

Annual Results Report

July 2024 – September 2025



The Commonwealth

COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT

Annual Results Report

July 2024–September 2025



The Commonwealth

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABIA	Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority	CTMM	Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting
AI	artificial intelligence	CWF	Commonwealth Women's Forum
CARICOM	Caribbean Community	CYMM	Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting
CCA	Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda	CYP	Commonwealth Youth Programme
CCFAH	Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub	EBR	Extra Budgetary Resource
CFAMM	Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting	IMF	International Monetary Fund
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation	NCD	non-communicable diseases
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting	NDC	nationally determined contribution
CMAG	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group	PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
COMSEC	Commonwealth Secretariat Fund	SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
COP	Conference of the Parties	SIDS	Small Island Developing States
CSET	Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transitions	SIDS4	Fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States
CSSO	Commonwealth Small States Office	UN	United Nations
		UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Foreword

In line with my responsibility, I present this final annual report of the Commonwealth's strategic period 2021/22–2024/25. This document stands as both a record of achievement and a testament to the collective will of our member nations. Together, we have delivered valued work with and for the Commonwealth family, guided by a shared vision of co-operation, inclusivity and resilience.

I wish to recognise the steadfast contribution of our senior management staff and hard-working teams across the Secretariat and, in particular, the important role of the esteemed past Secretary-General Patricia Scotland. Their dedication and leadership have been indispensable in securing the outcomes reflected in these pages, and in bringing to conclusion the broad and diverse portfolio of projects undertaken during this strategy. These efforts have strengthened our capacity to respond to the needs of our members, and to demonstrate the unique value of the Commonwealth in action.

As we draw this period to a close, we also look to the future with renewed determination. The work of the Commonwealth continues, now guided by the new Strategic Plan for 2025–2030,

with an increased emphasis on impact, transparency and accountability. The critical lessons we have learned in the process of setting this strategy will inform the way forward as we refine our methods and sharpen our focus in service of our nations.

We are conscious, too, that this period has been marked by a crisis of confidence in multilateralism. At such a time, it is essential that the Commonwealth distinguishes itself by the salience of its strategic vision, the quality of its delivery, the clarity of its reporting and the integrity of its approach. By doing so, we deepen not only the relevance of our work, but also the enduring value of this family of nations working together in common purpose.

This report, then, is more than an account of what has been accomplished. It is a foundation for the future: a demonstration of the Commonwealth's ability to learn, to adapt, and to lead with impact in a changing world.



The Hon. Shirley Botchwey
Secretary-General of the Commonwealth



Overview

We are pleased to present the Commonwealth Secretariat's 2024/25 Annual Results Report, covering the final year of our 2021/22–2024/25 Strategic Plan. This report covers the period July 2024 to September 2025, due to a three-month extension of the period of the 2021/22–2024/25 Strategic Plan. It includes progress made in fulfilling outcomes of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Samoa in October 2024. It showcases programmes across the areas of democracy and governance; sustainable development; climate and oceans resilience; and small and other vulnerable states. Additionally, it details our progress in mainstreaming youth empowerment and gender equality across our programmes.

The Annual Results Report encompasses the achievements and impact of 46 projects delivered through 15 programmes, all in close collaboration with our member countries. Innovation and partnerships remain catalysts of our work with other international and regional organisations.

The report is divided into three parts.

- 1. A Year in Review:** From activities to outcomes: a story-driven overview of impact across programmes.
- 2. Financial Performance:** A summary of the year 2024/25.
- 3. Detailed Results Framework:** a project progress update against key performance indicators.

The report is based on evidence and data collected from results-focused programmes across our portfolio. It provides an overview of highlights rather than an exhaustive iteration of all Secretariat actions delivered in 2024/25. The aim is to showcase key progress across the strategic outcomes, and to demonstrate our commitment to learning, value for money and enhancing transparency and accountability.

We are grateful for the leadership and support of our Secretary-General, the Hon. Shirley Botchwey; our Senior Management Committee; our Board of Governors, chaired by H. E. Titilupe Fanetupouvava'u Tui'vakano, High Commissioner for Tonga; and our member countries and partners. Together, we have aimed to conclude the Strategic Plan effectively, with efficient utilisation of available resources and a commitment to advancing the Commonwealth's shared goals of democracy, development and diversity. We invite you to review this report and guide us forward.

Programmatic Progress



Democracy and Governance

Furthering peace and democracy through the Secretary General's Good Offices, the Secretariat has continued to support member countries in pre- and post-election contexts, and to enable conflict resolution where needed. Details of engagement were provided to the September 2024 meeting of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group in New York, and to CHOGM in Samoa that October. High-level missions to, and in-country consultations with the governments of, Sierra Leone and Bangladesh during the reporting period contributed to actions that strengthened political cohesion and stability.

In the 2024/25 financial year the Secretariat made progress on peace and democracy outcomes. To promote the rule of law across the Commonwealth, five model laws have been developed and are moving toward finalisation. These include a model laws on stablecoins, artificial intelligence, suppression orders and open-source evidence, and Military Justice Principles.

Recent efforts in Trinidad and Tobago have resulted in the completion of a best practice guide for integrated family courts, and a second guide in the series, on developing a people-centred access to justice strategy, centres on Kenya. The Secretariat has also delivered targeted legal and advisory support for constitutional and political development in Zimbabwe, Bangladesh, Maldives and Togo, alongside ongoing legal assistance to its partners.

To strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights, the Secretariat continued its engagement with the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions. Additionally, in-country technical assistance was provided to the Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone and the Malawi Human Rights Commission; remote assistance was delivered to the Ombudsman of Samoa; and technical advice on the establishment of a national human rights institution was provided to Barbados. In-country technical assistance prioritised both youth and gender mainstreaming, with all technical assistance missions demonstrating significant participation by women.

With technical assistance from our human rights advisers based at the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO) in Geneva, nine member countries made a total of 75 statements to the Human Rights Council during the period. This has significantly enhanced the voice and visibility of these member countries at the Council, strengthening their engagement and co-operation within the UN multilateral system more generally.

Taking forward the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration, with support from the United Kingdom, the Secretariat oversaw the training of judicial and criminal justice officials in Ghana, Nigeria, Tanzania and South Africa on cybercrime and electronic evidence.

The Secretariat continues to assist member countries to conduct fair, credible and inclusive elections through a whole-of-election-cycle approach. Commonwealth Observer Groups (COGs) were deployed to Sri Lanka, Mozambique, Ghana, Gabon and Trinidad



Cyber Power Girls

In collaboration with the MIDO Foundation, the Secretariat delivered a transformative 10-week Cyber Power Girls programme to 150 girls from underserved communities in South Africa. This security masterclass focused on enhancing digital literacy, equipping participants with the skills, knowledge and mentorship needed to thrive in the digital world as learners, earners and leaders.



 Watch video on the Cyber Power Girls programme

and Tobago. Commonwealth Expert Teams were also deployed to Botswana and Gabon. Technical assistance was provided to Elections Cameroon to enhance its capacity for the upcoming elections. Gender and youth experts have been integral to COGs, and their inclusion is a standard and significant aspect of Commonwealth election observation. COG reports feature a dedicated chapter with recommendations on participation and inclusion, addressing issues that impact youth participation and women's involvement in elections and other political processes.

Marlborough House, the Commonwealth Secretariat's London headquarters, hosted the CHOGM Senior Officials Meeting and Committee of the Whole in September 2024. This focused on key preparations for the upcoming CHOGM in Samoa, the pre-CHOGM Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM) and deliberations

on the draft CHOGM 2024 Communiqué. Delegates also reviewed drafts of the Declaration on Reparatory Justice and the Commonwealth Ocean Declaration.

The 24th CFAMM, convened in the wings of the UN General Assembly in New York in September 2024, was the first CFAMM to review the year's achievements and set priorities ahead of the 2024 CHOGM.

The Secretariat continues to assist member countries in conducting fair, credible, and inclusive elections through a comprehensive election cycle approach. Commonwealth Observer Groups (COGs) were deployed to Gabon, Ghana, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago. Commonwealth Expert Teams (CET) were also deployed to Botswana and Gabon. Technical assistance was provided to Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) to enhance its capacity for the upcoming elections. Gender and youth experts have been integral to COGs. This inclusion is a standard and significant aspect of Commonwealth election observation. COG reports include a chapter with recommendations on participation and inclusion, addressing issues that impact youth participation and women's involvement in elections and other political processes.

Corruption is the antithesis of good governance. It undermines the rule of law and a disincentive to foreign direct investment. Reducing corruption stands at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their achievement. The Secretariat has been at the forefront of several initiatives aimed at tackling systemic corruption in member countries. Over the last year, the Commonwealth Secretariat successfully delivered high-impact executive leadership, governance and anti-corruption training programmes across Africa and the Caribbean, reaching over 400 senior officials from key public institutions. These initiatives strengthened institutional leadership and management capacity in countries including Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa and Zambia and across the Caribbean.

The Secretariat hosted the 11th Commonwealth Caribbean Regional Meeting for Heads of Integrity Commission and Anti-Corruption Bodies in Saint Lucia for over 120 representatives of the region as well as the 15th Commonwealth African Regional Conference of Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies in South Africa for over 250 delegates. Through tailored programmes and regional conferences, the Secretariat promoted good governance, integrity and the adoption of international best practices, contributing to more effective, ethical, and accountable public sector leadership across the Commonwealth.

Marlborough House hosted the CHOGM Senior Officials Meeting (SOM) and Committee of the Whole (COW) in September. This focused on key preparations for the upcoming CHOGM, the pre-CHOGM Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting and deliberations on the draft CHOGM 2024 Communiqué. Delegates also reviewed drafts of the Declaration on Reparatory Justice and the Commonwealth Ocean Declaration.

Ongoing impact in Malawi's political system

The emerging impacts of the Secretariat's institutional capacity development and advocacy efforts are reflected in ongoing changes in behaviour and policy that continue after our initial direct interventions. The Secretariat played a central role in advancing gender equality in Malawi's political system, based on recommendations from a 2019 COG. Five years after the tripartite elections, high-level political engagement and changes in behaviours continued, with partnering organisations using the Commonwealth's 'elections checklist' to support gender-responsive political processes and violence-free primary elections. In August 2024, the coalition and taskforce of development partners submitted proposed legislative amendments on 'Implementation of Gender Quotas for Parliamentary Elections' to the Ministry of Justice.



The 24th Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting (CFAMM), held under the auspices of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in New York in September 2024, reviewed the year's achievements and set priorities ahead of the 2024 CHOGM.

Promoting good governance

Over the past year, the Commonwealth Secretariat successfully delivered high-impact executive leadership, governance and anti-corruption training programmes across Africa and the Caribbean, reaching over 400 senior officials from key public institutions. These initiatives aim to strengthen institutional leadership and management capacity in countries including South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda, Zambia and Ghana, and across the Caribbean region.

The Secretariat also hosted the 11th Commonwealth Caribbean Regional Meeting for Heads of Integrity Commission and Anti-Corruption Bodies in Saint Lucia for over 120 representatives of the region, as well as the 15th Commonwealth African Regional Conference of Heads of Anti-Corruption Agencies, in South Africa, for over 250 delegates. Through tailored programmes and regional conferences, the Secretariat promoted good governance, integrity and the adoption of international best practices, contributing to more effective, ethical and accountable public sector leadership across the Commonwealth.

Sustainable Development

The Secretariat successfully convened the Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting (CTMM) held in Windhoek, Namibia in June 2025, where ministers adopted the operationalisation plan of the Working Group on Trade and Investment. This plan focuses on key activities to boost trade and investment among member countries, and builds upon the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (CCA) adopted in 2018. Ministers welcomed the launch of the Commonwealth Investment Network as a platform to connect member countries with investors; furthermore, progress on the *Commonwealth Model Law on Digital Trade* was highlighted for its role in reducing barriers to e-commerce. CTMM also addressed issues including energy transition, food security and critical minerals.

Held alongside the CTMM, the Commonwealth Business Summit brought together leaders from across 56 member countries to explore practical solutions for inclusive, resilient and sustainable growth under the theme, 'Harnessing Commonwealth Trade for Shared Prosperity'. The event, held in collaboration with the Government of Namibia and other partners, was attended by 900 delegates and over 3,000 online participants.

Opening the Summit, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, the Hon. Shirley Botchwey, delivered a keynote speech that set a bold and pragmatic tone, and committed to making the 'Commonwealth trade advantage' – a 21 per cent average cost-saving on intra-Commonwealth trade – deliver more for the Commonwealth's market of 2.7 billion people.



'This Summit is not just a new event, it is a new platform designed to turn the Commonwealth Trade Advantage into real trade opportunities... Let this Summit be a launchpad for bold ideas; for practical solutions; and for meaningful investment that transforms lives.'

Delegates engaged in a series of high-level sessions focused on global trade resilience, the path to US\$2 trillion in intra-Commonwealth trade, gender equality in business and the future of digital trade. From panel discussions on

Collaboration on critical minerals

At the 2024 CHOGM in Samoa, Heads of Government noted the growing importance of critical minerals and renewed their commitment to the sustainable use and equitable development of natural resources. The global transition to a low-carbon economy is driving unprecedented demand for minerals essential for manufacturing renewable technologies such as solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and electric vehicles. Many Commonwealth member countries have vast resources of these critical minerals, which may present once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to catalyse socio-economic development.

In November 2024, the Secretariat convened a side-event on 'Redefining Critical Minerals: Future Proofing Mining Projects' on the margins of the annual meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development in Geneva. Senior government officials from Botswana, Cameroon, Eswatini, Fiji, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zambia shared approaches to defining 'critical minerals', their challenges and opportunities, and areas

for Secretariat support. Officials highlighted the need for technical assistance, and called for the creation of community of practice to facilitate continued peer-to-peer exchanges. These insights and perspectives are being incorporated into learning resources currently under development, and has enabled the Secretariat to advocate on behalf of Commonwealth member countries, particularly small states and least developed countries.

On 23 April 2025 the Secretariat co-organised, with the government of the United Kingdom and the International Energy Agency, a high-level roundtable on 'Critical Minerals: Strategies for Supply Security and Economic Prosperity in Marlborough House'. Over 100 participants – including senior government officials, industry leaders and civil society representatives – took part in discussions on developing sustainable, diversified critical minerals supply chains. Deliberations and conclusions from the event fed into ministers' and CEOs' discussions at the International Future of Energy Security Summit held on 24–25 April, and influenced priorities for and approaches to enhancing energy security and the resilience of global energy supply chains.

Namibia's Local Content Policy

In December 2024 the Government of Namibia approved the National Upstream Local Content Policy, a progressive framework designed to ensure that the nation's burgeoning oil and gas industry benefits its citizens. The Secretariat played a pivotal role in the drafting of this policy, which aims to integrate local businesses and workforces into the oil and gas value chain, reduce dependency on foreign expertise and foster economic independence. By aligning the policy with Namibia's broader development frameworks such as the National Development Plan and Vision 2030, the Secretariat has ensured that the policy supports the country's long-term goals of industrialisation and economic diversification, and created a framework that promotes economic sovereignty, sustainable development and collaboration. This policy not only benefits Namibia but also serves as a blueprint for other member countries seeking to harness their natural resources.

empowering women entrepreneurs to technical dialogues on paperless trade, the programme reflected the Summit's commitment to inclusive, forward-looking solutions.

With participation from the African Continental Free Trade Area Secretariat, development banks and business chambers, the Summit aligned with Africa's broader industrialisation and regional integration agenda. Sessions further explored innovation, digital infrastructure, trade facilitation and sustainable investment. An B2B exhibition and site visits were also organised to enable international businesses and investors to identify and explore collaboration.

As part of the Secretariat's dedicated technical assistance to improve export competitiveness, support was provided to the Antigua and Barbuda Investment Authority (ABIA) to upgrade its website, including integrating training, accessible information for both local businesses and potential investors, feedback mechanisms and interactive content. ABIA staff were also trained to maintain website content and respond to evolving stakeholder needs. This has enhanced ABIA's capacity to deliver business support, improved its operational effectiveness and positioned the agency as a modern, responsive hub capable of actively promoting national economic development and fostering a robust local business ecosystem.

The Commonwealth Innovative Youth Essay Award, launched by the Secretariat during the 2024 CHOGM, encouraged youth entrepreneurship. The essay topic – 'Think Trade, Think Green' – asked how trade and trade policy can address climate issues in the Commonwealth. Over 500 young researchers and students participated, with the top five entries recognised at CHOGM.



The Secretariat has provided ongoing technical assistance to member countries under multi-year mining and petroleum sector reform projects that promote good governance and the strengthening of national capacity for sustainable, equitable, effective management and use of natural resources. Building on multi-year dedicated assistance, during the reporting period expert economic and legal assistance was provided on matters related to strategy and policy, taxation and revenue management, optimising economic benefits, legal and regulatory reforms, and social and environmental protections. This included:

- drafting mining legislation in Antigua and Barbuda
- capacity building on the operationalisation of energy policy in Barbados
- the drafting of the Sovereign Wealth Fund Bill for Eswatini
- capacity building on the petroleum fiscal regime in Malawi
- adoption of the National Local Content Policy for Namibia
- capacity building in mining legislation in Vanuatu.

The Secretariat also assisted member states in negotiations at the International Seabed Authority for the development of regulations for the exploitation of seabed minerals in international waters. Expert technical advice was provided to draft more than 100 interventions covering various provisions of the Draft Exploitation Regulations to strengthen environmental protections, and ensure both a fair and equitable payment regime and responsible and informed decision making.

Fostering Sustainable Development through a Resilient and Inclusive Energy Transition



The CSET Forum is held every two years, bringing together senior officials responsible for energy from ministries, departments and agencies across the Commonwealth. By providing opportunities to share knowledge and experience and develop new networks, CSET Forums help member countries to build capacity and foster closer collaborations to accelerate sustainable, inclusive and just energy transitions.

The fourth CSET Forum was held at Marlborough House in London on 20–23 May 2025, on the theme, 'A Resilient and Inclusive Energy Transition to Foster Sustainable Development'. The Forum convened 33 Commonwealth member countries, with youth delegates, partner organisations, private sector participants and leading experts in sustainable energy discussing major barriers, solutions and contextual challenges to speeding up the energy transition, combatting climate change and achieving SDG 7 by 2030.

Participants identified the most critical challenges to be addressed in the sustainable energy transition, clarified the Commonwealth's role in supporting this process and suggested areas ripe for collaboration and partnership. Discussions also focused on identifying priority areas in which technical assistance would be most valuable, ensuring that the Secretariat's future efforts are aligned with member countries' needs.

Member countries highlighted the power of the CSET Forum to provide practical knowledge and strategies to accelerate the pace of sustainable development, delivering benefits for both people and the planet.

'One of the most exciting aspects when it comes to the Commonwealth is the fact that it brings together such a large and diverse number of countries from around the world and can really share experience, knowledge and best practice to ensure that those leading in the transitions and learning from the transitions can then share with others and help them move more quickly to achieve the goals and aspirations that they want to.'

Dan Dorner, Head, Strategic Initiatives Office, International Energy Agency

'The Commonwealth is doing a great job in building this platform for exchange of information, sharing experiences where countries can interact and learn from each other. It also allows countries to learn about the opportunities available to finance the transition. The Commonwealth is also doing a great job in providing technical assistance in developing the right policies at country level.'

Charlazi Bongani Dlamini, Energy Officer, Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy, Eswatini

To unlock the trillions of dollars needed for clean energy investments and decarbonisation, the Secretariat published *Financial Policies to Achieve the Paris Agreement* in October 2024. The report highlights opportunities for member countries to use carbon taxation, renewable energy auctions and capital market policies to reduce emissions and limit climate change.

In April 2025, the Secretariat co-organised three orbital events in Marlborough House ahead of the inaugural International Future of Energy Security Summit:

- 'Empowering Women for Enhanced Energy Security and a Just Energy Transition'
- 'Methane: Accelerating Energy Sector Solutions to Tackle Emissions and Enhance Energy Security'

- 'Critical Minerals: Strategies for Supply Security and Economic Prosperity'.
- The Summit delivered a comprehensive roadmap for redefining energy security in a rapidly shifting global context, emphasising the need for integrated action, long-term strategic vision and multilateral co-operation.



Supporting a home-grown solution to integrated debt reporting in Tanzania

Tanzania's Ministry of Finance adopted Commonwealth Meridian system to record and report public debt, while the Bank of Tanzania utilised it to monitor private sector external debt. However, at the same time, the government was rolling out its broader financial management system, MUSE, for processing all public financial transactions, including debt servicing. This dual-system setup created operational strain for the Debt Management Office, which had to duplicate entries in both systems. This led to increased workload, data delays and accuracy issues.

To address this, the Ministry of Finance, in collaboration with the Bank of Tanzania and the Commonwealth Secretariat, developed a digital interface between Commonwealth Meridian and MUSE. By integrating the two systems, the project has reduced duplication, improved data quality and enhanced efficiency. This home-grown solution – shaped directly by the teams managing both systems – now supports more accurate and timely public debt data, contributing to greater transparency and more informed borrowing decisions in Tanzania.

The International Monetary Fund reported in January 2025 that Tanzania had made significant progress in making the compilation and dissemination of public sector debt statistics more accurate and reliable.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in January 2025 that Tanzania made significant progress in strengthening the compilation and dissemination of public sector debt statistics amid accuracy and reliability.

The clean energy transition is a global challenge that requires collaboration across all stakeholders. The Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition (CSET) Agenda is a collaborative platform for member countries and partners to work together to accelerate the shift to sustainable low-emissions energy systems. The aim is to accelerate progress towards the Paris Agreement's climate goals and Sustainable Development Goal 7.

Notable progress in the past year has included:

- the 4th Biennial Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Forum in May 2025
- the launch of CSET's series of children's books (*The Energy Around Us*, *Energy and Me* and *Roads to Clean Energy*) at Likwati Primary School in Tanzania in collaboration with the British High Commission

- developing clean energy business cases for promoting finance and investment in the transportation sector with Antigua and Barbuda and Seychelles
- the launch of CSET Youth Action Group national chapters in Tanzania and Sierra Leone.



[Watch video on the Commonwealth uniting to drive just and sustainable energy transitions](#)

Pursuing sustainable public finance and debt management, the Secretariat continues to build institutional capacity in member countries to build debt sustainability, implement Commonwealth Meridian and improve debt data quality. As of June 2025, Commonwealth Meridian has been deployed and supported in 40 of the 41 Commonwealth member countries that use the Commonwealth debt management system. Meridian has also been installed in four countries outside the Commonwealth: Bhutan, Liberia, Somalia and Oman.

Commonwealth Meridian offers tools to record, report and analyse government borrowing, specifically focusing on the social sector and youth development aspects. This provides decision-makers with valuable insights into the degree to which government borrowing supports youth development objectives. Countries are therefore better equipped to track the effects of debt and related programmes on youth outcomes, while also enhancing government capacity to monitor how development resources are utilised to achieve targeted youth development goals.

On debt policy, the Secretariat supported The Bahamas and St Vincent and the Grenadines to develop medium-term debt management strategies and borrowing plans which guide governments' financing and borrowing decisions, and help to achieve the desired composition of government debt portfolio cost and risks. A knowledge-sharing workshop was held to disseminate lessons in government debt management learned from The Bahamas' project to 12 member countries. The Secretariat also continued to provide practical solutions to support the public debt management needs of small states facing similar economic, market structure and sovereign debt challenges.

The multi-year project 'Strengthening Public Debt Management Framework and Developing Government Bond Market in The Bahamas' was successfully completed during the reporting period. It delivered an integrated programme of assistance to The Bahamas to strengthen and reform the governance structure and policy framework for public debt management, and to develop the government securities market.

Climate Change and Building Resilience

At CHOGM 2024, Commonwealth countries adopted the Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration for One Resilient Common Future, which calls on all 56 Commonwealth countries to protect and restore the ocean in the face of severe climate change, pollution and impacts related to over-exploitation.

The Apia Declaration paves the way for robust, ambitious, innovative and transformative action for a *common wealth* of shared ocean prosperity, resilience and sustainability that builds on national and collective efforts to protect the ocean and use it sustainably.

The adoption of the Apia Declaration also reinvigorated the Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Groups, which subsequently hosted a dynamic series of Blue Dialogue webinars and trainings to accelerate implementation. The Action Groups convened six thematic webinars covering areas such as sustainable coastal fisheries, coral reef conservation, blue carbon initiatives and the development of 100-per-cent-sustainable ocean management plans. The Commonwealth

Clean Ocean Alliance hosted a high-level briefing to support member states to prepare for the global plastics treaty negotiations under the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. The Marine Protected Areas Action Group led an intensive three-day training on the identification, designation and effective implementation of marine protected areas.

To strengthen co-ordination and provide strategic oversight, a Ministerial Steering Committee convened its first in-person meeting in June 2025, with participation from 11 of the 16 Blue Charter Champion countries, to provide strategic direction for the Blue Charter.



 Read the full
Apia Declaration

thecommonwealth.org/apia-commonwealth-ocean-declaration



The Commonwealth at COP29

The Commonwealth Secretary-General led a delegation of policy experts, climate specialists and youth to the 29th Conference of the Parties (COP29) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in Baku, Azerbaijan, in November 2024.

The Secretariat's presence at COP29 enabled it to champion and advocate for the needs of small and other vulnerable states. The Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub's (CCFAH's) national and regional Climate Finance Advisers were able to directly support these countries' negotiations in the main COP arena.

The then Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, the Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland KC, urged action to reduce emissions, accelerate the energy transition and restore the natural world. She emphasised that the Commonwealth seeks to ensure that commitments to vulnerable countries, such as the Commonwealth's small states, are honoured.

Importantly, this COP marked the start of the tenth anniversary year of CCFAH, which provides small and other vulnerable states with improved access to financial resources, technology and capacities for climate change adaptation and mitigation. It does this through the development of projects, policies and human and institutional capacity; accreditation support; and the promotion of knowledge-sharing and learning.

The Secretariat was actively engaged at COP29, participating in more than 20 events – organising and leading six of them – and contributing to others through speakers, panelists and moderators. Notably, the Secretariat also launched the *Forest Carbon Toolkit* – a resource that provides a practical pathway for accessing voluntary carbon markets while safeguarding the rights of Indigenous Peoples, local communities and landowners. In collaboration with Seychelles and Namibia, the Secretariat also hosted an official side event on the role of Indigenous Peoples and local communities' (IPLCs') knowledge in climate action. The event highlighted how invaluable IPLCs' unique and exceptional traditional and ancestral knowledge is to addressing the intertwined challenges of land degradation, biodiversity loss and climate change.

The Secretariat was instrumental in supporting the Leaders' Summit of the SIDS on Climate Change, which brought together global leaders including Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, COP29 President Mukhtar Babayev, eight small island developing state (SIDS) leaders and the executive directors of the Green Climate Fund and the Fund Responding to Loss and Damage.

The Commonwealth Secretariat and the COP29 Presidency signed a joint declaration in Tonga to strengthen climate action in SIDS and other vulnerable regions. This agreement aims to support small and other vulnerable states especially with a focus on climate resilience, disaster preparedness, and sustainable development.

As part of its ongoing technical assistance to member countries to accelerate their ratification of the High Seas Treaty (or BBNJ Agreement), the Secretariat:

- conducted a needs assessment survey
- delivered a series of six webinars on key aspects of the agreement and the tangible steps for ratification
- delivered bilateral technical assistance to Ghana and Sri Lanka.

Supporting St Kitts and Nevis to define and protect its maritime zones

St Kitts and Nevis is one step closer to unlocking greater economic potential from its marine territory, following a successful maritime boundary delimitation workshop held in June 2025. Organised by the Secretariat in partnership with the Department of Maritime Affairs, the three-day training brought together key government stakeholders to build national capacity in maritime boundary negotiations.

The workshop was part of a broader strategy to help the country define and protect its maritime zones, namely its exclusive economic zone (EEZ). According to Wayne Edmead, Director of Maritime Affairs,

'this training was not only timely, but essential. It allowed our stakeholders to engage with the complex realities of maritime boundaries in a structured and practical way. The knowledge gained will greatly support our efforts to secure our maritime rights and manage our ocean space effectively.'

For SIDS like St Kitts and Nevis, establishing clear maritime boundaries is vital for economic growth and sovereignty. A well-defined EEZ supports sustainable development, from fisheries management to attracting investment. The workshop exemplifies the Secretariat's ongoing support to member states in helping them maximise their maritime resources for long-term national benefit.



Read & watch Commonwealth highlights from COP29

thecommonwealth.org/cop29

The Blue Charter Project Incubator

The Commonwealth Blue Charter (CBC) Project Incubator funded and completed six projects in the reporting period, through £204,000 of grants and by leveraging an additional £133,000 from partners, for a total value of £337,000. The CBC Project Incubator plays a unique role in tackling ocean challenges through government-led, community-driven initiatives that are innovative and sustainable.

Barbados

A roadmap for tackling plastic pollution in Barbados: a rapid assessment using Common Seas' Plastic Drawdown tool. The project increased technical capacity on plastics pollution and the blue economy in Barbados, and provided technical and policy support and valuable input to the UN Expert Group on Plastics Reporting.

Kenya

Ocean climate monitoring in the Swahili Coast: a marine monitoring and mapping project which identified and trained youth and leaders to empower local communities and promoted long-term capacity building in marine monitoring and mapping.



Image: Bennett Whitnell/Tula Foundation

Kiribati

Fishing gear store revolving fund for the Northern Line Islands: a project that addresses the issue of expensive fishing gear by operating a gear store for the Northern Line Islands, providing quality, legal fishing gear at affordable prices, thereby reducing the usage of illegal and otherwise problematic gear.

The Bahamas, Bangladesh, Cameroon, Kenya, Malaysia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago

Instrumentation, methods and training for Coastal oceanographic observations: this project received a small grant of GBP£20,000, and an additional £7,000 in co-funding by the Tula Foundation, to support a training workshop organised by Canada and the provision of low-cost, reliable kits to monitor eutrophication, a pressing issue affecting marine ecosystems. User-friendly visualisation and data management tools are being developed as part of this initiative.

Nigeria

Rapid assessment of policy gaps for sustainable mangrove management in the Niger Delta: this assessment looks at the feasibility of blue carbon crediting projects, provides a summary of the current state of policy, and identifies areas where training and capacity building may be required. This will help to determine whether the voluntary carbon market can support the restoration of mangrove ecosystems in the Niger Delta.

Seychelles

Investigating rivers as a source of marine plastic litter on Mahé island: a monitoring programme to identify the presence, quantity and sources of plastic pollution in seven rivers on Mahé island.

This technical assistance programme was supported by extra -budgetary resource (EBR) funding from the United Kingdom. The Secretariat provided further support to some member countries at the BBNJ Agreement Preparatory Commission meetings through advice and guidance on agenda items, discussions and negotiations.

CCFAH was created in 2015 following the mandate by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Malta in the same year. The Hub supports small and other vulnerable states to improve their access to climate finance, leverage available technology and strengthen both human and institutional capacities for inclusive climate change adaptation and mitigation. To view the video of CCFAH at 10 years, please scan the QR code below:



Drought and desertification are worsening in many Commonwealth countries, including Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Zambia. Through the Living Lands Charter, the Secretariat is committed to enhancing resilience to drought and addressing increasing desertification. To that end, we attended the 16th Conference of the Parties (COP16) of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, in December 2024.

At UNCCD COP16 the Secretariat hosted a side event – ‘Sustainable Land Management and Climate Resilience: Addressing Drought and Land Degradation’ – attended by high-level stakeholders. Discussions emphasised anticipatory approaches including nature-based solutions involving local and Indigenous communities, scaling up sovereign insurance schemes and securing land tenure as incentives for better land stewardship.

Supporting food system resilience in Lesotho

Lesotho, a small, landlocked and mountainous country, is increasingly vulnerable to the adverse effects of droughts, exacerbated by climate change and irregular weather patterns such as La Niña and El Niño. The country’s agricultural systems, primarily rain-fed, are highly susceptible to these climatic variations, resulting in declining food production, widespread land degradation and significant threats to food and nutrition security. In July 2024, Lesotho declared a food insecurity disaster, with a third of the country – over 700,000 people – experiencing severe food insecurity.

As part of the Climate Resilient Food Systems Alliance, the Secretariat advocated for support to Lesotho. It also supported a diagnostic study on food systems in the country which aimed to understand Lesotho’s complex food systems in terms of production, distribution, nutritional value, policy and regulatory frameworks and key players.

Additionally, the Secretariat funded a workshop in October 2024 that convened representatives from government and other partners to discuss the report and agree on the key steps towards addressing ongoing challenges and strengthening resilience within food systems.

As an outcome, participants adopted the Thaba-Bosiu Food Systems Declaration, which establishes a roadmap for achieving sustainable food systems in Lesotho. The Declaration commits the government to a comprehensive approach and encourages all stakeholders to collaborate in order to address the identified opportunities and challenges.

The Government of Lesotho has formally expressed its appreciation to the Secretariat for its invaluable support and assistance provided.

Advocacy and Economic Policy Support for Small and Other Vulnerable States

The October 2024 Commonwealth Ministerial Meeting on Small States in Samoa marked a significant milestone with the launch of the Commonwealth Programme of Action for Small States. This operational roadmap, developed with the UN Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, established a robust advocacy framework featuring advocacy champions for political leadership, a 'troika' oversight group and a 'sherpa' group of officials for technical guidance.

This revitalised advocacy strategy shifts the focus from dialogue to tangible action, with the sherpa group convening regularly to address key issues such as economic vulnerability, climate action and sustainable finance. These co-ordinated efforts ensure that small states' voices are elevated in global forums, fostering inclusive and climate-resilient development. The new framework aims to generate stronger policy outcomes and empower small states to shape sustainable, resilient pathways amid an increasingly complex global landscape.

To advance inclusive development of small and other vulnerable states beyond advocacy efforts and towards domestic resource mobilisation, the Secretariat continued its dedicated support for member countries by supporting Kenya to develop its first-ever diaspora investment strategy. Through a combination of in-depth research and targeted consultations with stakeholders, the strategy has been thoughtfully developed to provide clear, actionable guidance for enhancing diaspora investment.

Furthermore, the recent publication by the Secretariat, **'From Brain Drain to Brain Gain: Unlocking Diaspora Finance in Small States'**, highlights the growing importance of diaspora funding to bridge development gaps and offers policy recommendations to strengthen investment frameworks, especially for small states facing financing shortfalls.

Volume 22 of the *Secretariat's flagship Small States Economic Review and Basic Statistics* series was launched at CHOGM 2024, and emphasised the importance of tourism recovery as part of building economic resilience in most small states. The publication included case studies of sustainable and regenerative tourism from Belize, Malta, Samoa and Seychelles, thus providing a platform for member countries to exchange best practices.

The Secretariat delivered a high-level side-event, opened by the Vice President of Malawi, on 'Innovations for Building Fiscal and Debt Resilience' at the UN's fourth International Conference on Financing for Development. The Secretariat's participation represented a strategic imperative for brokering partnerships and advancing the interests of its 56 member states, particularly vulnerable economies facing compounding crises of debt, climate change and limited fiscal space.



Championing Youth, Gender and Social Policies

The fourth Commonwealth Women's Forum (CWF) was held in Apia, Samoa in October 2024, bringing together nearly four hundred delegates and over 60 speakers from around the Commonwealth. With the theme of 'Collective Action for a Resilient Commonwealth: Solidarity for Gender Equality', the Forum explored the critical challenges and opportunities for advancing women's empowerment and gender equality in the Commonwealth.

CWF 2024 marked the first time the Forum was held in the Pacific, giving the region greater representation in Commonwealth gender equality discussions and emphasising the importance of regional collaboration. Furthermore, CWF showcased the essential roles of women, youth, children and people with disabilities in addressing critical global challenges, including climate resilience, economic inequality and gender equality. Lessons drawn from the 15th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS4) in Antigua and Barbuda were also shared.

The general CWF discussions yielded recommendations for member countries and governments, including:

- dedicating resources to gender and youth initiatives
- supporting leadership training for underrepresented groups
- monitoring progress on inclusion policies for accountability
- supporting women in leadership roles
- encouraging men's allyship
- in recognition that violence against women and girls is a widespread human rights violation, increasing support for prevention and response measures that are feminist-centred, gender-transformative, accountable and sustainably funded.

The Forum's recommendations and their subsequent endorsement by CHOGM represent a significant stride towards a more inclusive and equitable Commonwealth. The



lessons learned and the commitments made at CWF 2024 will continue to guide efforts to promote gender equality and empower women and girls across the Commonwealth.

The Secretariat has advanced youth initiatives through targeted network-building, international forum participation, improved youth work skills and technical support. Collaboration with regional partners resulted in four capacity-building interventions, four meetings for officials and four youth leadership fora, including the Commonwealth Youth Forum at CHOGM 2024.

In a direct fulfilment of the 2023 Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting mandate, the Secretariat successfully convened both the Commonwealth Asia Youth Alliance (CAYA) Summit and the Commonwealth Asia Regional Youth Ministers Meeting, which were held in Pakistan in January 2025.

A state-of-the-art Secretariat office for CAYA at the Pakistan–China Friendship Centre in Islamabad was launched in January 2025. The office serves as a hub for youth-led entrepreneurial initiatives and capacity-building programmes to strengthen economic opportunities for young people across Commonwealth Asian countries. CAYA is now firmly established as a vital regional youth platform, complete with a clear governance structure, strategic priorities and actionable plans. This initiative aims to foster intensified national and regional youth collaboration, align policy priorities to drive sustainable development, and strengthen youth leadership to address critical challenges such as climate change, digital inclusion and socio-economic inequalities across the Commonwealth Asia region.

Heads of Government at CHOGM 2024 underscored the pivotal role of education in promoting human rights, peace, economic, political and social development and environmental sustainability. They reaffirmed their commitment to resilient, inclusive and safe environments in education systems. The Commonwealth Secretariat's education programme delivered on contributing to build resilient, inclusive, equitable and safe learning environments.

The revised second edition of the *Commonwealth Curriculum Framework for the SDGs* was peer reviewed with collaboration from key partners such as the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the Association of Commonwealth Universities. The Secretariat supported member countries to develop governance and capacity, using the Commonwealth Education Policy Framework to guide equitable and inclusive policies from early childhood to vocational training, aligning with SDG 4's goal of inclusive, quality education and lifelong learning for all.

The 11th Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting, convened by the Secretariat and hosted by the government of Canada, was held in the margins of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, in July and August 2024.



Heads of Government at CHOGM 2024 stressed the importance of sports for peace, inclusive and sustainable development; of sports scholarships; and of data-driven, sustainable sports policies and programmes that protect and promote integrity, safety and inclusion for all. They welcomed the priorities and commitments that emerged from the 2024 Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting, and welcomed efforts to secure the future and enhance the resilience and impacts of the Commonwealth Games.

The Secretariat's online course, 'Sport for Sustainable Development: Designing Effective Policies and Programmes', has attracted over 7,000 participants from 191 countries since July 2020. In this reporting period, the Secretariat, in partnership with the African Union, also launched the first hybrid global course for government officials, selecting 42 senior officials from 17 Commonwealth countries to participate.

The Pacific has some of the world's highest rates of obesity, diabetes and tobacco use. Despite regional political will and high-level commitments, most countries lack the legal capacity to develop and update comprehensive public health legislation aligned with the Pacific Legislative Framework for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), and with international standards such as the World Health

Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. To address this gap, the Secretariat partnered with the Pacific Community to deliver targeted legal drafting support.

Promoting gender equality and strengthening democratic capacity in Malawi and across Africa

Following the 2019 Commonwealth Observer Group (COG) recommendations, the Secretariat played a central role in driving sustained political engagement and reform to advance gender equality in Malawi's electoral process.

Through post-election gender reform dialogues in 2021–2022, the Secretariat helped build consensus around key reforms for elections, including gender quotas. This engagement led to a political consortium, comprising the major political parties in Malawi, using the Commonwealth 'elections checklist' to help ensure gender-responsive processes and violence-free primary elections. In August 2024, the taskforce of development partners proposed legislative amendments that would implement gender quotas in parliamentary elections to Malawi's Ministry of Justice, marking a critical milestone in institutional reform.

The Secretariat's post-election gender reform dialogues generated consensus on the identification and operationalisation of key learnings for the 2025 elections, including mobilising advocacy for gender quotas. A member of Malawi's Consortium (Centre for Civil Society Strengthening) used these lessons to provide 'symbiotic sharing' by supporting Zambian civil society organisations to combat violence against women and girls related to elections, in readiness for Zambia's 2026 General Elections.

Robert Mbirizi Phiri, Executive Director of Malawi's Public Affairs Committee, is a committed advocate for Commonwealth democratic values and electoral stability across Africa. His journey began in 1995 when he participated in a Commonwealth youth training programme in Pretoria, South Africa, which laid the foundation for his understanding of democratic governance, electoral integrity and conflict prevention.

Over the past 30 years, Robert has worked across seven African countries, contributing meaningfully to electoral stability and democratic progress for millions of people. His deep involvement reflects the lasting impact of Commonwealth-led capacity-building efforts.

Robert's experiences have translated into regional influence. He served as an observer during the 2011 Ugandan and 2015 Egyptian elections, where he directly applied lessons from his Commonwealth training. He also played a pivotal role in the Commonwealth's peace messaging and early warning activities, which were crucial to pre-empting violence and maintaining peace during Malawi's 2019 and 2020 elections. He further strengthened his democratic practice through his involvement in the Commonwealth Observer Group mission to The Gambia in 2021, building on decades of practical experience. In preparation for Malawi's 2025 elections, Robert continued to apply these insights through an election observer partnership with the Public Affairs Committee and the National Democratic Institute (NDI).

'My experiences from the Commonwealth – in terms of deployment, what it means to be an observer and the importance of neutrality of organisations – this is already fitting into the process.'

Robert Mbirizi Phiri, Executive Director,
Public Affairs Committee, Malawi

Through his sustained leadership and commitment, Robert Mbirizi Phiri exemplifies how early investment in youth and democratic capacity through the Commonwealth can lead to long-term, cross-regional impact on peace, stability and inclusive governance.

Innovation, Digital Transformation and Partnerships

The Commonwealth Secretariat and UN Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) signed a joint declaration in June 2025 to maximise the solutions offered by space technology, innovation and collaboration. The agreement covers not only climate and environmental resilience but also access to distance learning education opportunities and equitable access to services.

Remote sensing, satellite imagery, earth observation systems and geospatial data are already transforming the way we manage natural resources, respond to disasters and plan for a more resilient future. These technologies allow us to:

- detect droughts before they devastate harvests, and storms before they make landfall
- track ocean temperatures and currents
- map land use and forest loss
- reach communities that terrestrial infrastructure cannot.

Together, the Secretariat and UNOOSA aim to democratise access to space-based solutions and unlock their potential for every member country, including those with limited space infrastructure of their own. The joint declaration paves the way for working together to:



- scale up access to space technologies and data
- support early warning systems and emergency preparedness
- foster research, STEM education and gender inclusion
- promote responsible and peaceful uses of outer space.



The BRIDGE Programme and the World Bank in Commonwealth South Asia

Leveraging its 75 years of experience in South Asia, the Commonwealth Secretariat collaborated with the World Bank to launch the Commonwealth BRIDGE Programme to address the unique challenges that newly stationed World Bank personnel face in the region. A two-day workshop was held at Marlborough House in October 2024 that explored South Asian member countries' diverse socio-political landscapes, governance challenges and development disparities. The programme featured expert-led sessions, interactive workshops and scenario-based discussions, and explored themes such as governance transitions, electoral integrity, climate resilience and the application of AI, in order to equip participants with the tools necessary for contextually informed and impactful development work.

The event's collaborative, evidence-driven approach fostered strategic partnerships and created an inclusive platform for dialogue and learning. The monitoring survey found that it had successfully fostered knowledge sharing and collaboration among participants, who highlighted the value of interactive sessions, youth-focused discussions and insights into regional geopolitics.

This initiative exemplifies the power of multilateral partnerships to address the complex development challenges faced by member countries. The Commonwealth Secretariat and the World Bank aim to expand the programme's scope, incorporating emerging issues like digital transformation and climate



finance to further enhance its relevance. Collaborative efforts will continue to prioritise actionable insights, ensuring that participants are equipped with theoretical knowledge and practical strategies for implementation. This commitment reflects a shared vision of sustainable growth and peace-building across South Asia.

The Secretariat partnered with global artificial intelligence (AI) leader SAS to advance technological advancement across the Commonwealth. This initiative focuses on strengthening digital literacy, access and enhancing computational capacity. It equips students and educators with training in AI and data analytics, provides high-quality educational resources and opens opportunities to participate in international AI competitions – all while promoting the responsible and ethical use of AI.

On International Youth Day in August 2024, the Secretariat launched a virtual museum highlighting 50 years of supporting member countries with youth development, and showcasing our incorporation of innovative technology across all our areas of work. Those attending the museum's launch could view it through virtual reality headsets, as well as online.

During the reporting period, the Secretariat developed and launched a new Partnership Portal. This centralised platform streamlines the end-to-end process of forming partnerships, including integrated risk assessments, thus ensuring that all new partnerships are strategic, aligned with the initiating directorate's objectives and consistent with the Secretariat's values. This approach helps mitigate reputational risks and strengthens the overall integrity of partnership engagements.

The number of Commonwealth Accredited Organisations rose to 97 in the reporting period, with four new members added in February 2025. This growth supports the Secretariat's aim to broaden its network, foster collaboration and strengthen its ability to meet Commonwealth challenges.



Watch our video on the virtual museum

thecommonwealth.org/CYP-50-exhibition

Evaluations and Financial Performance

Evaluation Outcomes

The Mid-term and End-term Reviews of the 2021/22–2024/25 Strategic Plan, alongside multi-country evaluations, underscore the Secretariat's unique strengths within the multilateral landscape. These strengths include its trust-based relationships, its significant convening power, and its specialised expertise. These will be crucial for achieving impact in the 2025/26–2029/30 Strategic Plan. The consultants engaged for the End-term Review found the Commonwealth Secretariat

'...to be a unique and valuable organisation. It has something that others do not have... based on high-level trusting relationships and complete neutrality. By and large it has been using that advantage to deliver real change, especially for member states in difficulty and for its many small-sized and vulnerable members.'

Aleph Strategies, 2025

Lessons from country evaluations

A series of in-depth studies of the Secretariat's in-country delivery and impact in a representative selection of Commonwealth member countries were conducted between 2017/18 and 2024/25. The valuable lessons and recommendations from these studies – including the need to scale successful initiatives beyond their initial pilot phases – have informed the development of our new Strategic Plan. This Plan is focused on strengthening technical engagement, refining indicators for progress measurement and leveraging the Secretariat's neutral convening power and trusted relationships to address the evolving needs of member states.

1. Strengthening the country results focus in programme strategies may enhance the coherence, impact and sustainability of Commonwealth Secretariat interventions.

- Improved visibility can increase opportunities for stakeholder engagement. Stakeholders were often unaware of the Secretariat's other activities.
- There is a need for better alignment of interventions with country-specific needs, reform and system environment, and institutional capabilities at design stage.

2. Recognise the Secretariat's value proposition and opportunities for deepening in-country engagement.

- Counterparts lauded the Secretariat's values-based and service-orientated approach. However, they referenced missed opportunities to align efforts with regional organisations and partners to more deeply support their institutional, governance and co-ordination capacity building.
- Diplomatic and cross-communication can be enhanced for effective collaboration and implementation.

3. Prioritise impact through scale, reach or depth in results.

- In the context of limited resources, a series of connected and sustained interventions over time increases the potential for impact, particularly through institutional capacity building and policy reform. Direct efforts should prioritise strengthening these impact pathways to build long-term resilience, while indirect actions

(e.g. advocacy and regional engagement) should reinforce and complement country-level work.

- To maximise effectiveness, enhancing the Secretariat's evidence base will demonstrate impact. Its consensus-building role should be leveraged to influence global policy in favour of member countries' priorities.

End-term review insights

The End-term Review of the 2021/22–2024/25 Strategic Plan highlighted the following programmatic and organisational lessons.

Programmatic Lessons

Democracy and Governance

- Expert support and consensus-building fosters high levels of trust and access, vital to our comparative advantage.
- Critical roles in reducing tensions or driving reforms in, for example, Sierra Leone, Brunei Darussalam, Eswatini and Lesotho.
- Met/good progress on performance indicators across diverse political contexts.

Sustainable Development

- Strong partnerships and ministerial engagement.
- The CCA's efficient delivery and contributions to regional co-operation, legal harmonisation and digital readiness highlight excellent strategic alignment and good value for money.
- Met/exceeded most performance targets (health and finance, legislative reforms, expanded debt management tools, digital trade capacity).

Resilience and Climate Action

- Advanced policy reform and capacity building, and mobilised over US\$485.68 million in climate finance, particularly for small and vulnerable states.
- Added long-recognised value to global climate and biodiversity action.
- Programme demonstrated strong strategic fit, most indicators were met.

Small and Other Vulnerable States

- Strong strides in elevating SIDS concerns in global governance and policy discussions.
- The CSSO attracted growing donor investment and provided highly valued technical support. Exceeded most performance indicators, through influential initiatives like the Universal Vulnerability Index, UN joint advocacy and active roles in COPs, debt relief and SIDS4.

Financial Performance 2024/5

Project Delivery and Expenditure Analysis for 2024/25

During the 2024/25 financial year, the Secretariat successfully implemented 40 projects, operating within a total year-to-date budget of £45.0 million. This achievement reflects the organisation's commitment to efficient budget management, with actual expenditure amounting to 91 per cent of the available budget. The resulting overall variance stood at £4.0 million, indicating a strong alignment between planned and delivered activities.

Of the total £45.0 million budget, £32.4 million was allocated specifically to direct programme activities, while £12.6 million was earmarked for overheads. Actual direct expenditure reached £29.0 million, representing 89 per cent utilisation and leaving a variance of £3.4 million. Extra Budgetary Resources (EBRs) accounted for £1.6 million, and Designated Funds (DFs) contributed £0.9 million of the budget variance.

Overheads expenditure for the year amounted to £12.1 million, resulting in a variance of £0.5 million from the budgeted allocation. The expenditure utilisation rate for the overhead expenditure was at 96 per cent.

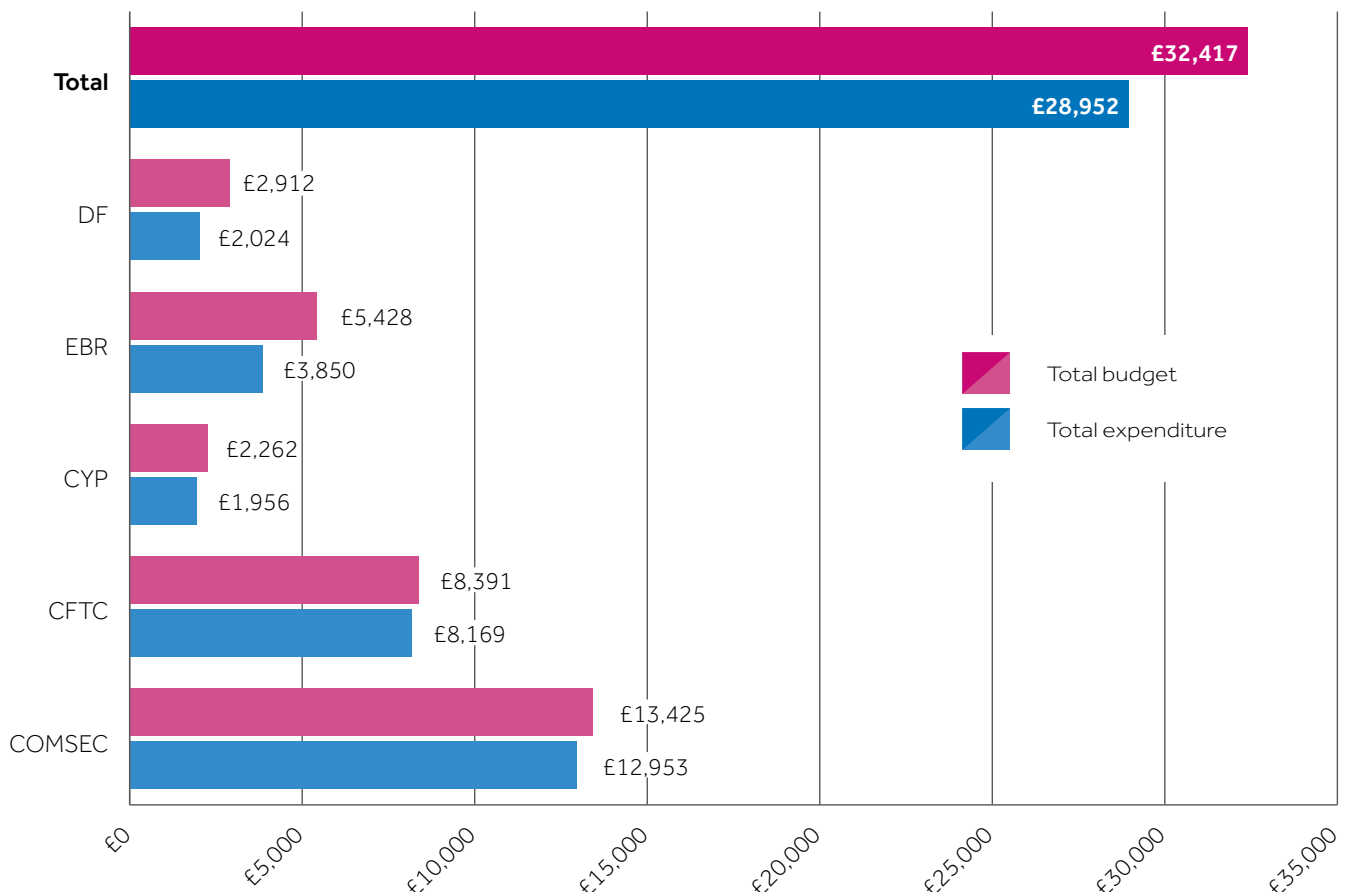
Direct Programme Expenditure by Fund, 2024/25

In the 2024/25 financial year, consolidated total expenditure on programme outcomes for the three funds was £29.0 million (89 per cent), compared to a year-to-date budget of £32.4 million. Further analysis by source of funds is detailed below.

Breakdown by fund

- Commonwealth Secretariat fund (COMSEC): £12.9 million was expended, against a budget of 13.4 million, representing 96 per cent of the total available budget.
- Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC): £8.1 million was spent, against a budget of £8.4 million, amounting to 97 per cent of the total available budget.
- Commonwealth Youth Programme fund (CYP): £2 million was utilised, 86 per cent of the planned total available budget of £2.3 million.
- Extra Budgetary Resources (EBRs): £3.9 million was utilised against a budget of £5.4 million, resulting in a 71 per cent utilisation rate.
- Designated Funds (DF): £2.0 million was utilised against a budget of £2.9 million, resulting in a 70 per cent utilisation rate.

Figure 1.1: Total Direct Budget Performance by fund (GBPE000s)



This level of expenditure highlights the Secretariat's commitment to effectively utilising allocated resources across its core programme funds. The close alignment between planned and actual spending also demonstrates sound financial management and robust delivery of activities within the Strategic Plan period.

Figure 1 illustrates the performance of each fund, and of EBRs and DFs.

Expenditure supported by EBRs in each outcome area

Collaborative efforts leveraging partnerships at national, regional and international levels remain instrumental in catalysing Strategic Plan outcomes. The Secretariat has emphasised partnerships as a critical lever with which to respond to emerging requests. In 2024/25, the Secretariat mobilised £3.9 million in EBRs from partners – including member countries, government bodies, private entities and other multilaterals – for initiatives within the Strategic Plan.

Annex: Detailed Results Framework

Progress Update

Intermediate outcomes	Performance indicator	Baseline 2020/21	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Actuals 2023/24	Actuals 2024/25	Progress rating
1.1 Member countries effectively utilise mechanisms to further adherence of Commonwealth values and principles	Share of engaged member states implementing CMAG and Secretary-General's Good Offices advice	60%	57%	67%	82%	N/A	Project finalised
	Number of member countries implementing new or improved mechanisms, policies or programmes to counter violent extremism	0	5	5	N/A	N/A	Project finalised
1.2 Member countries conduct fair, credible and inclusive elections	Share of member countries engaged through the Secretariat's election programme who implement substantive Commonwealth Observer Recommendations or engage in substantive reform processes	60%	100%	91%	80%	80%	Project finalised
	Share of election management bodies implementing recommendations formulated by Commonwealth Elections Professionals to enhance the transparency, credibility and inclusiveness of electoral processes	8%	52%	33%	39%	71%	Project finalised
CC1 Effective participation and equal opportunities for youth in leadership, governance, economic and social development enhanced	Number of targeted member countries that implement Commonwealth recommended measures to increase youth participation in the political process	17	25	25	25	N/A	Project finalised
CC2 Gender disparities in access to political, social and economic rights and violence against women and girls reduced	Share of targeted member countries that implement Commonwealth recommended actions to promote equal political representation	30%	25%	25%	N/A	N/A	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries implementing Commonwealth advisory guidelines and frameworks to reduce violence against women in politics and elections	1	3	3	3	N/A	Project finalised

Intermediate outcomes	Performance indicator	Baseline 2020/21	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Actuals 2023/24	Actuals 2024/25	Progress rating
1.3 Public institutions and frameworks in member countries strengthened to promote rule of law, access to justice, human rights and good governance	Number of targeted small and other vulnerable states effectively participating in international human rights mechanisms	8	10	13	20	33	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries progressively implementing outcomes from human rights instruments and mechanisms	0	3	9	14	23	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries with substantially reduced backlog of cases	0	1	1	1	N/A	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries implementing improved legal, policy and practice frameworks to address cybercrime	0	5	5	5	N/A	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries with substantially improved legislative drafting and law reform capacity	0	3	5	10	10	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries with improved SDG-enabling rule of law frameworks	0	0	0	0	0	Project finalised
	Number of targeted national anti-corruption bodies demonstrating improved performance	0	4	13	25	30	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries implementing Commonwealth recommended reforms in public administration	0	3	6	8	10	Project finalised

Intermediate outcomes	Performance indicator	Baseline 2020/21	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Actuals 2023/24	Actuals 2024/25	Progress rating
2.1 Effective trade policy, increased competitiveness and co-operation	Number of targeted member countries implementing Commonwealth recommended export development and trade competitiveness strategies	13	16	18	18	20	Project finalised
	Share of Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda cluster decisions with implementation complete or on track	90%	95%	96%	98%	98%	Project finalised
	Number of member countries supported by the Secretariat to implement policy or regulatory initiatives aligned with the Commonwealth Connectivity Action Plan	18	24	36	50	62	Project finalised
	Number of developing country member countries advocating Commonwealth policy guidance on digital trade and trade and environmental sustainability in multilateral fora	0	37	40	40	N/A	Project finalised
CC1 Effective participation and equal opportunities for youth in leadership, governance, economic and social development enhanced	Number of supported member countries incorporating youth considerations in trade-related policies and strategies	0	5	5	5	5	Project finalised
	Number of supported member countries incorporating gender considerations in trade and trade-related policies and strategies	5	6	8	8	N/A	Project finalised
2.2 Sustainable public finance and debt management	Number of targeted member countries implementing Commonwealth recommended reforms and policies for debt and public finance management	2	3	7	10	N/A	Project finalised
	Number of member countries actively utilising Meridian as their primary/sole tool for debt recording and reporting	5	28	34	39	40	Project finalised

Intermediate outcomes	Performance indicator	Baseline 2020/21	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Actuals 2023/24	Actuals 2024/25	Progress rating
2.3 Sustainable, equitable, transparent and effective management, governance and use of the ocean, energy and natural resources	Number of targeted member countries implementing Secretariat policy, legal, economic or strategic advice in the sustainable management of their ocean, energy and natural resources	12	14	14	14	16	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries implementing Commonwealth regional legal frameworks to address NCDs	12	13	13	14	N/A	Project finalised
	Number of regional/ international fora where Commonwealth positions on global health inequalities are reflected	3	6	8	9	N/A	Project finalised
CC1 Effective participation and equal opportunities for youth in leadership, governance, economic and social development enhanced.	Number of member countries implementing policies to reduce disparities and improve education access and outcomes	7	10	10	11	12	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries implementing Commonwealth recommended policies to promote economic opportunities for youth	0	3	5	5	N/A	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries implementing Commonwealth policies/frameworks/guidelines to reduce violence against women and girls	1	-	-	-	-	Project finalised
CC2 Gender disparities in access to political, social and economic rights and violence against women and girls reduced							

Intermediate outcomes	Performance indicator	Baseline 2020/21	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Actuals 2023/24	Actuals 2024/25	Progress rating
3.1 Enhanced intra-Commonwealth co-operation on sustainable ocean action and energy transition	Number of Action Group members implementing Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Group commitments	0	7	11	24	49	Project finalised
	Number of member countries engaged with CSET agenda making progress on their sustainable energy transition	0	4	8	16	33	Project finalised
3.2 Enhanced access to financial resources, technology and capacities for climate change adaptation and mitigation	Increased amount of climate finance (US\$) mobilised for member countries through the actions of the CCFAH (cumulative)	US\$43.8m	US\$47.6m	US\$276.1m	US\$335.08m	US\$485.68m	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries implementing climate actions through Commonwealth established mechanisms	2	16	19	20	N/A	Project finalised
	Extent of agreement reached on Commonwealth Living Lands Charter	0	30	56	N/A	N/A	Project finalised
CC1 Effective participation and equal opportunities for youth in leadership, governance, economic and social development enhanced	Number of Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Group members with increased knowledge of youth perspectives in ocean action	1	3	3	21	37	Project finalised
	Number of CSET Action Group members promoting energy literacy among children	0	3	11	14	130	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries that actively incorporate youth considerations in their implementation strategies to the NDCs	1	3	11	11	N/A	Project finalised
CC2 Gender disparities in access to political, social and economic rights and violence against women and girls reduced	Number of member countries with increased knowledge of gender issues around sustainable energy	0	N/A	2	8	33	Project finalised
	Number of targeted member countries that actively incorporate gender mainstreaming in their implementation strategies to the NDCs	0	4	11	11	N/A	Project finalised

Intermediate outcomes	Performance indicator	Baseline 2020/21	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Actuals 2023/24	Actuals 2024/25	Progress rating
4.1 Small and other vulnerable states' policy positions advanced in global governance mechanisms	Number of key stakeholders that advance Commonwealth positions on small and other vulnerable states	0	3	5	6	N/A	Project finalised
	Number of international fora that recognise Commonwealth positions on small states in agreement, arrangements and resolutions (e.g. COP, CARICOM, G7, G20, PIF, UN, OECD, World Bank, IMF)	1	3	5	6	N/A	Project finalised
4.2 Reduced vulnerability to shocks and improved fiscal sustainability and access to financing	Number of small and vulnerable member countries implementing Commonwealth's policy guidance and tools to address resilience	0	0	2	3	N/A	Project finalised

Cross-cutting outcome	Performance indicator	Baseline 2020/21	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Actuals 2023/24	Actuals 2024/25	Progress rating
CC1 Effective participation and equal opportunities for youth in leadership, governance, economic and social development enhanced	Number of targeted member countries adopting youth mainstreaming strategies	2	5	5	5	N/A	Project finalised
	Share of Secretariat programmes' budget directed to youth empowerment	N/A	60%	60%	60%	N/A	Project finalised
CC2 Gender disparities in access to political, social and economic rights and violence against women and girls reduced	Number of targeted small and other vulnerable states implementing Commonwealth policies/frameworks/guidelines for gender mainstreaming	1	2	2	2	N/A	Project finalised
	Share of Secretariat programmes' budget directed towards gender equality	N/A	60%	60%	60%	N/A	Project finalised

Enabling Outcomes	Performance Indicator	Baseline 2020/21	Actuals 2021/22	Actuals 2022/23	Actuals 2023/24	Actuals 2024/25	Progress rating
CI Enhanced use of technology, innovation and digitalisation	Number of targeted member countries Commonwealth facilitating digital/ technological solutions	0	12	15	15	N/A	Project finalised
	Number of Commonwealth initiatives resulting in innovation and knowledge transfer between member countries	0	10	15	15	N/A	Project finalised
CII Delivery through co-creative partnerships increased	Share of Secretariat projects demonstrating leveraging of partnerships to deliver sustainable change in member countries	0	8%	25%	25%	N/A	Project finalised
CIII Dynamic risk management approach institutionalised	Secretariat makes demonstrable progress towards embedding risk	Level 3 of the Risk Maturity Model	Level 3 of the Risk Maturity Model	Level 3 of the Risk Maturity Model	Level 3 of the Risk Maturity Model	N/A	Project finalised



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