resources, it is important that the organisation target its resources effectively, to avoid dilution of impact.
- Much of the Secretariat's support to member countries is demand-driven, which enables it to remain responsive and relevant to national priorities and member country needs. However, this model has also led to a portfolio that is spread across multiple areas. Evaluation work and project and member country feedback indicate that the Secretariat may want to consider a more focused approach to its work, such as the identification of regional or country-level targets to work towards.
- The placement of technical advisers in member countries – the model utilised by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) and other initiatives such as the Climate Finance Access Hub (CFAH) - is a strong method for providing in-depth support to member countries. This method allows for responsiveness to member country demand and comes with the benefit of sustained engagement on specific issues, which is of value when trying to achieve long-term change.
- The Secretariat's convening power is seen as a significant advantage both internally, among member countries, and externally, among partners and peers. Consensus-building activities such as Ministerial Meetings provide the opportunity to identify and validate work areas and provide legitimacy to the Secretariat's work. There remain key challenges to the effectiveness of these meeting, such as declines in attendance and challenges to ensuring relevance for ministers who have to attend many competing regional and international meetings. The Secretariat faces challenges in ensuring these meetings retain their attendance and relevance.

Unintended outcomes of the Secretariat's work

- There have been unintended outcomes in the areas of the CYP, the Blue Charter and Sport for Development and Peace. Secretariat work has catalysed the work of other organisations or partners not initially targeted by these projects.
- Identifying and understanding unintended outcomes relies on having a solid monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan integrated in each project. MEL plans have been introduced in the first two years of the Strategic Plan period but effectively integrating MEL at the project level will require further work and additional capacity.

Lessons learnt on evaluation question 1

- By attempting to respond to all member country demands for support, the Secretariat risks over-promising and under-delivering, and diluting the potential impact of its work. When the Secretariat is unable to respond to requests for support, or to demonstrate progress in member country priority areas, owing to lack of resources, there may be negative consequences. Member countries may question the Secretariat's contribution, along with the value of their own financial contribution to the organisation, and in turn the organisation's relevance.
- One of the strengths of the Secretariat lies in identifying niche programme areas where its technical assistance has the potential to produce a greater impact. This was observed in the areas of Social Policy, Economic Policy, Political, Governance and Trade.

2. **The extent to which projects have been able to demonstrate evidence-based progress towards achievement of the Intermediate Outcomes in the Strategic Results Framework**

   - At this two-year stage of the Strategic Plan, the Secretariat's projects sampled here are showing good progress across multiple Short-Term Outcome (STO) indicators, and more limited progress against Intermediate Outcome (IO) indicators. Across the 12 projects reviewed, there is evidence of fair progress for 58 per cent of STOs. Regarding the achievement of IOs, there is evidence of progress towards one or more indicator on ten out of twelve projects. Two out of twelve projects are unable to evidence any progress at the IO level. These findings are described in more detail below and in Annex 4.

   - Evidence review for the MTR was challenging. Evidence stored on the Secretariat's Project Management Information System (PMIS) is not organised in a structured manner; it is simply uploaded with a file name and a record of who uploaded it and the date. Other sources of evidence for project achievements are held by individual team members and not all are stored centrally on PMIS. There is a lack of third-party evidence or example evidence from the media and civil society and partner organisations, in addition to the current evidence, which relies primarily on information from Secretariat and member country sources.

Leveraging of partnerships to support achievement of Intermediate Outcomes

- The Secretariat has worked towards establishing the internal structures that will strengthen its ability to engage with and leverage partnerships. Secretariat teams leverage a wide variety of partnerships with organisations ranging from UN agencies to other Commonwealth organisations, non-governmental organisations and academic organisations. Working in partnership expands the organisation's reach and voice and is recognised internally as a valuable way of achieving outcomes for member countries.

- The organisation would benefit from greater clarity on the role of the partnerships team and how it can support project teams in brokering partnerships, along with improved knowledge and skills in partnering. Further work is needed in the areas of partnership maintenance, building capacity for partnership development and ensuring centrally negotiated partnerships align with the needs of technical teams.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting mandates

- The broad nature of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) communiqué is beneficial in reaffirming commitment to the wide range of areas in which the Secretariat works but can also be a hindrance in identifying what constitutes a new mandate.

- Implementation of CHOGM mandates has not had significant negative impacts on the delivery of the projects included in the project sample, or on achievement of targets in the Strategic Plan.

- The CHOGM cycle does not align with the Secretariat's current planning and budgeting cycles, and new mandates emanating from the CHOGM are not always backed by the necessary resources to enable their effective implementation.

Lessons learnt on evaluation question 2

- Diversifying the evidence base for project achievements to include other sources would strengthen the legitimacy of the results reported by teams, and consequently the results reported in external documents such as the Annual Results Report. There is no method or system on PMIS that allows for the linking of evidence sources to specific outcomes. This makes the process of assessing the validity of the self-reported data on PMIS very time-consuming.

- The creation of the Secretariat's Partnership Strategy 2018 represents a move towards a more strategic approach to partnership. Partnering is not a common competency requested by the Secretariat when recruiting for technical teams, nor is it part of any learning and development. By integrating partnerships skills into key areas and building the skills base in this area, more partnerships could be leveraged.

3. **The efficiency and effectiveness of the internal systems and processes of the Secretariat**

- There was positive progress in planning and budgeting in the first two years of the Strategic Plan. The introduction of the comprehensive annual Delivery Plan and Matrix in 2017 ensured the existence of a key mechanism to bind annual delivery to the Strategic Plan. The combination of an annual Delivery Plan and annual Budget enables the Secretariat to comprehensively demonstrate how it plans to make progress towards the ambitions set out in the Strategic Plan year by year.
- Through the first two years of the Strategic Plan, clear investment was made to embed and socialise the annual planning and budgeting process across teams, and there is adequate guidance and support available for teams about this. There is internal frustration with planning and budgeting processes, however, which are perceived to be excessively burdensome. Internal respondents called for a simplification of the process.
- This review found considerable support to move to biennial planning and budgeting. The benefits of moving to multi-year planning and budgeting would include the creation of a more stable platform for projects to plan and deliver beyond annual cycles, which would in turn support projects to move from activity-based interventions to longer-term programming. Multi-year planning and budgeting would enable the organisation to recalibrate planning around the CHOGM and enable improved integration of CHOGM mandates. However, any move would have to be supported through contributions from member countries that were for more than one year.
- This review found that the process to allocate divisional budgets was not fully transparent. Lack of a clear and transparent process for the allocation of budgets at divisional level has contributed to a decrease in morale at team level, a sense that some teams are more favoured than others and, critically, the limiting of some teams to activity-based interventions rather than longer-term interventions.
- No evidence was found in the planning and budgeting process for 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2018/19 that there was an accompanying and dovetailed human resource process to map annual capacity needs against the annual Delivery Plan and Budget. Without any accompanying process to analyse the human resources required to meet the ambitions set out in the Delivery Plan and Budget, there is a real risk of a mismatch between ambition and delivery. Further, there is a missed opportunity to understand what core technical skills it is necessary to bring in or enhance to deliver the ambitions set out in the Strategic Plan.

Project Design Document process

- A sufficient Project Design Document (PDD) development and appraisal process is in place, and this supports the alignment of Secretariat projects with the annual Delivery Plan and, ultimately, the Strategic Plan. There is an increasing trend towards compliance in the PDD appraisal process, with 100 per cent compliance reached for 2019/20. However, this compliance rate has been influenced by the fact that the release of annual budgets is dependent on project teams having completed the PDD reappraisal process. This has led to limited engagement with the process by teams because they see it as a budget approval step rather than an opportunity to review and recalibrate planning for the coming year.
- Further work is needed with project teams to demonstrate the value added of the PDD review process to enhance engagement. Finally, while it is evident that the timeframe to reappraise PDDs has improved year on year, any delays in the PDD approval process has significant implications for delivery, and was one of the drivers of underspends in the first two years of the Strategic Plan.

Quarterly, six-monthly and annual reviews

- Processes are in place for quarterly, six-monthly and annual reviews to assess progress against overall portfolio delivery. Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPRs) have not been fully implemented across all divisions, which limits the effectiveness of the system. The review found that this owed in part to delegation of responsibility for the process at Directorate level, with prioritisation and compliance evident in some of the Directorates but not all.

- There was limited evidence to show how the QPRs were systematically recorded, or how issues were escalated for management attention and action. While the introduction of a quarterly issues' log is a positive initiative, there is no mechanism to track issues and actions over multiple quarters. There was also no evidence of a mechanism at the senior management level to ensure issues raised in the quarterly review were dealt with and followed up.
- With the introduction of a monthly monitoring mechanism by the Deputy Secretary-General, there is potential for duplication between quarterly and monthly monitoring and an increased burden on teams to provide management information if the processes are not streamlined sufficiently.

Project Management Information System

- The Secretariat's PMIS is a centrally accessible comprehensive system that effectively supports the organisation to plan and deliver on its annual and strategic priorities. From a strategic perspective, the system is a strong tool for it to plan and support delivery through the management of PDDs that represent the portfolio of projects being delivered.
- The system allows the Secretariat to gather data that supports its results-based management approach to portfolio management, including quantitative and qualitative data on the achievement of outputs, STOs and IIOs by projects, along with detailed narrative information regarding project context, challenges, achievements, lessons learnt, cross-cutting themes, partnerships and innovation.
- PMIS supports data collection for various organisation-wide monitoring and reporting requirements, such as the QPRs, Six-Month Reports and Annual Results Reports. It has the capacity to act as an audit trail of programme delivery and evidence of achievements, as well as a way to retain information in a central location of historical programme delivery.
- There is significant frustration with the system internally, specifically with its usability. This leads most project teams to engage only partially with the system. Work has been carried out on making the system more user-friendly, as well as on aligning it with CODA (the Secretariat's finance system) to make it easier to access up-to-date financial information via PMIS. However, there is a clear need to improve the system further to meet users' needs and promote better engagement by staff, and to fully align it with other core corporate systems, such as CODA.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

- This review found clear evidence of the introduction and enhancement of core approaches and processes to support strengthened MEL in the first two years of the Strategic Plan, as well as a significant ring-fenced financial commitment through the Designated Funded for Monitoring and Evaluation (DFME) . MEL has thus gained more prominence, priority and traction within the organisation.
- Despite efforts at the central level to ensure a robust process to support and enhance project-level MEL, to date MEL has been not been embedded in projects in a systematic way. This has led to a weakness in the evidence base for projects. There is no real MEL culture at the project level in the organisation, with MEL often seen as an optional add-on and not an integral part of programming. Aside from PMIS, there are few developed tools for the capture of project data.
- Processes and systems to strengthen the organisational evaluation function are evident. It is apparent that the evaluation team is conducting or procuring services for multiple country and programmatic evaluations to support the overall continual assessment of the portfolio. However, steps should be taken to further the evaluation function's independence and transparency.
- More emphasis is needed on creating organisation-wide processes to enhance and embed learning across the organisation and within projects. Respondents highlighted that learning was a 'new element' and there was an internal appetite to further embed learning and use it as a way to help the organisation rethink the way it does programming.

Corporate systems and processes

- There was significant internal frustration among staff around corporate processes and systems and the impact of these on teams' ability to deliver.

Lessons learnt on evaluation question 3

- A lack of joined-up working remains a key obstacle for Secretariat teams. The way the current portfolio is structured, on a project-by-project basis, is one of the drivers of siloed working. The budgeting and planning process could be used to intentionally bring teams together, by incentivising joint working around common core programmes, not individual projects.
- Within the first two years of the Strategic Plan, there were notable underspends, with staff vacancies contributing significantly to these, among other drivers. This review identified main three ways to help reduce the level of underspends: cut delays in the PDD reappraisal process; use funds from staff vacancies to bring in interim cover or repurpose them; ensure organisational monitoring structures such as the QPRs and the newly introduced Monthly Monitoring Process are fully adhered to by all divisions to promote quick decision-making about possible underspends.
- Where systems and processes are overly burdensome on teams, or hard to use, this is slowing delivery. While some of the process burden could be alleviated through moving to biennial planning in the next Strategic Plan, this is by no means the solution. Key to such a move is the need to take a refreshed look at the underpinning systems and processes and to ensure the balance is right between ensuring upward accountability to the Board of Governors, having adequate controls in place and critically enabling, not hindering, projects to deliver.

4. The extent to which objectives of the Strategic Plan are aligned with the current global development agenda and environment

- There is clear overall alignment between the goals of the Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the aim of developing a Strategic Plan that is responsive to the SDGs was successful. Further, analysis of the sample of 10 regional and peer organisation strategies shows strong alignment between the Secretariat's Strategic Plan and the latter's strategies and targets.

Shifts in the global development agenda in the first two years of the Strategic Plan

- In the first two years of the Strategic Plan, two significant external shifts had direct implications for the Secretariat: climate change and global threats to multilateralism. The Secretariat's work through the CFAH is already responsive to the threat of climate change. Meanwhile, as a multilateral organisation with broad membership, the Commonwealth is well placed to champion the benefits of multilateralism.

The role of the Secretariat in supporting member countries to deliver the global development agenda for the period 2020-2030

- The Secretariat should consider the benefits that may come from reducing the portfolio and bringing the organisation together through programmes and not projects, as a way to enhance collaboration and be smart with its modest, reduced budget. There is interest from internal staff in wide consultation in the development of a new Strategic Plan, and an imperative to analyse significant regional bodies and peer organisations strategies to understand who is doing what and where the overlaps exist. Better communication at all levels both internally and externally is needed to enable a smooth transition from one Strategic Plan to the next.

Recommendations

The following key recommendations are made from the analysis conducted for this review:

- Provide programmes with the financial resources required to extract the most value from the Secretariat technical expertise and to avoid dilution of its impact in member countries.
- Continue the investment in and emphasis on MEL to fully understand the organisation's influence. To fully understand the value of the Secretariat's convening power, apply

consistent monitoring to all Ministerial Meetings, and conduct an evaluation of the consensus-building role of the Secretariat to assess its effectiveness. In all evaluations of the Secretariat's work, the Terms of Reference would benefit from an increased emphasis on identifying unintended outcomes and their causes and impact.

- Deepen and diversify the evidence base by developing evidence standards to guide Secretariat staff on what constitutes good evidence, and how to utilise third-party evidence sources (e.g. the media, civil society, partner organisations) to triangulate results. Strengthen the management of evidence by including evidence tagging on PMIS that allows evidence sources to be linked to outcomes.
- Increase support to project teams to continue building partnerships that contribute towards delivery of the Strategic Plan. Strengthen capacity to manage partnerships in order to gain optimal value from them.
- Align the Secretariat's planning and budgeting cycles with CHOGM and scope out a model for securing financial commitment from member countries for all new CHOGM mandates.
- Integrate capacity mapping of human resource needs into the Secretariat's planning with budgeting cycles. Enhance communications from the senior director's group in collaboration with the planning and budgeting divisions to increase transparency around budgeting processes and project budget allocations. This review recommends moving to streamlined biennial planning and budgeting processes in the next Strategic Plan.
- Institutionalise a practice for QPRs across all Directorates and establish mechanisms to escalate issues to senior management for resolution. To limit overlap and duplication of effort, ensure a clear link to the new Deputy Secretary-General-led Project Management Committee is created.
- Utilise in-house IT expertise to fully integrate PMIS with the other core systems (such as CODA) and improve usability of PMIS by developing a new user-friendly interface.
- Enhance project-level MEL support, by developing a suite of tools that teams can use to gather data from project activities and enhancing capacity at a team level. Develop a learning strategy, to complement the MEL approach, that defines how the Secretariat will learn from its work in member countries and integrate this learning into projects. Take further steps in the evaluation function to increase its independence by expanding the remit of the peer review panel to include engagement across the whole of the evaluation process.
- Conduct a specific review of all corporate processes and systems and their effectiveness to support delivery of the Strategic Plan.
- In the new Strategic Plan, move to biennial planning and budgeting and align planning and budgeting processes with the CHOGM cycle so it takes place shortly after CHOGM, making it possible to effectively take on board new CHOGM mandates during planning and budgeting.
- In the development of the new Strategic Plan, continue alignment with the SDGs by integrating SDG indicators into programmes that directly show alignment with the SDGs.
- Continue to enhance the focus on climate change adaptation and mitigation.

Introduction

Background

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent and equal sovereign states that was established in 1965. With the Commonwealth Charter as the overall guide, the Commonwealth promotes democracy, rule of law, human rights, good governance and social and economic development, and provides a voice for small states and a champion for youth empowerment. The Commonwealth Secretariat delivers support to member countries, guided by its current Strategic Plan for 2017/18–2020/21. This was built on the results achieved and lessons learnt during the previous Strategic Plan period (2013/14–2016/17). The current Strategic Plan was developed based on performance feedback from member countries, as well as internal audits and an external evaluation of the previous Strategic Plan.

The current Strategic Plan is built on strategic, intermediate and enabling outcomes. There are five Strategic Outcomes: **Democracy; Public Institutions; Youth and Social Development; Economic Policy; and Small and Vulnerable States** and three cross-cutting outcomes: **Partnerships and Innovation; Gender Mainstreaming and Consensus Building**. There are 18 **Intermediate Outcomes (IOs) under the 5 Strategic Outcomes**. See Annex 5 for full details.

Table 1 gives an overview of the Secretariat's approved direct budget and the number of projects and staff in the first two years of the Strategic Plan to provide further context for this review.

Table 1. Overview of Secretariat operations in the first two years of the Strategic Plan

Delivery year	Approved direct budget	Number of projects	Number of staff
2017/18	£29.5 million[a]	41[b]	223[c]
2018/19	£34.5 million[d]	44[e]	222

Source: a); b); c); d) Annual Results Report, Part A, 2018-2019; e) Annual Results Report, Part C, Delivery Progress, 2018–2019.

Purpose

The purpose of the Mid-Term Review (MTR) was to assess progress in the realisation of the IOs as set out in the Strategic Plan and the Strategic Results Framework (SRF) and to provide clear strategic and operational recommendations to improve the Secretariat's planning, performance and results going forward. The MTR took place between August and October 2019, when the Secretariat was two years into its four-year Strategic Plan.

According to the terms of reference (TOR), the scope of the MTR was to:

- Assess progress to date through review of a sample of Secretariat projects and an assessment of the extent to which Commonwealth member countries have benefited from the Secretariat's work and tangible outcomes realised;
- Review the organisation's capacity with respect to planning, delivery and monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL);
- Assess the level of alignment of the Strategic Plan and portfolio with the global development agenda and make recommendations for improving such alignment;
- Identify the global and regional trends affecting the relevance of programmes to the sustainable development needs in member countries;
- Synthesise findings, identify lessons and make recommendations regarding requirements post-Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2020 to inform the strategic planning process and the new Strategic Plan.

Structure of this report

The MTR sought to answer four primary evaluation questions and a set of sub-questions. Annex 1 presents these questions. This review is divided into four main chapters, addressing each of these primary evaluation questions in turn. Each chapter presents:

- Findings and analysis;
- Key challenges and lessons learnt;
- Concluding points and recommendations.

Methodology

This review used a mixed-methods approach to gather robust evidence to answer four primary evaluation questions and a set of sub questions. A mixed-methods approach was chosen because it made it possible to offset potential weakness in one method by concurrently using another method, as well as giving a more comprehensive account than a single quantitative or qualitative method alone could give. Further, the mixed-methods approach allowed for cross-referencing and in some cases triangulation of findings from one method with another method or methods(s), enhancing the analysis of results and giving the review team greater confidence in reported findings. The methods used are described below.

Method 1: Key informant interviews

KIIs were used to gather in-depth information from a range of stakeholders, including Secretariat staff, member country representatives and partners. Most interviews were semi-structured, with some structured interviews taking place particularly with member country stakeholders. A total of 27 KIIs were held with internal staff, and 7 with external stakeholders.

The review team chose to record all interviews and transcribe the recordings to provide an accurate data record. Respondents were asked for permission to record the meeting. Where permission was not granted, the team recorded feedback through handwritten notes that were then written up into a meeting record. All data collection from KIIs included in the report was anonymised, except for in a small number of cases where the interviewee granted prior permission.

Method 2: Focus group discussions

FGDs were used to collect in-depth qualitative data from project teams, and therefore to gain insight into a particular topic. They allowed the review team to build on themes emerging from KIIs, and to triangulate these. FGDs engaged a total of 29 internal project staff.

Again, the review team chose to record all FGDs and transcribe the recordings to provide an accurate data record. Respondents were asked for permission to record the meeting. Where this was not granted, the team recorded feedback through handwritten notes that were then written up into a meeting record. Data collection from FGDs is presented in this report by project. Responses from individual staff have been anonymised.

Method 3: Surveys

Surveys were used to gather information from larger cohorts of Secretariat staff, partners, beneficiary organisations and other key stakeholders. They enabled the evaluators to extend their reach to cover more people and gather more primary data. Optional confidentiality was available for survey respondents to enable potential new areas and themes to emerge that may not surface using other methods. A total of 12 members of the Senior Management Group were surveyed, and 27 project and Secretariat partners.

The review team used the online service SurveyMonkey to facilitate data collection via survey. Target respondents were sent a link to a 10-question online survey. The review team then downloaded the data for analysis. The surveys contained a mix of open and closed questions. Survey data are included in Annex 8.

Annex 2 presents a detailed list of all respondents of KIIs, FGDs and surveys.

Method 4: Content analysis

A review of core internal and external documentation formed the foundation for this MTR. This content analysis allowed the review team to gather background information, as well as to establish a source of base information against which to cross-check emerging findings, particularly through the bank of evaluations that the team reviewed. In total, the MTR reviewed 196 documents.

Data coding and analysis

All raw data gathered were coded primarily using a coding structure based on the four primary evaluation questions and the sub-questions. Coding of interviews and FGD data along with survey data was completed on copies of the transcripts. Data from document review were copied into notes and coded using the same method. Coded data from these sources was then aggregated according to their coding. This created several datasets, organised by evaluation questions and sub-questions, containing relevant data obtained from each different data source.

These aggregated data then formed the basis of a qualitative data analysis. The first step in this was a thematic review of each of the aggregated datasets and tagging of data according to emerging themes. The reviewers then undertook secondary organisation of the data under similar themes that were emerging in response to each of the evaluation questions and sub-questions. The coded data retained tags identifying their source. As a result of this analysis, the review team was able to identify similar themes emerging from different data sources (KII, FGD, survey, document review). The analysis also enabled the team to analyse the depth of evidence in similar themes and responses by identifying the number of times a specific theme occurred, and by triangulating whether a certain theme was identified through multiple different sources. This formed the basis for identifying the key findings of the evaluation and lessons learnt. This secondary organisation also enabled the review to find outliers in the data by identifying themes not supported by multiple quotes or not identifiable through at least two different data sources.

Sampling of projects

The TOR for this MTR required that at least two projects from each pillar of the Strategic Plan be selected for in-depth review, thus providing for a minimum sample of ten projects. In order to ensure a representative sample of projects, 12 projects were selected for in-depth review. The criteria to select these projects were as follows:

- A minimum of one and a maximum of three projects selected to represent the different funding sources (ComSec/Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC)/ Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) Fund/Extra Budgetary Resources (EBR));
- Inclusion of two projects where IOs are responsive to CHOGM mandates, or where project design has been adapted to include CHOGM mandates;
- Representation of the different delivery modalities employed by the Secretariat in the delivery of support (e.g. advocacy/ technical assistance);
- A representative sample of projects internally rated through the Secretariat's Project Management Information System (PMIS);
- At least one project to be selected from the three cross-cutting themes included in the Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21.

See Annex 3 for the full sampling criteria. Table 2 presents the projects selected as part of the sample on the basis of these criteria.

Table 2. Project sample and criteria met

Sr#	Project	Criteria met
1	Election Observation and Strengthening Electoral Processes	Pillar 1; CHOGM mandate
2	Countering Violent Extremism	Pillar 1; EBR
3	Improved and Constructive Engagement with the Universal Periodic Review	Pillar 2; delivery model of supporting member country to engage with international mechanisms
4	Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Centre and Networks	Pillar 2; Capacity-building delivery model
5	CYP	Pillar 3; CYP-funded
6	Maximising the Development Potential of Sport	Pillar 3; Multiple partnerships
7	A Resilient Blue Commonwealth: Blue Charter	Pillar 4; CHOGM mandate
8	Commonwealth Trade Competitiveness Programme	Pillar 4
9	Improved Access to Climate Finance	Pillar 5: Hosted project; EBR-funded
10	Convening of Commonwealth Education Ministers	Consensus-building
11	Gender Mainstreaming	Cross-cutting theme

The Secretariat's Learning for Life Education project was added to the sample after initial data collection began. This decision was made because this project includes workstreams emanating from the Secretariat's Convening of Commonwealth Education Ministers project (Number 10 in Table 2). The identification of 12 projects that represented the overall portfolio meant that their analysis against the four primary evaluation questions made it possible to draw conclusions about the overall portfolio.

For each project in the sample, the team undertook an in-depth review of records in the Secretariat's PMIS. Ahead of KIIs with the project lead and FGDs with the project team, the reviewers read the Project Design Document (PDD) and project results framework, to familiarise themselves with the approach, theory of change and output and outcome targets. They also familiarised themselves with project results reported via PMIS in the first two years of the Strategic Plan. KIIs and FGDs were used as an opportunity to verify the project approach, theory of change and outputs and outcomes achieved. These data were transcribed, coded and analysed as described above. Separately, the review team spent time in PMIS, triangulating the results reported against output and outcome targets with the evidence documents uploaded onto PMIS, aiming to match output and outcome data self-reported by teams with physical evidence of these achievements. The summary of this analysis is included in Chapter 2 and Annex 4: In-depth project reviews.

Limitations

This MTR had significant limitations in four areas.

Member country engagement

The review team had planned to engage with a fully representative sample of member country representatives, through engagement with high commissioners and their offices. This work started early, given the time it takes. Despite this, the review team was able to engage with only a small selection of member country representatives in this way. The high commissioners were engaged face-to-face through KIIs.

The review team requested interviews with six high commissions and was successful in securing appointments with three, giving an interview response rate of 50 per cent. In collaboration with the commissioning team, a strategy was developed to try and reach a broader sample of high commissioners through a survey. This was sent to all high commissioners not engaged via interview through an email sent from the Assistant Secretary-General, and follow-up email; however, only five high commissions responded to the survey, giving a response rate of 10 per cent and limiting the volume of feedback received through this method.

The implications of this limitation are that the findings and recommendations take account of the views of only a small proportion of member country representatives, and therefore cannot be considered fully representative of all member country views.

Partner engagement

Surveys were used as the primary method to gather information from Secretariat partners. Overall, when teams in the sample provided a list of partners for the review team to engage with, partner feedback was received. However, one team did not provide any partners, despite repeated requests for this information, and one team provided partner details after the data collection phase had ended. Further, feedback from one other team was limited. Partner feedback was a key source for the triangulation of emerging findings. Where the review team was not able to engage with partners, this led to difficulties in the triangulation of the internal evidence provided for that project.

Across the surveys sent by email to partners, the response rate was between 60 and 70 per cent. Because the response rate from partners was generally high across projects, this enabled the review team to substantiate emerging findings and verify internal evidence provided by teams. Overall, the review team received feedback from representatives of 17 different external partner organisations, two Commonwealth inter-governmental organisations and three Commonwealth accredited organisations, and government ministries in six member countries, which provided a good opportunity to gather qualitative insights regarding their views but does not necessarily present a large enough sample to infer partners' views of the Secretariat.

Staff engagement

Although review team starting to lay the groundwork for engagement with senior internal staff as soon as the review started, it was a real challenge to find adequate time to engage with particularly senior members of the Secretariat. The survey team used an online survey to increase the number of Senior Management Group[1] (SMG) staff engaged through data collection. A 10- question survey was emailed to SMG staff. This received four responses, or a response rate of 40 per cent, limiting the volume of information gathered via this method.

Overall, project teams gave a significant amount of time to and input into the review, but some teams were not able to make the allotted three-hour slot, and adequate time to engage with some senior members of staff was not always available. This meant it was not always possible to gather full information from these teams, and the review team having to rely on information presented through PMIS and other source documents.

Evidence

The review team encountered challenges around gathering evidence to demonstrate progress towards results, which limited its ability to triangulate results. The majority of evidence available to the review team came from the Secretariat's own sources (e.g. reports, presentations, emails, back-to-office reports (BTORs)) and member country sources (e.g. emails, letters, policy documents, presentations). The review team recognised the value in this evidence but, in order to triangulate results, looked for evidence of the same result from at least three different sources, including sources external to the Secretariat or member country institutions with which the organisation works. Examples included the media (e.g. newspaper articles) and partner documents and partner feedback. Lack of diversity in the evidence base limited the ability of the review team to conduct a contribution analysis, thus this method was not adopted as it was decided that the underpinning evidence was not strong enough.

1 The Senior Management Group is a deliberative body comprising the S-G, DSGs, Directors and Heads of Units.

Presentation of findings and analysis

Each of the following chapters presents findings and analysis related to a key evaluation question and its sub-questions. Challenges and a summary of lessons learnt are also presented. Each chapter ends with recommendations related to the evaluation question.

Chapter 1 looks at the extent to which Commonwealth member countries have benefited from the Secretariat's work and to identify tangible outcomes realised during the first two years of the Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21. It also reviews the influence of the Secretariat on changes seen at member country level, the Secretariat's delivery model and unintended outcomes. In defining and identifying outcomes for member countries, the evaluation team used the Secretariat's Results Chain and Definitions, as shown in Annex 6, and specifically the descriptions of Short-Term Outcomes (STOs) and Intermediate Outcomes (IOs). This was chosen as the reference for defining and identifying outcomes because it is included in the Secretariat's own Programme Management Guidelines (PMGs). Chapter 1 analyses:

1. The extent to which Commonwealth member countries benefited from the Secretariat's work between 2017 and 2019
    - 1.1. The influence of the Secretariat
    - 1.2. The effectiveness of the Secretariat's delivery model
    - 1.3. Unintended outcomes

Chapter 2 reviews the extent to which projects in the sample are able to demonstrate evidence-based progress towards achievement of the IOs in the Secretariat's SRF. This chapter also looks at the Secretariat's ability to leverage partnerships and the implementation of CHOGM mandates. Chapter 2 analyses:

2. The extent to which projects are able to demonstrate evidence-based progress towards achievement of the IOs in the SRF
    - 2.1. Leveraging of partnerships
    - 2.2. Implementation of CHOGM mandates

Chapter 3 reviews the Secretariat's processes and systems for planning, delivery and MEL. The aim is to ascertain if these underpinning processes

and systems are effective in supporting delivery of the Strategic Plan. The chapter also presents a summary of staff feedback on corporate (human resources, information technology and finance) processes and systems. Chapter 3 analyses the following:

3. The efficiency and effectiveness of the internal systems and processes of the Secretariat in supporting delivery of the Strategic Plan and CHOGM mandates
   - 3.1. Planning and budgeting
   - 3.2. The PDD process
   - 3.3. Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPRs) and six-monthly and annual reporting
   - 3.4. PMIS
   - 3.5. MEL
   - 3.6. Corporate processes and systems

Chapter 4 reviews the extent to which the objectives of the Strategic Plan are aligned with the current global agenda and environment. This chapter looks *outwards* by reviewing the shifts that have taken place in the current global development agenda and whether the strategic objectives of the Secretariat remain responsive to these, and *forwards* by looking at the role the Secretariat could take in supporting member countries in the delivering of the global development agenda. This chapter also looks at where the Secretariat's strengths and weaknesses lie in supporting the delivery of the global development agenda. Chapter 4 analyses:

4. Strategic Plan alignment with the global development agenda and environment
   - 4.1. Significant external shifts in the first two years of the Strategic Plan
   - 4.2. The Secretariat's strengths and weaknesses in supporting delivery of the global development agenda
   - 4.3. The role of the Secretariat in supporting member countries in delivering the global development agenda for the period 2020–2030

1. The extent to which Commonwealth member countries benefited from the Secretariat's work between 2017 and 2019

Findings

- Commonwealth member countries benefited from the Secretariat's work across all pillars of the Strategic Plan between 2017 and 2019. Tangible outcomes include electoral reform; improved engagement in human rights mechanisms; strengthened policies in the areas of youth, education and sport; improved trade strategies; strengthened legal frameworks for natural resource management; pan-Commonwealth co-operation on meeting commitments for sustainable ocean development; and improved access to climate finance for small states. The Secretariat's work is responsive to demand for support and is taking place in all areas of the Strategic Plan.
- In several areas of work, including economic policy, youth and democracy, the Secretariat's ability to deliver work in response to member country demands is hindered by the organisation's current resource constraints. This finding is discussed in greater detail in the Challenges section of Chapter 1.

Analysis

Under the Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21, the Secretariat's work is divided into five key pillars. Table 3 looks at each of these and describes examples of member country benefit and tangible outcomes of Secretariat programming in the first two years of the period.

Table 3. Member country benefits and tangible outcomes per strategic pillar

Pillar 1: Democracy. This area of work targets greater adherence to the Commonwealth's political values and principles. IOs cover the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG); the Secretariat's Good Offices team; Elections; and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).
In the first two years of the Strategic Plan, member countries benefiting from the presence of a Secretariat election observation mission included Ghana, Lesotho, Nigeria, Solomon Islands and Zambia. In Sierra Leone, the president acknowledged during CHOGM 2018 the impact of the Secretariat's engagement during the contested 2018 election in facilitating dialogue between parties and supporting the Electoral Commission to deliver its mandate.[1] CHOGM 2018 also provided the opportunity for Heads of State to mandate the Secretariat's revised guidelines for election observation. These have been used in nine election observation missions since CHOGM 2018.

(*Continued*)

1 Annual Results Report 2017–2018, Highlights, p. 4.

Table 3. Member country benefits and tangible outcomes per strategic pillar (*Continued*)

In Papua New Guinea (PNG), the Secretariat, in collaboration with the Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association (CMJA), provided support to the Government ahead of the Bougainville referendum, scheduled for late 2019. The Secretariat's own evaluation of support through its Democracy programme from 2013/14 to 2016/17 highlighted other benefits in PNG in terms of post-election follow-up work that led to the prime minister announcing a comprehensive electoral reform programme for the country in 2018.[2] This represents a tangible outcome resulting from Secretariat work in this member country.

Short-term tangible benefits in this period included work at the nexus of gender and political work, such as pre-election capacity-building for female political candidates in Malawi and on-going work aimed at enhancing women's empowerment in the Caribbean, under the Secretariat's Good Offices programme.

In-depth technical assistance provided to 10 member countries under the CVE programme has enabled these countries to strengthen their national capacity for working in this area. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago reported that the CVE Unit's support had been invaluable to it in the type of work it conducts.

One of the Secretariat's key strengths is its convening power, and its ability to bring member country representatives together through Ministerial Meetings, along with the opportunities this provides for building consensus and advancing key priority issues across Commonwealth member countries. Data from the Secretariat's Annual Results Report 2017–2018 indicate that, during this delivery year, the Secretariat convened eight Ministerial Meetings, in the areas of Youth, Foreign Affairs, Finance, Law, Education, Sports, Small States and Health, bringing together 174 Commonwealth ministers and senior officials.[3] Further discussion of the Secretariat's convening work is included later in this chapter and in Chapter 2. The frequency with which individual Ministerial Meetings are held varies between thematic areas; for example, Finance and Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meetings are held annually, whereas education ministers meet triennially. The Secretariat has undertaken monitoring of Ministerial Meetings and implemented post-meeting reviews; however, the reviewers noted that there did not appear to have been an evaluation of the impact of these meetings.

Pillar 2: Public Institutions. This area of work targets more effective, efficient and equitable public governance. IOs cover Human Rights, Rule of Law, Improved Public Administration and the Prevention and Elimination of Corruption.

Senior Secretariat staff highlighted the role the organisation had played in supporting Nigeria in the field of anti-corruption, and the recovery of stolen assets, as a tangible benefit to member countries in this area. Through Secretariat capacity-building work to Nigeria's presidential anti-corruption commission, driven by the Rule of Law team, Nigeria was supported to establish a committee for asset recovery. Secretariat staff described how the member country reported that the input provided by the Secretariat had contributed to a significant increase in the volume of recovered assets. This demonstrates real value for a member country from the Secretariat's work.

The Secretariat's own country reports highlight the benefit afforded to Namibia in the area of anti-corruption through the organisation working closely with the Government and through the Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Centre (CAACC) to support the development of policies and civic infrastructure to combat corruption.

In response to the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration 2018, the Secretariat's cyber security project, funded by CFTC, is providing advice to member countries. The project relies on a small team within the Secretariat, with benefits at the member country level delivered primarily through the placement of technical advisers. Support covers development of cybercrime and cyber security legislation, and establishment of a cyber-currencies working group.

(*Continued*)

2 111. Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Democracy Programme 2013/14–2016/17.
3 Annual Results Report 2017–2018, p. 17.

Table 3. Member country benefits and tangible outcomes per strategic pillar (*Continued*)

The Secretariat's Human Rights Unit (HRU) delivers a project supporting member countries to report to the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) under the UN Human Rights Council (HRC). HRU supports member countries to constructively engage in the UPR mechanism by increasing their understanding of the process. This project has provided nine member countries (that are also small states) with support that strengthened their ability to report under the UPR: Belize, Dominica, The Gambia, Grenada, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga and Tuvalu.

The work of HRU is complemented by the presence of the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO) in Geneva. This facility provides small states with the opportunity to represent themselves in Geneva. This affords states that would not normally have the financial resources to be present here the opportunity to maintain a representation, engage in UN mechanisms and engage with other Commonwealth small states to learn from their experiences and at times with larger Commonwealth members such as Australia, Canada or the UK. Over time, member countries benefiting from the CSSO including Fiji, Jamaica and Sierra Leone, have begun to make their own arrangements for a permanent presence in Geneva. Fiji is now contesting for a seat on the HRC.

The Secretariat's own evaluation of its assistance to Grenada from 2013/14 to 2016/17 highlighted clear linkages between Secretariat inputs and national priorities. Technical assistance on legislative drafting and national planning was directly linked to a government prioritisation of the 'home-grown' structural adjustment programme. In the area of human rights, the evaluation highlighted engagement with the Government in establishing a National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), and support provided by the Secretariat to Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries on the UPR process.

Pillar 3: Youth and Social Development. This area of work aims to support people of the Commonwealth to fulfil their potential with dignity and equality in a healthy environment. IOs targeted cover Youth, Sports, Health and Education, and Gender.

The Secretariat is currently leading an international effort to develop a global indicator framework to measure the contribution of sport, physical education and physical activity to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Its leadership of this initiative demonstrates its role as a thought leader in this area. Support from the same Secretariat team to Zambia has focused on developing a Sport Policy to identify ways in which sport can contribute to broader elements of the National Development Plan. Indirectly, the team has influenced development of Tuvalu's national Sport Policy through the provision of technical materials. During data collection for this review, member countries recognised the support the Secretariat had provided in the development of national sport policies.

The CYP supports work in the areas of Youth Policy, Youth Employment, Youth Participation and Youth Work professionalisation, and has influenced the direction of youth work, services and programming in a number of member countries, for example Belize, India, Ghana and Kenya (see Chapter 2 and Annex 4). As described in the 2017 review of the CYP, the programme has a strong legacy of achievements in these areas both within the Commonwealth and globally. Selected examples identified through this review include technical support to Pakistan to develop its youth parliament structure; India publishing its 2017 Youth Development Index (YDI) and Report, based on the Secretariat's YDI methodology; support to the African Union (AU) in the development of the State of African Youth Report 2019, and to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other partners in producing the State of Pacific Youth Report 2017; and advocacy for youth work mainstreaming beginning in 2017 at the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (CYMM), and continuing at CHOGM 2018. The CYP continues to track progress in youth commitments from CYMM and CHOGM through meetings of the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Taskforce. Greater detail on the work of the CYP is included in Chapter 2 and Annex 4 of this report.

(*Continued*)

Table 3. Member country benefits and tangible outcomes per strategic pillar (*Continued*)

In the area of Education, benefits for member countries include development of a Commonwealth Education Policy Framework (CEPF) and its roll-out in the Pacific, which has supported Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu to enact commitments to update their education policies. Support by the Secretariat to gender equality in education, for example through work to improve boys' educational achievements in Jamaica, resulted in acknowledgement by the Jamaican Ministry of Education that a multi-stakeholder approach and multi-sectoral policy framework to advance the cause of boys' education would be of benefit in this area.

In the Pacific, the Health programme is supporting the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) to combat non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which the World Health Organization (WHO) has identified as causing a health crisis in the region. NCDs impose a heavy social and economic burden on Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs), 11 of which are Commonwealth member countries. The region has harmonised its approach to NCDs through development of the Pacific NCD Roadmap. In 2017, it was proposed that work begin on a Pacific Legislative Framework on NCDs (PLF) to support PICTs to update their NCD legislation. In support of this, the Secretariat funded the placement of a legislative drafter at the SPC from 2018 to 2019. This initiative has strong national and regional support from governments and partners including WHO, the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the World Bank and the SPC. The placement of the drafter supports the goals of the 2017 memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the Secretariat and the SPC.

Pillar 4: Economic Development. This area of work targets inclusive economic growth and sustainable development for member countries. IOs targeted cover Trade, Employment and Business Growth, International Development and Financing Mechanisms, Debt Management, and Marine and Other Natural Resources, including Blue Economies.

In this pillar of work, internal monitoring by the Secretariat of CFTC-funded Long-Term Technical Assistance (LTTA) to St Vincent and the Grenadines Maritime Agency demonstrated tangible benefit to the member country. The report highlighted capacity-building and development of legislation, both of which strengthened the country's ability to implement a Corrective Action Plan established in response to adverse audit findings by the International Maritime Organization, and supported the efforts of the country to maintain its status as a shipping registry.

In the area of Trade Competitiveness, the Secretariat has in the past two years extended support to Botswana in the development of its National Export Strategy, to Lesotho in the development of a New Products New Markets (NPNM) scheme and country branding strategy and to Grenada in the development of an NPNM scheme.

Through its efforts to bring attention to the issue of contingent financing mechanisms for countries affected by the twin risk of natural disaster and high national debt since 2010, the Secretariat's Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM) has promoted advocacy on this issue by larger member countries such as Canada and the UK in international forums such as the Paris Club. The Secretariat acknowledged that it was not the only international organisation to raise this subject but that it had a played a role in raising it as a risk facing a group of Commonwealth member countries.

The Secretariat supported Guyana to develop its Natural Resources Sovereign Wealth Fund, including technical assistance to establish the relevant legal frameworks to ensure the country was empowered to govern its globally significant offshore petroleum reserves and the financial revenues these will potentially deliver at national level.

When surveyed, member countries highlighted the support provided by the Secretariat in delivering the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda, designed to boost trade and investment links across the Commonwealth, and in public debt management, where the Secretariat's work in development of debt management software and training has improved facilities and capacity at the national level.

(*Continued*)

Table 3. Member country benefits and tangible outcomes per strategic pillar (*Continued*)

Pillar 5: Small and Other Vulnerable States. This area of work targets strengthened resilience of small and other vulnerable states, including climate change adaptation and mitigation. IOs targeted cover Small States' Development and Resilience Needs, Adaptation to and Mitigation against Climate Change, and Climate Financing.

Progress towards the aims of the Commonwealth Blue Charter mandated at CHOGM 2018 highlights the Secretariat's co-ordination role in pan-Commonwealth work. The Secretariat's Oceans and Natural Resources team has played a critical role in the work of the Blue Charter by driving the establishment of the Charter's nine action groups. Each is led by a 'member country champion' and supported by other member countries, and each targets an individual priority area of Blue Charter work. The action groups enable sharing of experience and capacity and are strongly supported by the Secretariat through technical assistance and its role in identifying relevant partner organisations that can assist member countries in delivering on their action plans. The Blue Charter represents an agreement by all member countries to actively co-operate to solve ocean-related problems and meet commitments for sustainable ocean development. In the context of Commonwealth membership by small island developing states (SIDS) and by low- or middle-income countries (LICs/MICs) whose Blue Economies are important to their development, the Blue Charter has the potential to create significant tangible benefits for member countries. In the context of global environmental concerns, it demonstrates real commitment to addressing ocean-related issues.

The Secretariat's Climate Finance Access Hub (CFAH) supports 10 climatically vulnerable member countries, all of which are either SIDS or states with least developed country (LDC) status. Each of these 10 recipient countries is benefiting from the deployment of a national climate finance adviser to assist in accessing climate finance and in the development of policies in the area of climate change. Examples include a climate change bill in eSwatini, a climate investment strategy in Jamaica, a climate investment fund in Antigua and Barbuda and Mauritius' climate change strategy. The Secretariat's 2017–2018 Annual Results Report indicates that in its first year of operation the CFAH raised £4.1 million in climate finance for member countries.

1.1 The extent to which Secretariat interventions influence results

The Secretariat needs to be able to demonstrate that it has contributed to changes seen in member countries. This is important so member countries can see they are receiving value for money from the contributions they make to the Secretariat's funding. It is also important for the Secretariat as it shows the relevance and effectiveness of its operations.

Findings

- Results at the member country level are influenced by Secretariat interventions, and the work of some projects (e.g. Maximising the Development Potential of Sport and the CYP) can be shown to influence changes at the regional level. The Secretariat is working towards complex, high-level changes that often take years to surface and mature. The influence of interventions often spans Strategic Plan periods and may become clear only through collection of information and evaluation work undertaken in the years following.
- Where the Secretariat influences changes in member countries, its work is often complemented by that of other development actors and relies on commitment from the country itself to engage in initiatives and take them forward.
- Continued investment in monitoring and evaluation (M&E), along with efforts to strengthen the evidence base for Secretariat achievements, will strengthen the organisation's ability to identify its influence in the Strategic Plan period.

Analysis

The IOs targeted by the SRF are in many cases changes that will take time to occur, and that will be influenced by the actions of multiple actors, such as member countries themselves and other international organisations, not just the Secretariat. Responses to a survey of SMG members included the observation that, while Commonwealth countries have benefited from Secretariat programmes, there is often a time lag between when inputs occur and when results are seen, particularly in the area of policy change.

Examples of such IOs include:

IO 1.3: Member countries conduct fair, credible and inclusive elections
IO 2.2: Rule of law strengthened and access to justice ensured for all
IO 3.1: Young people engaged and empowered to meaningfully participate in political and development processes
IO 4.4: Sustainable development of marine and other natural resources, including 'Blue Economies'
IO 5.2: Increased resilience, adaptation and mitigation against climate change

Other examples include IOs 2.3, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 4.1, 4.3 and 5.1.

The SRF does include a number of IOs that are more clearly related to the inputs of individual Secretariat programmes, where it may be easier to identify the contribution of its inputs - for example 1.1 (CMAG), 2.1 (Engagement in the UN UPR) and 4.4 (Improved Access to Climate Financing), but all of these may still be influenced by other actors.

In attempting to understand the influence of the Secretariat on changes seen at member country level, the review team looked not only at data from projects being implemented under the current Strategic Plan but also at data from previous years. Table 4 presents examples of influence from historic engagement identified.

Table 5 presents examples of Secretariat influence on changes seen at member country level within the current Strategic Plan period as identified during this review.

Further examples of changes at member country level that can be seen as having been influenced by Secretariat interventions can be found in more detail in findings on question 2, which describe selected examples from the period 2017–2019 identified and evidenced during in-depth project review. More broadly, review of the CYP highlights how its work is influencing the youth agenda globally. Reference to the programme at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) 2017 highlighted its role in the creation of YDIs and evidence-based youth policies. Regional credit for the programme's work on YDI and influence has also come from the AU and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as well as several member countries.

1.2 The effectiveness of the Secretariat's delivery model

As part of the aim of identifying the extent of member country benefit from the Secretariat's work, the review team used data collection to interrogate the range of methods the Secretariat used to identify member country needs and to respond to these.

Findings

- The Secretariat utilises a range of different methods to deliver member country benefits under the Strategic Plan, and there are strengths and weaknesses to each of these. In the context of the Secretariat being a multi-mandate organisation, operating across a large membership with modest resources, it is important that the organisation target its resources effectively, to avoid dilution of impact.
- Much of the Secretariat's support to member countries is demand-driven, which enables it to remain responsive and relevant to national priorities and member country needs. However, this demand-driven model has also led to a portfolio that is spread across multiple areas. Evaluations, projects and member country feedback indicate that the Secretariat may want to consider a more focused approach, including identification of regional or country-level targets to work towards.

- The placement of technical advisers in member countries – the model utilised by the CFTC and other initiatives such as the CFAH – is a strong method for providing in-depth support to member countries. This method allows responsiveness to member country demand and comes with the benefit of sustained engagement on specific issues, which is of value when trying to achieve long-term change.
- The Secretariat's convening power is seen as a significant advantage of the organisation both internally, among member countries, and externally, among partners and peers. Consensus-building activities such as Ministerial Meetings provide the opportunity to identify and validate work areas and provide legitimacy to the Secretariat's work. The Secretariat does, however, face challenges in ensuring these meetings retain their attendance and relevance.

Table 4. Examples of historical Secretariat influence

Member country	*Historical* Secretariat Influence
Guyana	The Secretariat's 2018–2019 Annual Results Report describes how recommendations made in 2006 by the Secretariat regarding the autonomy of the Guyana Elections Commission were successfully implemented, and technical support to address voter registration and education strengthened its capacity. According to the report, member country officials believe the Secretariat played an integral role in ensuring the Commission can now deliberate on issues, review guidelines and make recommendations for improvement. In this case the influence of the Secretariat has emerged over a number of years.
Papua New Guinea	The Secretariat's evaluation of support to PNG from 2103/14 to 2016/17 highlights how recommendations from two international observer reports (the Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) and the European Union Expert Mission) were analysed by the PNG Electoral Commission and incorporated into the post-election review process.[4] Following this, the Commission developed a five-year corporate plan (2018–2022), which included recommendations from the COG.[5] These findings demonstrate that the Secretariat has influenced the development of the PNG Electoral Commission and that changes emerge over a period of years, alongside influence of other actors, in this case the EU.
Namibia	In Namibia, Secretariat analysis has highlighted other benefits resulting from historic engagement. According to the Secretariat's evaluation of support to Namibia in 2013/14–2016/2017, Namibia's Youth Credit Scheme, established in 2005 (and based on the CYP model), is regarded as having met targets of job creation and establishment of businesses. The same evaluation report also identifies results in the area of Youth Work Professionalisation, such as the development of a Bachelor of Arts in Youth Development, following successful delivery of the Diploma in Youth Development, by the Namibian College of Open Learning, in collaboration with the Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning and the University of West Indies.[6] The first intake for this was scheduled for 2018. The report describes how support to Youth Work Professionalisation by the Secretariat stretches back to the 1970s, and renewed commitments made at CYMM 2007 and CHOGM 2013. These examples again illustrate how the influence of the Secretariat emerges over time and can involve the contribution of other actors.

4 Annual Results Report 2018–2019: Report B – Country Reports, PNG and Guyana.
5 110. Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Support to PNG 2013/14–2016/17.
6 108a. Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Support to Namibia 2013/14–2016/17.

Table 5. Examples of current Secretariat influence

Member country	Secretariat Influence during the *current Strategic Plan period*
Solomon Islands	In Solomon Islands, the Secretariat sent a mission to observe the 2019 general election. This was conducted under the country's new Electoral Act 2018 and electoral reform plan, which had been influenced by the findings and recommendations of previous COG missions.[7] The chair of the 2019 Secretariat observation mission also highlighted the role of the 2003–2017 Regional Assistance Mission led by Australia and Pacific Islands Forum members in support of stability in Solomon Islands.
Mauritius	In the area of Sport for Development and Peace (SDP), the Secretariat's Sport team extended support to Mauritius in 2016 to develop its Sport for All Action Plan. In 2017, Mauritius developed a National Sport Policy and in 2018 the Government ring-fenced funds for national sport projects. Mauritius referred to the role of the Secretariat in supporting and influencing these developments in its position statement at the Ninth Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting in Australia in April 2018.
Seychelles	The Secretariat's Oceans and Natural Resources team supported development of the Seychelles Blue Economy Roadmap 2018-2030 through placement of a resident adviser at national level. The Roadmap was approved by Cabinet and adopted by Parliament in 2018. Follow-up work by the team has facilitated the integration of blue economy indicators in the roadmap into the national development strategy.
Botswana	Botswana's revised National Export Strategy 2019–2024 launched in May 2019 was influenced by support from the Trade Competitiveness team.[8] The strategy outlines priority sectors to target for export.
Jamaica and Mauritius	Advisers funded by the CFAH and placed in member countries secured climate finance grants for Jamaica and Mauritius.[9] Feedback from Mauritius highlighted the role of its national climate finance adviser and the benefit this would have for the implementation of Mauritius' Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Climate Agreement. The CFAH is a Secretariat initiative that also benefits from the support of Mauritius as the host member country and grant funding from member countries such as Australia and the UK.

Analysis

Placement of technical advisers in member countries has historically been one of the key ways in which the Secretariat has sought to support its membership and influence change at the country level. This approach describes the model used by the CFTC, and support provided under other projects.

Senior staff at the Secretariat, some with more than 10 years' experience in the organisation, identified the CFTC as one of the Secretariat's most effective methods of providing benefits to member countries, citing the example of CFTC consultants placed with national institutions under project areas such as Natural Resource Management, Trade and Rule of Law, and with partner organisations such as CARICOM. The strengths of this model were described as sustained engagement at the level of the recipient organisation; a cost to the Secretariat that is lower than that incurred by advisers based in headquarters frequently travelling to member countries (at high cost) to provide technical assistance; and the benefit that comes through developing long-term relationships with member countries through sustained engagement over a number of years.

In comparison, other teams, when surveyed about the Secretariat's delivery model, described how capacity-building by Secretariat-based advisers,

7 https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/observing-vote-solomon-islands
8 http://www.dailynews.gov.bw/news-details.php?nid=49019
9 Annual Results Report 2017–2018.

through targeted training and short in-country visits, provided benefits that were equal to those from the placement of technical advisors, and in some cases enabled expanded reach through the ability to deliver inputs to a greater number of member countries for a similar financial investment. Direct respondent feedback from elsewhere in the Secretariat did highlight that, in response to shrinking financial resources, the Secretariat is adapting its capacity-building activities. One team described how, rather than sponsoring large numbers of beneficiaries to attend workshops in London, it now sought to deliver workshops through regional partners, with assistance from Secretariat technical advisers, so as to reduce costs to the Secretariat while maintaining the reach of the organisation's capacity-building support. The reviewers understood that several other teams were pursuing such an approach, of projects using capacity-building to focus on peer learning among participants.

Although not funded by the CFTC, the CFAH utilises a similar model of placing LTTA in member countries in response to demand. The CFAH project lead described this model of support as having benefits in terms of sustainability and reach. The benefits of placing an adviser within the host government were said to include increased time for engagement and relationship-building across multiple ministries, leading to a broader range of recipients benefiting from the capacity-building delivered by the advisor. This model was also utilised by the Secretariat's Hubs and Spokes programme, a successful 15-year trade programme run jointly by the Secretariat, the EU, the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group Secretariat and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.

This is not to say that there are no weaknesses in the LTTA model. The Secretariat's evaluation of assistance to Grenada in 2013/14–2016/17 concluded that expert-led Secretariat initiatives tend to lose momentum when the expert leaves the organisation and there is no handover or organisational direction to complete the work started.[10] This finding from Grenada is supported by observation of the Secretariat's monitoring of CFTC support to St Vincent and the Grenadines, which found that the placement of an expert adviser in the member country's maritime agency had risked creating dependency on the technical expertise.

10 Evaluation of the Secretariat's Support to Grenada 2013/14–2016/17.

However, this report did conclude that the placement had provided a significant positive benefit to the beneficiary agency. It recommended that in future placements of technical advisers are supported where necessary by cross-team working within the Secretariat, in this case to strengthen the passage of new legislation by engagement of the Secretariat's Rule of Law or Public Institutions teams.[11]

One of the key elements of programmes, like the CFTC, which placed LTTA in member countries, is that they are demand-driven. Advisers are placed in country in response to member country demand. This approach has benefits in terms of enabling the Secretariat to remain relevant and responsive to member country needs. However, two recent evaluations have highlighted challenges associated with a demand-driven delivery model.

An internal evaluation of the Secretariat's support to PNG in 2013/14–2016/17 concluded that support was primarily in direct response to requests received from the member country, but that 'basing activities on requests, as and when received, impeded visioning and visualisation of a national plan of action'. The evaluation suggested 'a country focus be inbuilt in programming at the strategic level (such as the delivery plan).'[12]

An independent evaluation of the Secretariat's Democracy programme 2013/14–2016/17 concluded that the impact of the programme was weakened because (i) there were no broad problem analyses at a country level, (ii) there were no, or weak, links between global and regional meetings, with no post-event impact assessment; and (iii) many staff still lack a focus on results (predominantly moving from activity to activity). The evaluation also indicated that the impact at the strategic level was weakened by the fact that incoming requests were required to be within the scope of the Strategic Plan, but that scope was very broad and not prioritised. It also highlighted how staff recommended more facilitation and engagement with a range of issues and actors at a country level before making a decision on how to respond to demand. The evaluation found that the assessments carried out in response to requests did not sufficiently analyse the local context and were mostly technical in nature.[13]

11 SVG Monitoring Mission Report 2018.
12 Commonwealth Secretariat Evaluation Series 110 – Evaluation of Support to PNG.
13 111. Evaluation of the Democracy Programme 2013/14–2016/17.

High commissions highlighted another potential risk of using a demand-driven delivery model: member countries that do not request support may not benefit from the Secretariat's political or development programming.

The organisation's convening power and its activities in the area of consensus-building are a significant strength. Mechanisms such as the organisation's Ministerial Meetings provide legitimacy to the Secretariat's work by creating the platform for identification and agreement of priority work areas. The Youth team utilises platforms such as the CYMM and CHOGM to gain high-level support for key initiatives of the CYP such as the YDI and the Youth Mainstreaming Guidelines, before rolling them out to member countries. Similarly, the Secretariat's Education team uses the triennial Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) to identify education priorities among member countries, which are then integrated into the team's programming. Feedback from partners indicated that the Secretariat's convening power, and its ability to bring together ministers and Heads of State, was seen as a significant strength of the organisation, and one that sets it apart from many other international organisations, including UN bodies.

1.3 Unintended outcomes

Analysis

Findings

- There have been unintended outcomes in the areas of the CYP, the Blue Charter and SDP. A theme among these unintended outcomes is how Secretariat work has catalysed the work of other organisations or partners not initially targeted by these projects.
- Identifying and understanding unintended outcomes relies on having a solid MEL plan integrated in each project. MEL plans have been introduced in the first two years of the Strategic Plan but effectively integrating MEL at project level will require further work and additional capacity. Further analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the Secretariat's MEL systems and processes is included in Chapters 2 and 3.

This review aimed to understand whether Secretariat projects had resulted in any unintended outcomes in the first two years of the Strategic Plan. Table 6 describes examples identified.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Resourcing for the Secretariat's work

As discussed above, in several programme areas the Secretariat's ability to deliver work in response to member country demands is hindered by the organisation's resource constraints. By attempting to respond to all demands for support, the Secretariat risks over-promising and under-delivering and diluting the potential impact of its work. When the Secretariat is unable to respond to requests for support, or to demonstrate progress in member country priority areas owing to lack of resources, there may be negative consequences. Member countries may question the Secretariat's contribution to their country, along with the value of their financial contributions to the organisation, and in turn the organisation's relevance.

Demand for election observation missions, and the desire of the Secretariat to engage in these, has put pressure on the Secretariat's limited resources. Senior Secretariat staff estimate that a full COG mission costs the Secretariat on average

£250,000. The Political Division's budget has not been sufficient to cover all requests for election observation received during the current Strategic Plan period or to cover the full breadth of the election and the activities involved in a COG.

The Secretariat's Economic Policy Division uses the annual CFMM to identify priority policy areas to inform its programming. Internal monitoring by the Secretariat highlights that, although the CFMM enables identification of issues of financial importance to member countries, the organisation's resource limitations negatively affect its ability to take forward programming. Policy areas that the Secretariat has been asked to work on since 2015 include tax, dialogue with the G20, disaster finance and fintech. Work on tax issues was initiated and resulted in the Secretariat championing the voice of small states but this work stalled in 2017 when the Secretariat's tax adviser left their post. This post remains vacant owing to resource constraints. At CFMM 2018, ministers asked the Secretariat to develop a fintech toolkit

Table 6. Examples of unintended outcomes

Project area	Unintended outcome
CYP	The rapid expansion of Youth Networks supported by the CYP has very quickly resulted in them pursuing a wide range of initiatives across multiple member countries. The CYP supports 13 Youth Networks but finds itself in a position where resource constraints mean it is unable to keep track all the different activities and events taking place. This is despite it employing innovative M&E tools such as Verdentum, a smartphone-enabled reporting software that allows Youth Network members to upload details of activities using a social media-type model. This reflects the experience of the review team, which found it challenging to understand the full range of initiatives underway through Youth Networks owing to the large volume of information in multiple formats.
Blue Charter	The Blue Charter has generated interest from other organisations keen to engage with the Secretariat in supporting the Charter's objectives. The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) approached the Secretariat's Oceans and Natural resources team to propose establishing a Blue Charter Fellowship. This programme is now in its second year and will support 10 fellows in designing innovations to tackle ocean pollution (one of the focus areas of the Blue Charter Action Groups) through six-month placements in ACU member universities. It benefits from funding by Waitrose and Partners. The Secretariat and ACU are looking at ways to expand the fellowships to support topic areas of other Action Groups.
	The Blue Charter has also generated interest in the fashion industry from designers working in sustainable fashion and artists and musicians. The Purcell School (a specialist music school in London) is looking to help raise awareness of the Blue Charter by writing songs based on the Action Group's themes.
	The number of Blue Charter Action Groups, each with an individual theme, was initially proposed to be five. Member countries stepped forward to lead eight Action Groups. These eight quickly became nine, and the team is currently in discussion regarding a tenth group.
SDP	The SDP team is leading an international effort to develop a global indicator framework for measuring the impact of sport on achievement of the SDGs. The Secretariat's leadership of this significant piece of work came about as a result of recognition of the organisation as a thought leader in this area at the Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS VI) meeting in 2017. The key UN agency mandated to work in this area, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), formally nominated the Secretariat as a lead agency in this area, as did the African Union Commission. These nominations recognised the body of work and institutional knowledge built up by the Secretariat in its work in this area over a number of years. That the Secretariat is leading on this work can be considered an unexpected (rather than unintended) outcome of its work in this policy area, in that the Secretariat did not explicitly target stepping into the leadership position on this piece of work. A further unintended outcome that has evolved from this work is that Japan has engaged in piloting the indicator framework and stepped forward as an early adopter of the work. This take-up of Secretariat led work by a high-income country outside of the Commonwealth's sphere can also be considered an unexpected outcome.

for member countries, but this project was not allocated funding in the Secretariat's budget and so to date this work has not been taken forward.

An inability to respond to all member country requests for support owing to resource constraints is a challenge for the CYP also, and the team does not have the resources available to respond to all requests for technical support, particularly in popular programme areas such as the YDI. Since development of the YDI, increasing numbers of regional partners are investing in tracking progress on youth development in the areas of health,

education, employment and civic and political participation. While this demand is positive in one sense as it shows regional partners are taking the YDI up, this has led to an increasing demand for the development of national YDIs that take account of national priorities using the youth indicators developed by the CYP. Similarly, not all demands for programme support on youth employment and youth entrepreneurship can be met.

Regarding the Secretariat's financial model, feedback from one member country highlighted how the Abuja Guidelines, while being an important mechanism for ensuring member country contributions, can have a detrimental effect on Secretariat programming and impact in member countries. The example provided was the cessation of the support to work on marine boundaries and for a sovereign wealth fund because the recipient member country was in breach of the Guidelines. The high commission highlighted the benefit that these programmes had been creating at the national level, and that it was inefficient for such engagement to be terminated owing to a breach in Abuja Guidelines that was rectified after some time. The high commission queried whether a mechanism could be established to enable programme continuation while a member country brings its contributions up to date.

Additionally, in relation to the Secretariat's funding model, staff at the SMG level observed that, while the Secretariat benefits from EBR funding in a number of technical areas, for example CVE, Climate Finance and Trade, thus enabling increased support to member countries, the organisation lacks knowledge and experience of how to position itself to attract increased EBR.

Wavering interest in engagement at the member country level as a result of personnel changes was further identified through this review as a challenge facing the Secretariat and a risk to the impact of its work. Member country respondents to surveying for the MTR recommended that in such circumstances the Secretariat strengthen its efforts in institutional engagement to ensure programme continuation.

Consensus-building

Consensus-building activities, primarily through Ministerial Meetings, remain a key part of the Secretariat's work. The Annual Results Report for 2017/18 highlights how, in the delivery year, eight of these meetings were held, bringing together a total of 174 Commonwealth ministers.[14] Internal monitoring of the 2018 CFMM identified key challenges to this meeting, such as declines in attendance since 2010, particularly among member countries from Africa and the Pacific, and from LIC status member countries, and challenges to ensuring the Commonwealth maintains its relevance for ministers whose attendance is requested at a large number of competing regional and international meetings and forums.[15]

As external peers consider the Secretariat's convening power a particular strength of the organisation, and as the organisation uses these meetings to inform its own programming, it seems pertinent to make efforts to sustain these forums.

Although challenges exist, member country respondents acknowledged that Secretariat investments in ensuring it was visible, for example through consensus-building activities and visits by the Secretary-General and senior staff, were of value in raising and maintaining the profile of the organisation. Visibility is also key at the national level, where it makes the Secretariat's investments known to country-level partners working in the same areas. The Secretariat's own country reports have found that this level of national visibility is often lacking at the point of project delivery. The Secretariat operates on a modest budget compared with many other international organisations. There may be value in sustaining its efforts for high-level visibility while improving visibility at the national level to ensure the organisation receives relevant recognition for its support.

Niche programming

One of the strengths of the Secretariat lies in identifying niche programme areas where its technical assistance has the potential to produce a greater impact. Seven Secretariat staff, of adviser level or higher, described how identifying niche products or areas or work was a strength. This observation came from staff in the Social Policy, Economic Policy, Political, Governance and Trade divisions. Under the Secretariat' cross-cutting themes, Gender Responsive Budgeting was given as an example of the Secretariat's ability to identify

14 Annual Results Report 2017–2018.
15 Monitoring Mission Report – Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting 2018.

niche areas and lead the development of niche products that have the potential to have a catalytic effect. The example provided was attributed to the work of the Secretariat 20 years ago that is now being recommended by UN Women.

Another example of potential catalytic impact through niche areas is the Secretariat's support to the development of a NCD legislative framework in the Pacific. The support provided by the Secretariat takes advantage of its expertise in providing technical assistance and provides value for money through the effective use of limited resources. Through working in this way and providing a niche technical input into a larger regional framework, the Secretariat is creating an opportunity. The framework will be made available to 18 countries in the region, 11 of them Commonwealth members.

Other examples of niche programming by the Secretariat include the organisation's focus on law reform, and its efforts to promote the professionalisation of youth work in member countries. This latter policy area has included initiatives such as the Diploma in Youth Development and more recently the development of a Bachelor of Arts programme in Youth Development (jointly developed in collaboration with the Commonwealth of Learning and the University of West Indies). The professionalisation of youth work, in particular the education and training elements, is a niche area of work for the Secretariat.

While the Secretariat may have the ability to create niche or catalytic benefits or products, the potential weakness is that it may not always receive recognition for its investments since benefits may not be immediately forthcoming. The other risk is that, if the Secretariat, through its results-based management (RBM) approach, measures impact through a relatively rigid framework, it may not have the opportunity to capture these upstream impacts.

Recommendations for primary evaluation question 1

- The Secretariat's programmes should be provided with the financial resources required to extract the most value from its technical expertise, and to avoid dilution of its impact in member countries.
- The Secretariat should continue investment in and emphasis on MEL to fully understand the organisation's influence. To fully understand the value of the Secretariat's convening power, apply consistent monitoring to all Ministerial Meetings, and conduct an evaluation of the consensus-building role of the Secretariat to assess its effectiveness. In all evaluations of the Secretariat's work, the TOR would benefit from an increased emphasis on identifying unintended outcomes, their causes and impact.

2. The extent to which projects are able to demonstrate evidenced-based progress towards achievement of Intermediate Outcomes

Introduction

To answer primary evaluation question 2, the TOR for the MTR called for an in-depth review of a sample of projects from the Secretariat's portfolio. The inception report proposed selection criteria for the sample, subsequently agreed with the Strategy, Portfolio and Partnerships Division (SPPD). The 12 projects selected and the criteria for selection have already been presented (under Methodology). The criteria were designed to capture a sample of projects representative of the entire Secretariat portfolio.

Under the Secretariat's RBM approach, each project is described in a PDD that outlines the project approach, theory of change, rationale, methods of implementation, funding and targeted outcomes, among other information. A Logical Framework that describes the activities, outputs, STOs and IOs targeted supports each PDD. Indicators for outputs, STOs and IOs are described along with annual targets for each indicator[1] and means of verification (MOV). The Logical Framework for each project includes a hierarchy where outputs are designed to contribute to the achievement of STOs and STOs to the achievement of IOs. Each project must within its PDD target one IO from the Secretariat's SRF. Each project therefore logically contributes towards the achievement of the targets in the SRF and therefore the Strategic Plan.

The PDD and Logical Framework for each project are stored in the Secretariat's online PMIS, along with other project information and documents, such as the Budget. All members of a project team are given access to PMIS. Periodically, teams are required to self-report data on PMIS on achievements; this includes bi-annual reporting of quantitative and qualitative data against STO and IO indicators. Data reported on PMIS are used for preparation of Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPRs) and Six-Month and Annual Results Reports, the Delivery Plan and other *ad hoc* reports, for example to provide senior staff with a summary of Secretariat work in specific member countries or work areas. Chapter 3 covers all findings, analysis and recommendations for these areas in more detail.

The Secretariat's reporting guidelines advise that evidence for project achievements also be uploaded to PMIS. Evidence can be stored in a number of tabs on each project's monitoring module on PMIS. The system does not link evidence uploaded to specific outcomes or indicators, and uploading of evidence in support of data is not mandatory

Analysis for question 2 focused on the achievement of outcome-level changes in the project sample, and the available evidence to show these took place (the evidence base). In defining what constituted an STO or an IO, the review team used the descriptions of these included in the Results Chain and Definitions from the Secretariat's PMGs (see Annex 6).

Data collection methods utilised included KIIs, FGDs and document and data review. Each KII and FGD was conducted using the same standard set of questions. Document and data review covered the internal tools and systems in place under the Secretariat's RBM approach. For each project in the sample, the following were reviewed: the PDD and

1 Under the Secretariat's RBM approach, multiple indicators may be used to measure one individual STO or IO.

Logical Framework for each project stored on PMIS. This allowed the review team to understand the project model, the STOs and IOs targeted and the indicators in use to measure these.

Quantitative and qualitative data reported for each project on PMIS was also reviewed to understand progress to date against STO and IO indicators. Review of the evidence base for STO and IO achievements was conducted through review of evidence held on PMIS. Additional evidence, where provided by the project team, was also included in analysis. This allowed for comparison of progress reported for STOs and IOs with the evidence available for this progress. The review team attempted to identify evidence for each of the STO and IO achievements reported, and to triangulate this by looking for evidence of the same outcome from different sources, including non-Secretariat or non-member country sources. The findings and summary analysis of the in-depth review are described below. Annex 4 presents detailed results of the analysis of each of the 12 projects in the sample.

Findings

- At the two-year stage of the Strategic Plan, the Secretariat's projects sampled in this review are showing good progress across multiple STO indicators, and more limited progress against IO indicators. Across the 12 projects in the sample there are 43 STOs. There is evidence of fair progress or achievement of multiple indicator targets for 25 of these, or 58 per cent. Regarding the achievement of IOs, there is evidence for progress towards one or more indicator on 10 out of 12 projects in the sample. No projects in the sample have yet met all indicator targets for their IOS, although this is to be expected given the high level of IOs and the fact that the Secretariat is two years into a four-year plan. Out of 12 projects, 2 are unable to evidence any progress at the IO level. These findings are described in more detail below and in Annex 4.
- Evidence review for the MTR was challenging. Evidence stored on PMIS is not organised in a structured manner; it is simply uploaded with a file name and a record of who uploaded it and when. Other sources of evidence for project achievements are held by individual team members, and not all are stored centrally on PMIS. There is a lack of third-party evidence or example evidence from the media, civil society and partner organisations, in addition to the current evidence, which relies primarily on information from Secretariat and member country sources.

Analysis

Detailed analysis from the review of the project sample is presented in Annex 4. Table 7 presents a summary of analysis, including examples of STO and IO progress that can be evidenced, and a summary of the evidence base per project. Full in-depth reviews of each project are in Annex 4, which describes the sources of evidence available for project outcomes and the value of these in demonstrating impact at the outcome level. Annex 7 displays the type of evidence sources in use across the project sample.

2.1 The use of partnerships to support the achievement of Intermediate Outcomes

The Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21 includes a specific focus on leveraging partners to support delivery of the plan:

> 'Working with international and Commonwealth partners will be one of the key delivery principles in the new Plan period. The Secretariat will seek to increase the share of its projects that are supported through technical and financial partnerships. Building on results achieved in improving engagement with Commonwealth accredited organisations, the Secretariat will also work to increase the number of effective partnerships.'[2]

A meta-evaluation of the Secretariat's evaluation studies from 2005 to 2016 recommended that the organisation 'invest in a Secretariat-wide approach for exploring, developing and maintaining strategic partnerships in order to maximise resources and impact' and that 'development of a Partnership Strategy could support in promoting this area of work'.

2 3.6.1, Partnerships and Innovation.

Table 7. Summary analysis of in-depth project review

Project	Outcome progress	Evidence
Election Observation and Strengthening Electoral Processes (YPCWG1006)	• Implementation of Secretariat recommendations in Pakistan, through the Electoral Act 2017 and the Election Registration 2017 (STO) • Process of electoral reform initiated in Solomon Islands, and a new Electoral Act passed (STO)	The project can evidence some progress by member countries towards implementation of COG recommendations. It can also evidence the number of member countries benefiting from Secretariat election missions but this does not necessarily mean elections are transparent, credible and inclusive, as per the indicator. The team highlighted challenges in the measurement of indicators for IO-level change as the overall outcome is at such a high level. The project has a MEL plan.
Countering Violent Extremism (YOCWG1047)	• Countries receiving in-depth technical assistance have expressed satisfaction with the support they receive and believe this is increasing their national capacity to prevent and counter violent extremism; Trinidad and Tobago states the CVE Unit is invaluable in the type of work it conducts (STO) • 10 member states benefiting from in-depth technical support to strengthen CVE systems/processes/mechanisms (STO) • Grassroots and civil society organisations (CSOs) reporting an increased capacity to run CVE programmes (STO)	The team discussed the high-level nature of the overall outcome, and said the steps they were taking to reach that outcome relied on a slow step-by-step process in collaboration with Government and partners to build capacity. Results in this space will take time to mature. However, the project is making strong steps towards meeting STOs and IOs. Examples of learning taking place through the programme include the CVE Unit delivering a practitioner workshop where officials from Trinidad and Tobago worked with expert practitioners from the Kenyan and UK Governments on the legal and programme responses needed to manage return and reintegration. A strong M&E framework underpins this project but the evidence base would benefit from triangulation; STO data rely in many cases on internal Secretariat reports.
Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Centre and Networks (YJCWG1010)	• Improved knowledge and skills of staff in national anti-corruption agencies (ACAs) (STO) • Two regional anti-corruption networks set up: Africa Association of Anti-Corruption Agencies and Caribbean Association of Integrity Commissions and Anti-Corruption Bodies (STO)	This has a range of STOs and IOs indicators being tracked, with the majority of PDD target ratings as target met or exceeded for both. There is limited evidence to show depth to the results reported, however. There is significant high-level acknowledgement of the Secretariat's work but, because of a lack of solid recent evidence, limited verification of results can be made. The evidence base for achievements would benefit from strengthening and diversification. Much of the evidence relies on surveys of capacity-building participants. There is a MEL plan in place, and evidence of an evaluation (2017) and two reviews (2019). Examples are given of learning mechanisms within the project, for example the CAACC in Botswana model looking to be replicated in the Caribbean, as well as learning being generated for relevant parties through regional conferences, such as the Ninth Commonwealth Regional Conference for Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies in Africa.

(*Continued*)

Table 7. Summary analysis of in-depth project review (*Continued*)

Project	Outcome progress	Evidence
Improved and Constructive Engagement with the UN UPR (YRAFR1016)	• Eight member countries supported in reporting to UN UPR (STO/IO) • Capacity-building of parliamentarians and publication produced on 'The Global Human Rights Implementation Agenda and the Role Of National Parliaments' (STO)	HRU was able to describe in detail the support provided to multiple member countries through this project and give a variety of examples of the work undertaken in Geneva at the UN and at member country level. The information provided to the MTR team and the data on PMIS indicate that the project is making good progress towards the achievement of its outcomes, and that the team is utilising a variety of methods to engage with target beneficiaries and identify relevant inputs from the Secretariat. The evidence base would benefit from strengthening at IO level and diversification in sources used, especially in terms of member countries receiving UPR support. HRU described how it aimed to monitor all of its interventions and gather feedback on what had and had not worked, for example using pre- and post-training surveys. The team described how the narrowing of its approach, to focus on small states, was the result of monitoring past work and concluding that this was an area where the Secretariat could have the greatest impact with limited resources. The team did note, however, that its M&E work focused primarily on STOs. An M&E plan was completed as part of the 2019 PDD appraisal process.
Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (YHCWG1040) **Learning for Life (YHCWG1062)**	• CEPF workshop recommendations under implementation in Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu, with roll-out starting in Southern Africa (STO) • Support to CARICOM in development and implementation of its Human Resource Development Strategy 2030, and development of standards for teachers (STO) • Jamaica considering a multi-sectoral approach to address boys' educational achievement as prescribed by the Secretariat	Of the large number of initiatives and outcomes under the Learning for Life programme, the Secretariat's Education team has the resources to focus on a sample of these outcomes itself. The evidence base is good for targeted STOs and IOs but would benefit from diversification in the sources of evidence used (i.e. evidence from sources outside of the Secretariat), and continued follow-up of impact, for example of the CEPF in the Pacific and South Africa. Some data reported at IO level do not necessarily demonstrate achievement of the result at this level, for example strengthening of partnerships, and requests for technical support from partners fits better under the STOs that have been chosen for this project.

(*Continued*)

Table 7. Summary analysis of in-depth project review (*Continued*)

Project	Outcome progress	Evidence
Commonwealth Youth Programme (YYPAF1024)	• Adoption of a youth mainstreaming approach in Belize's National Trade Policy 2019–2030 (STO) • UNGA 2017 session on youth development giving recognition to the Commonwealth's policy position on evidence-based youth policies (IO) • AU State of African Youth Report 2019, which acknowledges Secretariat support, and heavily references the Commonwealth Youth Development Framework (IO) • Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) State of the Pacific Youth report referencing the use of the YDI indicators in defining its indicators for Pacific adolescents and youth (IO)	The evidence base on PMIS for reported outcomes is good and includes evidence of progress at the Intermediate Outcome Level. Not all achievements at the IO level are evidenced in a clear manner though including for the results report for Commonwealth Youth Council and Youth Networks. Similarly, not all achievements at the STO level are evidenced. During the course of data collection for the MTR the CYP was able to provide the review team with other rich sources of evidence, such as the presentations from the Asia Senior Officials meeting, which were not included on PMIS. The team described how although they see governments making structural changes, it is still difficult to measure the IOs in the PDD at Member State level. The programme completed a MEL plan as part of the 2019 PDD revision process. Feedback gathered from team members during the review included the observation that they do not have the resources to track all of the outputs and outcomes from some CYP initiatives (such as the Youth Networks), and that the volume of workstreams under the CYP means that the time for monitoring and evaluation of their work is limited.
Maximising the development potential of Sport (YYCWG1043)	• Progress in designing, piloting and targeting sport sector results frameworks by Mauritius (STO) • Zambia's commitment to developing a policy framework in SDP (STO) • Development of Indicator Framework for Measuring Contribution of Sport to SDGs (STO)	In data collection for the MTR, the project team described a continuum of progress and level of benefits for member countries. Evidence is present on PMIS for STOs, for example for Zambia, and some of the data support reporting against IO indicators, for example for Mauritius. There are weaknesses in the evidence base, for example for results reported in Tuvalu. Some useful evidence, for example consultation reports with member countries, is not included in PMIS but should be stored centrally with other project evidence. Model Indicators work would benefit from greater recognition in the project documents. The project team has a strong internal M&E processes but would benefit from support in formalising some of the data collection from its M&E work to strengthen the evidence base. One of the challenges the team described with M&E is that much of what it does is informal but that all data feed into iterative development processes in its work. The team commented that it could be better at documenting all of its MEL, and the feedback received, but low staff numbers represented a challenge. The team holds internal M&E workshops every six months.

(*Continued*)

Table 7. Summary analysis of in-depth project review (*Continued*)

Project	Outcome progress	Evidence
Commonwealth Trade Competitiveness Programme (YXCWG1017)	• Adoption of National Export Strategy by Botswana following Secretariat technical support (STO) • NPNM reports produced for two member countries (Botswana and Lesotho) (STO)	Of the outcomes reported, evidence is available for approximately 50 per cent. Review of the project's results framework and comparison of this with the Secretariat's results chain highlight some structural weaknesses (e.g. STO and IO indicators at the wrong level) that are likely to affect the Secretariat's ability to measure progress effectively and report on outcomes achieved. The evidence that is present comes from Secretariat, member country and media sources but would benefit from diversification to enable triangulation, such as for Grenada and Lesotho. Progress may be more apparent when structural weaknesses in the results framework are corrected. An M&E plan was completed as part of the 2019 PDD appraisal process but no evidence of other formalised MEL mechanisms came to light during the review.
A Resilient Blue Commonwealth: Blue Charter (YNCWG1051)	• UK and Canada improving their capacity to deliver on programmes (STO) • Canada, Kenya, the UK and Vanuatu making demonstrable progress in defining, planning, protecting, managing or developing their ocean space (IO) • Vanuatu announcing bans on various single-use plastic items (IO) • Kenya's progress in developing Blue Economy policies (IO) • Canada's ban on industrial activities in marine protected areas (IO)	The project can evidence progress towards improved capacity of national institutions to deliver on Blue Charter implementation, and on the number of member countries making demonstrable progress. Strong progress is being made towards STO- and IO-level change, therefore an overall assessment is that the project is making fair progress. During review there was no evidence of a systematic MEL framework for the project currently being in place yet, as the project is still in its setup phase, but there is a clear intention to build one going forward and this was discussed at the All Champions Meeting in June 2019. The evidence base for the project would benefit from diversification and triangulation.

(*Continued*)

Table 7. Summary analysis of in-depth project review (*Continued*)

Project	Outcome progress	Evidence
Improved access to Climate Finance	• Three out of eight member countries have secured climate finance (IO) • $25.4 million in climate finance secured for member countries (IO)	The Climate Finance team highlighted that delivery and results were currently on track. The team specifically highlighted the long-term nature of change through the programme model, and that changes in this particular area (i.e. from placing an adviser in country, building capacity within that country and often having to support changes in national policies to enable access to international climate finance, to then preparing proposals, going through the proposal process and then securing the funds) take time to mature. Targets could be updated, for example for the value of climate financing targeted. Owing to capacity constraints, the emphasis on capturing and sharing the innovative learning from this project has been limited.
Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment	No outcome progress measurable	Evidence-based results at the enabling outcome level are limited. It is evident that, while there are activities happening to enable this broader change, some results are just starting to materialise at the STO level, and results at the high level of change will take much longer to mature. However, there is a weak evidence base for this project and baseline data for STOs are missing. The review could not identify a MEL plan, although the review team was informed that a gender results framework had been developed and was awaiting management review. The recent internal gender audit could be considered in part a review; otherwise, there is no evidence of review and learning mechanisms within the project. This was an area where the team acknowledged limited information was available.

Findings

- The Secretariat has worked towards establishing the internal structures that will strengthen its ability to engage with and leverage partnerships. Secretariat teams leverage a wide variety of partnerships with organisations ranging from UN agencies to other Commonwealth organisations, to non-governmental and academic organisations. Working in partnership expands reach and voice and is recognised internally as a valuable way of achieving outcomes for member countries.
- The organisation would benefit from greater clarity on the role of the Partnerships team and how it can support project teams in brokering partnerships, along with improved knowledge and skills in partnering. Further work is needed in the areas of partnership maintenance, building capacity for partnership development and ensuring centrally negotiated partnerships align with the needs of technical teams.

Analysis

In the first two years of the Strategic Plan, the Secretariat worked towards establishing the structures that will strengthen its ability to engage with and leverage partnerships. In 2017, the Secretariat established its Innovation and Partnerships Section[3] and in 2018 the Board of Governors (BoG) approved the Partnership Strategy, 'representing the first time the Secretariat has had a shared vision of partnership and a clear articulation of how its own objectives will be achieved more effectively through partnerships'.[4] The Strategy targets partnerships with member countries, Commonwealth organisations, international partners, regional organisations and private sector/philanthropic organisations.

3 Six-Month Report July–December 2017; Enabling and Internal Outcomes.
4 Annual Results Report 2017–2018; Partnerships and Innovation.

Current examples of partnerships

The picture that emerged through data collection for the MTR is that the Secretariat leverages a wide variety of partnerships with different types of organisations, including UN bodies such as UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the two other Commonwealth inter-governmental organisations – the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth of Learning; Commonwealth accredited organisations such as ACU, and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; Member States; regional organisations such as CARICOM, the AU and the SPC; and non-governmental organisations, for example the Universal Rights Group (URG).

Identification of project partners, and the roles they play in supporting the Secretariat's work across the sample of projects, was easier in some cases than in others. The review team observed that knowledge regarding the partnership work that projects engage in was, more often than not, managed at the project level and not necessarily known about centrally. Despite this, it was clear that across the organisation staff at all levels were working to identify and engage in partnerships that add value to the work of the Secretariat and support achievement of its Strategic Outcomes.

The in-depth project reviews presented in Annex 4 provide details on the different types of partnerships in which each project in the sample is engaged. Table 8 presents a selection of the key partnerships.

The CYP works with UNDP in the Pacific region. The review team received the following feedback from this partner:

> 'UNDP has worked with the Secretariat on a number of joint interventions around learning and advocacy on Youth Empowerment. The single most important aspect of the work has been the policy guide on youth entrepreneurship. Both agencies are conveners [who] bring stakeholders together to share, learn and advance the agenda. Technical expertise drives our partnerships, along with evidence-based approaches to data and policy work. We co-designed the joint activities in Singapore and brought together partners to advise how UNDP should work on systemic design on Youth Employment.'

Table 8. Partnerships contributing towards achievement of Strategic Outcomes

Project	Partnerships
Improved and Constructive Engagement with the UN UPR	In support of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) Trust Fund support to participation of LDCs/SIDS in the work of the HRC, HRU runs working sessions with member country representatives in Geneva to further understand the requirements of small states. HRU has been able to encourage informal information-sharing between member countries around the HRC. The Secretariat prepares an agenda for these informal meetings and facilitates them by arranging for the chair in office to chair them. It is through the development of this informal mechanism that technical assistance to Dominica and The Gambia evolved. HRU has begun to develop further partnerships with this body, for example with the various mandate-holders in the HRC, such as the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and expert on sexual orientation and gender identity.
Learning for Life	UNICEF, UNESCO, the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the International Labour Organization (ILO), Africa Early Childhood Network and University College London collaborated in the development of the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Toolkit. Feedback from UNICEF on this initiative described how the network of partners brought different relevant inputs, how the Secretariat had a strategic advantage in its ability to work directly with ministers and that the convening power was of value in bringing member countries together with technical partners to maintain progress. The Secretariat provided support to the development of a Finance and Costing Plan for the CARICOM Human Resources for Development 2030 Strategy. CARICOM described how it was too early to measure impact, given that this work took place in 2019, but said the collaboration would serve to enhance the quality of educational delivery in CARICOM Member States, all of which are Commonwealth members.
CYP	The CYP engages multiple partnerships, including with the SPC, the AU, CARICOM and ASEAN on Youth Policy Development and with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), UNESCO and UNDP on Youth Peace and Security and Youth Mainstreaming. In the area of Youth Employment, the CYP convenes a partnership with the World Bank, the UK Department for International Development, ILO, the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the Mastercard Foundation. Partnerships also exist with the Commonwealth Youth Council and the Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Work Associations. Feedback from UNDP regarding its work with the CYP is included below this table.
Maximising the Development Potential of Sport	UNESCO platforms were leveraged to promote the Secretariat's leadership on sport and the SDGs, for example the MINEPS VI process. UNDESA (along with UNESCO, academic experts and member countries) sits on the steering group for the Model Indicators project. Steering committee members are also assisting to pilot the indicators and support their development. Durham and Swinburne Universities give *pro bono* technical support. The Commonwealth Games Federation's aligned messaging on maximising the potential of sport as a development tool in the Commonwealth is leveraged, along with its focus on strengthening governance across its member associations, and proactive leadership on sport and human rights issues.
Anti-Corruption	Botswana and Grenada are partners in the anti-corruption centre.

The strengths of the Secretariat were described as 'decades of technical expertise', having the 'ears and trust of governments' and the 'ability to convene governments at such a high level', along with long experience in evidence policy-making and credibility from 'sticking to the issue for decades'. UNDP observed that co-organised events had led to increased demand for UNDP's service offer in six or seven countries and increased collaboration between the countries and international development agencies in the Asia-Pacific, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Plan and ILO.

The partnership with UNCTAD was also highlighted, with examples given of work between the Secretariat's Trade and Youth teams on entrepreneurship and trade innovation.

A partnership highlighted with a member country was with Brunei Darussalam and its annual capacity-building programmes for small island states: the Secretariat undertakes outreach work to identify civil service staff beneficiaries from other member countries and then recommends these to Brunei Darussalam. The CAACC in Botswana and the CFAH in Mauritius are two other examples of the Secretariat working closely with individual member countries to develop and host initiatives that have the potential to create much greater impact across the Commonwealth. The model of the CFAH was highly acclaimed by the director of the Rocky Mountain Institute as 'one of the most innovative interventions anywhere in the world'. The Rocky Mountain Institute is a strategic partner of the CFAH that has supported the design and implementation of the climate finance service.

Other partnerships that the Secretariat entered into during the first two years of the Strategic Plan include a partnership with the CARICOM Development Fund to collaborate on areas of mutual interest such as debt management, youth and the Blue Economy; joint working with Brunei Darussalam to administer a training programme for participants from Commonwealth developing countries; and collaboration with Bloomberg Philanthropies in areas of mutual interest including international trade, innovation and climate change. The Commonwealth Education Partnership for Sustainable Development, a historic partnership agreement between the Secretariat, ACU and the Commonwealth of Learning, was signed as part of the 20th CCEM.[5]

The New York Small States Office of the Commonwealth signed renewed partnership agreements with 10 member countries. The Secretariat's HRU began a partnership with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI). Blue fashion partnerships were expanded to engage with the Commonwealth Fashion Council, an accredited organisation, and with Kenyan designers, to showcase innovative sustainable designs from waste ocean products. In July 2018 an MOU was signed with the Global Infrastructure Connectivity Alliance, and in September 2018 a partnership agreement was signed with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation to provide a framework of cooperation and facilitate and strengthen collaboration in areas of common interest. In October 2018, the Secretariat signed a co-operation agreement with the United Nations System Staff College. Through a partnership with the Eastern Caribbean Development Bank, the Secretariat's Debt Management Unit is strengthening the roll-out and implementation of the Meridian debt management software.[6]

The value of partnerships to the Secretariat

Four SMG members in the Secretariat pointed to the value of partnerships as a force multiplier, and a way of increasing the Secretariat's visibility. Staff described how, for an international organisation with a modest budget and resource constraints, partnership provides the opportunity to pool resources, and to extend the reach of programming and technical work, including that of partners. It was described as a strategy with increasing importance since, 'Core funding is going down, CFTC is going down, at the same time [we have] new mandates, so if you have to square the circle, either you increase resources, or you think creatively and innovatively and connect the dots through partnerships.'

Staff also described how there was increasing recognition of the fact that the Secretariat, as an inter-governmental organisation, is one of many actors working in the spaces that it occupies, and that no one organisation can achieve all of its objectives on its own. Respondents from other organisations within the Commonwealth family

5 Annual Results Report 2017–2018; Partnerships and Innovation.

6 Six-Month Report July–December 2018; Partnerships and Innovation.

described how the 'Commonwealth voice is stronger if the family engages together' and that doing so 'strengthens legitimacy and reach'.

2.2 The impact of CHOGM mandates on the achievement of Intermediate Outcomes

The Secretariat supports the convening of CHOGMs every two years. The previous CHOGM was held in the UK in 2018. The next CHOGM will be held in Rwanda in 2020. CHOGM provides an opportunity for leaders of member countries to meet and discuss issues of importance. Outputs include a communiqué of political commitments agreed by leaders and may result in agreement for the Commonwealth's inter-governmental organisations[7] to begin work in specific areas. At CHOGM 2018, leaders mandated the Secretariat to begin work in the areas of the Commonwealth Blue Charter and the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda. Leaders also mandated the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration and approved the Revised Commonwealth Guidelines for the Conduct of Election Observations in Member Countries.

In assessing the extent to which the Secretariat is able to demonstrate progress towards the achievement of IOs in the SRF, the review team wanted to interrogate whether mandates resulting from CHOGM have an impact on delivery. This was considered an important question for the following reasons:

- The Secretariat's planning and budgeting cycles are not aligned with the CHOGM cycle. The former takes place annually and the latter takes place biennially.
- CHOGM historically is held in the months of October or November (this was the case in 2009, 2011, 2013 and 2015. In 2018, CHOGM was held in April after being rescheduled), whereas the Secretariat's budget is usually agreed at the annual meeting of the BoG, often held in June or July of each year.
- The previous two iterations of the Secretariat's strategy have covered four-year periods. The Secretariat therefore plans in four-year cycles but CHOGM mandates can be issued every two years.

7 The three Intergovernmental Organisations are The Commonwealth Secretariat; The Commonwealth Foundation; The Commonwealth of Learning.

The review aimed to understand whether the issuing of CHOGM mandates and integration of this into the Secretariat's work had an effect on the delivery of Secretariat projects.

Findings

- The broad nature of the CHOGM communiqué is beneficial in reaffirming commitment for the wide range of areas in which the Secretariat works but can also be a hindrance in identifying what constitutes a new mandate.
- Implementation of CHOGM mandates has not had significant negative impacts on the delivery of projects included in the project sample, or on achievement of targets in the Strategic Plan.
- The CHOGM cycle does not align with the Secretariat's current planning and budgeting cycles and new mandates emanating from CHOGM are not always backed by the necessary resources to implement them effectively.

Analysis

Given the structured process the Secretariat takes in supporting the development and preparation of the draft CHOGM communiqué, and the convening of member country representatives that takes place to receive their input, the resulting communiqué is well aligned with the Secretariat's Strategic Plan, Commonwealth values and member country priorities. This is demonstrated in the key mandates from CHOGM 2018 – the Blue Charter, the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda, the Revised Guidelines for Election Observation and the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration.

Secretariat respondents highlighted how the broad nature of the CHOGM communiqué was helpful in reaffirming commitment to certain areas of work that may not be highlighted specifically as new mandates within the communiqué, but for which renewed support is helpful in maintaining the profile of the Secretariat's efforts in these areas.

Projects were selected within the project sample to include projects that had recently been influenced by CHOGM mandates, and data collection among interview respondents included gathering feedback on this subject from internal and external stakeholders.

Of the 12 projects in the project sample, 6 (Election Observation; CVE; Anti-Corruption Centre and Networks; Blue Charter; Climate Finance; and Gender Mainstreaming) were described by their project leads as resulting from or being heavily influenced by CHOGM mandates either from CHOGM 2018 or previous CHOGMs.

The lack of alignment between the Secretariat's planning and budgeting cycles, and the CHOGM cycle was described by senior Secretariat staff member as a challenge to effective working by the Secretariat. Respondents commented that improved alignment would facilitate the inclusion of new mandates in the Secretariat's work plans. Regardless of this, the review did not find that implementation of CHOGM mandates had had any significant negative impacts on the delivery of projects included in the project sample, or on achievement of targets in the Strategic Plan. Other challenges specific to the identification and funding of CHOGM mandates are described in the section below on challenges and lessons learnt.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Evidence

Evidence sources are in many cases the Secretariat's own reports, documents and tools, along with evidence originating from member countries institutions, for example requests for technical assistance, feedback from ministries and statements made by member country representatives. Diversifying the evidence base for project achievements to include other sources would strengthen the legitimacy of the results reported, and thus the results reported in external documents such as the Annual Results Report.

To find evidence of STO and IO achievements, the review team had to download and read a very large volume of documents, and compare the information in these with the data reported to attempt to identify which STO or IO they were related to. There is no method or system on PMIS that allows evidence sources to be linked to specific outcomes. This makes the process of assessing the validity of the self-reported data on PMIS very time-consuming. It also creates the space for misinterpretation of project achievements, since the validity of a certain piece of evidence and its relevance to a certain outcome may not be immediately obvious to someone reviewing PMIS who is not part of the project team, for example SPPD staff, who are responsible for quality assuring the data on PMIS.

Several projects are implementing internal MEL tools and mechanisms, but two-thirds of projects were unable to describe strong project-level MEL. Even teams that had developed MEL mechanisms and shown commitment to MEL commented that their human resources in this area were stretched and that they would benefit from increased MEL staff capacity.

Partnerships

This review aimed to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the Secretariat in building partnerships. The creation of the Secretariat's Partnership Strategy 2018 represents a move towards a more strategic approach to partnership. The strategy document describes five groups of partners to be engaged under the strategy, along with the rationale for and objectives of partnering with each group. It also describes steps to be taken towards engaging with targeted partners but does not outline where responsibility lies for these actions. There is a need to improve clarity on the organisation-wide partnership approach and the roles of central and project teams in developing partnerships.

Secretariat staff highlighted how tension is created when partnerships are seen as being driven centrally as opposed to from within the technical teams. An example provided by one of the technical teams concerned a high-level partnership that was negotiated centrally with a key partner in their area of work, with the team in question not informed about or consulted with until the partnership was agreed. This example raises concerns around the overall alignment of the partnership focus, if the actual negotiation of the partnership happens outside of the technical teams.

Respondents also recommended investment in building the skills of staff in technical teams in brokering partnerships. Partnering was described as not being a standard skill that technical teams looked for when recruiting new team members. By integrating partnership skills into key areas and building the skills base, more partnerships could be leveraged.

Three SMG respondents described investing in partnerships and putting partnerships at the centre of the delivery model as a risk when the Secretariat is not putting funds on the table as part of partnership negotiations. Examples were shared of the Partnerships team engaging with potential partners, including a peer regional development organisation,

setting up the contacts with teams and the partners having 'brilliant ideas of what the partnerships could look like' but then one of the first questions being, 'Where is the funding coming from for this?' And once it becomes clear that the Secretariat cannot contribute financially, the partner soon loses interest. Because teams are not in a position to bring funds to the table in partnership development, a further risk highlighted was diminishing relevance of the organisation: 'The weakness is, if you are not careful, you become a weak partner, because you don't have resources, then the other big organisation like the World Bank and IMF [International Monetary Fund] will take over. And then the relevance of Commonwealth will be diminished.'

Feedback from other respondents highlighted that, while the Secretariat's Partnerships team generally works well in terms of brokering, there is less emphasis on maintenance of partnerships. While there was recognition of the role the Partnerships team plays in developing the MOUs for partnerships, feedback highlighted that this was at the transactional end, and the focus needs to shift to measuring partnerships by the impact they are having on results. One senior director flagged that the Secretariat's partnership work could be strengthened by a 'a partnerships framework' agreed during the planning stages, to support the maintenance of partnerships and enable both parties to leverage the most value.

Finally, another apparent weakness highlighted by Secretariat staff is the perception of the Secretariat by other international organisations, and the fact that it is not easy to 'find people who have an accurate idea of what we stand for, everybody has a different idea about the Commonwealth, and quite often those ideas are pretty outdated or, or pretty off the mark'. This affects the organisation's ability to build partnerships.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings

Two teams described the broad nature of the CHOGM communiqué as a challenge to Secretariat working because it is not always clear which elements of it cover reaffirmation of support for current work and which mandate new areas of work, and that greater clarity on the latter would be helpful.

Feedback from high commissions regarding the integration of CHOGM mandates into the Secretariat's Strategic Plan included a recommendation that the organisation engage more closely with governors in the interrogation of the CHOGM communiqué and in doing so benefit from their support in identifying specifically where Heads of Government have mandated new workstreams.

Another challenge, highlighted by three senior-level Secretariat staff, is that new CHOGM mandates are not always accompanied by additional resources, and the Secretariat can be required to identify funding from its budget, which reduces the resources available for other areas of work being delivered under the Strategic Plan. This concern reflects comments made in the second report of the High-Level Group on Governance that

> 'The Commonwealth's engagement in areas of global significance is guided by two main sources: the priorities set out in its Charter; and the decisions of Commonwealth Heads of Government as set out in CHOGM Communiqués. The attention of the latter changes every two years and the outcomes invariably expand the role and scope for the Commonwealth, and consequently the Secretariat is left needing to address a seemingly ever-expanding list of "priorities", even as its finances are declining.'[8]

Recommendations for primary evaluation question 2

- Deepen and diversify the evidence base by developing evidence standards to guide Secretariat staff on what constitutes good evidence, and how to utilise third-party evidence sources (e.g. media, civil society, partner organisations) to triangulate results. Strengthen the management of evidence by including evidence tagging on PMIS that allows evidence sources to be linked to outcomes.
- Increase support to project teams to continue building partnerships that contribute towards delivery of the Strategic Plan. Strengthen capacity to manage partnerships in order to gain optimal value from them.
- Align the Secretariat's planning and budgeting cycles with CHOGM and scope out a model for securing financial commitment from member countries for all new CHOGM mandates.

8 Second Report of the High-Level Group on the Governance Arrangements of the Commonwealth Secretariat, Governance Arrangements for Commonwealth Engagement in Areas of Global Significance, p. 10.

3. The efficiency and effectiveness of the internal systems and processes of the Secretariat in supporting delivery of the Strategic Plan and CHOGM mandates

Processes and systems for organisation-wide planning, budgeting, monitoring and delivery are coordinated by the Portfolio Management Team in SPPD and the Finance Division in collaboration with directorates.

In the Delivery Plans for both 2017/18 and 2018/19, a strong commitment is placed on driving the RBM agenda forward within the Secretariat, by 'spearheading the institutionalisation of results-based management including building staff capacity'.[1] The 2017/18 Delivery Plan states that, 'Results based management has been adopted by the Secretariat as the core management approach to conduct business. It will ensure good governance, transparency and accountability at the project, programme and portfolio levels.' This clear commitment to the RBM approach led in part to the enhancement and introduction of specific processes and procedures in the first two years of the Strategic Plan. These are:

- Yearly Delivery Plan and matrix, which was introduced in the 2017 delivery year;
- Annual budgeting process, a process introduced prior to this Strategic Plan;
- Quarterly Performance Reviews (QPRs), combining assessments of project performance with finance reviews. QPRs were initiated in the 2017 delivery year and quarterly finance review meetings were an on-going initiative;
- Six-monthly and annual reporting, introduced prior to this Strategic Plan;
- PMIS, to track all projects implemented under the Strategic Plan, introduced prior to this Strategic Plan.

The following provides the findings and analysis for each of these processes and systems.

1 Delivery Plan 2017–2018.

3.1 Planning and budgeting

Findings

- There have been positive improvements in planning and budgeting in the first two years of the Strategic Plan. With the introduction of the comprehensive annual Delivery Plan and Matrix in 2017, a key mechanism has been created to bind annual delivery to the Strategic Plan. The combination of an annual Delivery Plan and annual Budget enables the Secretariat to comprehensively demonstrate how it will make progress towards the ambition set out in the Strategic Plan year by year.
- Through the first two years of the Strategic Plan, clear investment was made to embed and socialise the annual planning and budgeting process across teams. There is adequate guidance and support available for teams regarding this process. However, frustration was evident in Secretariat teams, which perceive the process to be excessively burdensome, and internal respondents called for simplification. Further, as planning and budgeting is done from a project, not a programme, perspective, it has led to an excessive amount of work for individual team members.
- This review found considerable support to move to biennial planning and budgeting. The benefits of moving to multi-year planning and budgeting would be the creation of a more stable platform for projects to plan and deliver beyond annual cycles, which would in turn support projects to move from activity-based interventions to longer-term programming. Further, multi-year planning and budgeting would enable the organisation to recalibrate planning around CHOGM and enable improved integration of CHOGM mandates. While a move to biennial planning and budgeting would have clear benefits to the organisation, any move would have to be supported by the contributions from member countries being for more than one year.
- This review found that the process to allocate divisional budgets was not fully transparent. The reviewers observed that lack of a clear and transparent process for the allocation of budgets at divisional level has in part led to a decrease in morale at team level, a sense among teams that some teams are more favoured than others and, critically, limiting some teams to activity-based interventions rather than longer-term interventions.
- No evidence was found in the planning and budgeting process for 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2018/19 that there was an accompanying and dovetailed human resources process to map annual capacity needs against the annual Budget and Delivery Plan. Without any accompanying process to analyse what is required to meet the ambition set out in the Delivery Plan and Budget, there is a real risk of a mismatch. Further, there is a missed opportunity to understand what core technical skills actually need to be brought in or enhanced to deliver the ambition set out in the Strategic Plan.

Analysis

In each year of the current Strategic Plan, the Secretariat has developed a Delivery Plan and Budget that summarises all projects being delivered in the financial year. The purpose of the annual Delivery Plan is to set out the programmatic areas of focus for the year ahead and bind annual project delivery to the Strategic Plan. In the second year of the Strategic Plan, a delivery matrix was introduced to further articulate the detail behind each of the deliverables in the Delivery Plan. The 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 Delivery Plans and Budgets hold the detail of how the Secretariat intends to deliver in the particular year against the Strategic Plan areas of focus. Annual approval by

the BoG is required for the Delivery Plan, Matrix and Budget. In 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20, SPPD and Finance co-ordinated the development of these. This move to a comprehensive Delivery Plan and Matrix was particularly welcomed by two high commissioners, who noted that the more detailed annual Delivery Plan, Matrix and Budget was one of the key positive developments in the previous two years.

Accompanying the annual Delivery Plan, Matrix and Budget is a detailed Planning and Budgeting Calendar, updated annually by SPPD and Finance. This is shared with teams through an all-staff communication as well as being placed on Compass (the Secretariat's intranet). The aim of the Calendar is to provide staff with key deadlines to enable the timely preparation of the Budget, Delivery Plan and Six-Month Report, as well as sharing key dates for budget and programme monitoring. Through the detailed Calendar, initiatives are evident to support teams to prepare and socialise annual planning and budgeting requirements, from PMIS drop-in sessions to provision of relevant guidance and templates. The Secretariat Six-Month Report (July-December 2018) highlights this detailed support by stating that, 'the Portfolio Management team delivered training and briefing sessions for staff on quarterly and six monthly reporting, and jointly with the Finance team delivered briefing sessions for the 2018/19 Delivery Plan and Budgeting process.' Internal respondents noted this support and highlighted that a particular area of improvement was in the level of support from SPPD throughout the annual planning and delivery cycle. While improvements are evident, four members of the SMG highlighted concerns that, for the size of the Secretariat's overall programme budget, the annual planning and budgeting processes and systems are too burdensome, 'complex and laborious'. A clear call by internal staff was made for the planning, budgeting and delivery process to be further simplified so more time could be spent on delivery.

Frequency and timing of planning and budgeting: One high commissioner, three senior directors, one head of team and four project leads particularly highlighted issues around the planning and budgeting being on an *annual* basis. While an annual planning and budgeting cycle ensures continual tight alignment with the Strategic Plan and available funding, feedback from staff highlighted that the process was not commensurate with the size of the budget, and, further, limited the majority of teams to activity-based interventions that could be completed within the year. Respondents highlighted that a move to biennial budgeting not only would ease the planning and budgeting burden on teams but also, as one head of section encapsulated, 'would be more agile in delivery'.

The feedback from teams with EBR secured for more than a year demonstrated the positives of multi-year planning/delivery: they know what financial allocations they have.

> 'We are slightly immune to it [the budgeting process] as we have multi-year funding from our donors. We have jump through the hoops for the annual budgeting, but have multi-year budgeting already agreed. That allows us to plan much more effectively. Since 2017, we have known how much money we have had per year for four years. Four-year funding is pretty useful. Two years at least is possible. Because we had that certainty, we have been able to establish contracts that bridge financial years, which means you can plan continuously as a result of that. It was highly effective, and it means that you can sit down with countries and make commitments about where you are going to be going.'

In addition, senior Secretariat staff described the lack of alignment between the Secretariat's planning and budgeting cycles and the CHOGM cycle as challenging to effective working by the Secretariat. Respondents commented that improved alignment would facilitate the inclusion of new CHOGM mandates in the Secretariat's work plans.

Allocation of divisional budgets: Eleven respondents highlighted particular concerns around the process to allocate annual project budgets at the divisional level. The biggest concern was that the decision to allocate project budgets was made by one director and that there was not a transparent or clear process around how allocations were made. Further, in the pre-planning for budgeting

rounds for year 2 and 3 of the Strategic Plan, three teams flagged the issue of budget reductions with no explanation. They described how they were required to conduct extensive internal proposal development with the same amount of funds they had received in the previous year, when budgets were allocated. It appeared that there was a relatively arbitrary allocation of funds, not based on teams' proposals. Some teams were allocated less funding than what they had put forward and given no communication as to the reason for the reduction.

Connection between planning, budgeting and annual capacity analysis: Analysis of the Delivery Plan, Matrix and Budget for 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 found no accompanying capacity needs analysis as part of the planning and budgeting process. Further, a review of internal documents found no guidance to support or encourage teams to look at their annual capacity assessments alongside the annual budgeting and planning process. This issue was also highlighted by one of the project teams, which flagged that, without any accompanying analysis of annual capacity needs, there is the potential for the organisation to be over-ambitious in its planning yet at the same time to under-deliver.

The review team was made only aware after data collection (for this Mid-Term Review) was completed of a process at the Senior Management Committee[2] (SMC) level to identify the Secretariat's established posts. Therefore, it was not possible to assess whether the process, at the SMC level, was a sufficient mechanism to support a capacity assessment as part of the annual planning and delivery.

A thinly spread budget: Two senior directors and one head of section highlighted underlying issues around the budget and planning process in that there is currently no formal process in place to prioritise member country requests. This leads to a portfolio that is 'spread too thin'. Further, feedback included the observation that were too many projects in the Secretariat's portfolio, and that going forward this should come together around a set of core programmes, not individual projects, to avoid further dilution.

The First Report of the High-Level Group on the Governance Arrangements of the Commonwealth Secretariat also highlighted this issue:

> 'The Secretariat is faced with growing tensions with its governing bodies over the allocation and governance of resources, and one manifestation of this is a Commonwealth Secretariat trying to be everything to everyone, and on almost every issue. This way of doing things is unsustainable and has led to some members expressing deep concerns over the Commonwealth's focus being too diluted.'[3]

For the 2017/18 delivery year, the organisation implemented 41 projects with a total budget of £42.7 million. In the 2018/19 delivery year, the organisation again implemented 41 projects, with a total budget of £47.7 million. If it is assumed that the Secretariat aims to respond to requests for support from all member countries, then its budget appears to be quite modest. Taking into account the high-level aims of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan, and the fact that the annual budget must support work across more than 40 projects, a picture begins to emerge of a budget that could well be stretched, leading to diluted impact of projects in member countries.

2 Senior Management Committee is the highest level of discussion and decision-making in the Secretariat on policy, coordination and strategic matters. It comprises the Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General(s) and Assistant Secretary General.

3 First Report of the High-Level Group on the Governance Arrangements of the Commonwealth Secretariat to Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers.

3.2 Project Design Document process

Findings

- A sufficient PDD development and appraisal process is in place and this supports the alignment of Secretariat projects with the annual Delivery Plan, and ultimately the Strategic Plan. There is an increasing trend in terms of compliance with the PDD appraisal process, with 100 per cent compliance reached for the 2019/20 delivery year. However, this rate has been influenced by the fact that the release of annual budgets is dependent on project teams having completed the PDD reappraisal process. This has led to limited engagement with the process by teams because it is seen as a budget approval step rather than an opportunity to review and recalibrate project delivery plans for the coming year.
- Further work is needed with project teams to demonstrate the value added of the PDD review process to enhance engagement. Finally, while it is evident that the timeframe to reappraise PDDs has improved year on year, any delays in the PDD approval process have significant implications for delivery. This was one of the drivers of underspends in the first two years of the Strategic Plan.

Analysis

Prior to the 2017/18–2020/21 Strategic Plan, a process was initiated to develop a PDD for each project, created and managed via the Secretariat's PMIS. Further, aligned with the RBM approach of the Secretariat, an annual reappraisal of the PDDs, initiated by SPPD and in collaboration with project teams and Finance, takes place to verify, among other checks, that 'all projects are responsive to the Strategic Plan'.[4] The annual PDD review process provides the basis on which the project is given formal approval (from divisional directors, or the Deputy Secretary-General/Assistant Secretary-General for projects over a certain threshold) for funding and implementation.

The approval stage ensures adequate funds are available and funds are allocated to an agreed project design. Stages of project approval include:

- Project manager's submission of an appraised PDD through an Approval Memo to the division/unit head;
- Director (with operation officers) checking due process has been followed and all documents are complete and submitted, depending on the scheme of delegation, with a recommendation to the Deputy Secretary-General's office;
- Activation of the project in CODA (the financial system), once approved.

The data regarding the number of PDDs developed and then reappraised for the 2018/19 and 2019/20 delivery year clearly show a high level of compliance with the process. The view from SPPD highlighted that the PDD development and review process had enabled teams to be 'more engaged with their project designs, and revisit those project designs' on a continual basis to ensure they remain aligned with the annual priorities as set out in the Strategic Plan. It was also noted from two teams how the PDD process was improving, with the last round of approvals having been much smoother and more effective and the PDDs being signed off earlier.

Table 9. Number of PDDs developed and reappraised[5] in the first two years of the Strategic Plan

Number of PDDs developed in 2017/18	Number of PDDs reappraised for 2018/19 delivery year	Number of PDDs reviewed by SPPD in 2019/20
All projects initiated under the 2017/18 Delivery Plan had a PDD developed	39 projects were appraised, 6 were not applicable and 2 were not reappraised	All projects were reappraised by August 2019

4 PMGs 2018.

5 Internal documentation provided by SPPD.

However, one senior director, one head of section and two project leads flagged concerns around the PDD development and review process. Specific issues were raised around teams perceiving the PDD appraisal process as a way to get their budget for the coming year. This point was encapsulated by one respondent, who highlighted that teams 'rush to get the PDD done with the intent of approval so that the budget will flow, and we can start over'. Further, concerns about the knock-on effect on delivery were raised when there are delays in the approval of the reappraised PDD. This issue was also highlighted in the 2018 KPMG Audit on Project Outcomes and Delivery:

> 'We noted for 2017/18 the delivery plan was approved on 5th July 2017 and the Project Delivery Document was approved on 17th August 2017. The start date of three out of five projects in our sample was 1st July 2017, hence the delay in approval of the documents caused delay in the start of the project. The primary start date for the project Meridian was 1st July 2013 but the Project Delivery Document (PDD) was approved on 10th June 2014.'

In addition, two senior directors, one head of team and one project team highlighted that there was a need for less rigidity in the process to allow more room in the annual PDD development process for flexibility to respond to areas that cannot be planned for. One respondent stated that, 'Sometimes for example a crisis could happen in the member countries, which inevitable we have to respond to, so this flexibility should be factored into every PDD.'

This review found in its analysis that the Secretariat's PMIS allows for PDDs to be 'living documents'. They can be updated at any time with support from the Secretariat's SPPD team and re-enter the appraisal and budget approval process, allowing for the modification of project design at any time during the delivery year. The observation by Secretariat staff that PDDs are inflexible may be a reflection of challenges staff encounter when engaging with the PDDs and PMIS; incorrect knowledge among staff of the flexibility of the system; or lack of capacity of some staff in using PMIS to update their PDD.

3.3 Quarterly, six-monthly and annual reviews

Findings

- Processes are in place for quarterly, six-monthly and annual reviews to assess progress against overall portfolio delivery. The rationale for a process of QPRs that focus on not just financial performance but also project delivery is sufficiently outlined in the PMGs. However, to date, the process has not been fully implemented across all divisions, which limits effectiveness. The review found that this owed in part to the delegation of the process being initiated at directorate level, with prioritisation and compliance with the process evident in some of the directorates but not all.
- There was limited evidence to show how the QPRs were systematically recorded, and how issues were escalated for management attention and action. While the introduction of a quarterly issues log is a positive initiative to strengthen the capture of actions and issues raised through the QPRs, this review found that, where a log was generated it was done so on a quarter-by-quarter basis, with no mechanism to track issues and actions over multiple quarters and no analysis of issues over more than a quarterly basis. There was also no evidence of a mechanism at the senior management level to ensure issues raised in the quarterly review were dealt with, followed up on and fed back on to the teams.
- With the new introduction of a monthly monitoring mechanism by the Deputy Secretary-General, there is potential for duplication between the quarterly and monthly monitoring and an increased burden on teams to provide management information, if the processes are not streamlined sufficiently.

Analysis

A new institutional practice of QPRs was established in 2017 to enable project-level monitoring of progress against objectives outlined in the Delivery Plan, and a review of spend to date. The QPRs built on the established practice the Finance team had been previously leading of meeting with directorates to review quarterly spend. The newly introduced process aimed at creating a joint review of portfolio and financial performance on a quarterly basis.

The Secretariat's PMGs describe QPRs as a review conducted by directors every quarter to assess the delivery progress and financial performance of each project, to allow for cross-team sharing on challenges and collaborative identification of solutions and actions to ensure delivery progress is on track or sustained.

The creation of the QPR process was led jointly by the Secretariat's SPPD and the Finance team. An issues and actions log was introduced to track progress and ensure action was taken where issues were identified.

Table 10 gives an indication of the number of QPRs where both the budget and the overall performance of the portfolio were discussed between 2017 and 2019. The review noted that a number of reviews that focused solely on financial performance took place between Q1 2017 and Q4 2019; it does not go into detail of these reviews, as the focus is only on the newly introduced QPR mechanism.

Table 10 shows that, out of a possible eight QPR windows, only three full QPRs took place that combined financial and project performance. The data reviewed showed that one directorate, the Economic, Youth & Sustainable Development (EYSD) Directorate has not held any QPRs. SPPD provides clear guidance on the QPRs through the PMGs and the Planning and Budgeting Calendar, as well as through information put up on Compass to detail the process. The PMGs advise that QPRs be 'conducted by Directors every quarter to review delivery progress and financial performance of each project, allow for cross-team sharing on challenges and collaborative identification of solutions and actions to ensure that delivery progress is on track or sustained'.

In instances where full QPRs have not taken place, quarterly finance meetings have still been occurring. This indicates that a financial review mechanism remained in place on a quarterly basis throughout the first two years of the current Strategic Plan period. This historical mechanism benefits from greater engagement by teams than does the newly introduced QPR system. Additionally, in instances where full QPRs have not taken place, SPPD has at times joined the quarterly financial meetings to encourage engagement by teams on issues of financial performance and their linking to delivery performance. Since the inception of the QPR process, SPPD and Finance have worked to develop and improve the process and its associated tools.

Findings from the recent KPMG audit (July 2019) on EBR found that quarterly review meetings were in place where Finance and SPPD discussed progress on projects. However, 'meeting minutes are not recorded which limits the ability of the Secretariat to track progress and actions clearly recorded and tracked'. While full minutes from the QPRs were not evident, there is an issues and action log that is pulled together by SPPD following each QPR meeting as a way to capture issues and actions raised. Summary documents of the issues raised

Table 10. Number of projects teams attending the quarterly performance reviews

Q1 2017/18	16 (these were from the Governance and Peace Directorate (GPD) and the Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate (TONR))
Q2 2017/18	No QPR took place
Q3 2017/18	No QPR took place
Q4 2017/18	No QPR but engagement with teams to verify annual results data was in place
Q1 2018/19	20 completed reports; 5 reports in preparation (from GPD and TONR)
Q2 2018/19	40 completed reports (from GPD and TONR)
Q3 2018/19	No QPR took place
Q4 2018/19	No QPR but engagement with teams to verify annual results data was in place

in the QPRs that took place were evident, although there was limited evidence to show how issues identified through the QPRs were addressed and dealt with at the senior management level.

Concerns were raised from internal staff that the majority of the quarterly reviews to date have been finance-focused, with no overall view taken on the overall portfolio and project delivery. However, respondents also noted that the process of aligning the finance and portfolio review process was improving. Three directors highlighted lack of a robust process to consistently monitor the overall portfolio as one of the drivers of a lack of quick identification and action around the significant underspends within the first two years of the Strategic Plan.

Internal staff referenced introduction of the new additional monthly monitoring mechanism by the Deputy Secretary-General as an effective way to monitor spend and project delivery. An analysis of this new monthly monitoring mechanism is out of scope of the MTR, as it has been initiated in year 3 of the Strategic Plan. However, adding another monitoring process, if not fully aligned with the QPR process, could be burdensome on teams in terms of the need to provide management information, and duplicative of a process that appears to be being developed and promoted by SPPD and the Finance team. The impact on staff of the introduction of another monitoring mechanism should be considered in light of this review's findings that current systems and processes are already considered overly burdensome and to affect the time staff are able to devote to project delivery.

The Strategic Plan clearly states the 'reporting of results will continue in the form of an annual report to the Board of Governors (BoG) on the performance of the Secretariat in achieving the priorities in the Strategic Plan'. The Delivery Plan for 2017/18 emphasises the drive towards more effective and consistent monitoring of the portfolio to enable an increased understanding of progress towards results. As a result, project monitoring and reporting has been strengthened to enable effective reporting to the BoG, including reporting on progress towards the annual Delivery Plan, and in turn the Strategic Plan. The Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Reporting Guidelines for Divisions 2018/19 detail the process for teams to follow to complete project reports that contribute towards the Six-Month and Annual Results Report through PMIS as a way of demonstrating progress against the annual Delivery Plan. Two comprehensive and detailed Six-Month Reports have been produced, which BoG has approved, as well as two detailed Annual Results Reports. The Annual Results Report for 2017/18 has been approved by the BoG and is publicly available on the Secretariat's website. The Annual Results Report for 2018/19 was in the process of sign-off at the time of data collection for this review.

The process for six-monthly and annual reporting is driven by SPPD in collaboration with Finance and project teams. One head of section specifically highlighted these results as an improvement in terms of communicating results and what is happening in projects to the wider organisation. However, concern was raised within project teams that the reporting process could be burdensome and could involve repetitive reporting. It can also lack a clear link with supporting improvements to project delivery where the reporting process is simply meeting the organisation's reporting requirements.

Overall monitoring of the portfolio is also covered in Section 3.5 on MEL.

3.4 Project Management Information System

Findings

- The Secretariat's PMIS is a centrally accessible comprehensive system that effectively supports the Secretariat to plan and deliver on its annual and strategic priorities. From a strategic perspective, the system is a strong tool for the Secretariat to plan and support delivery on its annual and strategic priorities through the management of PDDs that represent the portfolio of projects being delivered.
- The system allows the Secretariat to gather data that supports its RBM approach to portfolio management, including quantitative and qualitative data on the achievement of outputs, STOs and IOs by projects, along with detailed narrative information regarding project context, challenges, achievements, lessons learnt, cross-cutting themes, partnerships and innovation.
- PMIS supports data collection for various organisation-wide monitoring and reporting requirements such as QPRs, Six-Month Reports and Annual Results Reports. It can act as an audit trail of programme delivery and for evidence for achievements, as well as retaining information in a central location of historical programme delivery.
- Levels of internal frustration with the system, specifically with its usability, are significant, leading to only partial engagement from most project teams. There has been an emphasis and work to date on making the system more user-friendly, as well as beginning to align the system with CODA to make it possible to access up-to-date financial information via PMIS, but there is a clear need to improve the system further to meet users' needs and promote better engagement with the system by staff, and to fully align the system with other core corporate systems, such as CODA.

Analysis

In line with the organisational move to an RBM approach, the Strategic Plan sets out the commitment to a comprehensive PMIS to track progress across the portfolio. The drive is for it to be a systems tool to embed the results-focused approach designed to support strategic planning and delivery. It is to be compatible with corporate systems to minimise duplication and improve consistency in reporting and provide a platform for transparency, communications and information-sharing. The 2017/18 Delivery Plan specifically states:

> 'Project managers will do quarterly and annual planning and enter data into the PMIS, against which they will regularly review and report progress. This data will be used by project and programme managers to monitor, analyze and make appropriate adjustments at their levels. Aggregated performance data will be consolidated to produce portfolio reports to inform senior management decisions and external reporting to the governing bodies.'

Significant time and money was invested over the first two years of the Strategic Plan to streamline and improve PMIS, for example through simplifying some of the interfaces of the systems, such as on risk, and beginning the process of alignment with other systems, such as CODA. Further, SPDD has taken the opportunity to socialise and embed the system across teams before key reporting dates (such as the Annual Results Report) as well as providing PMIS drop-in clinics and inducting new starters to the system. These initiatives clearly show the organisational commitment to continually improve the system and socialise it across teams. Two teams recognised the work that had taken place over the two years to try and enhance PMIS and make it more user-friendly. Further, a member of the SMG noted, 'People are starting to use PMIS data for different purposes.' A project lead stated that the parts that had been simplified so far, such as risk, had been helpful.

Despite the work to enhance to PMIS to date, and the pockets of positive user feedback about the system, overall feedback from the project teams internally (eight of the eleven projects in the sample, one senior director and five SMG representatives)

was that the majority of project users did not see PMIS as a system that supports and enables delivery of the portfolio, and that it has been over-engineered for such a small organisation.

One overall frustration, raised by eight respondents, was that PMIS as a system asks for too much detailed information, and parts of it are repetitive and 'too cumbersome'. Further, respondents highlighted that PMIS lacked a user-friendly interface and was not pleasant to use, so they do not fully engage with it or input high-quality information. Teams said that they perceived PMIS as a process they had to get through because they were required to; once they have fulfilled the requirement, they do not use it again. Teams described how they used PMIS primarily as a tool to fulfil internal planning and reporting requirements. Further, teams noted what they perceived to be a limitation with PMIS in that it has problems in capturing narrative forms of information and focuses more heavily on quantitative data. PMIS does not always allow teams to capture the nuanced information of the often-complex changes teams are aiming to bring about, as these changes are often better conveyed through narrative, not through numbers.

This feedback from teams warrants further investigation. PMIS has the ability to capture a wide range of narrative or qualitative information. It includes a monitoring module, designed for use by teams to report data at quarterly, six-monthly and annual intervals. This module enables the capturing of both quantitative and qualitative information against activities, outputs, STOs and IOs. This includes quantitative data on indicator targets, and qualitative information to describe and contextualise achievements. Further areas of the monitoring module allow for the capture of narrative information regarding project context, challenges, achievements, lessons learnt, cross-cutting themes, partnerships and innovation. The module also enables staff to upload documents and evidence in support or project work, including their own drafted impact stories. Reflections by project teams that the system does not allow them to capture the nuance of their work may be linked to perceived poor usability, discouraging engagement and full utilisation of its features.

Further frustration was expressed with PMIS around the lack of full alignment with financial systems such as CODA. Staff said the systems were not fully aligned, resulting in teams having to duplicate work by going through each system separately to, for example, reconcile expenses. Two senior directors said the reason for the lack of alignment was that the systems had been developed, driven and 'owned' by individual sections, with one central and cross-cutting function, such as IT, not being brought in to utilise its systems expertise and facilitate alignment. The wider issues around systems alignment are covered in Section 3.6 on corporate processes and systems.

The issues raised by internal teams with PMIS as a system resonate with the findings from the 2017 evaluation of the last Strategic Plan:

> 'Internal frustration with the Secretariat's software systems for project planning, monitoring and reporting revolved around PMIS orientation toward corporate-level data needs (the outcome level)" and "RBM areas for improvement were identified as follows: (1) simplification and re-engineering of PMIS to better meet users' needs, including improved integration with the financial system (CODA) and software used for human resources (HR) and other operational functions.'

3.5 Monitoring, evaluation and learning

The Strategic Plan sets out how M&E will be taken forward over the four years, to ensure 'systematic collection of evidence to enable the Secretariat to monitor better, make adjustments, learn lessons and increase the changes of sustainable impact'. The Delivery Plans for 2017/18 and 2018/19 set out the annual commitment to M&E. The MEL Approach Paper outlines how M&E are interlinked cornerstones of an RBM framework and should provide a detailed assessment of the Secretariat's performance, allowing for organisational learning, growth and maturity on its results. This commitment to enhancing MEL led to the introduction or enhancement of specific MEL processes and systems in the first two years of the Strategic Plan:

- A three-tiered monitoring approach, introduced in the 2017/18 delivery year;
- External and internal programme and country evaluations, a process introduced prior to this Strategic Plan;
- Capacity-building interventions to embed evaluation principles and approaches at the project level;
- A peer review mechanism for evaluations, introduced in the 2017/18 delivery year;

- Monitoring and communication of evaluation recommendations to drive and assess utilisation of findings and learning, introduced in the 2017/18 delivery year.

The following provides the overall findings for MEL and analysis for each of these processes and systems.

Findings

- This review found clear evidence for the introduction and enhancement of core approaches and processes to support strengthened MEL in the first two years of the Strategic Plan, as well as a significant ring-fenced financial commitment through the Designated Funded for Monitoring and Evaluation (DFME) from the organisation specifically for MEL. These initiatives have resulted in MEL gaining more prominence, priority and traction within the organisation.
- Despite efforts at the central level to ensure a robust process to support and enhance project-level MEL, to date MEL has been not been embedded in projects in a systematic way. This has led to a weakness in the evidence base for projects. There is a lack of a MEL culture at the project level in the organisation, with MEL often seen as an optional add-on and not an integral part of programming. Aside from PMIS, there is a lack of developed M&E tools for the capture of project data, for example tools to support data capture during project activities.
- Processes and systems to strengthen the organisational evaluation function are evident. It is apparent that the Evaluation team is conducting or procuring services for multiple country and programmatic evaluations, which support the overall continual assessment of the portfolio. However, steps should be taken to further the evaluation function's independence and transparency.
- This review found that more emphasis was needed to create organisation-wide processes to enhance and embed learning across the organisation and within projects. Project respondents highlighted that 'learning is a new element', and there is an internal appetite to further embed learning and use it as a way to help the organisation rethink the way it does programming.

Analysis

As specified in the MEL Approach Paper, monitoring in the Secretariat is carried out at three levels: project, programme and portfolio. The Approach Paper sets out how at each level the monitoring cycle is intended to address planning and implementation of monitoring activities, as well as the assessment and utilisation of monitoring information. Monitoring information is gathered from tracking delivery and activities, financial reporting, outcome monitoring actions and stakeholder/beneficiary feedback experience. Tables 11 and 12 present analysis of the key elements of the Secretariat's MEL approach and the extent to which these functioned in the first two years of the Strategic Plan.

Analysis of the project-level monitoring mechanisms and processes in the 12 sample projects provided evidence of the link between all of the projects' results logic and the Secretariat's Delivery Plan. There was a notable lack of baseline data, and 50 per cent of the projects had issues around formulating SMART indicators. Further, while MOV were present for all projects, there was a notable lack of third-party MOV presence, leading the majority of teams to rely on internal ways of verifying results. See Annex 4 and Section 2 for further analysis on evidence. The majority of projects had MEL plans, but, as this was a new initiative, set in the 2019/20, there was little evidence of how these had been embedded. One project had a notably strong M&E framework. The majority of the projects did not have a formal review and learning mechanism in place, but could share examples of *ad hoc* but considerable learning opportunities that had arisen in the project.[6]

6 Monitoring missions covered the CFMM St Vincent and the Grenadines technical expert on maritime safety; Seychelles Blue Economy development; Meeting of the New Petroleum Producers Group in Ghana; implementation of a regional workshop on addressing money laundering/countering financing of terrorism for judges and prosecutors.

Table 11. Project-level monitoring in the first two years of the Strategic Plan

MEL approach	Analysis
A clear project rationale and results logic linked to the Secretariat's Delivery Plan	12 out of 12 sample projects had a project rationale and results logic linked to the Secretariat's Delivery Plan. See Annex 4 for specific project details.
A results framework comprising SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	6 of the 12 sample projects had SMART indicators and 6 had issues around their indicators. Baselines were not present or were limited for 9 of the 12 projects. See Annex 4 for specific project details.
Robust and sensible MOV describing the source and methodologies to be used to gather the data and evidence needed to verify the achievement of results	MOV were present for all sample projects but with weaknesses observed, particularly the lack of third-party evidence included. See Annex 4 for specific project details.
A project assumptions and risks register and risk management plan	Present in all projects reviewed.
A time-bound monitoring plan identifying roles, responsibilities and resource for monitoring	MEL plans were present for 10 of the 12 sample projects but for all projects it was clear that the MEL plans had not been fully embedded, with the exception of 1 project that had a strong M&E framework underpinning it.

Evaluation

The processes and systems underpinning the Secretariat's evaluation work are set out in the Commonwealth Secretariat Evaluation Strategy. Table 13 provides an analysis of the extent to which these functioned in the first two years of the Strategic Plan.

Embedding MEL across the organisation

The analysis above demonstrates the general and established M&E processes and systems in place at the organisational level. There are, however, less established processes and systems for learning.

Four respondents noted that there had been an increased focus on MEL in the first two years of the Strategic Plan. One project lead stated that there had been 'very positive changes in terms of evaluation', with considerably more visibility of evaluations of the previous two years. Respondents welcomed the increased focus on MEL in the first two years of the Strategic Plan in that there was a perception that the increased focus on MEL was helping keep projects and activities focused on delivery of the Strategic Plan.

Table 12. Programme-level monitoring in the first two years of the Strategic Plan

MEL approach	Analysis
Delivery Plan that sets out the priorities for delivery in each financial year as well as the strategies and targets for delivery.	Two Delivery Plans (2017/18 and 2018/19) with strategies and targets for delivery present.
SRF that sets out the indicators for each IO, with delivery year and targets as well as end of Strategic Plan targets	The in-depth project review highlighted that all projects had a logframe designed to contribute to IO indicators. Weaknesses identified included structural confusion of STO and IO indicators in some PDDs, and indicators lacking baselines and targets.
Monitoring missions, conducted as learning exercises to better understand what worked and what did not in delivery and attainment of results	7 monitoring missions were conducted in 2017/18 and 2018/2019.[6]
QPRs	See Section 3.3 on the QPR for progress in this area.

Table 13. Evaluation processes and systems in the first two years of the Strategic Plan

Evaluation system/process	Analysis
1. Independent evaluations of Secretariat's programmes that are managed by SPPD and delivered through external consultants.	1 independent evaluation (Democracy) completed and 1 underway (Economic Development) (2017/18 and 2018/19).
2. Country-focused evaluations that holistically assess the realisation of outcomes and impact of the Strategic Plan at the country level. These studies are planned for and conducted internally by the Evaluation team.	3 country-focused evaluations (Namibia, Grenada, PNG) were completed by SPPD in 2017/18 and 2018/19 and 3 are underway (Barbados, Guyana, Sierra Leone).
3. Project evaluations planned for by directorates to address formative or learning objectives, mid- or end-term reviews of project delivery, performance and results. SPPD supports project evaluations through advising on and appraising evaluation TOR, building the capacity of project team members to manage and quality control evaluations, providing technical support in executing evaluation plans and providing quality assurance for evaluation outputs.	Evaluations of the Secretariat's Hubs and Spokes programme and Debt Management work are underway. TOR have been developed for reviews of the Secretariat's Anti-Corruption work (Ghana and Guyana 2019).
4. Capacity-building interventions to embed evaluation principles and approaches at the project level.	An event 'Learning as a Leaver of Change' was run by the Evaluation team in April 2019 but no other capacity-building initiative is evident. Overall support is provided to project teams on a team-by-team basis through the MEL plan tools as a way to build capacity, and informally support to teams through help with M&E TOR and actions and quality assurance of outputs.
5. Peer reviews of evaluation to strengthen their quality and credibility.	4 draft evaluations and 1 draft evaluation peer-reviewed in the first 2 years of the Plan.
6. Monitoring and communication of evaluation recommendations to drive and assess utilisation and learning.	There is an internal evaluation recommendation implementation matrix tracking progress of evaluation recommendations and SPPD reports to the Executive Committee on the progress of implementing agreed recommendations from evaluations. Management responses and action plans have been developed for all programme evaluation studies. In April 2019, progress against evaluation findings was assessed by the Secretariat as satisfactory (green) for all studies.

Over the first two years of the Strategic Plan, there was clear commitment from the Secretariat to enhancing and further embedding MEL, as demonstrated above. This was also particularly demonstrated through the introduction of the DFME. This is a £1.4 million fund, whose establishment the BoG approved as part of the approval process for the 2018/19 Delivery Plan. Its existence and its allied policy enables project leads and directors to access ring-fenced MEL funding.

The DFME empowers directors to grant access to MEL funds for project-level monitoring. Approval for use of funds for programme- or portfolio-level monitoring sits with the Assistant Secretary-General. The policy also empowers the head of portfolio management to appraise all requests for use of MEL funds and therefore increases the visibility of MEL activities across the Secretariat. This appraisal process also ensures a level of quality assurance of MEL activities since it includes

review of alignment with the project/programme's MEL plan and the Secretariat's MEL approach, methodology and value for money.

The increased focus at an organisational level has been welcomed internally. However, there is a disconnect between the organisation-wide emphasis on embedding MEL and the emphasis on supporting project-level MEL. For project teams, MEL is perceived as secondary, not integral to delivery. Staff generally perceive MEL as something outside of the culture of the organisation.

Further factors that hinder the embedding of MEL include that project teams with small budgets find they have to choose between allocating funds to project delivery or MEL. One team said its overall budget had been reduced to £30,000 for the year, thus it felt it had to prioritise direct delivery and not MEL. There is also a lack of awareness about the DFME despite efforts by SPPD to inform staff of its existence and purpose.

Teams specifically highlighted that there was a lack of project-level MEL tools to support teams in data collection. Four heads of section and two project leads specifically pointed to a shortage of practical monitoring tools available to teams to support them to monitor their projects, leading to a significant gap in terms of teams' ability to be able to monitor and evaluate their activities. As one head of section observed:

> 'There are not enough operational tools to support teams. For example, there is no common tool to monitor ministerial meetings... there could be questions that are common across projects, that allow teams to capture the broader impact. Another example, if you are delivering a training workshop, have a tool that records demographic data, gender data on participants, changes in knowledge and then this could be correlated across the Secretariat as a whole which would give "us a common language to be able to speak to impact.'

The review team found there was in fact a tool available to monitor Ministerial Meetings. The observation above may again represent a lack of knowledge among staff of certain tools. The overall finding that the Secretariat lacks other project-level monitoring tools is supported by this review.

Further, one senior director, four SMG respondents and one project lead specifically highlighted that project-level M&E capacity needed to be enhanced within teams to really drive and embed the MEL ambition of the organisation. This is further explored in the Challenges section below.

Learning

More work is needed by the Secretariat to embed organisation-wide processes that enhance and embed learning across the organisation and within projects. This finding was highlighted by project teams, with internal respondents highlighting that 'learning is a new element' within the Secretariat. The evaluation of the previous Strategic Plan noted the challenges around embedding learning and that 'the hierarchical nature of the organisation works to inhibit lesson learning, because the organisational culture creates obstacles to open discussions and collaboration vertically among staff at various levels and horizontally across departments'.

There was interest from project teams as well as one senior director in taking learning to the next level and using the evaluation findings to 'help the organisation rethink the way it does its programmes'. Learning was highlighted in the evaluation of the last Strategic Plan as a key area: 'RBM should always have a feedback loop, whereby results-informed learning should be applied to project improvement and development of new strategies.'[7] There was recognition from one senior director that there was a need to 'institutionalise mechanisms of feedback loops where we are learning from our delivery from member feedback at different levels and not repeating some of these mistakes'.

The review also noted inconsistency in core MEL policies and guidance, with some guidance and policies referring to learning and others just to M&E. This gives further indication that learning is not fully embedded yet.

Evaluations

While it is evident that a process is in place to ensure evaluation recommendations are taken forward through the recommendation implementation matrix, the head of evaluation recognised the need to move from ticking a box that an evaluation recommendation had been implemented, to understanding what had happened as a result of that recommendation being implemented. The Secretariat's 2016 Meta Evaluation found that, 'once it [the evaluation] reaches the reporting and dissemination stage, the evaluation process becomes significantly more open for input'. However,

7 Evaluation of Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17.

throughout this review, feedback from respondents highlighted that more was needed to communicate evaluation findings across the organisation. Feedback from one head of section highlighted a tendency in the Secretariat to share the good things that come out of evaluations, and that 'we are very polite and diplomatic about the not so good things'. This sentiment was echoed in a response from one high commission that there had to be more transparency in the evaluation processes. One senior director, one high commissioner and one project lead stated that, going forward, there should be more independence and transparency in the conducting of evaluations within the Secretariat and that the Secretariat should be commissioning evaluations and not conducting them. This point was encapsulated by a respondent who stated that, 'If we cannot make evaluation an independent function, we should not do any evaluations. We should be commissioning evaluations not conducting [them].'

Summary of feedback on the developments in the Secretariat's approach to portfolio management and MEL in the first two years of the Strategic Plan

Feedback in this review found there was clear recognition internally and externally of the developments in portfolio management and MEL over the first two years of the Strategic Plan. Three respondents highlighted the support provided to teams from the beginning of the process to the end as an area that had improved. A high commissioner highlighted that the key strength of the Secretariat was now in its planning, with another two heads of section stating that there had been more structure to the planning, delivery and MEL processes, with more emphasis on performance tracking. In addition, six respondents (three of them from SPPD) stated that there had been an increased focus on results across the organisation in the past two years. A head of section highlighted specifically an increased focus on results, as well as 'assessing progress towards reaching those results. I've seen lots of things moving forward and plans to improve other processes.'

Three respondents said they had observed attempts to streamline and simplify processes to enable smoother delivery, with one head of section stating that, 'The developments in portfolio management take the organisation on a good trajectory, and help team improve what they do.' Feedback from high commissions reinforced these positive developments in portfolio management and MEL, with one high commissioner stating:

> 'I think the Secretariat in the last couple of years has done two excellent things. One is to prepare the delivery programme after the strategic plan was approved. And the delivery programme is a thing that those of us who have been civil servants know, that should be done. Once you do your strategic model, then, you know, your delivery plan. And that had been missing. But, you know, this current administration has introduced that. And I think that's one of the successes in recent years. And, the partner to that is the monitoring and evaluation plan as well, that has been established.'

This was reiterated by another high commissioner, who highlighted that, 'There have been advancements in the last 12–18 months in the Secretariat's use of RBM and MEL, which has improved the level of reporting to member countries.'

3.6 Corporate systems and processes

This review sought feedback from respondents regarding whether the Secretariat's corporate systems – namely, Human Resources (HR), Information Technology (IT) and Finance – effectively supported delivery of the Strategic Plan. During data collection, this line of inquiry resulted in a larger volume of feedback than was expected. Much of the feedback indicated high levels of frustration and described significant challenges experienced by staff in navigating systems, particularly HR and Finance, in support of project delivery.

It was beyond the scope of the TOR to undertake a detailed review of corporate systems and processes. However, the review team felt that the type of challenges that were frequently highlighted and the potential impact that these could have on delivery warranted description in this report. A summary of feedback is included in this section.

The overwhelming view from internal respondents was that key elements of the internal corporate systems and processes did not complement delivery of the Strategic Plan but instead were overly bureaucratic and difficult to navigate, and either stifled or caused significant delays to agile and quick implementation.

Findings

There was significant and noteworthy internal frustration among staff around corporate processes and systems and the impact of these on teams' ability to deliver.

Analysis

When asked to rate the strength of the overall corporate systems and processes on a scale of 1–10 (1 being very weak, 10 being very strong) four senior directors, three members of the SMC and five project leads gave an average score of 4.6 (mean), 5 (medium) and 5 (mode). There was recognition from some respondents that there had been improvements recently. However, overall, there is a high level of staff frustration with corporate systems and processes. Directors, heads of section and project leads raised serious concerns about the ability of these to support effective delivery of the Strategic Plan. Nine respondents reported how challenges with such systems and processes had affected their ability to focus on delivery and agreed that, with better systems in place, teams could have had more impact in the first two years of the Strategic Plan. One head of section summed up this concern: 'The biggest stumbling block to delivering on the Strategic Outcomes and spending the money member countries give us is our own systems internally.' Another project lead stated that, 'Our processes are our clearest blockage to achieving our outcomes.'

Key challenges

One of the most common sources of frustration among staff was the lack of alignment between, or integration of, systems. Examples include alignment of financial information between CODA (the Secretariat's finance system) and PMIS, used to plan and monitor all projects under the Strategic Plan, and lack of modern integration of finance systems with some approval processes. Another example was the lack of digitisation of the expense acquittal processes. Currently, travel acquittals are completed through a paper-based system. Given how often many Secretariat staff travel, this creates a significant administrative workload. The historic development of corporate systems in isolation, without an over-arching consideration as to how integration could improve work practices and efficiency, was cited as a key contributor to these challenges. The Secretariat is aware of these challenges, and the director of IT clearly laid out a vision for better alignment of internal systems to improve efficiency. This vision needs to be supported by adequate governance and management commitment. The strategic approach being taken by IT under the leadership of the Assistant Secretary-General is a step in the right direction.

An imbalance between compliance and efficiency was another key challenge raised. The Secretariat's system for approvals, including financial approval for procurement, travel approval, approval of PDDs and approval of recruitment, was frequently cited as causing delays to project work. Specific problems include the requirement for multiple approvals and the low thresholds for approval set in the organisation's scheme of delegation. This latter point means that a large proportion of approvals require director-level approval. These challenges become amplified when staff responsible for approvals are on duty travel or occupied with Secretariat meetings or events, and by the fact that (as described above) some Secretariat systems are still paper-based. The level of frustration these challenges cause and the lengths of delays experienced should not be underestimated. Secretariat staff described, for example, the process for approval of recruitment of a consultant as taking in some cases six weeks (note: this was simply approval for recruitment, not actual recruitment). Staff described how the number of 'people hours' consumed by approval processes had a significant impact on time spent by staff on project work.

The reviewers recognise that the Secretariat must have an adequate system of internal controls in place to ensure correct use of public funds. However, the current system appears to be overly burdensome on staff and is causing inefficiencies in project delivery. A review of the thresholds in the scheme of delegation, along with efforts to digitise approval processes, would potentially improve efficiency.

Table 14 presents further reviewer analysis, along with internal feedback regarding performance of the Secretariat's HR, IT and Finance systems.

Challenges and lessons learnt

Underpinning the findings and analysis for question 3 are some challenges that go beyond processes and systems for planning, budgeting, delivery and MEL as well as the corporate processes and systems. These challenges in part provide a further lens to understand some of the underlying factors affecting the use of, and compliance with, Secretariat processes and systems, and are significant challenges that should in themselves be noted.

Table 14. Performance of the Secretariat's HR, IT and Finance systems: analysis and internal feedback

System	Reviewer analysis	Internal feedback
Human Resources	Issues around HR processes and systems dominated the part of the KIIs and FGDs on corporate systems and processes. It was striking to observe the level of frustration that arose about HR within the first two years of the Strategic Plan. The majority of issues raised stemmed from legacy issues, and the review team was made aware of significant work currently underway to turn around the historical HR issues and their legacies. Five staff specifically mentioned the appointment of a new director of HR as a positive step, seen as 'cleaning up' and turning around the historical HR issues and their legacies. It is clear the director is currently leading extensive work to ensure the basics are in place, getting the building blocks right by focusing on improvements to data management, modernisation of policy and systems and more consistency and application of policy and systems. To get these blocks in place, a significant amount of foundational work has to take place, and it is clear solid work is underway to do this. Enhanced communication is needed to all staff to ensure they are aware of the positive steps currently being taken in HR to improve service delivery.	**Recruitment and procurement** were cited as a major concern. Respondents emphasised the length of recruitment processes, with four project teams saying delays in recruitment were a key driver of the underspends in the 2017/18 and 2018/19 budget and the cause of 'incredibly lengthy delays to implementation'. Particular frustration was cited around procurement, and the number of approvals required to procure consultancy services. One team talked of having to obtain signatures from 12 different people internally to have a procurement approved. One head of section said that a process that relied on such a large number of people to input or sign off had too many points of failure: if key people are away the system comes to a halt and delivery stalls. Staff cited the **performance appraisal process** as an area of concern, perceiving that it carried little weight. Staff go through the process if mandated by their manager and get given a rating, but no action is linked to the rating. Seven respondents raised particular concerns about the **level of support they received from HR** to support them to deliver. The clear feedback from teams was that they received very little consistent and constructive support, to the extent that one team highlighted that it was in discussions to try to find a way to internalise the contract management of its advisers within the team. One head of section, two project leads and one adviser described a lack of a **strategic approach** to HR. Frustrations include lack of a talent acquisition strategy and a skills development strategy to help identify what immediate skills are needed, as well as planning for the skills that will be needed in future. A further concern was around the lack of succession plans. Project staff felt that the current rotation system in particular, as well as the overall lack of a talent acquisition strategy, was weakening the organisation through loss of talent and institutional memory. Recommendations from respondents for improving HR processes and systems included ensuring HR acts as an internal service provider in support of project delivery, strengthening of the appraisal process, developing HR data management systems, better communication and engagement with staff and greater transparency and clarity regarding contracts and contract extensions.
Information Technology	Minimal reflections were shared from interviewees about IT. There were singular issues raised, but overall the opinion is that IT processes, systems and staff are supportive of the Secretariat's work.	There was a perception that IT is moving in the right direction. One head of section said there had been 'a massive investment the infrastructure, which obviously people don't really see. And I think there has been a real focus on getting that right before investing in, you know, things like Office 365, which has been great. And getting that transparency and agility of working is really good.' Singular issues raised included lack of training for new software systems (e.g. One Drive) and strong concerns about the strength of the organisation's IT security. It is noted that, during the time of this review, IT moved from being a corporate function to a strategic function, now under the management of the Assistant Secretary-General.

(*Continued*)

Table 14. Performance of the Secretariat's HR, IT and Finance systems: analysis and internal feedback (*Continued*)

System	Reviewer analysis	Internal feedback
Finance	The review elicited clear internal frustration with Finance processes and systems, especially around travel. From a user perspective, these processes and systems are perceived to be slowing teams down and hindering delivery, even though from an organisational perspective there are strong internal controls in place. This is highlighted through the continual process of external KPMG audits. The review indicates that there is a lack of balance between controls and efficiency. Travel represents a large area of expenditure for the Secretariat. In 2017/18, total travel costs were £3.9 million. Being an international organisation, there is high frequency of travel. Therefore, it is imperative that a smooth and easy-to-use system and process is in place to enable agile delivery and avoid project staff spending excessive time on travel-related administration, while maintaining the right amount of internal controls. A KPMG audit in April 2019 observed the following in relation to travel costs: the current process of reviewing acquittals is labour-intensive and is undertaken by a small team of people. While it is important to remind staff undertaking reviews of acquittals of the requirements of the Secretariat's Travel and Expenses Policy, a more sustained improvement would be achieved by continuing with the roll-out of the travel and expense tool. Simplification of finance processes, in particular those related to travel and approvals, will give significant burden relief to teams and free up time for delivery of project work.	**Financial processes and systems:** Respondents highlighted specific concerns with financial systems and processes, describing them as out-dated, slow and cumbersome. Concerns included lack of balance between transparency and facilitation. The head of finance acknowledged that the right systems were not in place to make the business easier, efficient and modern. The review team learned that a proposal had been in place for some time to upgrade the Secretariat's financial systems but that this had not moved forward owing to lack of resources and approval. **Financial approval process:** Approval of expenditure was raised in terms of both the scheme of delegation to approve expenditure and the time it takes to get approvals. Project teams felt the thresholds for approval set in the scheme of delegation were not proportional to the size of budget some teams were managing. To put this into context, project leads may manage budgets of over £1 million but find their individual threshold for financial approval is set at £5,000, meaning they have to go to director level for sign-off. This creates bottlenecks and delays. The Secretariat has a responsibility to ensure there is adequate segregation of duties, a point the head of finance made clear during this review, but it does appear that there is a lack of balance again between compliance and efficiency. **Travel systems and processes:** Eight respondents highlighted the travel system as a point of frustration, in particular its paper-based nature, especially concerning travel acquittals, where there are points of duplication. Users have to input excessive amounts of time to complete the process. Related to the above point on approval thresholds, concerns were raised around the impact of delays in the approval process for travel requests. These were cited as a reason for the Secretariat paying higher than necessary airfares: in the time between identification of a flight, and approvals being given, a particular quote may expire. The head of finance highlighted that this paper-based system was putting a huge burden on the Finance team as well. There were clear calls from all staff to upgrade the system to allow staff to submit their acquittals digitally, rather than in paper format (including hard copy receipts). The head of finance, as well as one other head of section, said that the Secretariat had attempted to tender for a travel and expense tool, but had been unsuccessful as the travel and expense systems could not accommodate the Daily Subsistence Allowance process the Secretariat used. It should be acknowledged that the Finance team has been looking at how to simplify the process and aims to try to tender again for a travel and expense tool. **Alignment of systems:** Concerns were raised around the duplication of work between PMIS and the CODA system. As described earlier, the Secretariat would benefit from greater integration of these two systems to enable combined financial and performance monitoring via PMIS.

Siloed working and working that is not joined up

The Strategic Plan describes how a Programme Coordination and Coherence mechanism will be established:

> 'A number of programme evaluations and recent operational reviews have highlighted the growing need for better coordination and coherence... A coordinated approach to programming and delivery will enable the Secretariat to increase its effectiveness. Better coordination will reduce overlap and duplication, and hence improve results.'

Despite this commitment, the review identified siloed working and a lack of joined-up working as a key obstacle for teams. The KPMG audit on corporate governance (2018) specifically highlighted that the monthly meetings of the SMG aimed to facilitate joint working and address cross-cutting issues and to promote cross-organisational working and prevent 'siloed' thinking. However, the audit found there was little discussion of such matters evident in the minutes. Respondents to this review highlighted that siloed working was so embedded across the Secretariat that it had become part of the culture of the organisation. This concern concurs with the findings of the Strategic Plan Evaluation (2017), the Meta Evaluation (2016) and the Democracy Evaluation (2017).

Siloed working: key messages from previous Secretariat evaluations

The 2016 Meta Evaluation found 'the need for the Secretariat to strengthen coordination, both internally and externally, comes up repeatedly across the entire period studied – from the first evaluation in the set, to the last'. It was also highlighted as a high-frequency recommendation theme in the Universalia study of 2003. Recommendations focused on improving coordination within the Secretariat itself include the following:

- 'Take a Secretariat-wide joined-up approach to improve effectiveness and maximise impact through inter-divisional coordination' (*Evaluation of Assistance to Member States in Legislative Drafting*, 2015);
- 'Initiate and encourage, via formal mechanisms, inter-divisional and interunit collaboration in the development and implementation of gender equality, women's empowerment and gender-mainstreaming initiatives' (*End Term Review of Gender Plan of Action*, 2016).

The Democracy evaluation found that 'joined-up working' should be better linked to line management and management decision-making and not left to individual initiative, and that, 'It is common knowledge among staff that the Secretariat has been struggling with the lack of cooperation between various fields of work. This has been the case for many years and has been highlighted as a priority by the Secretary-General.' There has been progress at the top levels (with joint meetings of senior staff), but, as one senior staff member mentioned, 'Much of the work has not been "joined up". Divisions were doing good work but in silos.' Another staff member said, 'There has been little information sharing, mostly on an interpersonal basis, sometimes with staff working in a particular country but not being aware of the work of other colleagues in the same country.'

While processes and systems are not the sole cause, or indeed the magic bullet, they do have a part to play. For example, at the project level, teams recognised that, by creating more opportunities for engagement and collaboration with teams through the planning and budgeting process, 'Programming could be strengthened.' Further, the way the current portfolio is structured, on a project-by-project basis, is an identified drivers of siloed working across the organisation. As one head of section observed, 'The current process was designed for silo working and it reinforces silo working.' This was reiterated across project teams, as well as by a senior director. Budgeting and planning was identified as a process that could be used to intentionally bring teams together, by turning it around to incentivise joint working around common core programmes not individual projects.

Capacity to support planning, budgeting, delivery and MEL

One senior director, four SMG respondents and two project leads highlighted that specialist technical advisers may be required to be leading technical experts as well as sometimes to cover administrative, project management and M&E duties. The review team noted there was no consistent support structure: some teams have administrative support staff for travel bookings, etc.; others have project manager-type roles that support PMIS use; in yet others, technical advisers are expected to take on all these functions. In teams where there are no support structures, a significant amount of advisers' time is spent on administration or overall project management, taking time away from delivery. A senior director highlighted that one

key weakness of the organisation related to the blurred lines between technical staff and their ability to manage projects:

> 'Lawyers should not be project managers; they're not geared that way. The technical officers that you see now, they think in the way of technical people, because that's how it is. Do they know how to manage a project? No. So I see that as a real problem, that you have people who think differently, try to run a project and manage it.'

Ensuring adequate specialist capacity at a team level is imperative going forward if project management and particularly MEL are going to be enhanced at project level.

Communication and information requests

Underlying some of the frustrations with the internal processes and systems for planning, budgeting, delivery and MEL were challenges concerning corporate communication. Several teams felt they had not been made aware of changes to internal systems (e.g. elements of work attempting to align PMIS and CODA). The review also found that departments responsible for such systems (SPPD and Finance) were continually working to communicate with teams regarding these corporate systems, and changes to their use or functionality. The mismatch between these views may potentially come from blockages in the internal communications systems, for example emails not being cascaded down through directorates and teams, or lack of uptake of assistance offered to teams.

Further, three project teams and two heads of section highlighted specific frustrations with the huge amount of information requested from teams for annual planning, budgeting, delivery and MEL systems and processes. They were not aware of who actually used the information and there is no central feedback once the information is submitted. Senior respondents, acknowledging that this was an issue, suggested more 'town hall meetings', to enable better communication about how information is used and provide an opportunity to share some of the emerging results and energise staff through.

A number of key lessons learnt were identified that are interrelated with the findings and analysis for Section 3.

Underspends: Within the first two years of the Strategic Plan, there were notable underspends, with staff vacancies contributing significantly to these. In this review, three particular areas were identified that could help reduce the level of underspends:

- If the PDD reappraisal process happens without delay (as it did in the 2019/20 planning round), enabling teams to access their new budget quickly and continue implementation;
- If funds from staff vacancies are identified quickly and either used to bring in interim cover or repurposed;
- If organisational monitoring structures – such as the QPRs or the newly introduced monthly monitoring process – are fully adhered to by all divisions, and identification and decisions are made quickly about possible underspends.

Enabling a supportive environment for delivery

This review found a strong emphasis on controls and upward accountability. This was evident through, for example, the high level of requests from teams for information to report back to the BoG or auditors. While controls and upward accountability are absolutely imperative, the balance has to be struck between meeting these requirements and not overly burdening teams with requests for information and overly bureaucratic processes and systems for teams to comply with and stifling delivery. The Secretariat has such an extensive mandate, with wide-ranging projects aiming to make systemic and long-lasting changes, that it is imperative that the internal processes, systems and controls do not slow the organisation down. This includes limiting the process burden on teams and, going forward, looking at how the balance can be struck between the need for controls and upward accountability and supporting teams to be agile in their delivery.

Opportunities for staff to raise issues

It was striking throughout this review how teams saw this review as an opportunity to raise issues and air frustrations, as it appeared there was a lack of other internal opportunities for staff to do this. A key lesson learnt from the first two years of the

Strategic Plan is to provide channels –for example all staff meetings, open staff forums, skip-level meetings or anonymous suggestion boxes for staff to use to raise issues and for management to deal with quickly and effectively.

Learn from others, innovate and adapt

Some of the findings in Chapter 3 highlight the need for a refreshed look at a particular process or system. Where the Secretariat has been able to look to what other external agencies are doing, as opposed to starting from scratch internally, this has saved significant time and resources. Many international agencies have cracked, for example, embedding of MEL throughout projects, and the Secretariat could benefit from looking externally first at different MEL models and processes, then innovating and adapting these models. The travel system is another particular example, highlighted through this review, where the organisation could look to peer organisations, such as the World Bank, which has developed an innovative and mobile-friendly travel system that could be replicated.

In the first two years of the Strategic Plan, the introduction or enhancement of core processes and systems took place around planning, budgeting, portfolio monitoring and MEL. Through these processes and systems, there has been an increased ability to bind delivery to the yearly Delivery Plans and subsequently the Strategic Plan. The Secretariat is moving in the right direction in getting the internal processes and systems for planning, budgeting, portfolio monitoring and MEL right, for instance introducing the comprehensive Delivery Plan and Matrix and making advancements to strengthen the processes of project monitoring. However, some internal processes and systems in these areas are overly burdensome and bureaucratic and require simplification - for example PMIS. Where systems and processes are overly burdensome on teams, or hard to use, this is slowing delivery of the Strategic Plan. While some of the process burden could be alleviated through moving to biennial planning in the next Strategic Plan (see Chapter 4), this is by no means the solution. Key to such a move is a need to take a refreshed look at the underpinning systems and processes and ensure the balance is right between ensuring upward accountability to the BoG, having adequate controls in place and critically enabling, not hindering, projects to deliver.

Recommendations for primary evaluation question 3

Recommendation 3.1 on planning and budgeting

- Integrate capacity mapping of HR needs into the Secretariat's planning with budgeting cycles. Enhance communications from the senior director's group in collaboration with the planning and budgeting divisions to increase transparency around budgeting processes and project budget allocations.
- In the new Strategic Plan, move to streamlined biennial planning and budgeting and align planning and budgeting processes with the CHOGM cycle so that planning and budgeting takes place shortly after CHOGM, enabling new CHOGM mandates to be effectively taken on board during planning and budgeting.

Recommendation 3.3 on quarterly, six-monthly and annual review

- Institutionalise a practice for QPRs across all directorates and establish mechanisms to escalate issues to senior management for resolution. To limit overlap and duplication of effort, ensure a clear link to the new Deputy Secretary-General-led Project Management Committee.

Recommendations 3.4 on PMIS

- Utilise in-house IT expertise to fully integrate PMIS with other core systems (such as CODA) and improve the usability of PMIS by developing a new user-friendly interface.

Recommendation 3.5 on MEL

- Enhance project-level MEL support, by developing a suite of M&E tools that teams can use to gather data from project activities and enhancing M&E capacity at a team level. Develop a learning strategy, to complement the MEL approach, that defines how the Secretariat will learn from its work in member countries and integrate this learning into projects. Take further steps in the evaluation function to increase its independence by expanding the remit of the peer review panel to include engagement across the whole of the evaluation process.

Recommendation 3.6 on corporate systems

- Conduct a specific review of all corporate processes and systems and their effectiveness to support delivery of the Strategic Plan.

4. The extent to which objectives of the Strategic Plan align with the current global development agenda and environment

The global development agenda, in the form of the SDGs, provides a powerful plan of action to solve the toughest global challenges by 2030. The 17 SDGs represent a shared roadmap and framework for governments and national and international organisations as well as the private sector across the globe. Alignment with these goals, especially for an *inter-governmental* organisation such as the Secretariat, is critical. This section presents findings and analysis as to whether the Secretariat's Strategic Plan aligns with the SDGs. It also reviews alignment with a sample of 10 regional and peer organisations' strategies.

Findings

This review found clear overall alignment between the goals of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan and the SDGs. This is not surprising, since the Strategic Plan is broad and covers a wide variety of development areas, and the SDGs were designed as a global development framework. Regardless of this, the analysis undertaken during this MTR demonstrates that the aim of developing a Strategic Plan responsive to the SDGs was successful. Further, analysis of the sample of 10 regional and peer organisation strategies shows strong alignment of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan with these.

Analysis

The Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21 covers five strategic areas of work: **Democracy, Public Institutions, Youth and Social Development, Economic Development and Small and Other Vulnerable States.** Each of these has a defined Strategic Outcome, and IOs to be realised for member countries. There are also three cross-cutting outcomes.

Alignment of the Strategic Plan with the SDGs

Senior Secretariat staff highlighted that the current Strategic Plan had been developed with a focus on the SDGs, and with the intention of being responsive to the SDG agenda and supporting member countries in working towards the Goals.

Other broader examples of alignment between the Secretariat's work and the SDGs include the Secretariat's Innovation for Sustainable Development Awards, launched in 2018, which award innovative ideas, developed by people working in government, business or civil society in member countries, that have the potential to support the country in achieving the SDGs, while advancing values in the Commonwealth Charter.[1] In addition, the Secretariat's Award for Excellence in SDG Implementation was launched in 2019. This award asks member countries to voluntarily submit data on their progress towards SDG targets.[2] Secretariat staff commented that the creation of the awards had ignited interest among member countries in how they evidenced progress towards the SDGs and a certain amount of positive competitiveness between them to demonstrate individual progress.

Analysis of the Strategic Plan and the SDGs shows clear overall alignment. This finding was corroborated by feedback from partners as part of this review. For example, work in the area of Youth

1 https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/secretary-general-launches-innovation-awards-sustainable-development
2 https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/blog-sdg-implementation-has-best-become-enemy-better

Table 15. Alignment of the Strategic Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals

Pillar 1: Democracy and Pillar 2: Public Institutions One example under this pillar is the Anti-Corruption work of the Secretariat, which is directly building and strengthening Anti-Corruption Agencies' capacity to tackle corruption.	**Aligns with SDG 16**
Pillar 3: Youth and Social Development One example under this pillar is the Secretariat's Maximising the Development Potential of Sport, whose PDD highlights how use of sport-based policy and programming can contribute to achievement of a number of the SDGs, including 3, 4, 10, 11, 16 and 17. The Secretariat is leading the development of a set of Model Indicators and data collection tools for measuring the contribution of physical education, physical activity and sport to prioritised SDGs and targets. The Secretariat is considered a thought leader in this area of work based on it having led a number of previous international efforts in this area.	**Aligns with SDGs 3, 4 and 5**
Pillar 4: Economic Development One example under this pillar is the Blue Charter Action Groups, focusing their work on achievement of the SDG targets, and close work between the Blue Charter team and the UN Special Envoy for SDG 14.	**Aligns with SDGs 7, 8 and 14**
Pillar 5: Small and Other Vulnerable States One example under this pillar is the CFAH, which is supporting member countries, especially those that are particularly vulnerable to the long-term impacts of climate change, to deal with the impacts of climate change by building their capacity towards resilience	**Aligns with SDG 10 and 13**

is contributing to SDG 8, and highlights the inherent value in the Secretariat's own frameworks such as the YDI, which was described as 'the benchmark for progress made in youth empowerment'. This observation validates commentary by the Secretariat's own staff regarding the impact of the CYP on the global development agenda. Senior Secretariat staff highlighted how there was no youth-specific SDG and that in their experience the CYP had had a greater impact at the regional level and national level, for example influencing decisions made by regional organisations such as the AU to develop an African YDI. Other partners, such as UNDP, commended the work of the Secretariat in supporting member country achievement of the SDGs and made recommendations on how to strengthen this support, including by expanding links with academic organisations and universities in member countries. Secretariat staff also observed that, despite the work of the Secretariat in contributing to member countries' achievement of the SDGs, it should continually challenge itself to ensure its work is aligned with national targets that contribute towards these global goals. They urged a stronger focus on understanding national-level targets and indicators for development and strengthening the role of the Secretariat in contributing towards and measuring these.

An analysis was performed of 10 the strategies of significant regional bodies and peer organisations to review alignment between these and the Secretariat's Strategic Plan:

- **African Development Bank:** A strategy mapping process, undertaken during partnership discussions between the Secretariat and AfDB, highlights a number of areas of strategic alignment, including governance and accountability; skills development for youth; reducing gender

disparities and gender-based violence; inclusive economic growth; natural resource management; natural asset management; and adaptation to and mitigation of climate risks.[3]

- **African Union:** Comparison of the goals and priority areas of the AU's Agenda 2063 document with the Secretariat's Strategic Plan highlights strategic alignment in the strategic goals of education; health; economic development; blue economy; climate resilience; democracy, human rights and rule of law; and gender equality and youth empowerment.[4]
- **Southern African Development Community:** SADC's Strategy 2015–2020 and the Secretariat's current Strategic Plan cohere in economic development and human development, including in areas of health and gender.[5]
- **Caribbean Community:** CARICOM is an alliance of 15 countries, of which 12 are Commonwealth member countries. CARICOM and the Secretariat's strategies show coherence in the following areas: economic growth; trade; debt management; and reduced environmental vulnerability.[6]
- **The African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States Strategy 2014-2020:** The ACP strategy shows coherence with that of the Secretariat in the following areas: health; education; innovation; and adaptation to and mitigation of climate change and trade.
- **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Paris Agreement 2015:** The 2015 Paris Climate Agreement calls for all parties to the agreement, which includes Commonwealth member countries, to engage in climate change adaptation processes, and for the provision of continuous and enhanced international support to developing country parties in adaptation and mitigation activities. The Secretariat's Strategic Plan demonstrates strong coherence with this aim through pillar 4, and in particular the work of the CFAH.
- **Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development:** In the Pacific Roadmap for Sustainable Development 2015, the Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Taskforce highlights that, 'It is imperative that the region's sustainable development story includes the transboundary issues of climate change (and disaster risk management) and oceans (including integrated oceans management).' The targets under pillar 5 of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan and the focus on SIDS resonate with this call.
- **Pacific Community Strategic Plan 2016–2020:** The goals of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan align with a number of goals of the Pacific Community Strategy 2016–2020, including the promotion of human rights, gender equality and opportunities for young people; improving education quality; improving multi-sectoral responses to NCDs; strengthening sustainable management of natural resources; trade, including improved pathways to international markets; and improved responses to climate change.
- **Asian Development Bank Strategy 2030:** ADB, in its Strategy 2030 document, highlights the need for work in Asian member countries on improving education and training opportunities, improving health and tackling climate change, including committing 75 per cent of its operations to supporting climate change adaptation and mitigation and providing climate finance. These priorities align with a number of priorities in the Secretariat's current Strategic Plan.
- **World Economic Forum Trends in Global Risk Landscape 2019:** In its 2019 Global Risk Report, WEF rated data fraud and theft, and cyber-attacks, fourth and fifth, respectively, on its list of global risks rated by likelihood. There is a correlation between these risks and the Secretariat's choice to work on Cyber Security and elimination of corruption. Also rated are extreme weather events, and failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation, as its highest and second highest global risks in terms of likelihood. In terms of impact, in 2019 WEF rated failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation as the risk with the second highest potential impact. Failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation was considered

3 African Development Bank Strategy 2013–2022.
4 https://au.int/agenda2063/goals
5 https://www.sadc.int/files/5415/2109/8240/SADC_Revised_RISDP_2015–2020.pdf
6 CARICOM Strategic Plan 2015–2019, p. 11.

the risk with the highest impact in 2016. In 2018 and 2019, extreme weather events were considered the second highest potential risk. There is strong correlation between these risks, and in particular their potential impact for SIDS, and Strategic Outcome 5 of the Secretariat's current Strategic Plan 'strengthened resilience of small and other vulnerable states, including adaptation and mitigation against climate change'.

4.1 Shifts in the global development agenda in the first two years of the Strategic Plan

The first two years of the current Strategic Plan represented a significant point in time when substantial external and global shifts manifested or arose. While a single organisation has little direct control over the external shifts, it is imperative to remain aware and abreast of these. This review therefore sought to identify the key external shifts, and to ascertain the Secretariat's responsiveness to these.

Findings

This review found that, in the first two years of the strategic period, two significant external shifts had direct implications for the Secretariat: climate change and global threats to multilateralism. The Secretariat's work is already responsive to the threat of climate change through the work of the CFAH. As a multilateral organisation with broad membership, it is well placed to champion the benefits of multilateralism.

Analysis

Climate change

Climate change is seen as *the* critical big global shift in the past two years, entering the global narrative and priorities. Respondents highlighted the increasing impact of climate change on member countries and the need to continue to integrate responsiveness to climate change in Secretariat programming. Climate change is notable in peer organisations' strategies, and in the risks highlighted by WEF in particular as having the greatest potential impact (e.g. extreme weather events and failure of climate change mitigation and adaptation). In the past few years, Commonwealth member countries have experienced severe impact from extreme weather (including Vanuatu 2015, Dominica 2017, The Bahamas 2019).

Examples of how Secretariat project areas are already seeing the impacts of climate change include those of the Education team, which highlighted how recent natural disasters in the Pacific and the Caribbean had heightened the team and member countries' focus on the impact of climate change on the progress of education initiatives, how prevention of climate change could be included in the curriculum and how school infrastructure could be adapted to be more resilient. Discussion had begun on whether the impact of climate change on member countries such as The Bahamas should be on the agenda for the next Education Ministers Action Group meeting.

In addition, the Commonwealth Improved Access to Climate Finance project is a key project in this area supporting member countries, especially small and vulnerable states, to access climate finance. As described in Chapter 2, the model this project has adopted, by placing specialist climate finance advisers in country to support governments to access climate finance, not only is innovative in itself but also acts as a platform for the Secretariat to establish and build a climate focus around.

Risks to multilateralism

Secretariat respondents also highlighted risks to multilateralism as a significant risk that had emerged in the previous two years, and one that is of relevance to the Secretariat because it is by definition an organisation that supports multilateralism. In the period of the first two years of the Strategic Plan, it is clear that multilateralism came under increasing pressure in several dimensions: a mounting trade war, stalled global trade talks, the questioning of global institutions by some prominent countries and stagnating of aid flows to LDCs, all underpinned by the rise in nationalism. The Forum for the Future's Future for Sustainability Report 2019 highlights that global institutions whose legitimacy rests on decades of painstaking work are being undermined, and international relations based on trade and cooperation are being threatened.

The Commonwealth membership spans five continents and a range of faiths and includes countries with some of the highest and lowest populations in the world. Its membership covers countries from all income brackets.

The organisation is well placed to offer platforms and convening to discuss and agree on solutions to global problems that no nation acting alone can solve, and to champion the benefits of multilateralism.

4.2 Secretariat strengths and weaknesses in supporting the delivery of the global development agenda

This review sought feedback on the Secretariat's strengths and weaknesses in supporting the delivery of the global development agenda. Table 16 summarises the key themes emerging from Secretariat members of staff, member countries and partners.

4.3 The role of the Secretariat in supporting member countries in delivering the global development agenda for the period 2020–2030

Findings

Going forward, the Secretariat should consider the benefits that may come from reducing the portfolio and bringing the organisation together through programmes and not projects, as a way to enhance collaboration and be smart with its modest, reduced budget. The review found not only interest from internal staff in consulting widely in the development of a new strategy, but also an imperative, through analysing significant regional bodies and peer organisations' strategies, to understand deeply who is doing what and where the overlaps exist. Further, this review found that better communication at all levels both internally and externally was needed to enable a smooth transition from one Strategic Plan to the next. Finally, the organisation needs to ensure that its internal systems and processes facilitate the organisation's work by supporting and empowering staff, rather than diluting the organisation's potential by being a hindrance to staff.

Analysis

Reduce the portfolio and go forward together through programmes not projects

One project lead stated that the success of the Secretariat going forward would lie in its ability to 'see the synergies and where they can be leveraged and go forward together'. Feedback from respondents included the suggestion to consider reducing the current portfolio and identifying a small set of core programmes where the Secretariat could really add value. To enhance the impact, and make better use of a small budget, there is a need to move from individual projects to core programmes. As one high commissioner highlighted, the Secretariat should find niche areas and products that are catalytic to countries' development. 'Pull the minds together' and use core programmes as the driver to unite the organisation in bringing about collective change.

Learn, adapt and innovate

As part of the development of the new Strategic Plan, respondents were clear on the need to consult widely to understand the real niche areas of the Secretariat and to identify its true *raison d'être*, and then align focus around that. Feedback also highlighted that adequate time for internal consultation and input must be factored into development of the new Strategic Plan, to bring the organisation together around a shared vision. Further, in moving from one Strategic Plan to another, careful management of ending, and communicating the end of, any on-going projects in member countries is needed. This was also highlighted in the Secretariat's Grenada evaluation, which specifically highlighted that any transition should entail clear consideration of on-going projects and the implications of stopping these. Respondents also identified a need to innovate going forward, given the reducing funding base. One senior director highlighted a need for the Secretariat to 'identify where countries are doing something innovatively, or with fewer resources, or is doing something is a more sustainable way. Then truly become the thought leaders for member countries, learn from these innovations and replicate.'

Table 16. Strengths of the Secretariat in supporting the global development agenda and areas to enhance

Stakeholder view	Strengths	Areas to enhance
Member countries	• Convening and consensus-building power • Diverse and unique membership with all member countries having an equal say • Trusted relationship between inter-governmental organisations in the Commonwealth • Small states • Alignment with member country priorities and being a 'neutral' organisation means governments are often keener to listen • The diverse and unique nature of the membership can be very useful in pushing the global development agenda • 'Value' space on the work on Rule of Law, Human Rights and Democracy. It has expertise in these areas and is stronger in these areas than other international organisations • Climate finance, Blue Charter and maritime boundary work is very positive and has strong benefits for member countries • A platform for frank conversation on priority areas among members, ahead of negotiations in other fora	• More strategic thinking and an understanding of which of the Commonwealth intergovernmental organisations (Commonwealth Secretariat, Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning) should lead on specific areas. Secretariat strengths lie in convening work • Improve collaboration between the Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning and the Foundation • Flexibility to respond to evolving member country needs • Enhance CFTC and other sources of direct funding • Delays in implementation as well as responding to member countries' requests • Consult more widely to help inform initiatives and to ensure these are seen through to completion. Also, remain focused on agreed priorities to avoid overstretch • Do more to further promote intra-Commonwealth trade in line with on-going changes in the global multilateral trade system and commitments taken by Heads of Government at the last two CHOGMs (in 2015 and 2018) • Through regular review and assessment, always aim to focus on actions that add value, and be aware of the areas that sit best with other organisations, such as global health and education

(*Continued*)

Table 16. Strengths of the Secretariat in supporting the global development agenda and areas to enhance (*Continued*)

Stakeholder view	Strengths	Areas to enhance
Partners	• Unique reach to Commonwealth countries means its partners can reach a unique group of UN Member States Support to the agendas of the region, seems to be a sensible and equitable approach. • Quality of technical staff • Relationships and work in country as well as experience in implementing the CFAH • Its training component and a recognised organisation that is well known for its commitments to equality and justice • Capacity training • Effective engagement	• Meeting deadlines and ensuring the Secretariat has the staff resources to execute agreed functions • Ensuring partners are informed of future projects well ahead of time permits, particularly governments, to ease implementation • Encourage greater involvement of government officials at conception and in initial phases of the project • Engagement of the PICTs in the activities of the Secretariat so cross-pollination and exchange of ideas can take place
Secretariat staff	• Each member country has one voice together in the Commonwealth family, and working on the principle of consensus we have a strong mandate to go forward • Respect for member countries • The Commonwealth's values and Charter • Seen as a trusted adviser • Being the voice of small island states • Facilitating access to international policy mechanisms and ability to bring member countries together and facilitate exchange of best practice between regions • Convening power and access to heads of 53 member countries	• Collaboration • Can play more of an instrumental role in profiling climate change issues for small island states • Foster solidarity on issues to force global change, e.g. on climate change, resource mobilisation and gender-based violence • Brokering partnerships and relationships on behalf of member countries that do not have the capacity • Being more realistic in the scope of what the organisation is aiming to achieve: 'Don't try to do everything.' Identify the core strengths and 'just stay in that lane' • Strengthen communication of Commonwealth missions and role • Support member countries to develop more sustainable trading policies and consider the carbon footprint of exports • Continue the valuable work being undertaken in support LIC/SIDS member countries to access climate finance, and also strengthen resilience-building for MICs that do not qualify for the same levels of assistance • Enhance the ability to effectively respond to various requests for technical assistance

Collaboration

One senior director highlighted that, 'The issues of the world are complex. They are not prompted by the boundaries of a particular country. So, you have to be collaborative.' This was a key theme underlining the findings from this review : one of the Secretariat's key global strengths lies in its ability to convene and enhance collaboration between and with member countries. One high commissioner encapsulated this: 'The Secretariat's most valuable function in supporting member countries is in the provision of a strategic framework for collaboration, including through facilitation of meetings.' To strengthen delivery going forward, this collaborative strength has to be enhanced, at national level but also, critically, at the regional level, where respondents wanted to 'feel like they belong'. Critically, this collaborative strength has to be matched internally within the Secretariat, by overcoming the culture of siloed working that currently exists internally.

Voice of small island states and the impact of climate change

The role the Secretariat plays as the global voice of small islands states clearly emerged as a key strength. One high commissioner explicitly stated that, 'The convening power of the Secretariat could be used to rally around supporting the development needs of member countries, notably small and vulnerable states.' The Secretariat could also position itself as the nexus to enable sharing of best practices among member countries/South–South cooperation. Respondents highlighted that this focus should be amplified going forward, particularly deepening the understanding of how climate change is impacting SIDS in particular and positioning the Secretariat as the champion for these states.

A potential niche area for the Commonwealth Secretariat

Through this review, a suggested potential niche area for the Secretariat going forward was around support to member countries in the preparation and delivery of their Voluntary National Reviews of the SDGs. It was noted that very few organisations were supporting member countries in this area, and it could play to the Secretariat's strengths to develop this as a future area of support.

Get the foundations in place to support delivery

The organisation's underpinning processes and systems, particularly on the corporate side, represent a fundamental and critical enabler of successful delivery going forward. As outlined in Chapter 3, there is a clear need to reduce the burden on teams, with less emphasis on the bureaucratic process and systems that have been slowing teams down. In addition to streamlining processes and systems, moving to biennial budgeting and planning in the Strategic Plan would significantly alleviate the burden on teams. Further, respondents highlighted a need for the new Strategic Plan to invest time in getting the programming framework right, so there are more measurable outcomes, clearer targets and more consistency and clarity around indicators and baselines. To be able to convey the overall results for the reduced set of core programmes, have a set of standardised indictors for all programmes, potentially aligned with the SDG indicators developed centrally. This is so, as one head of section stated, the organisation is 'measuring the same things in the same area in the same way'. This is likely to help overcome the current portfolio aggregation issues the Secretariat is facing.

Recommendations for primary evaluation question 4

- In the development of the new Strategic Plan, continue alignment with the SDGs.
- Continue to enhance focus on adaptation to and mitigation against climate change.

Annex 1: Evaluation questions

The MTR sought to answer the following evaluation questions:

1. **To what extent have Commonwealth member countries benefited from the Secretariat's work between 2017 and 2019 and what results have been realised?**

   Sub-question 1.1: How effective has the Secretariat's delivery model[1] been?

   Sub-question 1.2: To what extent were identified results influenced by the Secretariat intervention?

   Sub-question 1.3: What have been the intended and unintended outcomes of the Secretariat's interventions?

2. **To what extent are projects implemented by the Secretariat able to demonstrate evidence-based progress towards achievement of the IOs targeted in the SRF?**

   Sub-question 2.1: How are partnerships being effectively leveraged to support the achievement of IOs?

   Sub-question 2.2: Are CHOGM mandates on track for achievement, and how does the addition of CHOGM mandates impact on delivery of IOs?

3. **With respect to planning, delivery and MEL, how efficient and effective are the internal systems and processes of the Secretariat in supporting delivery of the strategic plan and CHOGM mandates?**

   Sub-question: 3.1 How well do the planning and budgeting processes of the Secretariat align with the requirements of delivering the Strategic Plan?

   Sub-question 3.2: What were the advantages and limitations of the Secretariat's project funding and operational support model?

   Sub-question 3.3: How have developments to the Secretariat's approach to portfolio management and MEL affected delivery of the Strategic Plan?

   Sub-question 3.4: How well do corporate systems (HR, IT, Finance) and processes support effective delivery of the Strategic Plan?

4. **To what extent are the objectives of the Strategic Plan aligned with the current global development agenda and environment?**

   Sub-question 4.1: Since the development of the current Strategic Plan, what shifts have taken place in the current global development agenda and do the current strategic objectives and programme approach remain responsive to these shifts?

1 The methods employed by projects to achieve targeted outcomes, for example placement of LTTA, advocacy, capacity-building, etc.

Annex 2: List of respondents to KIIs, FGDs and survey

Secretariat staff	Organisation	Position	Methodology
Dr Arjoon Suddhoo	Commonwealth Secretariat	Deputy Secretary-General	KII
Dr Nabeel Goheer	Commonwealth Secretariat	Assistant Secretary-General	KII
Pam McLaren	Commonwealth Secretariat	Acting Senior Director EYSD	KII
Katalaina Sapolu	Commonwealth Secretariat	Senior Director GPD	KII
Paulo Kautoke	Commonwealth Secretariat	Senior Director TONR	Survey
Theresa Haskins	Commonwealth Secretariat	HRFM Director	KII
Kimberly Cliff	Commonwealth Secretariat	Head of Finance Management and Information	KII
Carina Wangwe	Commonwealth Secretariat	Head of Information Technology Services	KII
Diana Copper	Commonwealth Secretariat	Head of Portfolio Management	KII
Mark Albon	Commonwealth Secretariat	Head of CVE	FGD
Anna Sherburn	Commonwealth Secretariat	Deputy Head of CVE	KII
Assan Ali	Commonwealth Secretariat	Capacity-Building Officer CVE	FGD
Oliver Dudfield	Commonwealth Secretariat	Head of SDP	KII
Michael Armstrong	Commonwealth Secretariat	Sport and the SDGs Project Officer	FGD
Saurabh Mishra	Commonwealth Secretariat	Assistant Programmes Office SDP	FGD
Nicholas Hardman-Mountford	Commonwealth Secretariat	Head of Oceans and Natural Resources	KII
Jeff Ardron	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser Ocean Governance	FGD
Alison Swadling	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser Ocean Governance	FGD
Layne Robinson	Commonwealth Secretariat	Head of Social Policy Development	KII
Sushil Ram	Commonwealth Secretariat	Programme Manager EYSD	FGD
Stephen Sowa	Commonwealth Secretariat	Programme Officer	FGD
Adanna Ehirim	Commonwealth Secretariat	Assistant Programme Officer	FGD
Puja Bajad	Commonwealth Secretariat	Consultant	FGD
Sharon Ng'etich	Commonwealth Secretariat	Assistant Technical Research Officer	FGD
Ahmed Ali	Commonwealth Secretariat	Research Officer	FGD
Bilal Anwar	Commonwealth Secretariat	CFAH	KII
Andy Schofield	Commonwealth Secretariat	Research Officer	FGD
Gary Rhoda	Commonwealth Secretariat	Human Rights Officer	FGD
Justin Pettit	Commonwealth Secretariat	Human Rights Officer	FGD
Steve Onwuasoanya	Commonwealth Secretariat	Human Rights Adviser	FGD
Sumedha Ekanayake	Commonwealth Secretariat	Human Rights Adviser	FGD

Secretariat staff	Organisation	Position	Methodology
Abhik Sen	Commonwealth Secretariat	Head of Innovation and Partnerships	KII
Claire Wolstenholme	Commonwealth Secretariat	Head of Events and Protocol	KII
Yvonne Apea Mensah	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser and Head of Africa	KII
Roger Koranteng	Commonwealth Secretariat	Interim Adviser and Head of Public Sector Governance	KII
Linford Andrews	Commonwealth Secretariat	Political Division	KII
Martin Kasirye	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser and Head of Electoral Support	KII
Clara Cole	Commonwealth Secretariat	Political Adviser	FGD
Andrew Bains	Commonwealth Secretariat	Programme Officer	FGD
Jonathon Milligan	Commonwealth Secretariat	Programme Officer	FGD
Sonali Campion	Commonwealth Secretariat	Programme Officer	FGD
Amelia Kinahoi Siamomua	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser and Head of Gender	KII
Jennifer Namgyal	Commonwealth Secretariat	Gender Adviser	FGD
Kemi Ogunsanya	Commonwealth Secretariat	Gender Adviser	FGD
Evelyn Pedersen	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser and Head of Evaluation	KII
Katherine Marshall Kissoon	Commonwealth Secretariat	RBM Officer	KII
Sujeevan Perera	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser and Acting Head of Trade Competitiveness	KII
Opeyemi Abebe	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser	FGD
Yinka Bandele	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser	KII
Nasir Kazmi	Commonwealth Secretariat	Education Adviser	KII
Amina Osman	Commonwealth Secretariat	Education Adviser	KII
Samer Zahar	Commonwealth Secretariat	Budget Management Specialist	KII
Travis Mitchell	Commonwealth Secretariat	Adviser and Head, Economic Policy and Small States	KII
SMG staff members	Commonwealth Secretariat	4 respondents from 10 invited to participate in a survey	Survey

Independents			
Patrick Spaven	Independent M&E consultant		KII

Partners			
Balaji Venkataraman	Commonwealth of Learning	Vice-President	KII
Anne Therese Gallagher	Commonwealth Foundation	Director-General	KII
Craig Beresford	CARICOM	Director	KII
Richard Lynch	Ministry of National Security, Trinidad and Tobago	Deputy Director of International Affairs	Survey
Vyana Sharma	Ministry of Attorney General & Legal Affairs, Trinidad and Tobago	Head, Anti-Terrorism Unit,	Survey
Goyayi Goyayi	Tanzania National Counter Terrorism Centre	Coordinator	Survey
Thomas Samuel	Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia	Director of Research, Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter Terrorism	Survey
Bomki Aimé Mbiydzenyuy	Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education, Cameroon	Senior Youth and Action Counsellor	Survey
Mirabelle Lukong	Ministry of External Relations, Cameroon	Department of Commonwealth Relations	Survey
Beatrice Duncan	UN Women	Rule of Law Adviser (Justice and Constitutions) and focal point on indigenous issues	Survey
Oliver Steeds	Nekton	CEO	Survey
Pauline Vaskou	Bloomberg Philanthropies		Survey
Dr Faye Taylor	ACU		Survey
Caroline Ott	Rocky Mountain Institute	Manager	Survey
Prof. Mahmood Yakubu	Independent National Electoral Commission, Nigeria	Chairman	Survey
Alieu Momarr Njai	Independent Electoral Commission, The Gambia	Chairman	Survey
Mohamed N'fah-Alie Conteh	National Electoral Commission, Sierra Leone	Chief Electoral Commissioner/ Chairperson	Survey
Justice Sardar Muhammad Raza Khan	Election Commission of Pakistan	Chief Election Commissioner	Survey
Josephine Tamai	Election & Boundaries Department, Belize	Chief Elections Officer	Survey
Joseph Cain	Office of the Electoral Commissioner, Nauru	Electoral Commissioner	Survey
Patilius Gamato	Electoral Commission, PNG	Electoral Commissioner	Survey
Mose Saitala	Electoral Commission, Solomon Islands	Electoral Commissioner	Survey
Marc Limon	Universal Rights Group	Executive Director	Survey

Partners			
Adeline Dumoulin	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK Branch	Head of Modern Slavery Project	Survey
Pablo Stansbery	UNICEF	Early Childhood Development Advisor	Survey
Dr. Marcellus Taylor	Ministry of Education, The Bahamas	Director of Education	Survey
Beniam Gebrezghi	UNDP	Programme Specialist	Survey
Ms Samidha Garg	Commonwealth Teachers Group and National Education Union/NUT, UK	Principal International Relation	Survey

High Commissioners			
Elizabeth Stephens	High Commission of Canada	Political Officer	KII
Ms Winnie A Kiap	High Commission of PNG	High Commissioner	KII
Chi Hsia FOO	High Commission of Singapore	Singapore	KII
Various		5 responses from 50 high commissions invited to engage	Survey

Annex 3: Sampling criteria for project sample

Primary funding source (defined as the largest contributing fund to a project's budget)	A minimum of one and a maximum of three projects selected from each of the following primary funding sources: • ComSec • CFTC • CYP fund • EBR
CHOGM mandates	Inclusion of two projects where IOs are responsive to CHOGM mandates, or where project design has been adapted to include CHOGM mandates
Delivery mechanism	Sample to include representation of the different delivery modalities employed by the Secretariat in the delivery of support to member countries, including: • Advocacy • Technical assistance Delivery by an institution hosted in a member country. At least one project to be selected from the following: • CFAH • Small States Centre of Excellence • CAACC Partnerships: sample to include examples of projects implemented in partnership with the following types of organisations: • Commonwealth organisations (Commonwealth Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning) • Commonwealth accredited organisations • Academic organisations • International or regional development partners
Project performance (according to data submitted for the 2018/19 Annual Results Report submitted on the Secretariat's PMIS	A representative sample of projects internally rated through PMIS as • Not satisfactory • Satisfactory • Fairly satisfactory • Highly satisfactory
Cross-cutting themes	At least one project to be selected from the three cross-cutting themes included in the Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21

Annex 4: In-depth project reviews

This annex describes the detailed findings from the 12 in-depth project reviews included in the MTR data analysis. The data from these reviews were utilised primarily to answer question 2 of the MTR: 'To what extent are projects implemented by the Secretariat able to demonstrate evidence-based progress towards achievement of the IOs targeted in the SRF?' The in-depth reviews therefore focused on the achievement of outcome-level changes and the available evidence base for these.

For each in-depth review, the following analysis took place:

- Review of the PDD and Logical Framework to understand the project model, the STOs and IOs targeted by the project and the indicators in use to measure outcome progress;
- Review of data reported for the project on the Secretariat's PMIS to understand progress to date;
- An FGD with the project team to interrogate the project model used; identify outcomes achieved (with reference to the Secretariat's Results Chain and Definitions); interrogate the link between the project and the Secretariat's Strategic Plan and SRF; understand the evidence base used to demonstrate project achievements; understand MEL processes and systems in place on the project; understand context and challenges; gather information on partnerships engaged by the project; and gather information on funding and financial performance;
- A review of the evidence base for outcome-level achievements through review of evidence held on PMIS, and other evidence provided by the project team during the review. This allowed for comparison of progress reported for STO and IO vs. the evidence available for this progress;
- Triangulation of evidence for the same outcome(s) from different sources. The review team aimed to see if the same outcome could be evidenced from internal sources such as Secretariat documents and from external sources, for example member country documents/letters/reports and third-party sources such as non-Secretariat media reports or evidence from civil society.

Each in-depth project review is summarised below, using a consistent reporting format.

Election Observation and Strengthening Electoral Processes (YPCWG1006)

Division: POL

Strategic Outcomes that the project contributes to: 1.3 Greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles

1. Project model

The purpose of this project is to deploy international observers to lend authority to the electoral process; strengthen the capacity of key electoral institutions and stakeholders managing and/or engaged in the electoral process through a systematic and co-ordinated programme of activities framed around the electoral cycle approach; and address the political dynamics of an election through integrated political initiatives (including through the Secretary-General's Good Offices).

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	1.3.5 Strengthened capacity with election management bodies to effectively manage and deliver electoral processes in targeted member countries 1.3.6 Member countries adopt and implement good electoral principles and practice in their conduct of elections 1.3.9 Member countries engaged in electoral process reform	1.3 Member countries conduct fair, inclusive and credible elections There are two indicators for this IO
Progress reported to date	**1.3.5** No. of targeted member countries reforming their electoral management systems and processes, **target 3, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results reported on PMIS:* Pakistan's implantation of a significant number of recommendations Malawi has strengthened its voter registration and results management systems and improved training of polling officials. St Vincent and the Grenadines: The technical expert deployed was able to meet with a number of national stakeholders, in particular the Election Commission, and set forth 5 proposals aimed at addressing key challenges identified during this mission and in previous fact-finding missions. The Gambia: The consultancy is now underway in Q1 2019/20 but the evidence of change in behaviour was present in Q3 and Q4 2018/19. Given the lack of reform under the previous administration, the request for technical assistance was itself a significant action. *Review summary:* Out of the examples given, evidence was available to show implementation of Secretariat recommendations in Pakistan, through the Electoral Act and Election Regulations 2017.	**1.3** Number of member countries benefiting from the Secretariat's election management programme whose elections are judged to be transparent, credible and inclusive, **target 10, stated as fair progress** *Results reported on PMIS:* Over the 2 years of the Strategic Plan, a total of 15 electoral events are observed; 57 per cent of countries met the criteria. *Review summary:* There are data available to show that these 15 electoral events took place, and that the Secretariat played varying roles in these. Statements from leaders were provided as a form of evidence, as well as COG reports. However, the aim of the overall IO is so high 'member countries conduct fair, inclusive elections', it is challenging to ascertain the link between the Secretariat intervention and the IO being achieved. **1.3** Number of member countries implementing COG recommendations, **target 3, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results reported on PMIS:* A number of countries show evidence of having undertaken reforms that addressed recommendations made in previous COG reports, including Malawi and Solomon Islands

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	While there is clear evidence of the Secretariat's engagement in elections, internal reporting the Secretariat had actually strengthened Malawi's voter registration and results management or improved the training of polling officials. In St Vincent and the Grenadines, following the election in 2015, there was a request from the Government for technical assistance to build its capacity to conduct elections; the adviser has been deployed and provided proposals on (i) a public relation initiative, (ii) a voter education programme and (iii) youth engagement with the voter registration process. However, there is no evidence to show that these proposals had been accepted by end Q4 2018. In addition, a process of electoral reform has been initiated in Solomon Islands, and a new Electoral Act has been passed, with the Hon. Sato Kilman Lituvanu, Chair of the observer group and former Prime Minister of Vanuatu stating that some of the recommendations submitted by previous COGs had been accepted and implemented as part of the country's electoral reforms." **1.3.6** No. of targeted members states that adopt and implement good electoral practices, **target 3, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results reported on PMIS:* Cameroon: Following conclusion of the forum, Elections Cameroon made a number of suggestions of areas in which it would like to receive further technical assistance from the Secretariat. A request was received from the Sri Lankan Election Commission to translate and publish the Election Management Compendium in Sinhalese, and to distribute this to district and division election officials ahead of the forthcoming election. This is evidence of the added value of the Secretariat's knowledge products for election management bodies. In Malawi, 87 officers were trained in political leadership, the electoral legal framework, effective political campaign outreach and conflict sensitivity, including violence against women in elections. *Review summary:* Cameroon: Further technical assistance requests have been made, but no evidence is available to show actual adoption and implementation.	Pakistan implemented a significant number of recommendations as evidenced in the Electoral Act and Election Regulations 2017. *Review summary:* The team has an internal table to show what COG recommendations have been implemented, and what has happened in each country as a result of the COG recommendations. Therefore, it is evident that there is a mechanism in place to track the COG recommendations, in line with the full electoral cycle approach. However, potential issues around what changes can actually be attributed to the Secretariat are apparent for these two indicators. The team itself highlighted the challenges with measuring the indicators for IO-level change as the overall outcome is at such a high level.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	Sri Lanka: While it is positive to note the request for translation of materials, there is no evidence available to show that these have been adopted and implemented as yet. **1.3.9** No of targeted member states that have identified, prioritised and/or planned for electoral processes reforms, **target 4, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results reported on PMIS:* Solomon Islands: 2019 COG Report noted that a number of recommendations made in the 2014 COG Report had been addressed. In addition, the Solomon Islands Electoral Commission has agreed to host the forthcoming Commonwealth Elections Professionals meeting. Malawi vote-buying: In the 2014 COG Report, observers noted and addressed allegations of vote-buying and 'handouts'. Ahead of the May 2019 Tripartite Elections, Malawi adopted a new Political Parties Act, addressing the issue. Malawi voter registration: 2014 COG Media and Campaign Environment: In January 2018, the ComSec Communications Division worked with national stakeholders to design and publish the 'Broadcast and Print Media Toolkit for the Implementation of the Media Code of Conduct for Reporting Tripartite Elections 2019 in Malawi'. 62 media outlets and other stakeholders signed the Code of Conduct, including the Election Commission. Maldives: In the 2019 COG Report, the country appeared to have made progress on some recommendations. Nigeria: The 2019 COG consisted of 18 observers in total. The COG found that voting and counting processes were in the end transparent. *Review summary:* Data were available to show Solomon Islands and Malawi had identified, prioritised and/or planned for electoral processes reforms; limited data available for Malawi and Nigeria.	

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
Evidence	From PMIS the following is available: • COG reports • BTORs • Post-election engagement reports • Technical assistance requests • Observer Handbook • MEL tool • Six-monthly report From the FGD and KIIs, the following is stated as evidence: • COG reports • BTORs • Statements from leaders • Statements from electoral commissions • Findings from pre-electoral missions • Statements by electoral commissioners • Invitations to observe an election • Internal COG recommendation progress log • Any policy changes, changes in laws as a result of intervention	

PDD YPCWG1006 has a range of STO and two IO indicators being tracked, with the PDD target rating as fair progress/target met or exceeded for the STOs and IOs.

The evidence base for this project is minimal but, taking into account the highly political and diplomatic nature of the work under this steam, evidence collection is more problematic (for example, 'You cannot simply send a survey to a COG'). However, more could be done to build a solid evidence base for this project, and to gather third-party evidence to triangulate the impact of the Secretariat's work. Currently, most evidence for the achievements reported is in the form of member country acknowledgement of Secretariat support. There is a clear need for more nuanced evidence and bespoke MEL tools, particularly around supporting the team to develop sensitive evidence collection tools so as to be able to show what impact the programme is actually having. Further, there are challenges with actually being able to measure the higher-level changes, as well as what actual changes can be attributed to the Secretariat around the IO-level indicators, because they are at such a high level of change.

There are examples of COG recommendations being implemented (see above), as well as of elections team returning to a country to ascertain what has happened as a result of COG recommendations, but limited capacity within the team combined with the decreasing budget means taking a whole electoral cycle approach has been challenging.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Comments
Clear project rationale and results linked to Strategic Plan	Yes	There is a clear project rationale with clear links to the Strategic Plan
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	Yes	The majority of the indicators follow the SMART principles, all baselines are set at 0 and there are clear results statements
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence	In part	Observer reports National policy changes Consultant reports COG reports News articles
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	Yes	MEL plan available, but limited information from the project team in this area
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget (4%)	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	Limited	No evidence found

4. Funding & expenditure (data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
ComSec	1,261,775	776,732	354,484	15,532
CFTC	822,000	563,846	29,298	8,095

5. Project staffing

Number of staff committed to project for 2017/18	Actual number of positions filled in 2017/18	Number of project staff budgeted for in 2018/19	Actual number of budgeted positions filled in 2018/19
3 established posts (head of section, adviser and executive officer)	3	3 established posts (head of section, adviser and executive officer); 2 projectised posts (Commonwealth Electoral Network (CEN) officer and programme officer)	3 2 projectised posts (CEN Officer and Programme Officer)

6. Integration of CHOGM mandates

The project is implementing a CHOGM mandate.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this Project Review Report for Elections

- KIIs and FGDs
- BTORs
- MEL plan
- Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Results Report (2018-2019) Annex A
- Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Results Report (2017-2018)
- Commonwealth Secretariat Democracy Evaluation 2018
- Evaluation of the Democracy programme
- Namibia country evaluation
- Commonwealth Secretariat Six-Month Report 2018
- Leaders statements (emails submitted as evidence from team)
- COG reports
- Post-election engagement reports

Countering Violent Extremism Programme (CVE) (YOCWG1047)

Division: SGO

Strategic Outcomes that the project contributes to: Greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles, 1

1. Project model

The CVE Unit's programme of works covers four different areas with the aim of strengthening mechanisms to counter violent extremism in member countries and ultimately to encourage strong democracy, rule of law, the promotion and protection of human rights and respect for diversity.

1. In-depth technical assistance to four countries to improve their understanding of national CVE gaps and strengths, and to help implement effective policy and programming;
2. Support to CSOs to strengthen their CVE capacity and their networks with the aim of encouraging positive collaboration with Government and building resilient communities;
3. Capacity-building and awareness-raising activities and workshops to improve member countries' ability to deal with violent extremism in all forms;
4. Research, communications and campaigns to advance pan-Commonwealth understanding of CVE.

The model is focused on building government capability and capacity to do this work on its own. In each case, the priorities are defined with Government in collaboration with CSOs. Each project is designed in response to priorities and needs set by the member country.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	1.4.1 Targeted member countries are reporting enhanced understanding of their national CVE gaps and strengths and are taking steps to implement CVE programming 4 indicators for this STO 1.4.2 Grassroots and civil society have an increased CVE capacity, youth networks are strengthened and government–civil society relations are improved 4 indicators for this STO 1.4.3 Member countries reporting an enhanced awareness of CVE and increased capacity to deal with violent extremism in all its forms 2 indicators for this STO 1.4.4 The Commonwealth is established as a credible actor and contributor on CVE among its member countries and globally 2 indicators for this STO 1.4.5 Improved project performance 2 indicators for this STO	This PDD has 1 IO 1.4 Strengthened mechanisms of civil paths to peace in member countries to counter violent extremism 2 indicators for this IO

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
Progress reported to date	**1.4.1** Share of beneficiary member countries that report satisfaction with the in-depth technical support received to strengthen their CVE systems/processes/mechanisms, **target 7, stated as met or exceeded** *Results reported to date on PMIS:* 100% of countries receiving in-depth technical assistance expressed satisfaction with the support and believed this was increasing their national capacity to prevent and counter violent extremism. *Review summary:* The 10 countries that have received technical support from the CVE Unit are Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ghana, Guyana, Jamaica, Malaysia, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Trinidad and Tobago. The Unit is measuring satisfaction with this support through participant feedback (via post-workshop surveys) and formal or informal correspondence with beneficiary member countries (via CVE Steering Committee, bilateral meetings with ministers or senior staff). Monitoring of anecdotal evidence is provided by working-level contacts in member countries or via other high commissions or international agencies. Through this review, third-party evidence was available from two of the project partners, reinforcing this high satisfaction rate, with the respondent from Trinidad and Tobago stating the CVE Unit was invaluable in the type of work it conducted. **1.4.1** Share of beneficiary member countries reporting improved knowledge of CVE best practices, **target 7, stated as met or exceeded** *Results reported to date on PMIS:* 100% of countries receiving in-depth technical assistance expressed satisfaction with the support received and believed this was increasing their national capacity to prevent and counter violent extremism. *Review summary:* Through this review, verification was available for the interventions in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Jamaica, Tanzania and Trinidad and Tobago that would have improved knowledge of CVE best practices. A report to the CVE donors stated that, '100% of awareness raising activities resulted in increased participant awareness of violent extremism and commitment to act against violent extremism.'	**1.3** Number of targeted member countries implementing new or improved mechanisms, policies or programmes to counter violent extremism, **target 7, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results reported to date on PMIS:* All 4 of the first-wave countries receiving assistance – Bangladesh, Cameroon, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago - have made policy commitments and taken action to implement new CVE measures. E.g., in Trinidad and Tobago, the Unit has encouraged and supported multi-agency co-operation on CVE. Over 2018/19, multi-sectoral approaches to CVE were strengthened, with the establishment of the Nightingale taskforce (working on return and reintegration of foreign fighters and their families). There is also strong evidence of multi-agency co-operation through observed communications and groups. *Review summary:* While solid progress is evident for these 4 countries in making substantive steps towards implementing new or improved mechanisms, policies or programmes, no country as yet is in the implementation stage. **1.3** Indictor measuring number of CSOs/ youth networks implementing new or improved mechanisms, policies or programmes to counter violent extremism, **target 20, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results reported to date on PMIS:* In the 2 years since the CVE Unit was established, the Secretariat has worked to improve relations within and between Government and civil society in support of outcomes on preventing and countering violent extremism.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
	Data were not available to show what interventions there had been in the other two countries. **1.4.1** Share of beneficiary member countries incorporating CVE research into National Action Plans (NAPs), **target 5, stated as met or exceeded** *Results reported to date on PMIS:* Bangladesh, Cameroon, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Trinidad and Tobago all demonstrated evidence of considering research in shaping NAP and project design or active engagement with relevant researchers. *Review summary:* Data are available to show that Bangladesh, Cameroon, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Trinidad and Tobago are *considering* the incorporation of CVE research into NAPs. **1.4.1** Number of member countries benefiting from in-depth technical support to strengthen their CVE systems/ processes/mechanisms, **target 7, stated as met or exceeded** *Results reported to date on PMIS:* Beneficiary states defined as Bangladesh, Cameroon, Jamaica, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago. Also received positive measures of performance from second tranche: Guyana, Kenya, Malaysia, Mozambique, Sri Lanka. *Review summary:* Data show support to these 10 countries, and partner feedback from 2 of these countries was highly positive about the technical assistance provided. **1.4.2** Share of participating grassroots and CSOs reporting an increased capacity to run CVE programmes, **target 20, stated as met or exceeded** *Results reported to date on PMIS:* 90 - see report to donors and post-workshop surveys for activity-related feedback. *Review summary:* The donor report states this result; however, there is no other third-party source to corroborate this. **1.4.2** Number of workshop participants from youth networks that are reporting that their capacity to operate regionally is increased and their network strengthened, **target 40, stated as met or exceeded**	From a low baseline, where there is low level of CSO engagement on CVE in Commonwealth countries and lack of observed co-ordination between Governments and CSOs, the CVE Unit has been working with select member countries to build the capacity of CSOs to work on this issue and to build the foundations to co-operate. Through activities delivered by the CVE Unit in 2018/19, CSOs have demonstrated greater engagement on CVE issues and provided input on CVE activities within communities in pilot countries. In addition, CSOs are engaging more frequently with Governments on CVE policies/issues. The Secretariat has been assisting member countries to collaborate with CSOs to agree on a basis for future co-operation on CVE projects. In Trinidad and Tobago, Government and CSOs increasingly recognise the benefits of collaboration. The Unit has delivered activities for CSOs, and evaluation of these activities, and follow-up monitoring to record the practical contribution that trained CSO participants have made in having input into CVE activities. For example, participants in the imam training course have delivered a co-ordinated programme of sermons to spread a consistent message, led a project to better empower women to participate in dialogue and decision-making about CVE and established a new CSO to deal specifically with the social needs of returning foreign terrorist fighters. The Secretariat has been working with ministers and senior officials in the Government to create a policy exchange. There are increased instances of Government/ community collaboration, and there is an emerging dialogue around how to institutionalise this into frameworks that institutionalise collaboration – especially in relation to the return and reintegration of foreign terrorist fighters.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
	Results reported to date on PMIS: A key cross-regional youth engagement forum was the Commonwealth Youth Dialogue Conference. 88% of the 70 participants reported a large or very great increase in their understanding about the importance of human rights and dialogue for increasing resilience to violent extremism. *Review summary:* Internal reporting data are available to show this result, but again there is no other third-party source to corroborate it. **1.4.2** Number of post-workshop alternative messaging campaigns launched, **target 10, stated as fair progress** *Results reported to date on PMIS:* Spread Love (Cameroon), Faith in the Commonwealth (Cameroon), No Hate Speech (London), Trinidad and Tobago Imams' Friday Prayer Sermons, Trinidad and Tobago Imams' Media Appearances, Youth Engage and Dialogue campaigns in Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka *Review summary:* Third-party web-based sources available to verify 3/4 of campaigns	In Cameroon, there is evidence of Government actively engaging youth networks formed through Secretariat activities (including 'no hate speech', Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network and Faith in the Commonwealth). Cameroonian youth and government workers have worked together to create the Yaoundé Declaration on the Role of Youth and Women in countering and preventing violent extremism, which sets out a proposed basis for future cooperation on CVE. However, while there is enthusiasm and engagement, co-ordination remains *ad hoc*. Youth engagement is strong, but more needs to be done to leverage this to achieve systemic capability. In Tanzania, the Government has established Haki na Usalama Forum. This is a coalition of stakeholders that allows civil society and the police to cooperate on CVE, community policing and other matters. The head of the Tanzania police personally requested the forum to conduct more advocacy on community policing to prevent violent extremism. The Unit has directly observed that the Forum is the first place the police go for inputs from civil society on policing matters (such as police legislation). Building the resiliency of the Forum and, over time, increasing the range of voices that contribute to the debate will be vital so that it is sustainable. In Bangladesh, the Unit has had good engagement with youth organisations and CSOs through the Commonwealth Youth Dialogue Conference on CVE, Faith in the Commonwealth and the Digital Khichuri Challenge: Youth Solutions to CVE. The Government has been supportive of this youth engagement. Graduates of the Commonwealth Youth Dialogue Conference delivered widely attended CVE awareness-raising lectures at universities in Bangladesh and are striving to facilitate trusting relationships between youth and the police.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
Evidence	From the PDD, the following is available: • Participant feedback (collated via post-workshop surveys), • Formal or informal correspondence with beneficiary member countries (via the CVE Steering Committee, bilateral meetings with ministers or senior staff) • Staff anecdotal evidence provided by working-level contacts within member countries or transmitted via other high commissions or international agencies From the FGD and KIIs, a broad range of evidence sources were raised, adding to the above evidence sources: • Surveys to measure training participants learnings and self-perceptions • Data on how information is moving between agencies • The extent to which agencies want to participate	

PDD YOCWG1047 has a broad range of STO and IO indicators being tracked, with the PDD target rating the majority as target met or exceeded for STOs and IOs.

In discussions, the team pointed to 70-80 per cent progress towards reaching their IO. The team discussed the high-level nature of the overall outcome, and that the steps it was taking to reach that outcome relied on a slow step-by-step process in collaboration with Government and partners to build capacity. Results in this space will take time to mature. However, the project is making strong steps towards meeting its STOs and IOs.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Comments
Clear project rationale and results linked to the Strategic Plan*	Yes	There is a clear project rationale with clear links to the Strategic Plan
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	Yes	Indicators are SMART, all baselines are set to zero, clear targets and results statements
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence	Yes	The log frame lists robust and sensible MOV and source documents. MEL could be strengthened by gathering a greater number of these
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	Yes	A strong M&E framework that underpins this project
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget (4%)	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	Learning mechanisms	Examples of learning include the CVE Unit delivering a practitioner workshop where officials from Trinidad and Tobago worked with expert practitioners from the Kenyan and UK Governments on the legal and programme responses needed to manage return and reintegration

4. Funding & expenditure (data sourced from vSecretariat's finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
CVE	No Budget	644,000	1,349,000	1,127,000

5. Project staffing

This section was designed to compare staff numbers in the team with staff numbers budgeted for. Information was requested from the team but was not forthcoming before data collection closed.

6. Partnership

In pursuit of the goals and objectives outlined above, the Unit has established key relationships with a broad range of partners including the UN (UNDP, UNCTO, CTED, UNODC, UNCTITF, UNESCO), Hedeyah, GCTF, GCCS and CARICOM IMPACS, as well as a broad range of CSOs working in the space. The Unit has also sought to leverage its relationships internally within the organisation by partnering with the Youth, Education and Office of Civil and Criminal Justice Reform teams to deliver CVE-specific and relevant projects to as wide an audience as possible. The Unit has further cooperated with Commonwealth associated organisations such as ACU and the Royal Commonwealth Society to support projects with CVE related material and inputs.

7. Integration of CHOGM mandates

This project is responding to a 2015/2018 CHOGM mandate.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this Project Review Report for Countering Violent Extremism Programme (YOCWG1047)

- KIIs and FGDs
- BTORs
- Annual Results Report 2017-2018 and 2018-2019
- April 2017: The Commonwealth CVE Strategy
- July 2018: The Commonwealth CVE Unit 2017/18 Implementation Report
- September 2018: Letter to the Commonwealth Secretariat from CVE Unit Donors – containing feedback on performance
- May 2019: CVE Unit Submission to the UK FCO Annual Review of Counter Terrorism Expenditure
- July 2019: The Commonwealth CVE Unit 2018/19 Implementation Report

Improved and Constructive Engagement with the UN UPR (YRAFR1016)

Division: Human Rights Unit

Strategic Outcomes that the project contributes to: 2. More effective, efficient and equitable public governance

1. Project model

Under this project the Secretariat's HRU works in three main ways to deliver support to member countries:

1. Monitoring and review of the UN UPR process to identify Commonwealth member countries that will be subject to review in a given delivery year and using this knowledge to approach member countries to offer technical assistance;
2. Accepting requests from member countries for support in meeting the requirements of the UN UPR process;
3. Prioritising support to small island states and in particular those not represented in Geneva.

Through these methods the project aims to:

- Support member countries to engage constructively and impactfully with the UPR mechanism and process;
- Assist member countries to set up and train national monitoring mechanisms for follow-up and implementation of international obligations;
- Provide technical assistance for implementation of accepted recommendations at the national level.

The project also includes work at the pan-Commonwealth level.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	2.1.1 Member countries engage constructively with international human rights mechanisms 2.1.2 Improved ability of parliamentarians to address strategic human rights issues 2.1.3 Capacity of member countries' national institutions strengthened to effectively address selected priority human rights issues of salience in the Commonwealth 2.1.4 Increased visibility of the Secretariat in the mechanisms and informal groupings in Geneva, and its advocacy messages on priority human rights issues	2.1. Human rights promoted and protected, and participation in the UN's UPR process improved
Progress reported to date	2.1.1 **Two indicators reported as target met or exceeded in 2019:** Target engagement of 2 member countries, with progress reported as 8. Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Vanuatu assessed as having improved participation in the UN UPR. These three member countries along with The Gambia and Grenada are reported as having themselves indicated that they are better able to participate in international human rights mechanisms. Tonga and Tuvalu reported in 2018. 2.1.2 **Three indicators, 2 of which are assessed as target met or exceeded in 2019:** Support to parliamentarians and parliamentary human rights groups, and one rated as poor progress or deterioration for support to parliamentary committees/caucuses. Progress figures support the rating.	2.1 Improved and constructive engagement with the UN UPR Indicators: *Number of targeted member countries effectively engaging with international human rights mechanisms*: Target met or exceeded **Target: 5, progress: 8** Belize, Dominica, The Gambia, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Vanuatu, reported in 2019. Tonga and Tuvalu reported in 2018. *Number of supported member states effectively addressing human rights issues in line with recommendations from international human rights mechanisms and/or specific priority areas*: Target met or exceeded **Target: 5, progress: 8** Belize, Dominica, The Gambia, Grenada, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Vanuatu, reported in 2019. Tonga and Tuvalu reported in 2018.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	2.1.3 **Four indicators, 3 of which are rated as poor progress or deterioration**, including those related to support to Sri Lanka, and indicators targeting work with religious leaders on issues related to equality. One indicator, measuring the ability of member countries to follow up engagement with international human rights mechanisms, is rated as target met or exceeded. Progress figures support the rating. 2.1.4 **Four indicators, all rated as target met or exceeded**: All measure opportunities for advocacy that support priority human rights issues or Commonwealth positions on issues. Progress figures support the rating.	*Secretariat engaged in global advocacy on specific priority areas*: Fair progress **Target: 11, progress: 11** The narrative update for 2019 describes 5 key areas and progress in 4 of these.
Evidence	For the evidence presented, the following observations are possible: • **Dominica:** feedback From the member countries supports the reported work of HRU in assisting reporting to the UN UPR and treaty bodies • **Tuvalu:** Feedback from the member country supports the reported work of HRU in assisting reporting to the UN UPR and highlights the capacity-building that the support enabled. • **Capacity-building of parliamentarians:** Evidence exists of capacity-building and advocacy, along with the launch of the publication 'The Global Human Rights Implementation Agenda: The Role of National Parliaments' in partnership with the URG. There are also various pieces of evidence of meetings, briefings, side events and capacity-building with partners and member countries. HRU is clearly able to describe progress made by this project towards STOs and IOs. However, of the outcomes reported, a weakness is that PMIS includes evidence for only approximately 25 per cent of the member countries said to have benefited.	

During data collection for the MTR, the Secretariat's Human Rights team was able to describe in detail the valuable support provided to multiple member countries through this project, and provide a variety of examples of the work undertaken in Geneva at the UN and at the member country level. (See Chapter 1 of this report for further information.)

The information provided to the MTR team and the data available on PMIS indicate that the project is making good progress towards the achievement of its outcomes, and that the team is utilising a variety of methods to engage with its target beneficiaries and identify relevant inputs from the Secretariat.

In terms of measuring progress on the IO, the team is able to describe support to member countries and the number of member countries that engage in the UPR process. During data collection, the team was also able to describe member countries where it had looked to engage in follow-up of recommendations at the country level, such as Tuvalu, and to support the strengthening of the national reporting mechanism, for example Dominica, Grenada and St Vincent and the Grenadines. Reporting at IO level could be strengthened by focusing effort on gathering data and evidence on how these inputs support the indicator of *number of supported member countries effectively addressing human rights issues in line with recommendations from international human rights mechanisms.*

The project has four STOs, each of which targets a different type of beneficiary or target group. When compared with the Secretariat's results chain, the STOs and IO included in results framework for this project fit well with the Secretariat's definitions. At the IO level, the three indicators are clearly defined, but one structural element that the Secretariat could consider looking at further would be the difference between STO 4.1.1 (*member countries engage constructively with international human rights mechanisms*) and the first IO indicator (*number of targeted member countries effectively engaging with international human rights mechanisms)*. The difference is not immediately clear, and in general the data reported for each are the same.

The evidence base for the project could be strengthened by storing on PMIS member country feedback from other countries reported as having been assisted in the UPR, such as Belize, The Gambia, Grenada, St Vincent and Grenadines and Vanuatu. Although the review team could not locate evidence of support to Tonga on PMIS, information on the engagements by HRU with this member country, and how this supported its presentation at the UN UPR, is included in the Secretariat's 2017/18 Tonga Country Report.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Strengths and weaknesses in supporting the project
Clear project rationale and results linked to the Strategic Plan*	Yes	The project design, objectives and targets are clearly linked to IO 2.1
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	Not across the entire project	Although most indicators at STO and IO level meet all SMART criteria (except being time-bound), a number do not meet: • Progress in Sri Lanka towards reconciliation and the constitutional protection of human rights (STO 2.1.3) • Gaps and opportunities for advocacy on priority human rights issues in the Commonwealth identified (STO 2.1.4) Baselines do not exist for any indicators. Targets exist for all except 1. A number also include measurement by 'share' rather than number or percentage. Share is imprecise, especially when there is no baseline.
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence	Yes	The log frame lists robust and sensible MOV and source documents. MEL could be strengthened by gathering a greater number of these.
Time-bound monitoring plan including **roles, responsibilities and resources**	Yes	The Secretariat's standard MEL plan as introduced during the 2019 PDD appraisal process

Components	Present?	Strengths and weaknesses in supporting the project
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	Unknown	During data collection for the MTR, HRU described how it aimed to monitor all of its interventions and gather feedback on what had and hadn't worked, for example using pre- and post-training surveys. The team described how the narrowing of its approach to focus on small states was the result of monitoring past work and concluding that this was an area where the Secretariat could have the greatest impact with limited resources. The team did note that its M&E work focused primarily on STOs and measuring the effectiveness of interventions, and using M&E to understand the situation more deeply and adapt its approach to become more effective. Examples given include Dominica and The Gambia and work done that enabled the team to understand the depth of the backlog of treaty body reports; and how engaging with Dominica at the national level allowed it to understand the capacity constraints at country level (only one officer to deal with UN and Commonwealth work) and to adapt its support accordingly.

4. Funding & expenditure (data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
ComSec	187,278	202,965	177,833	168,420
CFTC	152,639	125,486	164,909	134,122

HRU also described how EBR funding supported the project and how this in particular had made a difference by enabling it to assist more countries and also provides funds for two experts in Geneva who provide technical assistance to member countries at the CSSO. This technical assistance also covers meetings of the HRC, meaning that staff from the London office do not always have to travel to attend these. The team described how it was investigating whether the EBR funding could be extended.

5. Project staff levels (budgeted vs. recruited)

This section was designed to compare staff numbers in the team with staff numbers budgeted for. Information was requested from the team but was not forthcoming before data collection closed.

6. Partnership

Partner	Description of partnership and contribution to project
OHCHR	In support of OHCHR's Trust Fund support to LDC/SIDS participation in HRC work, HRU runs working sessions with Commonwealth member country representatives in Geneva to further understand small states' requirements. HRU has been able to encourage informal information-sharing between member states around the HRC. The Secretariat prepares an agenda for these informal meetings and facilitates them by arranging the chair in office to chair them. It is through the development of this informal mechanism that technical assistance to Dominica and The Gambia evolved. HRU has begun to develop further partnerships with this body, for example with the various mandate-holders in the HRC, such as the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and expert on sexual orientation and gender identity.
URG	Coproduction of policy brief: 'The Global Human Rights Implementation Agenda and the Role of National Parliaments' with HRU.
UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women	Convening of Commonwealth member countries for meetings on femicide, and identification of pertinent issues at the national level in member countries, such as strengthening national data collection and awareness of police and law enforcement bodies.
CHRI	CHRI is a partner in work funded by FCO and is funded to attend HRC meetings in Geneva.
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (UK Branch)	HRU has partnered with this organisation to engage with parliamentarians, in particular around modern slavery.

Surveys undertaken for this MTR received feedback from two partners with which HRU had worked with on engagement with parliamentarians: URG and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (UK Branch). URG highlighted the value of the partnership, describing how it had enabled 'a first ever comprehensive assessment of the current role of parliaments in overseeing State compliance with international human rights obligations, and possible future roles, and in doing so provided a key input into the evolving global human rights 'Implementation Agenda'. The partner also highlighted the strong role of the Secretariat in championing the causes of small states.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (UK Branch) commended the professionalism of HRU and described how the partnership had enabled both organisations to reach a greater number of parliamentarians, and supported work on modern slavery.

7. Integration of CHOGM mandates

The project has not had to incorporate specific new CHOGM mandates.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this project review:

- KIIs and FGDs
- A report from the IV Global Conference on the sustained eradication of child labour with references to the Secretariat's HRU's support to the UK's special session on ending forced labour, modern slavery and human trafficking, and individual meetings held with member countries Ghana, Malawi, Uganda and Zambia (this appears to be a Secretariat-written report).

- Summary data from a NHRI stakeholder conference in Grenada in June 2018: self-reported improvements in knowledge and understanding of NHRIs by participants
- Feedback forms from a meeting of Commonwealth Pacific Parliamentary Human Rights Group measuring changes in knowledge of the role of parliamentarians, and ability to engage and advocate on human rights issues, among other areas
- Attendance lists for HRU briefings at Small States Offices on disability and SDG 8
- A statement by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association on the launch of the publication 'The Global Human Rights Implementation Agenda: The Role of National Parliaments', November 2018
- Communication from the Office of the Attorney General, Tuvalu, thanking HRU for support and guidance through the UPR process and the positive impact it had had on learning from the process
- Letter of thanks from OHCHR for co-hosting a welcome reception for Guyana in honour of fellows supported by the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund, 2017
- Report of a Secretariat-supported Working Session of the Commonwealth Pacific Parliamentary Human Rights Group, 2019
- Commonwealth Network on Early and Childhood Forced Marriage Strategic Plan
- Communication from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dominica, thanking HRU for support in reporting to the UPR and treaty bodies
- Concept note for a side event held at the UN Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law on the positive outcomes and impacts of a strengthened relationship between parliaments and NHRIs – a Commonwealth perspective
- Notes from working lunches designed to raise member countries' interest – The Gambia and Tuvalu – thanking HRU and highlighting increased knowledge of what HRU offers in terms of support in the UPR

Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Centre and Networks (YJCWG1010)

Division: PSG

Strategic Outcome that the project contributes to: 2. More effective, efficient and equitable public governance

1. Project model

This project model has a three-pronged approach to help member countries' efforts in delivering anti-corruption programmes:

1. Establish communities of practice to strengthen collaboration, experience-sharing and benchmarking within ACAs in the Commonwealth.
2. Build capacity-building to improve ACAs' capacity and capability to combat and prevent corruption in the Commonwealth.
3. Utilise research and publication to improve knowledge and advocacy for anti-corruption measures. Increase evidence-based knowledge and understanding about corruption, leading to increased and more effective anti-corruption outcomes.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	2.3.2 Strengthened capacity of ACAs to provide better anti-corruption services 4 indicators for this STO 2.3.1 Improved project performance, target 2 indicators for this STO	2.3 Improved public administration for good governance and the prevention of corruption 2 indicators for this IO

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
Progress reported to date	**2.3.2** Number of Commonwealth ACAs reporting that capacity improvements have been implemented in their organisation as a result of Secretariat support in Africa and Caribbean, **target 11, stated as target met or exceeded 10** *Results on PMIS reported as:* ACAs from Africa and Caribbean capacity strengthened. *Review summary:* Little solid evidence made available to show how, as a result of Secretariat intervention, capacity in ACAs organisation improved in 2017/18 and 2018/19. There was third-party verification through the Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Evaluation (2017) noting that 68% reported making significant changes to their work after returning from CAACC courses. *However, see note below in the analysis about limitations of using this evaluation as evidence.* **2.3.2** *(indicator measuring number of training participants who report improved knowledge and skills relevant to their roles in their national ACAs),* **target 160, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results on PMIS reported as:* 45 senior officers from 6 Caribbean countries participated in senior leadership and management training programme focusing on ACAs reported improved knowledge and skills relevant to their role in national anti-corruption agenda. *Review summary:* Third-party verification of this result: The Anti-Corruption Evaluation (2017) noted that 80% of attendees considered the course to have significantly expanded their knowledge. *However, see note below in the analysis about limitations of using this evaluation as evidence.* Further, a recent external report (August 2019) on the capacity development project in Ghana found that, as a result of the intervention to enhance capacity of ACA, 'It is evident capacity is being built within CHRAJ.'	**2.3** Measuring number of targeted member countries with strengthened ACAs in Africa and Caribbean, **target 14, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results on PMIS reported as:* 10 ACAs from Africa and Caribbean with strengthened capacity. *Review summary:* Limited evidence was available to assess the extent to which outcome has been achieved. **2.3** Number of Commonwealth ACAs with improved quality of anti-corruption services provided to citizens in Africa and Caribbean, **target 16, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results on PMIS reported as:* An independent evaluation conducted by PFM-Connect on behalf of the Secretariat found that 'Commonwealth member states have benefited significantly from the programmes and tangible capacity improvements have been realised by the Anti-Corruption Agencies.' The survey responded to by 65 ACA representatives found that: • At least 80% felt CAACC courses had significantly expanded their knowledge • At least 70% reported significant improvement in their ability to perform their current role • At least 68% reported making significant changes in their work after returning from CAACC courses. These changes ranged from the adoption of financial investigations for all corruption-related investigations; to the development of Strategic Plans for ACAs; and amendments to members' Anti-Corruption Acts.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
	An external report on the capacity development project in Grenada stated, 'The findings of the review clearly indicate the programme is achieving its objective' of building the capacity within the ACAs. No further evidence was made available. **2.3.2** At least 60% of ACAs indicate agreement with a defined mechanism to conduct and utilise research findings, **target 60, stated as fair progress** *Results on PMIS reported as:* With the publication and dissemination of the 'Tackling Corruption in Commonwealth Africa: The Case Studies of Botswana', almost all the ACAs in Commonwealth Africa indicated agreement to utilise the research findings. **2.3.2** Regional anti-corruption networks established, **Target 2, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results on PMIS are reported as: Two regional networks set up:* 1. Association of Anti-Corruption Agencies in Commonwealth Africa; 2. Commonwealth Caribbean Association of Integrity Commissions and Anti-Corruption Bodies *Review summary:* It is evident that two regional networks have been established, with third-party verification to show that these have been set up. CAACC in Botswana cites that it was set up in collaboration with the Secretariat **2.3.2** Number of country participants in networks reporting benefiting from network activities, **target 120, stated as target met or exceeded** *Results reported on PMIS as:* 40 and 24 participants from Africa and Caribbean, respectively, participated in networks activities reported benefiting from network activities such as training and network meetings. Two recent external reports (August 2019) on the capacity development project undertaken in Ghana and Grenada, found that, as a result of the intervention to enhance capacity of ACAs, 'It is evident capacity is being built within CHRAJ' and 'The findings of the review clearly indicate the programme is achieving its objective' of building the capacity within ACAs. However, without further evidence, it is not possible to assess the extent to which this STO has been met.	According to Mr Lucas Kondowe, Chair of the Association of Anti-Corruption Agencies in Commonwealth Africa and Director-General, Malawi Anti-Corruption Bureau, 'The Centre is the only avenue dedicated for systematic and quality capacity building available to the Anti-Corruption Agencies in Africa' (Malawi, May 2017). Review summary: Limited evidence was available to assess the extent to which this outcome has been achieved.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
Evidence	The evidence base is weak for this project. Evidence to assess claimed results was limited, with some drawn from a recent report analysing capacity delivery in Ghana and Guyana. In the FGD, the 2017 evaluation was cited as a source of evidence to show changes resulting from this project, and it is used to provide evidence of changes in the PMIS reporting in 2019. However, the evaluation was completed in February 2017 so has limited scope in terms of assessing the interventions that took place until June 2019. Further, the evaluation focused only on Africa, so does not cover impact in Caribbean countries, thus limited analysis can be drawn. There is widespread appreciation of the Secretariat's anti-corruption work, including from Heads of Government: • Prime Minister of Grenada, The Right Hon. Keith Mitchell: 'I thank the Commonwealth for the technical assistance it has given to Grenada in particular and the Commonwealth Caribbean in general and look forward to the promotion of Grenada as centre of excellence in anti-corruption work in the Caribbean.' • Ibrahim Magu, Acting Executive Chairman of EFCC Nigeria: 'The initiative by the Secretariat to bring ACAs in the Commonwealth Africa countries has brought tremendous improvement in the process and procedures relating to cross-border crime, corruption, fraud and money laundering.' • Shakila Jhungeer, Board Member of ICAC Mauritius: 'I thank the Secretariat for all the help and support she has been providing at ICAC. I would also like to thank Dr Roger Koranteng who facilitated the process of drafting a code of conduct for parliamentarians in Mauritius.' • Ekpo Nta, former Chairman of ICPC in Nigeria: 'In the last year, Nigerian ACAs have cumulatively recovered around US$3 billion. The Secretariat has been very focused and has given a lot of direction to the anti-corruption process in Nigeria.' • Paulus Noa, Director-General of the Anti-Corruption Centre in Namibia: 'We have richly benefited from what the Secretariat has done for us. The main benefits that came as a result of this support are, the Secretariat has able to build the capacity of the anti-corruption commission in various fields, either through investigation, public education and corruption prevention.' • Advocate Andy Mothibi, Head of SIU in South Africa: 'Working with the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Africa anti-corruption centre in Botswana, there have been quite a number of training programmes that we've sent our members to. When they return you could see that they really have picked up the skills to interact with our asset forfeiture unit, and to date we have recovered trillions worth of assets.' • Rose Seretse, former Director-General of DCEC in Botswana: 'Officers' skills have improved, particularly investigation, prosecution, corruption prevention, and community education. This is all because of the help of the Secretariat, and in particular Dr Roger Koranteng.' • Irene Mulyagonja, Inspector-General of Government in Uganda: 'I had been a judge of the High Court, so I hardly knew about management of institutions when I was appointed as the Head of Inspectorate of Government. The support of the Secretariat, led by Dr Roger Koranteng, transformed the way I look at my role as Inspector General of Government.'	

PDD YJCWG1010 Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Centre and Networks has a range of STO and IO indicators being tracked, with the majority of PDD target rating as target met or exceeded for STOs and IOs.

The Anti-Corruption team stated that targets were on track. However, there is limited evidence to show this, for a limited number of areas. There is significant high-level acknowledgement of the Secretariat's work but lack of solid recent evidence means verification of results and thus an overall assessment of progress is difficult.

In FGDs with the team, it was also noted that, as the budget has reduced for this project year on year, decisions have had to be made as to where best to focus, reducing the areas in which the team can deliver. The team believed that continued reductions in budget would limit delivery, and the work to date would be lost. Capacity for this project is also a significant issue, with just one member of staff allocated to delivery.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Comments
Clear project rationale and results linked to Strategic Plan*	Yes	Yes, there is a clear project rationale linked to the Strategic Plan
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	Yes	Indicators for STOs and IOs were SMART, all baselines were set to 0, the results statements were clear
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence	In part	MOV are in place but would benefit from adding additional third-party MOV Methodology for gathering evidence is weak
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	Yes	There is an MEL plan in place, and evidence of an evaluation (2017) and two reviews (2019)
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget (4%)	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	Yes	There are examples given of learning mechanisms within the project, for example the CAACC in Botswana model looking to be replicated in the Caribbean, as well as learning being generated for relevant parties through regional conferences, such as the Ninth Commonwealth Regional Conference for Heads of ACAs in Africa

4. Funding & expenditure (data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
CFTC	199,903	190,303	131,374	127,740
ComSec	11,164	11,000		

5. Project staffing

This section was designed to compare staff numbers in the team with staff numbers budgeted for. Information was requested from the team but was not forthcoming before data collection closed.

6. Partnership

Partner	Description of partnership and contribution to project
Government of Botswana	Partner in the Anti-Corruption Centre
Government of Grenada	Partner in the Anti-Corruption Centre

No partners' contacts were provided by this team to pose evaluation questions to.

7. Integration of CHOGM mandates

The Anti-Corruption project came from CHOGM 2015 and is clearly in line with delivering a CHOGM mandate.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this project review report for Anti-Corruption.

- KIIs and FGDs
- BTOR.
- Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Results Report 2018-2019, Report A
- Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Results Report 2017-2018
- Commonwealth Secretariat Six-Month Report 2017
- Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Evaluation, PFM Connect Ltd, 2017
- Commonwealth Caribbean Association of Integrity Commission and Anti-Corruption Bodies
- Transparency International, Building Anti-Corruption agencies in the African Commonwealth
- Improving the Capacity of Anti-Corruption Agencies (Ghana report) 2019
- Improving the Capacity of Anti-Corruption Agencies (Guyana report) 2019
- News articles and web sources:
    - http://www.thecaacc.org/history
    - https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/deepening-anti-corruption-effort-grenada
- MEL plan

Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (YHCWG1040) & Learning for Life (YHCWG1062)

CCEM was included in the original sample for the MTR; in order to review the outcomes, elements of the **Learning for Life** project were also included in data analysis.

Division: Health and Education Unit, Social Policy Section

Outcomes that the projects contribute to:

Strategic: 3. People of the Commonwealth fulfil their potential with dignity and equality in a healthy environment

Enabling: 3. Consensus Building/Member states achieve consensus and advance key priority issues

1. Project model

CCEM is the largest Ministerial Meeting; it meets triennially and has been running since 1959. It supports SDG 4 and improving education outcomes in Commonwealth countries.

CCEM brings together education ministers from member countries, education stakeholders from civil society and technical experts from the Secretariat and partner and peer organisations. Aside from the Senior Officials and Ministerial Meetings, parallel partner forums encourage engagement between the different stakeholders. The declaration that results from CCEM is drafted to reflect the outputs of the various meetings. In this way, the declaration, and the topics noted in this, reflect member country priorities. Over the course of the last three CCEMs since 2012, the Secretariat has moved towards projectising these priorities into development support to member countries.

CCEM has two associated bodies, the Education Ministers Action Group (EMAG) and the Commonwealth Accelerated Development

Mechanism for Education (CADME). A key role of these is to meet in the intervening years between CCEMs and monitor progress on outputs.

Learning for Life is a Secretariat project that integrates education priorities targeted by CCEM into the Secretariat's development programming in member countries.

Projects included in Learning for Life that represent priorities identified through CCEM include:

- ECE toolkit
- Technical and vocational education and training self-assessment toolkit
- Effective Management of Education Systems toolkit
- Commonwealth Education Policy Framework (CEPF)
- Commonwealth Education Partnership
- Commonwealth Curriculum Framework
- Gender Inequality Toolkit

In order to deliver these various work streams, the Secretariat's Education team is employing a variety of methods. The theory of change includes capacity-building and the development of guidelines, frameworks and toolkits. Partnerships are being engaged in areas where the Secretariat does not have internal expertise, such as ECE. Other priorities are rolled out through capacity-building support, for example the CEPF.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
Results	**CCEM** 3.5 Ministers agree on key priorities for education across the Commonwealth, through engagement in CCEMs and Working Groups, and in the context of the Sustainable Development Agenda **Learning for Life** 3.3.6 Increase ability of learners to lead active and responsible engagement in society 3.3.7 Educators upskilled in gender-sensitive and learner-centred pedagogy and approaches 3.3.8 Curricula in member countries better integrated into the SDGs 3.3.9 Member countries better able to identify and address gaps in their policies, planning and management 3.3.10 Stronger partnership and collaboration benefit member countries	**CCEM** [Enabling]: Member countries achieve consensus and advance key priority issues **Learning for Life** 3.3. Strengthened sustainable policies reduce disparities and improve health and education outcomes
Progress reported to date	**CCEM STOs: Fair progress or target met** The indicators measure convening of CCEM, CADME and EMAG, number of meetings held, sharing of documents, attendance and satisfaction with quality, content and effectiveness of meetings held	**CCEM IO: Fair progress** **Baseline 20; target 25; achieved 10** 10 out of a target of 25 member countries are considered to be taking progress on Ministerial Declaration and Action Plan

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	Learning for Life STOs **3.3.6 Fair progress/target met.** Measures self-reported improvements in skills of learners benefiting from Secretariat training and share of training participants delivering social action initiatives in their communities. Also measures inputs of other organisations, e.g. ACU in delivering Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships, Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan and Commonwealth Girls Education Fund. Notes how the Secretariat works closely ACU in its advocacy for Commonwealth governments to support the replenishment of funds for these scholarships, and how CCEM is an advocacy platform for this. Measures pedagogic support from the Secretariat. **3.3.7 Fair progress/target met.** Measures support through frameworks, resources and education training (e.g. in support provided to Seychelles). Reports that CEPF workshop recommendations to help improve education governance, education systems capacity and planning processes have already been implemented in the 3 Pacific Islands: Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu. The 10 SADC countries are in the process of initiating implementation of recommendations made at the CEPF rollout in SADC. Fair progress is reported on use of Secretariat's frameworks but the update at 2019 references only distribution of resources. **3.3.8 Insufficient data/fair progress.** 2019 report has no data on indicators for member countries revising or developing their national curricula but reports fair progress for development of tools. **3.3.9 Target met/fair progress/Insufficient data.** A number of indicators measure use of resources but baselines are missing. Progress is reported as fair or target met for member countries implementing Framework recommendations or adopting new plans/strategies as a result of Secretariat interventions.	**Learning for Life IO** **Indicator:** Number of targeted member countries implementing policies to reduce disparities and improve education outcomes in line with Commonwealth values, **rated fair progress** **Baseline 0; target 0; achieved 0** The 2019 narrative notes: • CARICOM requested technical support from the Secretariat in the revision of teachers and school leaders' standards for countries in the region. • SADC partnering with the Secretariat to develop CEPF action plans for roll-out in 10 countries. • Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu taking into account elements of the CEPF. • Jamaica considering a multi-sectoral approach to address boys' educational achievement as prescribed by the Secretariat. • 2019 report also describes strengthening of partnerships with accredited organisations (Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management, CEC, ACU) and with Commonwealth of Learning for development of tools to support policy development. PMIS update also notes that the IO will be measured within several months of the end of the project.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	3.3.10 Fair progress/target met or exceeded. Measures countries' benefit from joint initiatives and work completed with CARICOM (e.g. in implementation of its Human Resource Development Strategy 2030 and development of standards for teachers); recognition of Secretariat inputs into joint meetings with partners; satisfaction of partners (Commonwealth Education Council (CEC)) with collaboration, measured through Secretariat input into an accredited organisation's away day.	
Evidence	Of the results reported, the CEPF and work on gender equality in education in Jamaica have the most evidence on PMIS. Regarding the target on Boys' Educational Achievement and Active Citizenship in the Caribbean, the evidence base includes 'The Commonwealth Secretariat Policy Toolkit and Guidelines: A Review of the Policy Toolkit and Guidelines from 2019' by the Jamaican Ministry of Education and Jamaican Teachers Council. Among other objectives, this aimed to identify the investments and support required by Jamaica to move towards a multi-sectoral approach to boy's education. The review concludes that a multi-stakeholder approach is necessary, and that the Secretariat has a role to play in supporting Jamaica to implement this, specifically in 'support the development of a country-specific, comprehensive, multi-sectoral policy framework to advance the cause of boys' education. Toolkits for school administrators keen on developing boys-friendly learning environment and for teachers attempting to become more gender-sensitive in their instructions would also be useful.' The review highlights that the toolkit can be strengthened, for example by including research from the past five years, and concludes that a multi-sectoral approach to education for boys is valid and is needed, and that collaboration with the Secretariat can advance this agenda. The evidence base is complemented by a newspaper article from the Jamaica Observer reporting on the consultative workshop between the Jamaica Teaching Council and the Secretariat. The CEPF was endorsed by EMAG in January 2017 and subsequently piloted in the Pacific region with Fiji, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu in October 2017. Regarding the CEPF, the evidence base includes: • The Secretariat's own report of the CEPF SADC region workshop in June 2019. This includes actions for member countries and the Secretariat but in itself is not yet evidence that these are being taken forward. Also present is the Secretariat's own report of participant feedback from the workshop, showing satisfaction with the quality of the CEPF and the workshop.	

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	• An evaluation report of CEPF technical assistance by the Secretariat to two member countries (Solomon Islands and Tuvalu). The report identified that, of 18 actions related to the CEPF that Tuvalu committed to, 4 had been completed, 10 were in progress and 4 were yet to commence, and that, across the actions, technical assistance was required in 7 areas. Regarding Solomon Islands, the report indicates that 3 actions are in progress and 7 are completed. The report concludes that, 'In summary, collectively for Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands, the overall progress of implementation of the CEPF Workshop outcomes indicates that 86% of the work has been completed or is being progressed, while only 14% is yet to be actioned... in discussions held with staff of ministries of education in both countries, there were numerous expressions of appreciation for how the CEPF toolkit has assisted them to update and modernise their respective governance and delivery systems, with the ultimate aim of aligning to SDG4... At the regional level, there is sufficient evidence to prove that the CEPF complements the Pacific Regional Education Framework.' • An evaluation report of the CEPF Policy Framework technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation consultancy to Fiji, by the consultant tasked with or supporting the Ministry of Education in the implementation and progress monitoring of recommendations and actions outlined at the CEPF Workshop. The report indicates that, of Fiji's governance commitments, all 9 are underway; 3 of 4 knowledge commitments are underway and all 5 capacity commitments were underway. **Additional evidence provided by project teams during review:** CCEM 2018 Most Significant Change Report (a Secretariat report). This report asks member countries attending CCEM to describe the most significant changes in education and learning in their countries in the past four years, and the contribution of the Secretariat to these. This document, although produced by the Secretariat, provides a richer source of data and evidence on how Commonwealth organisations supported member countries in education in the years running up to CCEM 2018.	

This evidence base broadly supports reported achievements of the project reported at the IO level. The evidence base for policy achievements in Jamaica is stronger than that for CEPF achievements since it enables triangulation of data from three different sources (the Secretariat, member country institutions and the press). This evidence supports reporting at the IO level. The evidence for roll-out of the CEPF in three countries in the Pacific is from Secretariat associated sources, and the evidence of CEPF work in Southern Africa is from one Secretariat source. The evidence provided demonstrates progress towards achievement of the project's IOs.

Other data reported at IO level do not necessarily demonstrate achievement of results at this level, for example strengthening of partnerships and requests for technical support from partners. This information would fit better as data against STOs such as 3.3.10. Reporting at the STO level would benefit from greater attention in other areas too, for example STO 3.3.7, where the MOV described in the project documents as 'narratives and reports received from managers and institutions, feedback forms and surveys completed by managers and institutions' do not feature in the evidence base. In addition, data that are reported for STO 3.3.7 are the same as those reported at IO level. Finally, it is worth noting that reporting for STO 3.3.6 includes data on scholarships granted by ACU. It is not clear why these are included in a results framework for a Secretariat-led project.

Regarding CCEM, feedback from member countries highlights that some of the gains made in education systems are attributable to the Commonwealth of Learning and other Commonwealth organisations.

Feedback gathered from member countries at CCEM 2018 indicates that gender in Jamaica and the CEPF are two key areas where progress can be attributed to the Secretariat's interventions; this supports the Secretariat's internal evidence base and reporting.

The face-to-face discussions for CCEM and Learning for Life indicated the use of convening and partnerships for delivery of outcomes such as the ECE Toolkit, although this is not reflected in the raw data for the Annual Results Report 2019 it is discussed further down under partnerships.

Summary

- Of the large number of initiatives and outcomes under Learning for Life, the Secretariat's Education team has the resources to focus on a sample of these outcomes themselves.
- In other areas, the team is working with partners to roll out certain initiatives, such as the ECE Toolkit.
- The evidence base is good for targeted IOs but would benefit from diversification in the sources of evidence used, and continued follow-up of impact, for example of the CEPF in the Pacific and South Africa.
- Reporting and evidence collection at the STO level shows some weaknesses and would benefit from further evidence-gathering and diversification of evidence base.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Strengths and weaknesses in supporting the project
Clear project rationale and results linked to the Strategic Plan*	Yes	Each project has a clear rationale in the PDD, and the results are linked to the PDD. An observation is that the Learning for Life PDD includes outcomes delivered by ACU.
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	No	Baselines and targets missing across IOs and STOs. Indicators are not time-bound in their description. Is it assumed that the time period is the year of delivery, or the duration of the strategic plan? This is unclear. Lack of specificity in some indicators – e.g. 'number of organisations reflecting Commonwealth views' with views not defined, although most others are specific in their focus. In the way they are defined the indicators are quantifiable, i.e. they measure a share or number.
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence		The PDD and log frame include MOV but at the STO and IO level, which could be considered robust enough for the level of change targeted.
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	Yes	CCEM and Learning for Life both completed annual MEL plans as part of the 2019 PDD appraisal process.
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	Yes	Examples given include the monitoring and feedback forms from CCEM, including the most significant change form. Less evidence of this for Learning for Life.

4. Funding & expenditure (data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
CCEM	398,000	255,000	503,000	442,000

5. Project staffing

Number of staff committed to the project for 2017/18	Actual number of positions filled in 2017/18	Number of project staff budgeted for in 2018/19	Actual number of budgeted positions filled in 2018/19
1 adviser (70%) 1 YPO (70%)	1 adviser (70%) 1 YPO (70%) 1 research officer (100% for 9 months) 1 programme manager (100% for around 7 months) 1 programme officer (100% for around 5 months) 1 adviser 20%	1 adviser (50%) 1 YPO (50%)	1 adviser (50%) 1 YPO (50%)
Comments: We contracted 3 project staff to assist with the operational preparation and delivery of 20CCEM (Fiji 2018). Regular staff for this project (1 adviser supported by a YPO) are also required to do other technical work in addition to delivering CCEMs.			

6. Partnership

Partnerships are being engaged in areas where the Secretariat does not have internal expertise (e.g. Early ECE and convening of partners), including UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO, GPE and Africa Early Childhood Education Network. Convening is also utilised in ECE, where the Secretariat has facilitated UNICEF in the Pacific region to share its technical work in this area with Commonwealth education ministers.

Partner	Description of partnership and contribution to project
ACU	Roll-out of Commonwealth scholarships
UNICEF, UNESCO, GPE, ILO	Convening these partners in development of ECE Toolkit. Feedback from UNICEF on this initiative described how the network of partners was bringing different relevant inputs to the piece of work, and how the Secretariat has a strategic advantage in its ability to work directly with ministers, and that the convening power was of value in bringing member countries together with technical partners to maintain progress of this piece of work.
CARICOM	The Secretariat provided support in the development of a finance and costing plan for the CARICOM Human Resources for Development 2030 Strategy. CARICOM said it was too early to measure impact given that this work took place in 2019 but that the collaboration would serve to enhance quality of educational delivery in CARICOM member countries, all of which are Commonwealth members.

7. Integration of CHOGM mandates

The projects have not had to integrate CHOGM mandates.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this project review:

- KIIs and FGDs

CCEM

- Thematic issues paper for CCEM 2018
- SDG 4 research report produced by the Secretariat for CCEM 2018
- Final proceedings of CCEM 2018
- CCEM Partners' Forum Evaluation Report

- CADME meeting report May 2019
- EMAG meeting report May 2019 and minutes; these, discussing adoption of the Nadi Declaration and Action Plan, note that, 'The Secretariat will follow-up with EMAG member countries as it pertains to their commitments on actions highlighted in the Action Plan' and 'The Secretariat will hold early discussions with other EMAG member countries that would be interested in piloting the CEPF'
- CCEM 2018 Evaluation Report (internal Secretariat report based on feedback forms)
- Media stories about 20CCEM

Learning for Life

- Regarding the target for improving Boys' Educational Achievement and Active Citizenship in the Caribbean: 'The Commonwealth Secretariat Policy Toolkit and guidelines: A Review of the Policy Toolkit and Guidelines' from 2019
- The Secretariat's own report of the CEPF SADC region workshop in June 2019
- An evaluation report of the CEPF technical assistance by the Secretariat to two member countries (Solomon Islands and Tuvalu)
- An evaluation report of the CEPF Policy Framework technical assistance, monitoring and evaluation consultancy to Fiji
- Commonwealth Education Programme Report 2015-2017
- Evidence of joint event between the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management in November 2019
- Emails from CEC members highlighting support from the Secretariat to its away day
- A brochure for the Commonwealth Education Partnership (CEP) for Sustainable Development developed by the Secretariat, Commonwealth of Learning and ACU
- Notes from the ECE Toolkit roundtable held at the Secretariat in March 2019, with delegates from UNICEF, Jamaica, Malta, Kenya, ILO, UNESCO and GPE

Commonwealth Youth Programme (YYPAF1024)

Division: Social Policy Section, EYSD

Strategic Outcome that the project contributes to: 3. Youth and Social Development/People of the Commonwealth fulfil their potential with dignity and equality in a healthy environment

1. Project model

The CYP aims to socially, politically and economically empower young people across the Commonwealth to ensure equitable development outcomes and youth's optimal contribution to development and democracy. It focuses on the role of the youth sector in delivering youth empowerment strategies, and the ability of actors in the development sector to deliver outcomes for youth (directly) and society (indirectly). The approach includes strengthening policies and institutions, capacity of stakeholders to inform policy change, and collaboration and connections, bringing together Government, young people's civil society and other development actors. Mechanisms that support young people's participation in global and national governance are considered particularly important.

The theory of change is a continuation of the youth programme under the previous Strategic Plan. A significant volume of work previously completed, including the YDI, the Youth Entrepreneurship Policy Guide, the Youth Mainstreaming Handbook, the Youth Work Baseline, the Guide to Optimising National Youth Development Mechanisms and the Guide to Establishing and Strengthening National Youth Councils, supports the approach. The YDI is considered a significant tool in furthering the aims of the CYP. Youth work mainstreaming is a significant element of the current programme.

The programme uses thought leadership, capacity-building, development of resource materials and sensitisation to support member country governments in strengthening capacity, policies and institutions. It also targets youth networks for capacity-building. In the youth mainstreaming project, an approach used is to undertake assessment at the national level to identify targets with regard to legislation or institutional capacity-building, working with organisations serving

young people to identify gaps in capacity that the Secretariat can work to fill. The CYP uses a variety of platforms to share information and tools, including the CYMM, regional workshops and other meetings where youth are given the opportunity to speak. The Commonwealth Ministerial Task Force is a Senior Officials space that is used to track progress on CYMM outputs.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	3.1.1 Enhanced evidence-based youth policy environment and youth mainstreamed planning by governments 3.1.2 Enhanced youth entrepreneurship policy development by governments 3.1.3 Strengthened representation and participation by young people in policy processes 3.1.4 Enhanced provision of youth work practice by governments, youth work associations and universities	3.1 Young people engaged and empowered to meaningfully participate in political and development processes
Progress reported to date	3.1.1 Results reported include the adoption of a youth mainstreaming approach in Belize's National Trade Policy (2019–2030). The report states Belize specifically cited the Secretariat's work on this as a driver for the change. Ghana's adoption of a new evidence-based national youth policy is reported, along with validation of recommendations of the Secretariat-sponsored national situation analysis. Adoption of a youth mainstreaming policy is cited as is partnership by the CYP, UNDESA and the Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors network to support the Government of Kenya in designing national-level action plans to support UN Resolution 2250. 3.1.2 Fair progress, although the update for 2019 cites that young entrepreneurs have validated policy solutions to overcome unemployment, based on Secretariat guidance. 3.1.3 All rated as fair progress (3) or target complete (1) although the narrative update states there are no data for two indicators. Progress is described as the Secretariat supporting countries to strengthen their youth participation frameworks (The Bahamas, Uganda and the UK).	3.1 Two indicators Number of member countries taking action to support and empower young people through strengthening the policy environment for youth development, and the professionalisation of youth work, **progress reported as fair, or target met** **Baseline 0; target 10; achieved 11** The narrative included in the 2019 data describes how the UNGA 2017 session on youth development gave recognition to the Commonwealth's policy position on evidence-based youth policies. It also describes AU commitment to develop an African YDI utilising Secretariat standards and tools; and establishment of a national youth council in Pakistan along with adoption of youth mainstreaming strategy and YDI methodology. Number of Commonwealth-supported youth networks taking action to mainstream youth perspectives, introduce policies and practices, and drive youth-led initiatives, **target met or exceeded**

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	3.1.4. The 2019 data report that 15 member countries, through higher education institutions, will develop the skills of aspiring youth workers, including through a youth work degree, although the only example described in the report in is Namibia's College of Learning establishing a community of practice to allow workshop participants to share their knowledge and expertise on youth development and youth work.	**Baseline 0; target 11; achieved 15** The update in 2019 reports the establishment of a new youth network as a result of the advocacy and action of the Commonwealth Youth Council in 2017 to focus on young persons with disability through the I Am ABLE campaign, with funds committed to the network from partners such as DFID; and the launch in 2017 of the Vote Like a Boss Campaign in 2017 to encourage young people to vote in national elections, and take-up in Belize, Guyana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria and PNG.
Evidence	The evidence base on PMIS is strong, and supports a number of the Outcomes reported by the CYP on PMIS: • At IO level, the UNGA Statement on Youth Development Links to Sustainable Development 2017: 'An important development in the field of youth data has been the creation of national youth development indices... supported by the work undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat. India is now producing subnational youth development indices. Recently, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations developed its own regional Youth Development Index, which covers its 10 member States' and 'The United Nations has also provided strong support for evidence based youth policies, in particular through an important global inter agency partnership on capacity building and regional dialogues, led by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Commonwealth Secretariat. Regional capacity building workshops conducted in five regions and on four continents have targeted more than 75 Member States and hundreds of participants from youth ministries and youth led organizations. Among other activities, the children and youth major group has been facilitating processes to enable local youth groups to become engaged with respect to national and regional disaster risk reduction plans, including through youth led peer reviewed science policy publications.'[1] Supports achievements reported at IO level and attributes progress in part to Secretariat initiatives. • Belize's National Trade Policy 2019–2030, which references the benefit of youth mainstreaming. Unfortunately, it references a youth inclusion report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development but not Secretariat support in this area. The Secretariat is referenced in other areas of technical support in trade. This evidence supports achievements reported for STO 3.1.1 but does not attribute the result to the Secretariat. • 'Towards Youth Centric Planning in Kenya: Youth Mainstreaming Frameworks, Observations and Recommendations as Emerging from Consultations', a 2018 report by the Directorate of Youth Affairs, Kenya. This report includes the following acknowledgement: 'The Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs wishes to thank the Commonwealth Secretariat for being our committed partners in this initiative, Susan T. Njau (Mrs.) Director, Youth Affairs'; it recommends that the Directorate develop a systematic youth mainstreaming strategy. This supports progress towards STO 3.1.1 but does not quite go as far as providing evidence of policy adoption as reported.	

1 UNGA, 72nd session, Item 28 (b) of the provisional agenda.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	• Report of the Ghana State of the Youth Development Report consultative workshop, sponsored by the Secretariat. The workshop took place in June 2019. The report cites the Secretariat providing a technical adviser to the Government of Ghana to develop a Situation Assessment of Youth Development in Ghana. This is not an outcome-level change; its evidences the work of the consultant supported financially by the Secretariat but not the policy change reported above. • The AU State of African Youth Report 2019. This acknowledges Secretariat support, and heavily references the YDI National and Regional Toolkit: A Guide for Developing Regional and National Youth Development Indices, and the Commonwealth 2016 Global Youth Development Index and report. It notes that data were collected in line with the YDI Toolkit. This evidence supports achievements reported at the IO level. • State of the Pacific Youth Report 2017, which references the use of YDI indicators in defining indicators for Pacific adolescents and youth. The evidence base on PMIS does not include information related to the achievements and changes reported to have taken place in Pakistan.	

A number of country-level PowerPoint presentations were also provided as evidence of the impact of CYP, from seven Commonwealth Asia member countries. These were created by member countries for the Asia CYMM Senior Officials Meeting in 2019 and were received as part of the ongoing regional monitoring of CYMM and CHOGM mandates by the Commonwealth Ministerial Taskforce in partnership with the Secretariat. As reporting created by member countries, they have value as evidence of progress towards the targets of the CYP, but the value of this evidence would be strengthened if it could be triangulated with evidence from third-party sources (e.g. media, civil society) of the same commitments or changes described. The reports describe the following results at member country level:

Bangladesh: Cites the adoption of the National Youth Policy in 2017, and the establishment of the National Youth Leadership Forum in 2017;

Brunei Darussalam: Mentions a reform of the National Youth Council and study to review National Youth Policy, in addition to the Second Youth Congress being held. The presentation by Brunei included support for continued empowerment and resourcing of the CYP and suggests revisiting the CYP Asia centre decision. It also suggests a Senior Officials-level mechanism to assess progress on the plan of action for youth development;

India: Cites the 2017 YDI, 'constructed on the lines of the Commonwealth YDI', along with national youth programmes to on education and skills development, and the orientation of youth workers at state and district level, and within non-governmental, community-based and civil society organisations, universities and schools.

Malaysia: Cites the National Youth Policy launched in 2015, and the implementation of the Youth Parliament of Malaysia.

Pakistan: Describes the National Youth Development Strategic Roadmap, with plans for a National Youth Council in 2019; the National YDI in 2019–2020; and a National Youth Development Foundation institutionalisation of a national youth development programme through legislation from 2021 onwards. Cites the National Youth Council, and the Prime Minister's Kamyab Jawan ('Successful Youth') programme, which includes a youth entrepreneurship scheme.

Singapore: Mentions that the Youth Division works closely with the National Youth Council and describes how the National Youth Council is responsible for elements of the youth strategy.

Sri Lanka: Describes commitments such as expansion of the Youth Development Policy, creating a national evaluation project for youth programmes; and establishment of a youth parliamentary committee to achieve the youth SDG.

Summary

The evidence base on PMIS for reported outcomes is good and includes evidence of progress at the IO level. Not all achievements at the IO level are

evidenced in a clear manner, including for the results report for the Commonwealth Youth Council and Youth Networks. Similarly, not all achievements at the STO level are evidenced, and some STOs lack reporting or evidence, for example STOs 3.1.1, 3.1.2 and 3.1.4.

During data collection, the CYP provided the review team with other rich sources of evidence, such as presentations from the Asia Senior Officials Meeting, which were not included on PMIS.

Feedback gathered from the team included the observation that they did not have the resources to track all outputs and outcomes in some CYP initiatives (such as Youth Networks), and that the volume of work under the CYP means M&E of their work is limited. The team also described how, despite seeing governments making structural changes, it was still difficult to measure IOs in the PDD at member country level.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Strengths and weaknesses in supporting the project
Clear project rationale and results linked to the Strategic Plan*	Yes	The PDD describes a clear project rationale that builds on previous iterations of the CYP, and the evaluation in 2017
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	Yes	SMART elements are included with the exception of indicators being time-bound
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence	Yes	Examples at IO level include reports to Youth Ministerial Taskforce of 9CYMM and periodic reports from Senior Officials on 9CYMM commitments. This evidence was provided to the review team. A weakness of the MOV described is that they do not include third-party information (e.g. media, civil society)
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	Yes	The programme completed an MEL plan as part of the 2019 PDD revision process
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	Yes	The 2017 review of the CYP informed direction of the current programme. The CYP has internal informal review and learning mechanisms in the team

4. Funding & expenditure (data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
Youth	1,505,000	1,472,000	1,465,000	1,548,000

During data collection, the Youth team noted that consistency of funding (under the CYP fund) has helped the CYP maintain strong support to member countries and highlighted how this in their view reflected buy-in across the Commonwealth to youth programming.

5. Project staff levels (budgeted vs. recruited)

This section was designed to compare staff numbers in the team with staff numbers budgeted for. Information was requested from the team but was not forthcoming before data collection closed.

In 2018/19, a new Social Policy Section was established. Since this point, the CYP's head of social policy and all the CYP administrative staff now also support Health, Education and Sports Units.

6. Partnership

The CYP engages multiple partnerships, including with SPC, AU, CARICOM and ASEAN on Youth Policy Development and with UNDESA, UNCTAD, UNESCO and UNDP on Youth Peace and Security and Youth Mainstreaming. In the area of Youth Employment, the CYP convenes a partnership with the World Bank, DFID, ILO, AfDB and the Mastercard Foundation. Partnerships also exist with the Commonwealth Youth Council and the Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Work Associations.

The PDD for the CYP lists a number of partners that the programme works with. During data collection for the MTR, the review team made requests to a number of these partners and received the following feedback from the UNDP:

> 'UNDP has worked with the Secretariat on a number of joint interventions around learning and advocacy on Youth Empowerment. The single most important aspect of the work has been the policy guide on youth entrepreneurship. Both agencies are conveners [who] bring stakeholders together to share learn and advance the agenda. Technical expertise drives our partnerships, along with evidence-based approaches to data and policy work. We co-designed the joint activities in Singapore and brought together partners to advise how UNDP should work on systemic design on Youth Employment.'

The strengths of the Secretariat were described as 'decades of technical expertise' and having the 'ears and trust of governments' and the 'ability to convene governments at such a high level', along with 'long experience in evidence policy-making and credibility from sticking to the issue for decades'. UNDP observed that their co-organised events had led to increased demand for UNDP's service offer in six or seven countries and increased collaboration between the countries and international development agencies in Asia-Pacific, such as ADB, Plan and ILO.

UNDP described the YDI as the most prominent index available and the only benchmark that there is to measure progress in Youth Empowerment and said that it had developed programmes based on the CYP's policy guides. The partner highlighted the impact of the CYP in contributing towards SDG 8.

7. Integration of CHOGM mandates

The CYP does not include implementation of CHOGM mandates.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this project review:

- KIIs and FGDs
- At the IO level, UNGA Statement on Youth Development Links to Sustainable Development 2017
- Belize's National Trade Policy 2019–2030
- Towards Youth Centric Planning, a 2018 report by the Directorate of Youth Affairs, Ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender Affairs, Kenya
- Report of the Ghana State of the Youth Development Report, consultative workshop sponsored by the Secretariat
- AU's State of African Youth Report 2019, which acknowledges Secretariat support
- State of the Pacific Youth Report, SPC
- Workshop reports (e.g. 2019 Wilton Park workshop on youth employment in sub-Saharan Africa)
- Verdentum monthly reports for data uploaded by members of Commonwealth Youth Networks on to these platforms, and an impact story on the use of the Verdentum software
- Commonwealth Higher Education Youth Work Consortium Action Plan, which demonstrates partnership between Commonwealth of Learning, University of the West Indies, YMCA George Williams College and the Secretariat
- A CARICOM Today article reporting on CARICOM hosting the Caribbean Forum on Population, Youth and Development, in partnership with CDB, the EU, UNFPA and the Secretariat

Maximising the Development Potential of Sport (YYCWG1043)

Division: Youth

Strategic Outcomes that the project contributes to: People of the Commonwealth fulfil their potential with dignity and equality in a healthy environment

1. Project model

The overarching aim of this project is to enhance contribution of sport to sustainable development, health, well-being and building peaceful and just societies. It targets three main result areas:

1. Increases in the number of member countries that adopt or invest in national policies and strategies to either utilise sport strategically as a tool to deliver against non-sport outcomes or to protect contribution of sport to sustainable development;
2. Institutional capacity-building of national institutions and national officials to use sport strategically and to implement SDP policies;
3. Promotion of alignment of policies and strategies with the SDGs and awareness-raising of the importance and value of sport contributing to the SDGs.

The PDD describes in detail how the project is designed to contribute to both member country priorities and specific SDG targets.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	3.2.1 Member countries develop a sport sector theory of change, logframe and results framework aligned with National Development Plans and identified SDGs 3.2.2 Member countries produce sport-based policy instruments to increase physical activity; enhance non-formal education structures through sport; promote gender equality in and through sport; increase access to open space for public use for sport and recreation; protect and promote human rights in and through sports; develop effective, accountable and transparent governance of sporting 3.2.3 Government officials and partners have enhanced knowledge, skills and motivation to develop policies to intentionally use sport to contribute to sustainable development	3. Youth and Social Development/ People of the Commonwealth fulfil their potential with dignity and equality in a healthy environment
Progress reported to date	3.2.1 Two indicators, **rated as fair progress** Annual reporting in 2019 describes how three member countries (Canada, Jamaica, Mauritius) have made progress in designing, piloting and targeting sports sector results frameworks. This is against a target of 1 in the PDD. Data describe that the second version of the international indicator framework has been developed.	3.2 Three indicators Number of member countries with operational sport sector results frameworks aligned with the National Development Plan and SDGs that have received Secretariat support, **fair progress**

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	3.2.2 Two indicators, **both rated as poor progress or deterioration** Targets for neither have been met. Narrative update describes how two member countries (Lesotho and St Kitts and Nevis) have initiated policy revision processes while work in Bangladesh has been delayed. 3.2.3 Four indicators, **rated as target met or exceeded (3) or fair progress (1)** Commitment to develop policies is cited for Lesotho and St Kitts and Nevis. Commonwealth ministers using international platforms to advocate for sport is reported for Kiribati and Samoa.	Annual reporting in 2019 describes how three member states (Canada, Jamaica, Mauritius) have made progress in designing, piloting and targeting sports sector results frameworks (*This is a repeat of the data for STO 3.2.1)* Number of member countries investing in policies to use sport as an intentional approach to advance sustainable development that have received Secretariat support (disaggregated by lead ministry), **fair progress – no progress reported for January to June 2019** Percentage of member countries that have adopted policies to use sport as an intentional approach to advancing sustainable development (disaggregated by lead ministry), **target met or exceeded** The target for this indicator is 58%, and progress is reported as 60%. The annual report update for 2019 notes, 'Additional countries in the Pacific have been supported through the Pacific Compass process.'
Evidence	Evidence sources on PMIS: • Manually produced qualitative review of number of member countries adopting policies to use sport as intentional approach to advance sustainable development. With support from a *pro bono* partner (Swinburne University of Technology), the team will develop an automated tool to measure the IO indicator. • Report by the Government of Zambia to the Ninth Commonwealth Ministers of Sports Meeting describing Zambia's commitment to developing a policy framework in SDP and noting the capacity-building support provided by the Secretariat as one of the first critical steps in this process. • SDP case study of the development of a national SDP strategy in Sierra Leone supported by the Secretariat. • Letter from the Jamaican minister for culture, gender, education and sport expressing thanks for the Secretariat's support in building capacity in sport development and looking ahead to the development of a technical exchange programme, November 2018. Also included is a letter from Jamaica requesting technical assistance. • The Secretariat's Model Indicators Toolkit v1.0. • Requests for technical assistance from Bangladesh (expression of interest for technical support for development of National Sport Policy); Guyana (request for assistance in the formulation of the National Sports policy); Jamaica; Rwanda (strategy for maximising contribution of sport to national development); Sierra Leone (SDP); Sri Lanka (SDP); St Kitts and Nevis (design of the National Sport Policy).	

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	For Mauritius: Budget statements from 2018/19 and 2019/20 that reference investment in sport and sports infrastructure, Secretariat support for a study on gender budgeting, and investment in youth and sports. News articles quoting the prime minister on the launch of the National Sport and Physical Activity Policy 2018–2028. Materials from national sports policy and SDGs workshop held by the Ministry of Youth and Sport with support from the Secretariat in May 2019, and the Voluntary National Review Report 2019 published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mauritius, that states, 'With the support of the Commonwealth, Mauritius will be positioned as a pilot country to introduce a common indicator framework on Sports and the SDGs into our national monitoring and evaluation system.' In terms of tangible progress, the team highlighted three member countries – Botswana, Mauritius and Zambia – that are at the policy adoption stage. In Mauritius, the team said Secretariat inputs had catalysed progress at the national level, which included national policy change and allocation of financial resources. This is supported by the evidence described above. The reporting and evidence in turn support the data at IO level reported on PMIS. Regarding Zambia, the team described a focus on integrating specific theories of change into the national sport policy to support broader elements of the national development plan, for example with a sports policy initiative for community spaces for sport. This is supported by the evidence described above. The reporting and evidence in turn support the data at IO level reported on PMIS. The team also described the adoption of a new sport policy by Tuvalu, despite a lack of direct technical assistance. The contribution of the Secretariat to this was reported to the team by Tuvalu public servants and a third party. Tuvalu had attended Sports Ministers Meetings and requested Secretariat technical materials and publications. The review team could not identify evidence for this achievement on PMIS. The data reported on PMIS also include reference to achievements by Canada at STO and IO level although this was not mentioned during data collection for the MTR. It is unclear whether this is relevant or an error in reporting. During MTR data collection, the team mentioned support to Botswana in the area of sport sector policy development, but again data could not be identified on PMIS for work with this member country.	

In data collection for the MTR, the project team described a continuum of progress and level of benefits for member countries from this project over the past two years, ranging from, at one end, a small number of countries allocating budget and resources to national reform to, at the other end, countries that do not engage in the project.

Regarding the M&E mechanisms employed, the team described a variety of tools and methods. These include surveys pre- and post-capacity-building, which have been used to measure improvements in the capacity of officials in Zambia, among other member countries. The team recognised that this type of tool produced mixed-quality results. In Jamaica, the quantitative data from the surveys indicated higher capacity after the capacity building event, whereas qualitative assessments undertaken by a technical adviser and the host government through the same survey did not support this. The team put this down to 'courtesy bias' among recipients completing these evaluation forms. As a result of the experience in this member country, the team sought to use different tools to measure effectiveness of capacity-building interventions. The team thus feels there is a gap in the analysis of some of the STOs, particularly around individual capacity. At the STO level, commitment to action by a member country is measured formally through the requests for assistance that are received, or through documented national commitments. An example given was Mauritius committing to developing a national statistical

system on sport and development. The team commented that there had been a discussion as to whether to measure this as an outcome, since it also forms an input by a member country into further outcomes. The team also reports commitments to action made in Ministerial Meetings as progress on STOs, but again said it had had a discussion about this, and questioned whether it could be measured as an outcome.

The team described using data gathered from engagement with one country, including feedback, and utilising this to inform how it might engage in another country. This analysis is contained in internal country reports completed for Jamaica, Lesotho and Mauritius, which are not currently put on PMIS, but which were provided to the review team. The team described how learning from these countries was used to inform work in Botswana and influenced its investment in an online gender-disaggregated monitoring system for sport within the country (the team said it had evidenced this through a news article).

Regarding its work on the Model Indicators for Sport project, the team describe how it used opportunities such as working group meetings to gather informal feedback from stakeholders, along with surveys to try to follow an evidence-based approach to their work. An observation from this MTR is that the Model Indicators work is not that prominent in the project documents and in the results framework. Since this is a significant piece of work, where the Secretariat is leading an international agenda, and one that has the potential to strengthen global measurement of SDG targets, it may want to consider increasing its visibility in the project's documents and results framework.

Summary:

- Evidence is present on PMIS for STOs, for example for Zambia, and some of the data support reporting against IO indicators, for example for Mauritius.
- There are weaknesses in the evidence base, for example for results reported in Tuvalu. Some useful evidence, for example consultation reports with member countries, is not included in PMIS but should be stored centrally with other project evidence.
- The project team has strong internal M&E processes but would benefit from support in formalising some of the data collection from its M&E work to strengthen the evidence base.
- Model Indicators work would benefit from greater recognition in project documents to strengthen the ability of the Secretariat to measure the impact of its leadership on this global piece of work.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Strengths and weaknesses in supporting the project
Clear project rationale and results linked to the Strategic Plan*	Yes	Clearly outlined in the PDD, demonstrating the link to the Strategic Plan, and highlighting the links between the project's aims and the SDGs
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	Yes	The project's indicators include SMART elements with the exception of being time-bound
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence	Yes	
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	Yes	The Secretariat's standard MEL plan as introduced during the 2019 PDD appraisal process
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	Yes	The team holds internal M&E workshops every six months to review progress, identify challenges, identify innovations and new ways of working, look at monitoring/reporting (including internal reporting) and discuss evidence and impact.

One of the challenges the team described with M&E is that much of what it does is informal, for example short conversations that are not documented or brief email feedback vs. the more formal mechanisms, such as meeting with a member country representative to gather feedback and sending out surveys to users of the Model Indicators and Toolkit to gather their feedback - but that all of these data feed into iterative development processes in its work. The team commented that it could be better at documenting all of its MEL, and the feedback it receives, but that the main challenge is low staff numbers. The MEL plan created by SPPD for the 2019 PDD appraisal process was mentioned as a useful tool for it to document all of its MEL processes.

4. Funding & expenditure (data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
Maximising the Development Potential of Sport	486,000	399,000	642,000	483,000

5. Project staffing

Number of staff committed to the project for 2017/18	Actual number of positions filled in 2017/18	Number of project staff budgeted for in 2018/19	Actual number of budgeted positions filled in 2018/19
4.6 1. Head (1) 2. Programme manager (0.6) 3. YP (1) 4. Project manager for Model Indicators project (1) 5. Administrative assistant (1)	**3.2** 1. Head (1) 2. Programme manager (0.6) 3. YP (1) 4. Administrative Assistant (0.6)	**4.6** 1. Head (1) 2. Programme manager (0.6) 3. YP (1) 4. Project manager for Model Indicators project (1) 5. Administrative assistant (1)	**3.2** 1. Head (1) 2. Programme manager (0.6) 3. YP (1) 4. Administrative assistant (0.6)
Any additional comments: The project manager for the Model Indicators Project budgeted for at the start of 2018/19 has been excluded from the number of actual positions filled in 2018/19 as the position was only filled late in Q4.			

6. Partnership

Partner	Description of partnership and contribution to project
UNESCO	UNESCO platforms leveraged to promote the Commonwealth's leadership on sport and the SDGs, e.g. UNESCO MINEPS VI process
UNDESA	UNDESA (along with UNESCO, academic experts and member countries) sits on the steering group for the Model Indicators project (STO 3.2). Steering committee members are also assisting to pilot the indicators and support their development
AU	Key supporting role

Partner	Description of partnership and contribution to project
International Olympic Committee (IOC)	Championing the Secretariat's work on the Model Indicators
Sportanddev.org and Australian Government	Support to develop a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) for SDP, including the expert reference group
Commonwealth Youth Sport for Development and Peace Working Group	Support to development of a MOOC for SDP, including the expert reference group
Centre of Sport and Human Rights	
University of South Pacific	Key supporting role
Durham University	Implementing partner: *pro bono* support in the production of policy papers
Swinburne University	Key support role in pro-bono technical support
Commonwealth Sports Movement and Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF)	Leverages CGF aligned messaging on maximising the potential of sport as a development tool in the Commonwealth along with its focus on strengthening governance across its member associations, and proactive leadership on sport and human rights issues. Also supporting the MOOC for SDP
Swiss Academy for Development	Policy and good practice support

The team described how the SDP sector relied on partnerships, and the value of partners such as the IOC and CGF supporting the work of the Secretariat on the Model Indicators project, acting as political champions for it and helping drive this work forward.

The team also described how it had been able to leverage the need for higher education institutions to demonstrate policy impact, to obtain *pro bono* technical and advocacy support from these types of partners, including a *pro bono* evaluation of the first round of pilot work on the Model Indicators project. Also described was the leveraging of support of the Canadian and Japanese Governments to pilot the Model Indicators.

Using partnership to enhance credibility is also a strategy the team uses to raise the profile of the work.

In terms of ways in which the Secretariat could strengthen its partnership work, a suggestion was made to strengthen corporate partnerships.

One of the unfortunate limitations of the MTR was that the team did not receive partner contact details from this team in time to allow data collection through surveying before the data collection period closed. It would add value to the knowledge base of impact for this project if in future the Secretariat's MEL staff were to survey project partners.

7. Integration of CHOGM mandates

The project has not had to integrate CHOGM mandates.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this project review:

- KIIs and FGDs
- Zambia Case Studies on strategies to Strengthen the Coherence in the Governance of Sport, Ninth Commonwealth Ministers of Sport Meeting, March 2018
- SDP, Zambia case study, 2018
- Case study of the development of a national SDP strategy in Sierra Leone, 2017
- Measuring the Contribution of Sport to the SDGs, Discussion Paper for the UN Expert Group Meeting on 'Strengthening the Global Framework for Leveraging Sport for Development and Peace', June 2018
- Mauritius Sport for All Recommendation Report, 2018
- One Basotho through Sport and Recreation Recommendation Report (Lesotho), 2019
- Consultation Report, Jamaica Results Framework, 2019

- Six Monthly Monitoring and Evaluation Workshop Outline, Sport Team
- A manually produced qualitative review of the number of member countries that have adopted policies to use sport as an intentional approach to advancing sustainable development
- Letter from the Jamaican minister for culture, gender, education and sport expressing thanks for the Secretariat's support in building capacity in sport development and looking ahead to the development of a technical exchange programme, November 2018
- The Secretariat's Model Indicators Toolkit v1.0
- Requests for technical assistance from Bangladesh (expression of interest for technical support for development of National Sport Policy); Guyana (request for assistance in the formulation of the National Sport Policy); Jamaica; Rwanda (strategy for maximising the contribution of sport to national development); Sierra Leone (SDP); Sri Lanka (SDP); St Kitts and Nevis (design of the National Sport Policy)
- Mauritius: Budget statements from 2018/19 and 2019/20; news articles quoting the prime minister on the launch of the National Sport and Physical Activity Policy 2018–2028; materials from national sport policy and SDGs workshop held by the Ministry of Youth and Sport with support from the Secretariat in May 2019; and Voluntary National Review Report 2019 published by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Sport PE and PA and the SDGs Toolkit and Model Indicators_v3.0

Commonwealth Trade Competitiveness Programme (YXCWG1017)

Division: TDD

Strategic Outcomes that the project contributes to: More inclusive economic growth and sustainable development

1. Project model

The Trade Competitiveness Programme has five main areas of work through which it supports member countries to improve their trade competitiveness:

1. Diversification of export baskets and export destinations;
2. Improving market access through well-negotiated trade agreements;
3. Building trade competitiveness within services sectors through regulatory co-operation and reforms; facilitating investments in areas where limited supply capacities exist;
4. Developing comprehensive national trade policies;
5. Improving trade facilitation processes with the aim of lowering their cost of trading.

The Trade Competitiveness Programme aims to provide technical support in these five areas in a holistic fashion so that recipient member countries are fully enabled to effectively participate in global trade, in a manner that leads to generation of additional employment, especially for women and youth, and prosperity for the recipient country. The team focuses its work on countries with LIC status, and those with LMIC status looking to graduate to MIC status, and aims to support member countries to progress through these development pathways.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	4.1.1 Member countries have increased export diversification and improved market access 4.1.2. Member countries have improved National Trade Policy Frameworks 4.1.3 Member countries agree to approved regulatory frameworks to facilitate trade in services	4.1. Effective mechanisms for increased trade, employment and business growth

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	4.1.4 Member countries have improved capacity for facilitation of investments 4.1.5 Member countries make progress on improving trade facilitation	
Progress reported to date	4.1.1 **Three indicators all rated as fair progress in 2019** (see note below regarding relevance of indicators). Reporting highlights the adoption of NPNM by Grenada and Lesotho, as progress against the indicator for member countries adopting export diversification strategies. 4.1.2 **Two indicators rated as fair progress** (see note below) and missing data. Missing data are reported for the indicator measuring number of member countries that endorse trade policy recommendations. 4.1.3 **Two indicators rated as fair progress, although one indicator does not measure outcome-level change** (see note below). There are no narrative data for 2019, indicating that achievements relate to work were completed during a previous window. 4.1.4 **Three indicators rated as target met or exceeded, or fair progress. One indicator does not measure outcome-level change** (see note below). Indicator for number of countries that commit to investment facilitation plans is measured through submission of action plans to member countries, rather than description of commitment. Indicator measuring share of participants who report improved knowledge or skills is measured through facilitation of member countries to attend forums. 4.1.5 **Two indicators rated as fair progress or target met in 2019 although one indicator does not measure outcome-level change** (see note below). Progress for number of member countries that demonstrate commitment to implementing provisions of trade facilitation agreements is rated as fair progress, with the comment that a new work programme is being developed.	5 IO indicators: *Number of targeted member countries that improve market access through the effective implementation of export diversification strategies*, **fair progress** **Baseline 6; target 9; achieved 6** *Progress reported for 2019:* Grenada NPNM completed; Lesotho NPNM completed; Botswana NES completed; Belize scoping completed, project design agreed; Malawi initiated NES review, report completed, national stakeholder verification consultation completed; The Gambia NES update agreed but not initiated. The challenge with this indicator is that it is measuring improved market access, not adoption of export strategies. Adoption of export strategies is the STO Indicator for 4.1.1, and the data reported against the STO and the IO are the same but these are not IO-level outcomes. Belize and Grenada mentioned, although the update for Grenada repeats the adoption of NPNM reported for STO 4.1.1. *Number of (new) regulatory framework agreements among targeted/supported member countries that facilitate trade in services*, **fair progress** **Baseline 1; achieved 2** in 2019, though no narrative update given in this reporting window. Data from 2018 describe consultations on e-commerce strategy in Cameroon and EAC Ministers resolving issues on negotiations in trade in services and mutual recognition agreements. These results are not new regulatory frameworks though. The update is more relevant for STO 4.1.5.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
		Number of initiatives by member countries promoting intra-Commonwealth trade and investment co-operation **Baseline 0; target 6; achieved 3** Narrative cites Intra-Commonwealth SME Summit 28–29 May 2019. *Number of targeted/supported member countries that ratify and implement trade facilitation agreements* **Baseline 2; target 3; progress 2** Narrative cites development of an authorised economic operator work scheme for East African Community. In 2018, it is reported that the Commonwealth Small States Trade Finance Facility; India, Malta and Sri Lanka ministers; and Mauritius Cabinet Secretary signed Donor Agreement. *Number of member countries increasing intra-Commonwealth trade and investment as a result of Secretariat mechanisms* **Baseline 8; target 12; achieved 20** The narrative cites attendance at an intra-Commonwealth summit in 2019 on SME access to finance and digital inclusion for developing countries.
Evidence	Evidence uploaded on PMIS includes: • Letter from permanent secretary at Ministry of Economic Development, Planning and Trade in Grenada thanking the Secretariat for support in review of Grenada's NES • Press article from Botswana Daily News on the launch of Botswana's NES, quoting Investment, Trade and Industry Minister Ms Bogolo Kenewendo as saying the NES 'resonated well with the country's vision 2036 and National Development Plan 11'. The article mentions that the Secretariat had 'hand-held Botswana in the process to come up with the strategy' • Correspondence from the chief executive officer of the Lesotho National Development Corporation acknowledging the support of the Secretariat in the development of the NPNM scheme and describing the impact of this, such as identification of 21 new products for export, identification of new export destinations and potential increased trade revenue. Also highlights the completion of the country branding strategy and management framework with Secretariat support • Secretariat Trade Express issue 10 on Designing a National Brand Strategy for Lesotho (2019) and issue 9 on the Commonwealth Trade Finance Facility (2018) (PMIS)	

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	Reporting in 2019 on progress against the IO focuses on the 2019 Intra-Commonwealth trade summit and Grenada's NPNM report. A report of the summit, completed by GBS Africa, is included as evidence on PMIS but does not provide data that are useful in measure progress against the IO. For the evidence presented, the following observations are possible: **Grenada**: Evidence supports the input of the Secretariat in reviewing the NES but does not go as far as demonstrating adoption of an NPNM report. Progress reported is a better fit for an STO-level achievement rather than an IO-level change. **Botswana:** Evidence supports the reported role of the Secretariat in reviewing the NES and indicates that the member country has adopted the strategy. These data support achievement of 4.1.2, and theoretically could be expected to contribute towards achievement of IO indicator 1. **Lesotho:** Evidence in the form of member country feedback points to the support of the Secretariat to Lesotho in developing the NPNM report and describes the impact of this in identifying products for export. This outcome fits neatly into the Secretariat's results as an STO change.	

The results framework for this project aims to measure a variety of high-level policy changes impacting trade competitiveness at member country level, including at the TO level, improved national trade policy frameworks, increased export diversification, increased market access and improved capacity of the member country. At the IO level, the results framework aims to measure improvements in trade, as part of a broader indicator on trade, employment and business growth.

The team has undoubtedly been providing relevant support to member countries in line with the project model and with the aim of improving their trade competitiveness. The review finds some weaknesses in the structure of the project's results framework, however, and in the reporting and evidence provided.

A comparison of the data reported up to 2019 and the evidence base on PMIS shows that the Secretariat is able to evidence support to three member countries: Botswana, Grenada and Lesotho. This does not mean the support provided to other countries is not taking place, simply that the Secretariat has not been able to gather information to support this.

During data collection for this project, the team itself described its role as being able to undertake the pieces of work that have the potential to catalyse larger outcomes. These three changes described above fit this description, and are all evidenced as being the result of Secretariat contributions under this project. Each would benefit from being evidenced by further third-party data to track the progress of the changes as they move forward. Whether the team has the capacity to continue to follow this up is unclear, but in terms of identifying and tracking benefit to member countries this would be advisable.

Evidence of progress against other outcomes is weaker. For example, the review team could not locate evidence on PMIS for the progress reported at IO level with member countries Belize, The Gambia and Malawi. The narrative descriptions for progress with these member countries in 2019 suggests, when considered against the structure of this results framework, progress to date is more likely at the level of STOs rather than on IOs.

It would also have been helpful to see evidence for the progress reported for the Trade Finance Facility, such as the finalisation of donor agreements with member countries. It should be highlighted that this progress is reported at the IO level, whereas, according to the project's results framework, it is evidence of an STO-level change (STO 4.1.5; Number of member countries that demonstrate commitment to implementing provisions of trade facilitation agreements). Evidence is also not present for the reported consultations on an e-commerce strategy in Cameroon.

Finally, a review of the project's results framework and a comparison of this with the Secretariat's results chain highlight some structural weaknesses that are likely to affect the Secretariat's ability to measure progress effectively and report on STOs and IOs according to their own definitions:

- Of the three indicators for STO 3.1.1, two (number of technical assistance interventions delivered effectively and share of member countries receiving technical assistance that report satisfaction with the quality provided) measure activities or outputs related to delivery of technical assistance, not outcomes as per the Secretariat's own results chain. A similar weakness exists under STO 4.1.2 (one indicator), 4.1.3 (one indicator), 4.1.4 (one indicator) and 4.1.5 (one indicator). The project lead highlighted this type of weakness in the project's logframe during data collection for this review.
- One outcome identified as an STO in the results framework (4.1.1 member countries have increased export diversification and improved market access) is closer to an IO according to the Secretariat's definitions.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Strengths and weaknesses in supporting the project
Clear project rationale and results linked to the Strategic Plan*	Yes	
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	No	Not all indicators have baselines. Although the indicators are SMART in description, aside from the time-bound element, a number of STO indicators are measuring results defined as being lower in the Secretariat's results chain (see note below) Intermediate outcome indicators are SMART but data are lacking for these. There are five, is this too many?
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence		The logframe lists MOV and source documents. MEL could be strengthened by gathering a greater number of these
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	Yes	The Secretariat's standard MEL plan as introduced during the 2019 PDD appraisal process
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	No	The review did not identify evidence of a project level review and learning mechanism.

4. Funding & expenditure (data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
CFTC	435,700	404,607	476,876	451,800

5. Project staff levels (budgeted vs. recruited)

This section was designed to compare staff numbers in the team with staff numbers budgeted for. Information was requested from the team but was not forthcoming before data collection closed.

6. Integration of CHOGM mandates

The project has not had to incorporate specific new CHOGM mandates.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this project review:

- KIIs and FGDs
- Letter from permanent secretary at Ministry of Economic Development, Planning and Trade in Grenada thanking the Secretariat for support in review of Grenada's NES
- Press article from Botswana Daily News on the launch of Botswana's NES
- Correspondence from chief executive officer of the Lesotho National Development Corporation acknowledging the support of the Secretariat in the development of Lesotho's NPNM scheme
- Correspondence from Lesotho highlighting completion of the Country Branding Strategy and Management Framework with Secretariat support
- Secretariat Trade Express issue 10 on Designing a National Brand Strategy for Lesotho (2019)
- Secretariat Trade Express issue 9 on the Commonwealth Trade Finance Facility (2018)

A Resilient Blue Commonwealth: Blue Charter (YNCWG1051)

Division: ONR

Strategic Outcome that the project contributes to: 4.4 More inclusive economic growth and sustainable development

1. Project model

This project is an action-oriented implementation vehicle to enable co-operate towards attainment of ocean-related commitments, with a particular focus on the SDGs, especially SDG 14 (ocean). Priorities and actions are member-driven, facilitated by the Secretariat and led by Commonwealth Blue Charter Champion countries. Member countries are invited to (co-)lead a Blue Charter Action Group on a topic of interest to them. The Blue Charter team described this model as assisting and expediting countries in their desire to address priority issues in relation to the ocean; generally these arise from national, regional or international commitments, targets and agreements.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	4.4.8 Member countries' national institutions have improved ability to develop integrated marine management policies and activities that comply with the social, legal and economic principles contained within the Commonwealth Charter 4.4.9 Improved Blue Charter project performance	4.4 Sustainable development of marine, other natural resources, including 'blue economies'
Progress reported to date	**4.4.8** Number of national institutions with improved capacity to deliver on Blue Charter implementation programme, **target 6, stated as fair progress** *Results reported on PMIS as:* Australia, Canada and the UK have integrated their Blue Charter Action Groups into their budgets and planning. Other Action Group countries have been much slower than expected to integrate Blue Charter into their budgets. Four-day All Champs Meeting in June 2019 enhanced capacity of all 12 Champion countries to deliver the Blue Charter.	**4.4** Number of supported member countries making demonstrable progress in defining, planning, protecting, managing or developing their ocean space, **target 4, stated as on track** *Results reported on PMIS as:* The UK has announced desire to protect 30% of its waters by 2030. A side event to All-Champs, co-hosted by UK and Seychelles, discussed marine protection. Further, the UK announced £61.4 million funding as

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
	Review summary: Third-party verification improved capacity to deliver on Blue Charter implementation Programme is available for the UK (secretary of state for international development) and Canada (minister of fisheries) An internal summary report from the All Champs meeting highlights that this, which brought together 28 representatives and 12 champion countries across 9 action groups, was a key way to build and enhance capacity. It also notes examples shared from the Action Groups where they have initiated convening of Action Group members to facilitate learning and strength capacity (e.g. New Zealand). **4.4.9** (measuring share of results indicators with (at least) satisfactory progress), **target 0, fair progress** *Results reported on PMIS as:* All indicators are on track but progress overall slower than anticipated.	part of the support to the Action Group on marine plastics to help Commonwealth countries stop plastic from entering oceans. Vanuatu has announced bans on various single-use plastic items. Canada has announced that no industrial activities will be allowing in its marine protected areas. Kenya has developed blue economic development policies. *Review summary:* Third-party verification was available of these results in the UK (UK Government source), Vanuatu (foreign minister of Vanuatu), Canada (external source) and Kenya (external source).
Evidence	There is recognition from the team that evidence and MEL to date has not been systematically built into the project. However, following the All Champs meeting in June 2019, there is commitment and progress to start to build a MEL framework. The Blue Charter team itself acknowledges that it is 'probably not as methodical as we should be' in this area.	

The project has a succinct amount of STOs and one IO, with the majority of the PDD target ratings at STO level showing fair progress, and that the project is on track to meet its IO. The Blue Charter team highlighted that delivery was currently on track.

It is clear that the Blue Charter is making solid progress towards STOs and their one IO. However, the one IO for this project is broad (developing/planning/protecting/managing or developing a member country's ocean space), meaning many results can be claimed as achievements under this IO. Further, without a robust MEL framework underpinning this project, it will be difficult for the project to ascertain the causal link between the work of the Blue Charter and the national ocean commitments that are currently surfacing, and to understand what the Secretariat has contributed to these results and what can be attributed to it.

M&E statements for the project do show the intention - for example follow up 'with national institutions to determine if content from the tool kits and training has been used in ocean management decision taking and policy making', answering questions such as "Has information/processes been implemented in-country?" This may involve remote questionnaires and missions to key action group member countries, and attendance at the action group's annual meetings' (M&E section in PDD).

Further, feedback from the team suggests delivery to date has been hampered by lack of coherent and supportive internal systems, as well as a lack of resourcing (both financial and in terms of capacity). Issues around capacity for this project are particularly pertinent given significant delays getting people in post, with an adverse effect on delivery to date.

The overall assessment of this project is that strong progress is being made towards STO-and IO-level change, therefore the project is making fair progress.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Comments
Clear project rationale and results linked to the Strategic Plan*	Yes	There is a clear project rationale with clear links to the Strategic Plan
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	Yes	IO-level indicator is very broad, thus covering an expansive area of change. There are some targets missing, and all baselines are set to zero
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence	In part	The MOV stated for this project are as follows: number of national institutions that have: • Participated in Action Groups • Received toolkits • Attended trainings It is noted that there are no third-party MOV included
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	In part	There is currently some limited M&E information in the PDD. No MEL plan was available. However, there is evidence of clear plans to strengthen MEL in the project
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget (4%)	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	Yes	Example of a learning mechanism evident in the Champions meeting in June 2019, where there was space for all groups to determine lessons learnt, as well as development of the online platform for action groups to engage and learn

4. Funding & expenditure (£ data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
EBR			501,355	231,752
CFTC	155,284	40,236		

5. Project staffing

	Number of project staff committed	Actual number of positions filled
2017/18	NA	NA
2018/19	Approx. 3.5 FTE: 2 existing adviser positions (%of their time) + 2 new positions explicitly for the Blue Charter	Approx. 2.0 FTE: 2 existing advisers worked more on the Blue Charter than anticipated because the 2 new positions were not filled until the last months of the financial year.

6. Partnership

Partner	Description of partnership and contribution to project
Nekton	Scientific research project that shares Blue Charter data
Bloomberg Philanthropies	Currently facilitating the holding of events
ACU	Oversees the fellowship programme
Member countries	Lead for the Action Groups

6. Integration of CHOGM mandates

The CHOGM mandate is clearly integrated as this project resulted from CHOGM 2018.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this project review report for the Blue Charter.

- KIIs and FGDs
- BTORs
- Commonwealth Blue Charter All Champions Meeting outcome report, June 2019
- Commonwealth Blue Charter 2019
- Commonwealth Blue Charter: Shared Values, Shared Ocean: A Commonwealth Commitment to Work Together to Protect and Manage Our Ocean, 2018
- Blue Charter International Commitments
- Action Group Member List, March 2019
- Annual Results report A, 2018/2019
- Media coverage
    - https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/government-of-canada-invests-in-commonwealth-blue-charter-action-group-885417717.html
    - https://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2019-02-27.HL14106.h&s=waste
    - https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-takes-step-forward-in-global-marine-protection
    - https://bluecharter.thecommonwealth.org/if-vanuatu-can-ban-single-use-plastics-so-can-other-commonwealth-countries/
    - https://www.sciencetimes.com/articles/20829/20190427/canada-bans-industrial-activities-surrounding-marine-protected-areas.htm
    - (https://www.gov.uk/government/news/commonwealth-unites-to-end-scourge-of-plastic)

Improved Access to Climate Finance (YBAFR1045)

Division: EPD

Strategic Outcome that the project contributes to: Strengthened resilience of small and other vulnerable states, including adaptation and mitigation against climate change

1. Project model

This programme seeks to improve access to climate finance for small and other vulnerable Commonwealth countries through a combination of direct long-term technical assistance; evidence-based research; and advocacy to influence the international climate finance architecture. This will be delivered through mutually reinforcing activities where the Secretariat can add particular value to national, regional and international initiatives. The project is expected to improve and strengthen the climate resilience of these countries. The emphasis is on helping member countries strengthen their capacity to build resilience to the impacts of climate change. The project also aims to support the mobilisation of climate finance, particularly to translate climate targets into climate action.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	5.3.1 Improved capacities of Commonwealth climate-vulnerable states to access climate finance	5.3 Improved access to Climate Finance, which has two subsequent indicators
Progress reported to date	**5.3.1** Number of CFAH-supported Nationally Designated Authorities (NDAs) that make measurable progress in preparing, developing and submitting climate financing proposals, **target 5, met or exceeded** *Results reported on PMIS as:* The project has made progress in supporting NDAs in 6 countries. *Review summary:* It is evident that there has been support to 6 countries in assisting them to prepare, develop and submit climate finance proposals. Third-party verification of this support is available for: • Jamaica (minister of foreign affairs) • Antigua and Barbuda (director of the Department for Environment) • Mauritius (minister of foreign affairs) Internal confirmation of this support is available from • Barbados (climate finance adviser) • Namibia (climate finance adviser) • Tonga (climate finance adviser) **5.3.1** Number of member countries that use the Secretariat as a delivery partner for climate finance readiness, **target 1, missing or insufficient data** *Results reported as: No* targets for 2018/19 on this. *Review summary:* This support is particularly around the Green Climate Access hub, and no results were reported. **5.3.1** Number of climate finance readiness actors that complete refresher training and successfully troubleshoot any gaps in knowledge, **target 4, target met or exceeded**	**5.3** Number of member countries accessing international climate finance (and/or readiness finance) owing to Secretariat interventions, **target 8, fair progress** *Results reported on PMIS as:* During this reporting period, through the support of the CFAH, an additional country, Antigua and Barbuda, was able to secure international climate funds. The national climate finance adviser deployed by the Secretariat provided assistance to draft the funding proposal, for the Enhanced Direct Access Project, in addition to participating in negotiations with the Green Climate Fund. *Review summary: A*nalysis found internal confirmation to show that Jamaica, Mauritius and Antigua and Barbuda had accessed climate finance funds supported by the Secretariat intervention. **5.3** Value of climate finance (US$ millions) accessed by supported member countries, **target 20, target met or exceeded** Results reported on PMIS as: The CFAH has achieved its annual target by mobilising an additional US$20 million, bringing the total amount of funds secured through the intervention of national climate finance advisers deployed through the Hub to US$27.3 million with another approximate U$492 million in the pipeline. *Review summary:* The Annual Results Report 2018/19 states that US$25.4 has been raised, and the following breakdown is available: • Jamaica: US$0.6 million (externally verified) • Mauritius: €0.2 million (internally claimed) • Antigua and Barbuda: US$20 million (externally verified)

	Short-Term Outcomes	Intermediate Outcomes
	Results reported as 25 staff members of the Coastal Zone Management Unit in Barbados. *Review summary:* There is anecdotal evidence that this training took place but no third-party evidence to verify the 25 staff in Barbados were trained and successfully troubleshoot any knowledge gaps.	While the team has given a verbal update on the figures, with reference to a tracking sheet, no evidence was available to the review team to verify this information.
Evidence	At the IO level, measuring progress towards IO achievement for the one IO indicator – number of member countries accessing international climate finance (and/or readiness finance) owing to CFAH interventions – could be problematic in the sense of understanding what part of access to the international climate finance was down to the CFAH. The team highlighted that this was a crowded space in terms of actors working with member countries to access climate financing, so attribution could be problematic. The second IO - value of climate finance (US$ millions) accessed by supported member states - is much easier to measure, and the team stated that it had a tracking sheet to measure all secured funds; however, this was not made available to the review team. There is verification of this figure in the 2018/19 Annual Results Report. The assessment of 'target met or exceeded' is fair, and with a reported additional approximately US$492 million in the pipeline it is clear that this target will be surpassed. The overall evidence base is fair for this project, and the team acknowledges that this is an area that needs to be developed further to be able to show what actual changes are taking place in member countries as a result of this project. One partner for this project specifically highlighted the ways it perceived this initiative to be collecting evidence: (i) funding secured, (ii) consistent engagement from partners and potential funders; (iii) the draft PDD, which contains a fully-fledged business plan for the service.	

This project has a range of STO and IO indicators being tracked, with the PDD target rating the majority as target met or exceeded for STOs and IOs.

The Climate Finance team highlighted that delivery and results were currently on track and there was an internal perception that very good progress was being made against targets. The team specifically highlighted the long-term nature of change through the programme model, and that changes in this area (i.e. from placing an adviser in country, building capacity within that country, often having to support changes in national policies to enable access to international climate finance, to then preparing proposals, going through the proposal process and securing the funds) take time to mature.

Through this review, the following is observed. Solid progress is being made across most of the STOs for this project, specifically enabled through the placement of climate finance advisers in country (currently nine in place). Mostly internal evidence is available to verify results at the STO level, with some third-party evidence available through high-level officials talking about the results (e.g. the MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN Jamaica highlighting the support provided through the Climate Access Hub).

The overall assessment of this project is that strong progress is being made towards STO-and IO=level change, therefore the project is making fair progress.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Strengths and weaknesses in supporting the project
Clear project rationale and results linked to the Strategic Plan*	Yes	There is a clear rational for this project which links directly to the Strategic Plan
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	Yes	The STO and IO indicators for this project were SMART, all baselines were set to 0, results statements were clear
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence		The MOV as stated in the PDD were: • Reports from National Advisers • CFAH reports/Secretariat desk reviews and country reports It is noted that there are no third-party MOV.
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	Yes	MEL plan in place; however, this was an area the team said could benefit from strengthening, particularly through a mechanism to share learning generated from this bespoke model
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	No	KIIs highlighted that capacity constraints had limited capturing and sharing innovative learning from the project. The team saw this as a significant gap. This review noted that opportunities to share learning had emerged from this initiative in the global arena, through: • The Commonwealth Secretary-General and Government of Mauritius joint side-event at UNFCCC COP 23, featuring a high-level round table panel discussion, where participants shared experiences, challenges and lessons learnt about accessing climate finance • A Climate Finance Symposium in May 2019 with 70 officials and representatives from 30 member countries to share lessons about the Climate Finance Initiative

4. Funding & expenditure (£ data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

Project	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
Climate finance	1,695,000	1,060,000	1,959,000	1,189,000

In the FGD, the team said the annual underspends were down to two vacancies in the project not being filled, suggesting annual underspends are predominantly on staff costs.

5. Project staffing

Number of staff committed to the project for 2017/18	Actual number of positions filled in 2017/18	Number of project staff budgeted for in 2018/19	Actual number of budgeted positions filled in 2018/19
3	3	5	2
Any additional comments: The 2017/18 financial year started off (July 2017) with 2 staff committed; this had increased to 3 by September 2017. In January-June 2018, 1 position (head, climate change) was filled on a temporary part-time basis with a consultant, after which it lay vacant throughout the 2018/19 financial year. Thus only 2 full time-staff were fully committed to the project from around November 2017 to August 2019.			

6. Partnership

Partner	Description of partnership and contribution to project
Government of UK, Mauritius and Australia	Funders and give in kind support to the project
Rocky Mountain Institute	Strategic partner who has supported the design and implementation of the climate finance service
Green Climate Fund	Funding body, and support to technical advisers in proposal development

The model of the CFAH was highly acclaimed by Paul Bodnar, Rocky Mountain Institute Director: 'The Commonwealth has developed one of the most innovative interventions anywhere in the world – the Climate Finance Access Hub.'

7. Integration of CHOGM mandates

The climate finance project is linked specifically to a CHOGM mandate, specifically the 2015 Climate Finance CHOGM mandate.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this project review report for Climate Finance:

- BTORs
- KIIs and FGDs
- Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Results Reports (2017–2018 and 2018–2019)
- Partner feedback from the Rocky Mountain Institute
- Mauritius: Delivery Plan 2017/18: Progress Update
- Press coverage:
  - https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/commonwealth-climate-finance-access-hub-poised-go-global
  - https://thecommonwealth.org/climate-finance-access-hub-jamaica
  - https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/p15567_ESSD_COP23_Regen_Dev_Flyer_S_Ngetich_V10_Screen.pdf
  - https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/antigua-and-barbuda-destined-climate-finance-success
  - http://www.commonwealthcbc.com/news/barbados-seeks-commonwealth-help-with-climate-finance
  - https://thecommonwealth.org/climate-finance-access-hub-steering-committee-meets-mauritius
  - https://thecommonwealth.org/climate-finance-access-hub-tonga
  - https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/blog-four-ways-jamaica-boosting-private-sector-engagement-climate-action

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (YGCOM1023)

Division: GDR

Cross-cutting outcomes that the project contributes to: Gender equality and the empowerment of women integrated in the Secretariat's policies, frameworks, programmes and projects

1. Project model

The project aims to ensure gender is mainstreamed in the Secretariat's own internal policies, structures, processes, systems, operations and programmes of assistance. In this way, it works towards the achievement of gender equality as a means of supporting democracy, peace, sustainable development and poverty eradication in member countries.

This project is attempting to mainstream gender internally through the project model described in the PDD, and to support member countries to integrate gender issues in the development of national policies, frameworks and development programmes for the enhancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The support to member countries is on a demand-driven basis.

2. Progress to date and evidence

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
Outcomes targeted	A.2.1 Secretariat staff applying gender analysis skills to project design, implementation, monitoring and reporting A.2.2 Organisational systems and process mainstream gender A.2.3 Improved project performance	2. Gender mainstreaming/ gender equality and the empowerment of women integrated in the Secretariat's policies, frameworks, programmes and projects
Progress reported to date	**A.2.1** has two indicators: • Share of portfolio demonstrating an improved gender analysis, **target 25, stated as fair progress** • Share of projects upholding gender mainstreaming standards, **target 15, stated as poor progress** Results reported in PMIS for both indicators as: All projects have a section on gender mainstreaming that must be completed as part of the project development process and 15 sections sought the assistance of the Gender team to strengthen this component by year end 2019. Other results noted under this STO but not reported in PMIS are the development of a Gender Results Framework, with evidence available to show that such a tool has been developed for 10 projects. Following the recent gender audit, over half of survey participants (53%) said they built gender analysis into their programme planning and implementation but 26% said they did not do so.	2 has one indicator: Share of Secretariat policy outputs that address gender equality and the empowerment of women, **target 20, stated as fair progress** Results reported in PMIS for this enabling outcome highlight that analyses of five Ministerial Communiqués were conducted, from the Ministers Meetings on Finance; Youth; Law and Attorneys General; Education; and Health. The analysis revealed a mixed picture, with some evidence of gender analysis in the subjects considered but continuing disparity in attendance both at Ministerial and Senior Official and Speakers' level. See separate section below.

	Short-Term Outcomes	Enabling Outcomes
	A baseline is missing for both projects. Evidence is collected to measure changes on the first indictor for this STO through a scan of the Secretariat's portfolio for evidence of gender mainstreaming through the planning and project cycle. No data were made available to the review team to show how this scan took place, and what data gave the fair rating status. A.2.2 Number of Secretariat systems and processes that comply with gender policy and guidelines, **target 2, stated as fair progress**. Results reported in PMIS as: The Gender Equality Policy was approved by SMC in the last quarter of the financial year (2019). Baseline data is missing. As the policy has just been approved (last quarter of FY 2018/2019), it is too early to assess compliance with this policy. Thus, this STO should not be rated as 'fair progress'. **A.2.3** Demonstrated progress in implementing gender mainstreaming in the Secretariat, **target 1, fair progress** Results reported in PMIS are the same as for STO A.2.1. Other data on this STO include that in the Gender Audit in 2019 60% of survey respondents highlighted that Secretariat staff did not have the necessary knowledge and skills to mainstream gender into their work. Baseline data is missing.	
Evidence	**The evidence available on PMIS is:** • 12WAMM policy paper on gender mainstreaming • Gender Audit Report from the Secretariat • Letter/email request from member countries • Mission reports • Technical assistance reports • Gender Equality Policy for the Secretariat, 2019 • BTOR Data from KIIs and FGDs highlight that the evidence base for gender mainstreaming work is weak. Anecdotal evidence was cited by the team for an increase in capacity as a result of trainings given in Tonga, but the team itself stated that this support to Tonga was on an 'activity'-based basis, which does not lend itself to building the evidence base for the changes that have occurred as a result of the intervention. The team particularly flagged that a reduction in its budget had meant that the emphasis of delivery had been on an activity-by-activity basis, with limited capacity to build the evidence base. There was a lack of evidence from third parties available for this project.	

PDD YGCOM1023 has a range of STO and Enabling Outcome indicators being tracked, with the PDD target rating all STOs bar one and the Enabling Outcome as fair progress.

The Gender team highlighted that delivery and results were currently emerging at the STO level, and any results at the Enabling Outcome level would take longer to surface. Through this review, the following is observed:

Gender mainstreaming

Positive steps have been taken to mainstream gender internally through the following outputs: development of an internal gender mainstreaming e-learning course; training 35 staff members on gender-sensitive indicators; and getting the Gender Policy approved and drafting the guidelines for it. Through the Gender Results Framework, it is observed that further embedding of gender across Secretariat teams could be enabled; however, the 10 Gender Results Frameworks have not yet been fully embedded in the teams, so progress cannot be assessed. The Gender team flagged that internal gender mainstreaming was very much a work in progress and was 'quite challenging to do halfway through a programme that has already been rolled out'.

The recent Gender Audit (2019) highlights critical gaps internally, with 60% of survey respondents saying that Secretariat staff did not have the necessary knowledge and skills to mainstream gender into their work. The team itself stated that, 'There's very little to demonstrate that gender mainstreaming is effective or is happening as an organisation.' A similar finding was found in the recent Democracy Evaluation: 'The majority of the Secretariat's interventions still do not take account of gender considerations, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of respondents interviewed stated that they saw no specific gender components in the interventions with which they were involved.'

Internal project data were weak in terms of showing the extent to which Secretariat teams have been mainstreaming gender over the past two years. However, feedback from the team, as well as the review team's analysis of internal Secretariat-wide reporting, (including the Six-Month Reports and Annual Results Reports), highlights the additional following results where gender has been integrated into delivery models and results of Secretariat teams:

- Support provided in collaboration with UN Women in the Levelling the Law initiative was verified by a third-party source from UN Women.
- As a consequence of CVE Unit advocacy, the Tanzanian Police Force Training College has advised that it will begin taking steps to increase women's participation in its courses and increase women's representation in college instructor and leadership positions (Six-Month Report July–December 2018).
- Gender mainstreaming has been pursued through equitable gender representation on COGs, through ensuring (where possible) gender experts are present on COGs and through the production of knowledge products on gender (including the Gender Checklist for Elections; and the Handbook on Gender-Inclusive Elections in Commonwealth Africa) (Annual Results Report 2018–2019).
- The CEP project aims to foster equality and inclusion in the development of staff of election management bodies. The requirement of a gender balance in training and networking opportunities has the purpose of ensuring upskilling junior and mid-level female election management body staff to progressively attain senior positions in the institution. Gender equality and inclusion issues are also part of the training programme to ensure participants practice inclusion in the convening and management of electoral processes (Annual Results Report 2018–2019).
- The Secretariat's CVE Unit has included women's organisations, such as the International Civil Society Action Network for Women's Rights, Peace and Security, in its cadre of experts that provide guidance to its co-operation with member-countries. Gender-sensitive activities have included training in Trinidad and Tobago on gender dynamics in CVE and facilitation of a workshop on countering the narratives that terrorist and extremist organisations use to recruit women (Annual Results Report 2018–2019).
- In Cameroon, the CVE Unit has engaged with civil society and officials to understand the factors that drive women to violent extremism (Annual Results Report 2018–2019).

- In Guyana and Jamaica, the CVE Unit has supported workshop sessions that explore gender paradigms and their relationship to gang and extremist violence. As a consequence of CVE Unit advocacy, the Tanzanian Police Force Training College has advised that it will begin taking steps to increase women's participation in its courses and to increase women's representation in college instructor and leadership positions (Annual Results Report 2018-2019).
- The September 2018 issue of Commonwealth Trade Hot Topics, a publication by the Secretariat's International Trade Policy team, explored the possibility of incorporating gender issues into multilateral trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization, as well as discussing the likely implications for LDCs, small and vulnerable economies and sub-Saharan African countries.

Because of the weak evidence base, an assessment cannot be made as to whether the impetus for these examples resulted from specific gender mainstreaming actions. However, what can be noted through these observations is that the wider Secretariat is taking steps to integrate and mainstream gender into some of its programming.

Gender mainstreaming in member countries

At the output level, there is reported support to Tonga and Mauritius. The Secretariat's Gender team supported the delivery of gender mainstreaming training for Tonga's Public Service Commission staff from government ministries. This was delivered in response to a gender audit of the Commission and focused on providing participants with a clear understanding of gender equality and social inclusion in the context of their work and developing capability for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming. Thirty-eight civil servants attended.

The Report on the Capacity Strengthening: Training on Gender with Public Service Commission, Tonga, highlights that the training was well received, but there is no evidence to suggest what the impact of the training was.

In addition, the team highlighted that the demand-led model of the technical assistance, whereby a government requests assistance on a specific matter, means it is not a long-term project, so evidence collection about the changes taking place in country is not currently built into programme delivery.

Because the budget is limited, the team has had to make a choice to focus on catalytic interventions in member countries to start the process to policy reform: 'We initiate the policy reform, and then that is how much our funds can take us.'

Summary

In the current Strategic Plan, gender mainstreaming is one of three 'cross-cutting outcomes', positioning gender to be integrated across the portfolio. Further, the ambition of this project is to mainstream gender also throughout internal policies, structures, processes, systems and operations, as well as to support member countries to integrate gender in their policies, frameworks and programmes.

Evidenced-based results at the Enabling Outcome level are limited. It is evident that, although activities are happening to enable this broader-level change, some results are just starting to materialise at the STO level, and results at the high level of change will take much longer to mature. However, there is a weak evidence base for this project. The overall assessment of this project is that fair progress is being made towards STO-level change but poor progress is being made at the overall Enabling Outcome level.

3. MEL approach

Components	Present?	Comments
Clear project rationale and results linked to the Strategic Plan*	Yes	There is a clear project rationale with clear links to the Strategic Plan
SMART indicators with baselines and targets underpinning clear results statements	Yes	All the indicators at STO level and Enabling Outcome level, apart from A.2.3, are SMART. Baselines were missing for all

Components	Present?	Comments
Robust and sensible MOV, source and methodology for gathering evidence	In part	The MOV for this project are limited with no third-party source mentioned. There is a critical gap in evidence mechanisms available for this project, in both the internal gender mainstreaming work and the mainstreaming support to member countries. Training reports and BTORs are available to demonstrate that the events actually took place, but there is no apparent method for collecting the evidence about the change that the project intended to bring about as a result of the interventions
Time-bound monitoring plan including roles, responsibilities and resources	No	No MEL plan available. This was an area where the team acknowledged limited information is available
Monitoring budget (3%) and evaluation budget (4%)	Yes	
Review and learning mechanism	Limited	The recent internal Gender Audit could be considered in part a review; otherwise, there is no evidence of review and learning mechanisms within the project

4. Funding & expenditure (data sourced from the Secretariat's Finance department)

	2017/18 budget	2017/18 actual	2018/19 budget	2018/19 actual
ComSec	140,000	39,411	148,227	101,739
CFTC			36,404	19,091

5. Project staffing

	Number of project staff committed	Actual number of positions filled
2017/18	3	2
2018/19	3	3

6. Partnership

Partner	Description of partnership and contribution to project
UN Women	Co-operating at high level, Global Strategy on Levelling the Law to increase women's access to justice, and technical assistance to The Gambia

7. Integration of CHOGM mandates

Gender has been a recurring commitment from CHOGM (cited in 2018 and 2015) and this project is clearly responding to a CHOGM mandate.

The following were used as evidence sources in putting together this project review report for Gender:

- Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women Integrated in the Secretariat's Policies, Frameworks, Programmes and Projects (YGCOM1023) PDD
- Building Capacity on Gender Mainstreaming in the Commonwealth Secretariat, desk review and gender audit, 2019

- Annual Results Report, Report A, 2018–2019
  - 2018 (July to December) Six-Month Report
  - Annual Results Report, 2017–2018
  - 2017 (July to December) Six-Month Report
  - Gender Equality Policy for the Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019
  - 10 projects' Gender Results Framework's
  - Accelerating Gender Equality by Gender Mainstreaming, paper by the Commonwealth Secretariat, 2019
  - Gender Equality in the Commonwealth 2018/2019
- Final Report on Training on Gender-Sensitive Indicators, 2018
- Report on Capacity Strengthening Training on Gender with Public Service Commission, Tonga, 2018
- Commonwealth Secretariat Democracy Evaluation
- KIIs and FGDs
- BTORs
- https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/3/news-un-women-and-partners-launch-initiative-to-repeal-discriminatory-laws

Annex 5: Commonwealth Secretariat strategic results

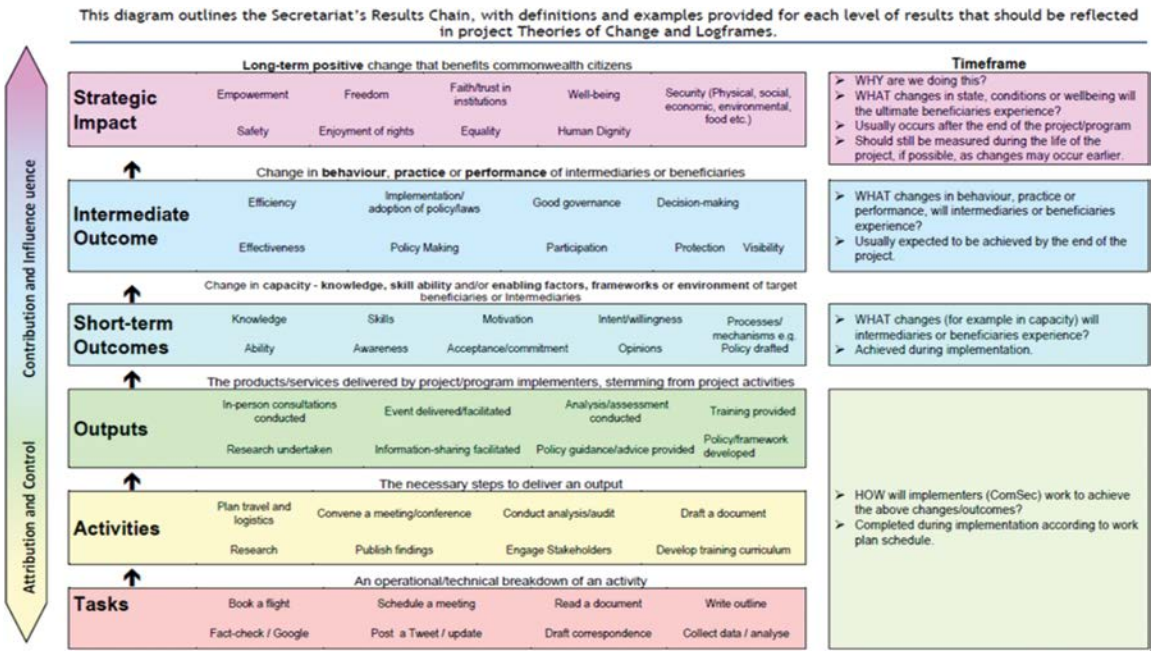
The outcomes matrix of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21 includes five strategic areas of work, each with a defined Strategic Outcome, and intermediate outcomes to be realised for member countries. The matrix also describes three Cross-Cutting Outcomes.

Strategic Outcomes	Democracy (Peace)	Public Institutions (Peace)	Youth and Social Development (People)	Economic Development (Prosperity)	Small and Other Vulnerable States (Planet)
	1. Greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles	2. More effective, efficient and equitable public governance	3. People of the Commonwealth fulfil their potential with dignity and equality in a healthy environment	4. More inclusive economic growth and sustainable development	5. Strengthened resilience of small and other vulnerable states, including adaptation and mitigation against climate change
Intermediate Outcomes	1.1 CMAG is well-informed and supported to protect and promote Commonwealth values and principles 1.2 Member states engaged with and benefit from strengthened Good Offices of the Secretary General 1.3 Member states conduct fair, credible and inclusive elections 1.4 Strengthened mechanisms of civil paths to peace in member states to counter violent extremism	2.1 Human Rights promoted and protected, and participation in the UN's UPR process improved 2.2 Rule of law strengthened and access to justice ensured for all 2.3 Improved public administration for good governance, and the prevention and elimination of corruption	3.1 Young people engaged and empowered to meaningfully participate in political and development processes 3.2 Sports contributes to sustainable development, health, and peaceful and just societies 3.3 Strengthened sustainable policies reduce disparities and improve health and education outcomes 3.4 Women, girls and other vulnerable groups empowered and protected against violence and harmful practices	4.1 Effective mechanisms for increased trade, increased access to trade, employment and business growth 4.2 Commonwealth positions, advanced in international development and financing mechanisms 4.3 National frameworks facilitate effective debt management 4.4 Sustainable development of marine, other natural resources, including 'blue economies'	5.1 International policies, mechanisms and rules are more responsive to small and other vulnerable states' development strategies and resilience needs 5.2 Increased resilience, adaptation and mitigation against climate change 5.3 Improved access to climate financing

Cross-Cutting Outcomes

i. Partnerships and Innovation: Strengthened partnerships and innovations to support member countries and Commonwealth organisations
ii. Gender Mainstreaming: Gender equality and the empowerment of women integrated in the Secretariat's policies, frameworks, programmes and projects
iii. Consensus Building: Member states achieve consensus and advance key priority issues

Annex 6: Commonwealth Secretariat results chain and definitions



Annex 7: Evidence sources in use across the project sample

Project	Elections	Blue Charter	Gender Mainstreaming	CVE	Climate Finance	Anti-Corruption	CCEM	Learning for Life	Trade Competitiveness	UN UPR	CYP	Sport
Evidence type												
Secretariat project reports or annual reports	Y	Y		Y		Y		Y		Y	Y	Y
Secretariat Annual Results Reports	Y			Y								
BTORs	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y			Y		Y	Y
Secretariat meeting/ workshop reports		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Reports of technical advisors placed in member country					Y			Y				
Participant feedback – satisfaction	Y		Y	Y		Y				Y		
Participant feedback – capacity changes				Y		Y				Y	Y	
Technical assistance requests from member countries	Y		Y							Y		Y
Technical assistance reports			Y						Y	Y		Y
Statements from leaders	Y					Y						Y
Statements from member country institutions (e.g. ministries)	Y			Y	Y						Y	Y
Member country policy documents and report											Y	Y
Commitments made by stakeholders		Y									Y	Y
Stakeholder meeting reports										Y	Y	Y
Training materials		Y	Y	Y								

Project	Elections	Blue Charter	Gender Mainstreaming	CVE	Climate Finance	Anti-Corruption	CCEM	Learning for Life	Trade Competitiveness	UN UPR	CYP	Sport
Press stories		Y			Y	Y	Y		Y	Y		
Blogs		Y										
Social media data		Y		Y							Y	
Secretariat policy papers/ documents			Y				Y	Y				Y
Secretariat toolkits								Y				Y
Secretariat publications									Y	Y		Y
Formal feedback from member countries/high commissions									Y	Y	Y	
Informal feedback from member countries/high commissions	Y			Y	Y					Y	Y	Y
Observations of agency/ institutions work practices				Y							Y	
Funding secured					Y							
Project or programme evaluations	Y		Y			Y	Y	Y			Y	
Partner reports										Y	Y	
International indices or ratings						Y						
Anecdotal information from partner				Y				Y		Y		

Annex 8: Survey data

This annex contains the raw data received by survey from partner organisations, Commonwealth high commissions and staff in the Secretariat's SMG. The surveys contained a mix of open and closed questions. It was not mandatory for respondents to answer all questions, therefore there is not an equal number of responses per question. In order to promote honest and open data collection, the review team informed respondents that their responses would be anonymised. We have therefore aimed to remove references to specific organisations, people or teams in this annex.

Survey of partner organisations

1. Can you describe how you have worked in partnership with the Secretariat
The [Partner Organisation] has received support from the Commonwealth Secretariat in the implementation of several initiatives, including: • Engaging with the Human Rights Council in Geneva (small grants to cover costs of participation for each Human Rights Council session) in 2019–20 ('UN Advocacy Initiative') • London conference for Parliamentarians in 2017 (with CPA UK, and WFD) • Workshop on 'Advocacy in the Commonwealth' 2016 • Support in arranging joint meetings with civil society representatives • Sharing information
Together we delivered a conference on human rights and rule of law in January 2017 which was very successful
Project on parliaments and human rights
Hub and Spokes Programme II (up to April 2019) through the attachment of a Regional Trade Adviser at the [Partner Organisation].
1. on the Standards for the Teaching Profession. 2. Commonwealth standards for leaders 3. the Commonwealth Secretariat provided support for the development of a Finance and Costing Plan for the [Partner Organisation] HRD 2030 Strategy
As an individual Advisor at [Partner Organisation] I have worked with ComSec on matters related to the High-Level Group on Justice for Women and Discriminatory Laws
The Commonwealth Secretariat provided support to the [Partner Organisation] on electoral reforms, by providing two experts to support the [Partner Organisation] on electoral reform activities with particular attention to the electoral process and boundaries delimitation
[Partner Organisation] has collaborated with the Commonwealth Secretariat on the design and implementation of the Climate Finance Access Service. The Commonwealth Secretariat has been a leading partner in this initiative, convening several international workshops and conferences, and also taking a leadership role in coordinating a network of organizations working to launch this initiative.
Served as observer for elections; Commonwealth has provided advice on best practices on electoral matters; Commonwealth has brought together Electoral Management Bodies to allow best practices to be shared and for support to be given to each other.
I took part as a Commonwealth Observer in the Tongan election 2017. I attended the CEN election training workshop in Samoa 2017. Staff from the Commission took part in training workshop recently in Solomon 2019. Commonwealth Observer groups took part in Nauru's elections 2016 and 2019.
As Head of Service in charge of political Cooperation in the [Partner Organisation] I have with permission of hierarchy coordinated and facilitated the holding of CVE Programmes in Cameroon.
Mandated by the [Partner Organisation] I serve as the Liaison officer in charge of issues with the Commonwealth and consequently the Focal Point of P/CVE. The above duties made me in essence a facilitator for the Commonwealth Secretariat within my ministry.

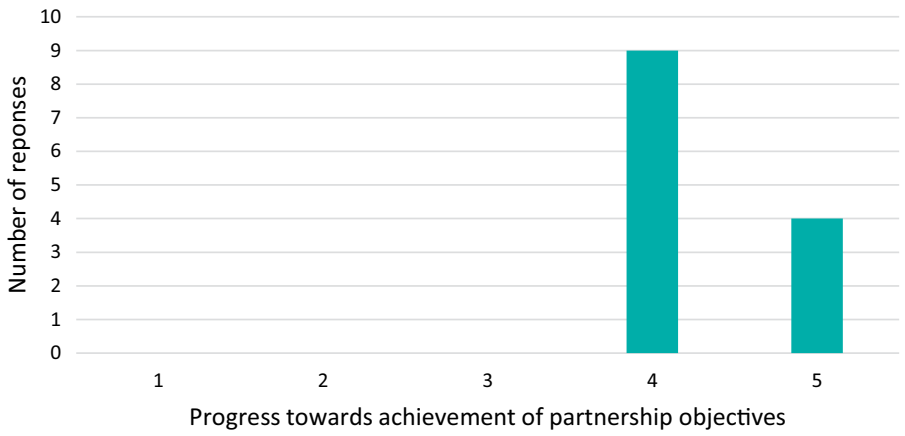
1. Can you describe how you have worked in partnership with the Secretariat
I have worked in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat through programmes conducted by the CVE Unit in [Member state].
[Partner Organisation] has worked with CWS through number of joint interventions, learning and advocacy on Youth Empowerment e.g. joint activities, programmatic work, awareness raising, support to Governments etc. The single most important was the policy guide on youth entrepreneurship which was the base for our project.
Serving as a lead officer when my country hosted the CCEM and subsequently servicing on various committees related to the education work of the Commonwealth Secretariat.
We have worked constructively with ComSec for over 15 years. Our main engagement has been in the field of education and with the education team, particularly in the context of CCEMs.
Contributed to the concept note, the TOR for consultant and attended the first advisory group meeting to co-construct a way forward.

2. Please briefly describe the inputs from different stakeholders to deliver this partnership or project.
Other stakeholders participated in meetings, provided inputs to documents and reports and also contributed financially
Development partners- provided the finances of the planned activities on the electoral reforms such as regional consultative workshops and a national validation workshop with stakeholders; Immense contribution from the Political Parties on their formation and operations; Media freedom and their role in elections
The Climate Finance Access Service has received inputs from several climate finance initiatives, developing countries, and donor countries and institutions. Partners have provided regular input to the program document (which describes the CFAS business model) and have also provided inputs through regular calls and meetings.
Inputs from Commonwealth have been helpful as there is now a network of electoral management bodies. Training for staff has also been done through the JEP program.
In 2017 a community workshop was held in Nauru to review the 2016 election including gender participation.
It a wonderful experience working with stakeholders from different fields. They've been so far very competent with impressive deliverables
The coordinated and highly professional expertise have always had a great output. Nevertheless, exploiting local expertise more and more will definitely have greater adherence to the projects and output
Concept Notes and Workshop Sessions
Both our agencies are conveners, so our job is actually to bring stakeholders together to share, learn and advance the agenda. Technical expertise drive our partnerships, evidence-based approaches to data, and policy work. We co-designed the latest joint activity in Singapore, brought together our partners to advise on how [Partner Organisation] should work on systemic design on Youth Employment.
Such work requires the input of stakeholder who understand and can speak to the education content, some material resources are required to host meetings and organisational skills are required to coordinate the events and activities.
Expertise, different perspectives and we particularly input our capacity and teacher's perspective.
Government colleagues recognize political constraints, some niche advocates are keen to promote specific sub-agendas of the ECE agenda, some offer international child development agenda, others reflect on the importance of parents and community in chid outcomes.

3. Why did you choose to work in partnership, and what have been the key learnings to date?
The [Partner Organisation], as a regional institution, is often required to support the efforts of Member States in the area of trade. However, there has always been constraints as to the level of support which could be provided by the Secretariat given its own capacity constraints. Collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat afforded the [Partner Organisation] the possibility of securing additional resources to support its trade outreach to Member States, though the Hub and Spokes Programme. The design of the programme and its management by the Commonwealth Secretariat worked well for the [Partner Organisation]. The implementation arrangements relieved the [Partner Organisation] of much of the administrative and financial oversight which such a programme entail.
1. Aligned priorities 2. The need for Continental approaches to educational development 3. The challenge of educational harmonization across contexts.
The issues mentioned in 1 cannot be achieved without partnerships and the lessons learned to date are that partnerships are important for securing gender equality results
1. learning from experiences of other electoral management bodies; best practices in elections and democratic governance
We chose to work with the Commonwealth Secretariat due to its experience in implementing the Climate Finance Access Hub. Key learnings include 1) improved understanding of the barriers that developing countries face in accessing climate finance, 2) improved understanding of the landscape of climate finance initiatives working to address this problem, and 3) the on-the-ground experiences of the CFAH climate advisors.
The experiences and knowledge from staff at the Commonwealth and their willingness to assist made us choose to work with them. Commonwealth is always ready to assist Commonwealth countries. Key learnings to date would be observation missions where you get to learn and also to see what our country is doing right and what can also go wrong. Basically, it allows you to learn from the experiences of others.
Promoting partnership with women, youth and disabled groups is the best way to ensure all are represented and participated in the elections. This has improved the number of voter attendance and women participation in politics. In fact, 2 women were elected in 2019 from the same Constituency for the first time.
To learn and gain experience on matters relating to preventing and countering violent extremism
In [member state], we say "A single hand cannot tie a pudding" that said, working in Partnership fosters the sharing of best practices. This have permitted my Government and Particularly my ministerial Department to acquire among other things the down to earth approach of handling issues.
I have chosen to work in this partnership as it is key in delivering the prevent strand of the Government's CT Strategy. The key learnings to date has been extremely extensive for implementation of measures in CVE for [Member state].
They have the ears and trust of the Governments. They have decades of Technical Expertise, they have the YDI that is the most prominent index available, they have networks and partnerships at all levels. The policy guides are so well done we have developed programmes based on them. A very holistic intervention from CWS.
Our view is that as a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, we ought to take an active role in whatever the Commonwealth puts forward. Additionally, we believe and have experienced the fact that the Commonwealth values the input of countries like ours...small, developing states which is not always the case in other global associations. Finally, the Commonwealth of Nations has been able to offer us concrete technical support which has assisted us with our work
It is important as ComSec adds value to our efforts and provides useful access to ministries of education
The commonwealth has strategic advantage to work directly with Ministers from across the globe, 53+countries, from high income to low income, hence the opportunity to influence HOW we expand the ECE agenda is powerful.

4. Why is partnering with the Secretariat of importance to your organisation?
The Commonwealth Secretariat is responsible for facilitating co-operation between members, organising meetings, including CHOGM, assisting and advising on policy development, and providing assistance to countries in implementing the decisions and policies of the Commonwealth. Partnership with the ComSec is particularly important to us, as the ComSec is able to facilitate access to diverse stakeholders across geographies, enable engagement and mobilisation of civil society on a range of rights issues. This, in turn, gives CSOs an opportunity to provide technical expertise, as in the case of us, punch above their weight and a voice at international Commonwealth platforms such as CHOGM, CLA, CPA, CJA, CW Peoples Forum, as well as UN mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council. We believe it is equally important for ComSec to partner with us, to ensure that all of its mandate is conducted within the framework and lens of human rights, and it is supported to hold Commonwealth nations to account for their human rights commitments.
Commonwealth Secretariat has been an incredible partner. The staff shows professionalism and is always keen to support our projects. I have worked with [Staff member] and I must say that he is an excellent colleague, very professional
Because the Commonwealth does very important work with developing countries, especially Small States, on human rights, rule of law and democracy
Collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat through the Hub and Spokes Programme enhances the [Partner Organisation] capacity to assist Member States in achieving economic growth through enhancement of their trade agenda.
Significantly- the partnership is aligned with the priorities of the region as well as wider global agendas. Increases impact on the ground where is counts.
Because they have a reach to all Commonwealth countries, all of which are also member states of the UN
As a member of the multi-national organisation, the Commission will benefit from the expertise of the Commonwealth in carrying out its mandate.
The Commonwealth Secretariat offers on-the-ground experience in working accelerate climate finance flows to developing countries. The Commonwealth Secretariat also offers a network of contacts among the 53 Commonwealth countries. Finally, the Commonwealth Secretariat has developed the operational structures to support embedded climate finance advisors.
Partnering is important as we are a Commonwealth country and the Secretariat brings together member states. This is the only opportunity that member states have to discuss together issues and address challenges as Commonwealth countries. Countries also have the opportunity to read articles published by the Secretariat as they are helpful to member countries.
The Commonwealth brings a wealth of knowledge and experience from a number of countries internationally. The lessons learnt from the experiences of these countries are valuable.
As a member country of the Commonwealth, partnership with the secretariat has strengthened cooperation.
Because of her efficiency in handling issues, the core values of the Commonwealth (the priority given to Youth empowerment and vulnerable), the commonwealth is part and forges Cameroon's cultural heritage.
It is extremely valuable to learn from the wide experience of the Commonwealth Secretariat based upon various inputs from Commonwealth nations that share similar situations to [member states].

5. On a scale of 1–5 (with 5 being the highest), please rate progress towards achievement of the partnership/project's target outcomes



6. Please describe and give examples of the main achievements of the project
Though the UN Advocacy Initiative, [Partner] has been able to more effectively engage with the UN human rights mechanisms, including the Human Rights Council, by being present in Geneva during the HRC sessions, participating and making interventions, written and verbal submissions. We have also engaged with Commonwealth Small States in Geneva and supported building their capacity to engage better with UN mechanisms. We were also able to provide full support to nine civil society representatives from the Pacific Islands who were funded to come to Geneva by the Australian Permanent Mission there for three sessions of the Human Rights Council this year. Through support by ComSec, [Partner Organisation] staff were able to attend in Geneva, and provide training sessions on advocacy with UN mechanisms, support throughout the one week visit, interactions with the CSSO, introductions to their and other permanent missions, including the UK and Australia, to the offices of the OHCHR, UNHCR and special procedures. In addition, meetings were arranged with Geneva-based INGOs, and there was engagement with the HRC through written and verbal submissions. As a result, the CSO representatives have continued to seek opportunities to engage at the international level with the aim of changing policies back home. One specific example are two representatives from Fiji who attended the 41st session of the HRC from separate CSOs - with their new knowledge of the UN human rights mechanisms and their potential impact, they are now engaging in the UPR process for Fiji through national level consultations and returning to Geneva for the UPR of Fiji this November. We have also convened meetings to support the sharing of good practice and lessons learned amongst civil society and States within the Commonwealth.
The conference went successfully; [Justin Petit] helped us to reach more members of parliament.
A first ever comprehensive assessment of the current role of parliaments in overseeing State compliance with international human rights obligations, and possible future roles
Improvement in trade facilitation resulting from assistance provided to assist policy makers in designing, implementing and monitoring regional trade facilitation reforms; Industrial development policy initiated through the development of a draft industrial policy; enhanced environment for trade in services intra-regionally through contribution to development of a Draft Regional Services Policy; Establishment of an institutionalised coordinated approach to donor funding for Trade Facilitation Agreement initiatives.
It is too early to measure impact given that this work took place in 2019. However, the collaboration will serve to enhance the quality of educational delivery in [Partner Organisation] CARICOM Member states all of which are members of the Commonwealth
The High-Level Group on Justice for Women produced a landmark report on justice for women which has been used as a resource in fora such as the HLPF and CSW

6. Please describe and give examples of the main achievements of the project
The reports of the experts most especially on the recommendations and suggestions on the part of the Commission has been in line with the original thoughts of the Commission
Main achievements include successful convenings at Marlborough House and at the Commonwealth's International Climate Finance Symposium. Additional achievements include the development of the CFAS program document and related program materials.
JEP programme has given officers the opportunity to network and learn from each other. Observers learn and support each other thereby building capacity. The project achieves building a strong team of electoral professionals as the task is not an easy one.
The recommendations from Observers reports were a catalyst towards our electoral reforms. E.g. partnering with community groups and legal framework to encourage equity and fair participation.
YTOT programmes, wherein many youths of all walks of life and from all 10 regions participated. Also, the workshop on women in preventing and countering violent Extremism. These workshops have all shaped their ideas and way of functioning.
The Faith in the Commonwealth Youth Training of Trainers project last November empowered 40 youths with skills and provided funds for these youths to efficiently impact their communities, The feedback gathered from the Seminar on Women and P/CVE was a life changing one for these key actors in P/CVE who so often are marginalised when this issue is tabled. They have become proactive as they enlightened others in return, Mr Mark Albon's Visit to Cameroon and notably the Secretary General's visit as well permitted my ministry to push further with the creation of a P/CVE centre which is currently pending funding.
Working with the CVE Unit on developing a framework for preventing violent extremism in [Member state].

7. What evidence can you highlight that shows the progress made by the project?
Please see response to Question 4.
After the conference, many members of parliament engaged with us and supported the delivery of our modern slavery project. The network we created during this conference has been incredibly helpful.
It provided a key input into the evolving global human rights 'Implementation Agenda'.
The report is on line and in relation to the work on discriminatory laws, [Member state] has produced a comprehensive legal assessment which ComSec contributed to financially. The government of [Member state] will be using this report as a basis for initiating legal reforms this year.
Marked improvement in election service delivery by the Commission.
1) Funding secured: The Commonwealth Secretariat has secured funding from the Climate Action Enhance Package (CAEP) for the implementation of CFAS, 2) consistent engagement from partners and potential funders, 3) the draft program document, which contains a fully-fledged business plan for the service.
Having the Commonwealth Electoral Network, the observer mission reports which helps countries measure where improvements need to be made to meet international best practices. Seeing the push for more women in politics as the Secretariat encourages countries to push for such. The fact that I have seen political parties slowly ensuring female participation is a first step. It's slow in progress but the progress is evident as there is more awareness in this area.
We've had several amendments to the Electoral Act 2016. Refer to the Commission website at election.com.nr
Behavioural change.
The continues demand by youths for more seminars and training sessions, the multiplier effect after each training session, the adherence and implementation of resolutions after sessions.
Implementation of the Government's approach on NPOs and working with the NPO sector has been extremely successful.

8. Do you think that the Commonwealth has a USP (Unique Selling Point) when it comes to supporting partners?
Yes, the Commonwealth Secretariat has convening power. Through its networks and resources, it can bring people together across the Commonwealth to share good practices and lessons learned, exchange resources, and facilitate collective action, directly or indirectly. It can bring states and civil society together, as well as NHRIs and other key actors across the Commonwealth. Its purpose of facilitating consultation and cooperation across the Commonwealth nations is one that is fundamental to the very purpose of the Commonwealth
N/A
Yes, link with Small States
The Commonwealth Secretariat's key strengths include their willingness to accommodate the views of partners; flexibility in responding to unforeseen challenges. Based on my experience to date, no specific weakness can be identified.
Strengths- responsiveness, attention to detail, respectful of contextual challenges, solution oriented
Yes, it does. Its unique reach to commonwealth countries means that its partners can reach a unique group of member states of the united nations.
Yes.
From our perspective, the Commonwealth's USP is its relationships and work in-country as well as its experience implementing the Climate Finance Access Service (a climate finance initiative that differs in scope and approach from most others out there).
Yes. This is because Commonwealth has made a name for itself as the organisation itself is respected worldwide and supports Commonwealth countries.
Yes, it's training component and a recognized organization that is well known for its commitment to equality and justice.
yes. Capacity training.
Yes.
Yes.

8 (Alternative question used in two surveys). What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Secretariat when working in partnerships?
The Commonwealth Secretariat's key strengths include their willingness to accommodate the views of partners; flexibility in responding to unforeseen challenges. Based on my experience to date, no specific weakness can be identified.
Strengths- responsiveness, attention to detail, respectful of contextual challenges, solution oriented

9. Do you think that the Secretariat engages effectively with partners and peer organisations in the delivery of global goals and targets?
We believe the Commonwealth Secretariat can do better and be more effective by being a consistent partner, exploring larger scale, longer term projects that are sustainable and have the potential of greater impact. It can also support the development and operations of key Commonwealth institutions that have proven potential for making an impact across the Commonwealth. Programmes and projects contributing to the SDGs could be prioritised in this process such as [Partner Organisation] own work on Access to Justice, Access to Information, Media Advocacy and combating Contemporary Forms of Slavery.

9. Do you think that the Secretariat engages effectively with partners and peer organisations in the delivery of global goals and targets?
Definitely.
The Secretariat (human rights team) has excellent people and does excellent work. However, it is often hamstrung by a lack of long-term planning – projects pop up, deadlines are short, and there is often no sustainability.
Yes, it does it is very responsive. There is however room for improvement in terms of consistency.
Yes.
The Commonwealth Secretariat has engaged effectively with our organization however, we have discussed areas for improvement, specifically around meeting deadlines and ensuring that the Commonwealth has the staff resources to execute agreed functions.
Yes.
Yes, very much so.
Yes.
To a greater extent.

10. As the Commonwealth Secretariat looks at delivery progress of the first two years of its strategic plan are there any other comments about your partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat that you would like to share
No additional comments
Not at this time.
All commonwealth countries continue to have discriminatory laws. It is UN Women's hope that ComSec will invest on both financial and technical terms in the implementation of the multi-stakeholder strategy on equality in law for women and girls by 2020 that we are jointly a part of.
Capacity Building. There has been the absence of granting of scholarships to the Staff of the IEC for over a decade now. This we would appreciate if it is revived.
As noted above, the Commonwealth Secretariat has at times seemed under-resourced to deliver on agreed work. The Commonwealth Secretariat has been an extremely collaborative partner and could be even more effective with additional capacity to support its work.
I would like for Commonwealth to continue its support as it helps the country greatly.
Engagement of Pacific Island countries in the activities of the Secretariat in other sections of the globe so they can study and learn from these countries as well as exchange ideas.
Not now.
To my humble opinion getting partners informed of future projects well ahead of time permits particularly governments to ease implementations. Greater involvement of Government officials at the conception and initial phases of the project.
The CVE Unit is invaluable in the type of work they conduct with the Government of [Member state].

Survey of high commissions

1. To what extent have you as a Commonwealth member country benefited from the work of the Secretariat between 2017 and 2019? What results have been realised in your country?
Technical assistance in the areas of oceans management/preservation, access to climate funding (CFAH), public debt management (meridian), gender-based budgeting (feasibility study- ongoing). Expert support to national adaptation and mitigation plans to address climate change
Commonwealth assisted us with the Consultant to Develop Sports Policy.
The Secretariat has helped advance our priorities through coordination of initiatives such as the Blue Charter and the Connectivity Agenda, by providing frameworks in which member states can take forward coordinated action. Results are likely to be realised in-country a bit further down the line.
N/A – Only small amount as developed member.
[Member state] is benefiting Technical assistance in the areas of oceans management/preservation, public debt management (meridian), gender-based budgeting (feasibility study- ongoing). [Member state] is also benefitting from the support of a National Climate Finance Adviser under the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub whereby the main objective of this kind of long-term support is to assist [Member state] to unlock climate finance for the implementation of its NDC. The formulation of various Commonwealth Policy Toolkits has been beneficial in terms of sharing of knowledge and experience and in the delivery of government's mandate. The development of the Commonwealth Toolkit for SDG Implementation has contributed in the monitoring and evaluation exercise of SDGs.

2. How effective is the Secretariat's current delivery model in providing benefit to member countries, and how could the delivery model be enhanced?
The delivery model has been streamlined in recent years to be more outcome / result oriented. There is further scope for appropriate mechanisms to predict and tackle bottlenecks and budget underspend in certain areas.
It is very effective, but they should improve in time frames.
We would be interested in receiving information on how the current delivery model is defined.
Needs to be more focused and resist mandate creep. Needs to be flexible and better management.
The delivery model has been streamlined in recent years to be more outcome /result oriented. There is further scope for appropriate mechanisms to predict and tackle bottlenecks and budget underspend in certain areas. It is also worth highlighting that the Commonwealth Innovation Hub is a well-designed platform unleashing the innovation potential of the Commonwealth in various thematic areas.

3. How could the Secretariat strengthen its internal systems and processes for project planning, project delivery and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning?
Use of resource planning software (ERP) may help in ensuring better predictability. – Involvement of Member States / Governors at the initial stage of goal setting will ensure better buy-in of strategic goals from countries – Lessons learned should be more incorporated in the strategic planning exercise in following years.
They should have a framework from the project planning to evaluation with stipulated time frames.
There have been advancements in the last 12–18 months in the Secretariat's use of Result Based Management and ME & L, which has improved the level of reporting to member states. Internal systems could be strengthened by ensuring project delivery matches agreed project plans and targets, and by having clear timeframes for completion of e.g. recruitment. There is potential to decentralise decision making and delegate authority to departments, and to ensure transparency in reporting on what has been achieved and reflecting on lessons learned.
Transparency. - Use of resource planning software (ERP) may help in ensuring better predictability. - Involvement of Member States / Governors at the initial stage of goal setting will ensure better buy-in of strategic goals from countries - Lessons learned should be more incorporated in the strategic planning exercise in following years.

4. With respect to supporting delivery of the global development agenda, where do the Secretariat's strengths lie, and what weaknesses can be observed?

The diverse and unique nature of Commonwealth membership can be very useful in pushing the global development agenda/SDG-2030 agenda especially in certain areas such as climate action, Small States and sustainable economic development. Funding- CFTC and other sources of direct funding are very low.

They are very strong in planning. Delays in implementation as well as responding to member's states requests.

The Commonwealth's strengths are its unique membership, shared values, and convening power. The Secretariat could consult more widely to help inform its initiatives and ensure that those initiatives are seen through to completion. There is also a need for the Secretariat to remain focused on agreed priorities to avoid overstretch.

Legal and political, good governance. Social issues like health and education. ComSec cannot compete or compare to better funded bodies in these areas.

The diverse and unique nature of Commonwealth membership can be very useful in pushing the global development agenda/SDG-2030 agenda especially in certain areas such as climate action, Small States and sustainable economic development. The convening power of the Commonwealth is a major strength which has to be exploited fully.

Funding- the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) and other sources of direct funding are very low; need to focus on issues where the Commonwealth can bring a difference rather than wider agenda requiring sharing of its limited resources (financial and human).

5. What role could the Secretariat take in supporting member countries in delivering the global development agenda for the period 2020–2030?

The convening power of the Commonwealth could be used to rally around supporting the developmental needs of member states, notably Small and Vulnerable States. The Commonwealth Secretariat may also position itself as the nexus to enable sharing of best practices among member states/south-south cooperation.

Technical support towards implementation of the agenda.

The Secretariat's most valuable function in supporting member states is in the provision of a strategic framework for collaboration, including through facilitation of meetings. The Secretariat could be more proactive in disseminating information to member states, including through a forward look of key travel and events to aid collaboration.

Focus only on the SDGs it has a niche advantage in. Stop trying to do them all.

The convening power of the Commonwealth could be used to rally around supporting the developmental needs of member states, notably Small and Vulnerable States.

The Commonwealth Secretariat may also position itself as the nexus to enable sharing of best practices among member states/south-south cooperation. The possibility of roping in the regional/ sub-regional organisations could be explored

6. Are there global development priorities that you think the Secretariat should engage in more deeply or reduce their focus on?

More should be done to further promoting intra-commonwealth trade in line with the ongoing changes in the Global/Multilateral Trade System and the commitments taken by Heads of Government at the last two CHOGMs in 2015 and 2018.

Eradication of Poverty in the small member states.

Through regular review and assessment, the Commonwealth Secretariat should always aim to focus on activities which add value and be aware of areas which sit best with other organisations, such as global health.

Reduce health and education. They can't do anything meaningful in those areas.

- More should be done to further promoting intra-commonwealth trade in line with the ongoing changes in the Global/Multilateral Trade System and the commitments taken by Heads of Government at the last two CHOGMs in 2015 and 2018.
- The Commonwealth should increase its assistance to the small and climate vulnerable members of the organisations.

7. What is the Secretariat's Unique Selling Point when it comes to supporting the delivery of the global development agenda?
The Commonwealth Advantage: its diverse and unique membership composed of developed and developing states, large and small economies coming from all regions of the globe.
Support in climate change issues.
It provides a platform in which members can have frank conversations on priority areas, ahead of negotiations in other fora. It has a unique membership, including both large and small countries which all have an equal say. The Commonwealth's commitments to values as set out in the Commonwealth Charter serves to support the global development agenda.
Does it have one? Small States?
The Commonwealth Advantage: its diverse and unique membership composed of developed and developing states, large and small economies coming from all regions of the globe.

8. What should be the role of member countries in the development of the Secretariat's strategy?
Member States, through the Board of Governors and Executive Committee, have an important role in steering the work of the Secretariat. While the day to day management should be left to the Secretary General, the Board of Governors/Executive Committee should play an active role in setting the overall objectives of the organisation and ensuring macro-level monitoring of the Secretariat in the delivery of these objectives. Member States pay for the budget of the Secretariat and as such, need to ensure transparency and accountability from the Secretariat in the delivery of its targets.
Support and oversight.
Member states should provide direction and insight in the formulation of the strategy, ensuring the right balance of priorities with the ability to remain flexible to respond to new developments, as well as the mainstreaming of priority areas such as gender and youth. Through the Board of Governors, members should then provide an accountability function, ensuring progress and spend remains on track, and spotting opportunities for further collaboration.
Guidance and approval.
Member States, through the Board of Governors and Executive Committee, have an important role in steering the work of the Secretariat. While the day to day management should be left to the Secretary General, the Board of Governors/Executive Committee should play an active role in setting the overall objectives of the organisation and ensuring macro-level monitoring of the Secretariat in the delivery of these objectives. There is need for Member States to be instrumental in the operationalisation of proposed structure for implementation purposes. For example, as regard the Commonwealth Blue Charter Plan of Action, there is need to ensure the implementation thereof and the need to develop policies related thereto including the strengthening of national institutions. Member States pay for the budget of the Secretariat and as such there is need to ensure transparency and accountability from the Secretariat in the delivery of its targets.

9. What is the impact of integrating CHOGM mandates and outcomes of Ministerial meetings into the Secretariat's work and budget? How should new mandates be delivered?
This has ensured better monitoring and reporting of targets set by Heads of Government and brought a better and clearer alignment with the strategic plan of the Secretariat. The same system may be used for new mandates, but it must be consistent with budgetary considerations to avoid putting too much pressure on Secretariat resources. New mandates must also be aligned with development priorities of Member States to ensure relevance and policy buy-in at all levels.
Through integration.
It is important for member states to be clear where primary responsibility lies when new mandates are agreed at CHOGMs or follow from the outcomes from Ministerial meetings. When the Secretariat is responsible for delivery of these outcomes / mandates, integrating them into the Secretariat's work and budget ensures adequate resources have been identified and agreed on, and allows the Secretariat to focus on areas where it has a comparative advantage, reducing the risk of the work of the Secretariat becoming diluted.
It has not integrating CHOGM mandates. It simply adds them on. Its needs to sun set old mandates and align the mandates with the strategic plan. Ministerial meetings cannot give new mandates unless they provide new funding. ComSec knows this but fails to tell ministers at meetings and then ask members for more funds after the fact. ComSec staff use ministerial meetings to "empire build". They need to stop this and focus on instructions provided by member states.
This has ensured better monitoring and reporting of targets set by Heads of Government and brought a better and clearer alignment with the strategic plan of the Secretariat. The same system may be used for new mandates, but it must be consistent with budgetary considerations to avoid putting too much pressure on Secretariat resources. New mandates must also be aligned with development priorities of Member States to ensure relevance and policy buy-in at all levels.

10. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Commonwealth System (Secretariat, Commonwealth of Learning, Commonwealth Foundation, partner and accredited organisations) in supporting member countries?
Well-integrated system with clear delimitation of responsibilities and areas of focus between Com Sec, Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning. Too many accredited and associated organisations which lead to confusion and difficulties in monitoring activities as well as duplication in certain areas of focus.
Technical support. They regard all member states to be equal whereas in actual fact is not the case.
All have different areas of strength and expertise. The Commonwealth system is of greatest benefit to member states when there is strong collaboration between all of its component parts. The Secretariat has a role in bringing the Commonwealth intergovernmental organisations, partner and accredited organisations, and member states together through regular and more meaningful dialogue, engagement and delivery, to help achieve optimum impact for Commonwealth citizens.
ComSec, treats the other bodies as a threat and does not cooperate openly despite members repeatedly asking it to. BTW it's the Commonwealth Family, not System (no need for new lingo).
Well-integrated system with clear delimitation of responsibilities and areas of focus between Com Sec, Foundation and Commonwealth of Learning. Too many accredited and associated organisations which lead to confusion and difficulties in monitoring activities as well as duplication in certain areas of focus

Survey of SMG members

1. To what extent have Commonwealth member countries benefited from the Secretariat's work between 2017 and 2019 and what results have been realised?
The Secretariat has been proactive in assisting member states on current issues such as climate change and cyber threat. The Cyber Declaration provides a basis for a number of activities. Results include training provided on electronic evidence, work on cybersecurity in elections. Research has also been undertaken on conventional arms control, the results of which will benefit member states.
Commonwealth member states benefit greatly from the Secretariat's work with specific results including climate finance, trade facilitation, elections management, gender empowerment.
Commonwealth countries have benefitted but the results are often hard to show given a time lag, especially in the areas of policy and advocacy.

2. How effective and relevant is the Secretariat's delivery model as a way to deliver £40.2 million of projects across 53 member countries?
The Secretariat has increasingly limited human resources and it is still difficult to have a unified approach. There should be more coordination across teams, less focus on workshops, conferences and travel. There are still too many projects attached to individuals
Outcomes focused delivery is of great relevance.
The model is in-effective with substantial room for improvement. The strategic plan is flawed because its derivation is not done properly. Needs to be country, region and Commonwealth specific – hence should be done via strategy papers build from country consultations
Effective development organisations respond to demand from member countries and other development partners. The effectiveness of the Secretariat is severely compromised by a model which prioritises funds to pay for the Secretary General's first class flights on missions without justification, and on projects thought up by the Secretary General, instead of listening to what countries actually want and delivering within the context of the delivery plan.

3. What has been the impact of integrating CHOGM mandates into the delivery portfolio?
It helps focus the teams' attention to the priorities of member states and provides a more solid basis for developing projects and making recommendations.
More efficient use of resources and alignment of work units to work more seamlessly.
The entire CHOGM process is also flawed. There is a mismatch between the timing and aims of CHOFM and the Commonwealth Strategic and Delivery Plan. With CHOGM ongoing every 2 years and new mandates being given, the CHOGM agenda actually serves to derail the ComSec strategic plan. That is because the ComSec has limited resources and so money can be spent on either or rather than all. CHOGM should be every four years so that the outcomes from CHOGM become the strategic plan for the 4 years hence. In this way, country strategy papers and outcomes from the thematic Ministerial meetings can feed CHOGM for Heads then to decide on what becomes the focus of the Commonwealth.

4. With respect to planning, delivery and MEL, how efficient and effective are the internal systems and processes of the Secretariat in supporting delivery of the strategic plan and CHOGM mandates?
The increased focus on MEL is welcome. It helps to keep projects and activities focused on the delivery of the strategic plan.
Increased use of MEL allows for greater learning / best practice.
Internal systems are onerous, especially given the staff shortage. With the current systems, the Secretariat needs an M&E officer in each section if monitoring and evaluation is to be done properly. Given the sheer volume of information requested by PMIS, its lack of user-friendly interface and the time needed to input, the current system is causing garbage to be inputted. And as they say, "garbage in, garbage out".

5. How well do budgeting processes of the Secretariat align with the requirements of delivering the strategic plan?
The budgeting process remains complicated and not most transparent. In some cases, budgets are still attached to individuals without a proper reflection as to how best use the funds to deliver the strategic plan.
Needs strengthening to avoid under-spend / delays in delivery.
As mentioned, the strategic planning process is ill-designed. That already distorts the budgeting process. And on top of that given that there is no prioritisation of the goals of the strategic plan, the budgeting and allocation more specifically, rests with the focus of the Secretary-General and Senior Management team. In such a process, there will be biased allocation not necessarily aligning with the strategic priorities of countries. This prioritisation again should happen at CHOGM, which should ideally be held on a 4-year cycle, in line with the strategic planning process.

6. How well do corporate systems (Performance Tracking, HR, IT, Finance) and processes support effective delivery of the Strategic Plan?
The systems still include a lot of administration, which can make delivery more challenging.
With increasing relevance to greater focus on performance tracking.
ComSec corporate systems are the worse I've seen in my 17 years of employment, and I am from a developing country, with supposedly less infrastructure than Britain. These archaic systems exacerbate the resource constraints. With better IT,HR, Finance systems etc. there could be some burden relief. For example, the travel system needs a complete overhaul. It takes on average 3–4 months to be reimbursed after mission with interest expense on credit cards at the feet of travellers. There are a variety of web-based systems that could relieve the huge paper-based system currently being used by ComSec. Our HR is not HR. Frankly, our HR could be outsourced, and we wouldn't recognise the difference. Finance also need a significant upgrade of its systems and processes.

7. How do you think the Secretariat could strengthen its ability to support member countries in delivering the global development agenda?
I think the Secretariat can play an important role but needs to focus on what it does best and on its activities, which are most beneficial to member countries. The size of the organisation does not allow it to cover everything so targeted action, involving the different departments in a coordinated effort might be more effective.
Increased funding to enable greater ability to respond to requests for technical assistance.
Make better use of technology to boost visibility; be realistic and find niche areas and products that are catalytic to countries development; form a team work culture – completely absent; improve recruitment and entrench a stricter performance culture; provide flexibility to improve morale and productivity.

8. With respect to supporting delivery of the global development agenda, where do the Secretariat's strengths lie, and what weaknesses can be observed?
The Commonwealth has the ability to bring member countries together and facilitate exchange of best practice between regions. The Commonwealth gives a stronger international voice to smaller countries. The Commonwealth's role and mission remain unclear to many, which can be a weakness.
Strengthen is close alignment with member states. Weaknesses are inability to effectively respond to various requests for technical assistance - both through lack of resources and capacity.
The strength of the Secretariat is in speaking and raising awareness of the issues which developing and smaller countries by themselves cannot mobilise internationally on their own steam. Fostering solidarity on such issues to force global change for e.g. on climate change; resource mobilisation; gender violence etc.

9. Do you think that the Secretariat engages effectively with partners and peer organisations in the delivery of the global development agenda?
The Secretariat has forged effective partnerships with other international organisations although it is often on an ad hoc basis, project by project, instead of a longer-term strategy.
Very much so – especially with increased levels of partnerships.
The Commonwealth engages but its size and resources is a severe limiting factor. Partners with greater resources will take centre stage and visibility, thereby casting the Commonwealth's contributions in the shadows.

10. As the MTR of the Strategic Plan is conducted, are there any other comments that you would like to share
No.
Findings need to be incorporated and taken on board.
Not at this time.

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The Commonwealth

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Mid-Term Review of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2017/18 – 2020/21

Management Response

The Commonwealth

Evaluation title	**Mid-Term Review of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan, 2017/18 - 2020/21**
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Management response approved by	**Senior Management Committee**

Overall comments

This formative Mid-Term Review, planned as part of the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2017/18 – 2020/21, was a real time assessment that provided the opportunity and a platform to reflect on progress to date on the implementation of the Strategic Plan. The Mid-Term Review assessed progress and identified lessons that can inform adaptive planning and management in the remaining years of the Strategic Plan and beyond.

The Secretariat is in agreement with all of the recommendations. Twelve (12) of the thirteen (13) recommendations have been accepted, while one recommendation is deferred for consideration in the next strategic plan period.

A number of the actions, in response to the evaluation recommendations, can only be addressed in the preparation and implementation of the new strategic plan from July 2021. These actions are already informing the development of the strategic planning process.

Recommendation 1 **The Secretariat's programmes should be provided with the financial resources required to extract the most value from the Secretariat's technical expertise, and to avoid dilution of the Secretariat's impact in Member States.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** This recommendation is directed to member states. The Secretariat will continue to demonstrate value for money and use the development of the new Strategic Plan as an opportunity to advocate for adequate financial resources.
Recommendation 2 **The Secretariat should continue investment in and place emphasis on Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning (MEL) to fully understand the organisation's influence. To fully understand the value of the Secretariat's convening power, apply consistent monitoring to all Ministerial Meetings, and conduct an evaluation of the consensus building role of the Secretariat to assess its effectiveness. In all evaluations of the Secretariat's work, the Terms of Reference (ToR) would benefit from an increased emphasis on identifying unintended outcomes, their causes and impact.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** The Secretariat will further invest in understanding its influence through a dedicated evaluation of the impact of its convening role.
Recommendation 3 **Deepen and diversify the evidence base by developing evidence standards to guide Secretariat staff on what constitutes good evidence, and how to utilize third-party evidence sources (e.g. media, civil society, partner organizations) sources to triangulate results. Strengthen the management of evidence by including evidence tagging on PMIS that allows evidence sources to be linked to outcomes.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** The Secretariat has been addressing data management challenges including the quality of its project information, its data governance architecture and its system linkages. It is also tracking third party Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) information on Commonwealth member states on its Commonwealth SDG Data Platform.

Recommendation 4 **Increase support to project teams to continue building partnerships that contribute toward the delivery of the Strategic Plan. Strengthen capacity to manage partnerships in order to gain optimal value from them.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** The Secretariat, following the introduction of a partnership strategy, has initiated institutional engagements with targeted and approved partners around key themes. This has led to new funding as well as more robust support and corporate processes for partnership development and management. The organisation is working towards creating a resource mobilisation strategy.
Recommendation 5 **Align the Secretariat's planning and budgeting cycles with CHOGM and scope out a model for securing financial commitment from Member States for all new CHOGM mandates.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** Several internal audits and evaluations have recommended moving to a biennial planning and budgeting process better integrated with CHOGM. This is for the consideration of the Governing Board, however the Secretariat will advocate for this when opportunity arises.
Recommendation 6 **Integrate capacity mapping of human resource needs into the Secretariat's planning with budgeting cycles. Enhance communications from the senior director's group in collaboration with the planning and budgeting divisions to increase transparency around budgeting processes and project budget allocations.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** The Delivery Plan and Budget 2020-2021 includes a workforce planning aspect.
Recommendation 7 **Institutionalise a practice for Quarterly Progress Reports (QPRs) across all Directorates and establish mechanisms to escalate issues to senior management for resolution. To limit overlap and duplication of effort, ensure a clear link to the new DSG led Project Management Committee is created.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** The QPR process has been developed and facilitated by SPPD and has broad participation across the Directorates. There is need for the process to be further embedded through strengthened leadership and accountability.

Recommendation 8 **Utilize the in-house Information Technology (IT) expertise to fully integrate PMIS with the other core systems (such as CODA (*Commonwealth Secretariat's financial system*)) and improve usability of PMIS by developing a new user-friendly interface.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** The Secretariat's ICT Team is currently undertaking reviews and developing proposals to streamline systems, improve data governance, and improve the utility of all corporate systems.
Recommendation 9 **Enhance project level MEL support, by developing a suite of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) tools that teams can use to gather data from project activities and enhancing M&E capacity at a team level. Develop a Learning strategy, to complement the MEL approach, that defines how the Secretariat will learn from its work in Member States and integrate this learning into projects. Take further steps in the evaluation function to increase its independence by expanding the remit of the peer review panel to include engagement across the whole of the evaluation process.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** In the next strategic plan, further embedding of MEL capacity across the organisation will be explored, for example through a MEL support staff in each programme area who can support capacity around MEL in activities delivered by the programme. The Secretariat is also reviewing the peer review mechanism on an ongoing basis to incorporate learnings and experience since the mechanism was introduced in 2018.
Recommendation 10 **Conduct a specific review of all Corporate processes and systems and their effectiveness to support delivery of the Strategic Plan.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** The Secretariat engages external auditors to review specific corporate and programme functions and has completed a number of these over the past two years. This practice will be ongoing as to ensure that corporate processes and systems continue to effectively enable the delivery of strategic plan. No further action is needed.

Recommendation 11 **In the new Strategic Plan, move to biennial planning and budgeting and align planning and budgeting processes with the CHOGM cycle so that planning and budgeting takes place shortly after CHOGM, enabling new CHOGM mandates to be effectively taken on board during planning and budgeting.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** As per Recommendation 5. Several internal audits and evaluations have already recommended a biennial planning and budgeting process that would better integrated with CHOGM. This is for the consideration of the Governing Board, however the Secretariat will advocate for this when opportunity arises.
Recommendation 12 **In the development of the new Strategic Plan, continue alignment to the SDGs by integrating SDG indicators into programmes that directly show alignment to SDGs.**	
Management Response	**AGREED** Currently, the Strategic Results Framework includes the relevant SDG indicators for information purposes. This alignment will be integrated within programme results frameworks in the next strategic plan.
Recommendation 13 **Continue to enhance focus on adaptation to and mitigation against Climate Change.**	
Management Response	**DEFFERED** Commonwealth Secretariat's strategic priorities are defined by member states. This recommendation can inform a discussion on those priorities in the context of the next strategic planning process.

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