

Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Results Report

July 2018 – June 2019



The Commonwealth

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Foreword

As we celebrate our 70th Anniversary, it is timely to reflect on the enduring value the Commonwealth delivers to member countries and the leadership we bring to the challenges of the present and the aspirations of the future.

In this report, we highlight how at a time of fragmentation and conflict, we continue to bring forward the ambitions of our Heads of Government, protecting our oceans through the Commonwealth Blue Charter, and breaking down barriers through the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda on Trade and Investment.



Bringing our strategy to life, we remain the consultant of choice for our member countries, supporting the development of best practice law and policy in election management, public sector governance, trade diversification, debt management, sustainable development of natural resources and health promotion, among other areas. We continue to strengthen institutions at the national level, enabling individuals and organisations to achieve their aspirations under the Sustainable Development Goals. We are passionate about our young people, 60 per cent of the Commonwealth's population. We work to bring them together, amplify their voices, give them a platform to innovate and shape a sustainable present and future. We continue to champion our small and other vulnerable states, the majority of our members. This is the core of everything we do, from enabling their participation in international decision-making at the highest level in Geneva and New York, to ensuring they can access life-saving climate finance through our Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub, which continues to deliver high return on investment.

As we reflect on our achievements in the past year, as well as those of the past 70, we are not complacent to the need for the Commonwealth to continue to deliver its promise to our members and peoples. I look forward to the 2020 Heads of Government Meeting as an opportunity to continue to rise to the challenge with a common voice, to shape our common future.

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC
Commonwealth Secretary-General

44 projects being delivered, across all 53 Commonwealth countries



Commonwealth Trade Finance Facility operationalised



6

elections where Commonwealth Observer Groups were present (Pakistan, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Maldives, Malawi, Solomon Islands)
Expert teams in 3 further elections



1200

officials trained on trade policy issues and implementation of trade agreements in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific

20

Trade advisers

supporting

26

beneficiary countries and institutions



12

countries upgraded to new CW debt management system

87

Number of debt managers upskilled on new software



12  countries and **3**  regions utilised the **Geneva** and **New York** office space to amplify their voices with **St Vincent and the Grenadines** elected to the **UN Security Council** and **The Bahamas** and **Fiji** to the **UN Human Rights Council**. **Grenada** fulfilled reporting to the **UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

12  countries have stepped forward to be **Champions** on **8**  areas of ocean action under the **CW Blue Charter** action groups **33**  countries participating

USD\$24m

in climate finance secured by the **Climate Finance Access Hub** +\$20m on last year's \$4.1m



Innovation Awards launched



47

senior officials attend the **CW Biennial Conference on Small States**



evaluations of Secretariat's support: **5 Country** – **Sierra Leone, Namibia, Grenada, PNG, Guyana**; **1 Project** – **Trade Hubs and Spokes**; **1 Programme** – **Democracy**



13

countries implementing **CW** guidance for the sustainable management of natural resources

YOUTH

11 **Commonwealth Youth Network** supported

18 young women benefiting from new **Mentorship Programme** in **Africa**

1  **Campaign**

6 **advocacy initiatives** launched 



HRH

the **Duke of Sussex** continued his work as **Commonwealth Youth Ambassador**, to amplify the **youth agenda** globally

Celebrating 70 Years



2019 marks the 70th Anniversary since the London Declaration was signed and the Commonwealth of Nations was born as a unique association of free and equal members, voluntarily cooperating with each other in the pursuit of peace, liberty and progress. In the years since the London Declaration was signed, the relevance and value of the Commonwealth has been reaffirmed repeatedly. The vibrant and growing network of Accredited Organisations is also a testimony to the importance of the Commonwealth's shared principles and aspirations.

1949 1959 1965 1966

Modern
Commonwealth
Begins

First
Commonwealth
Education
Conference

Commonwealth
Secretariat is
Established

First meeting of
Commonwealth
Trade Ministers

1977 1973 1972 1971

First
Simultaneously
Observed
Commonwealth
Day

Commonwealth
Youth Programme
fund established

First
Commonwealth
Senior Officials
Meeting

Commonwealth
Fund for Technical
Assistance
established

1980 1982 1985 1986

First election
observation by
the
Commonwealth

First
Commonwealth
Employment/
Labour Ministers
Meeting

First
Commonwealth
Women's Affairs
Ministers Meeting

Group of Eminent
Person's Mission
to South Africa

2007 2005 2004 1993

Civil Paths to
Peace' launched

Declaration on
Strengthening
Co-operation in
International
Humanitarian Law

Latimer Principles
established

First
Commonwealth
Consultative
Group of the
Environment

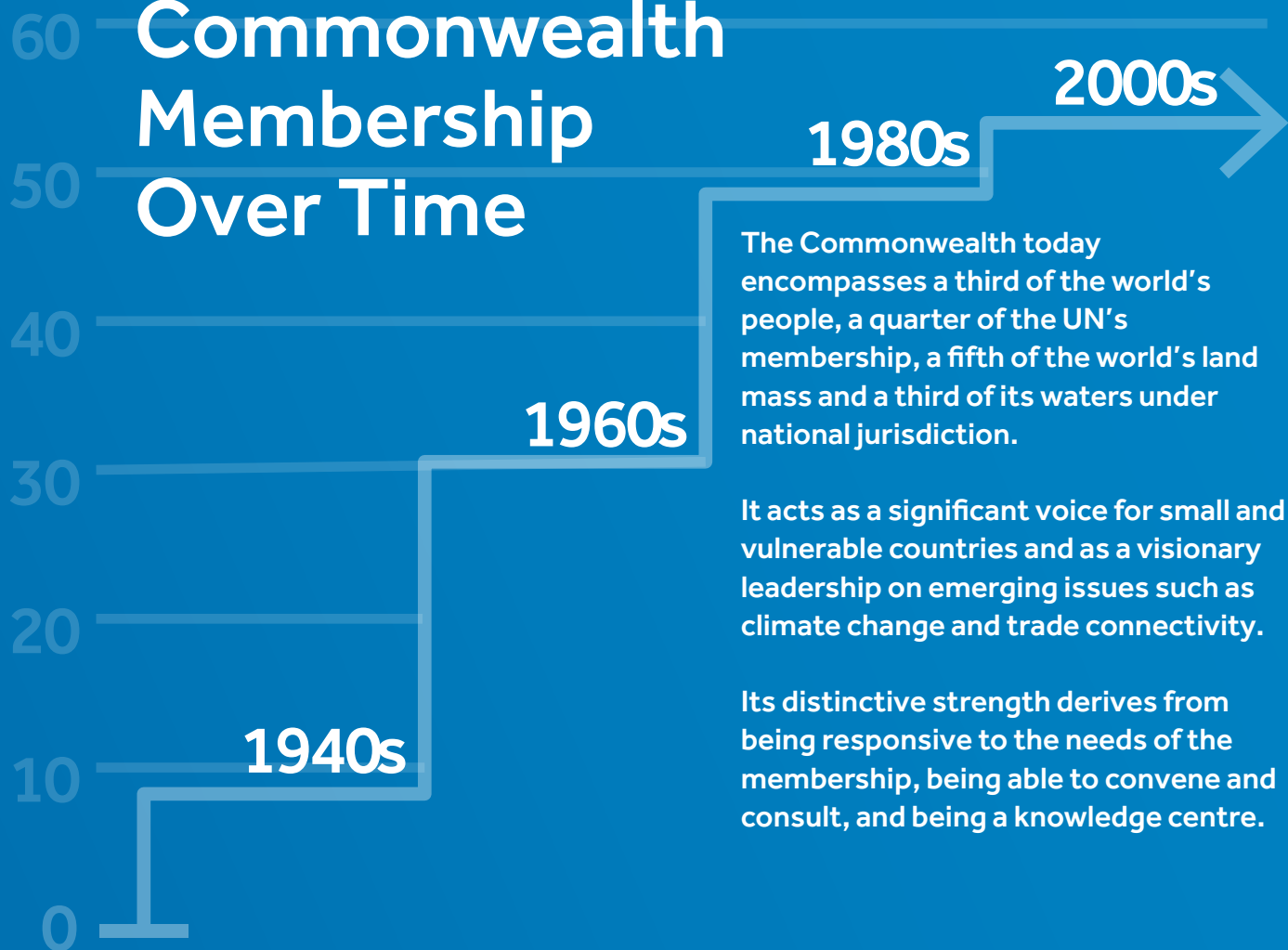
2011 2013 2017

Commonwealth
sets up "Small
States Office in
Geneva"

Commonwealth
Charter signed by
Her Majesty Queen
Elizabeth II

Countering
Violent
Extremism Unit
Established

Commonwealth Membership Over Time



1940s

UK
Canada
Australia
New Zealand
South Africa
India
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

1950s

Malaysia
Ghana

1960s

Nigeria
Cyprus
Sierra Leone
Tanzania
Jamaica
Uganda
Trinidad and Tobago
Kenya
Malawi
Zambia
Malta
The Gambia
Singapore
Guyana
Botswana
Lesotho
Barbados
Mauritius
Nauru
Kingdom of eSwatini

1970s

Fiji
Tonga
Samoa
Bangladesh
Bahamas
Grenada
Papua New Guinea
Seychelles
Dominica
Tuvalu
Solomon Islands
St Lucia
St Vincent and the Grenadines
Kiribati

1980s

Vanuatu
Antigua and Barbuda
Belize
St Kitts and Nevis
Brunei
Darussalam

1990s

Namibia
Cameroon
Mozambique

2000s

Rwanda

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Acronyms

12WAMM	12th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting
ACP	Africa, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
ACU	Association of Commonwealth Universities
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCFAH	Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub
CEP	Commonwealth Election Professionals
CFMM	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting
CFTC	Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
COG	Commonwealth Observer Group
CSO	civil society organisation
CSSO	Commonwealth Small States Office
CVE	countering violent extremism
EAC	East African Community
CDB	Caribbean Development Bank
EMBs	election management bodies
EOJ	Electoral Commission of Jamaica
ERM	Enterprise Risk Management
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDP	gross domestic product
GICA	Global Infrastructure Connectivity Alliance
H&S	Hub & Spokes
ICSA	Intra Commonwealth SME Association
MEL	monitoring, evaluation and learning
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSMEs	micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
NCD	non-communicable disease
P/CVE	preventing and countering violent extremism
RBM	results-based management
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SIEC	Solomon Islands Election Commission
SMEs	small and medium-sized enterprises
SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
T&T	Trinidad and Tobago
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAWG	violence against women and girls
WTO	World Trade Organization

Highlights and Success Stories

Democracy

Projects being implemented under this strategic stream are designed to support the strategic objectives of **greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles**. They encompass the work of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, good offices for peace, elections and countering violent extremism. This section highlights results in the areas of strengthening electoral processes and institutions, increasing women's political participation and supporting member countries in addressing the threat of violent extremism.

Elections

In 2018–19, the Secretariat continued to provide support for strengthening electoral processes. The Secretariat observed positive changes in member countries that it has been supporting over the years. Election observation missions completed in 2018–19, found clear evidence that some recommendations from previous Commonwealth observation missions in **Malawi** and **Solomon Islands** had been acted upon and electoral processes strengthened as a result. In **Malawi**, for example, there was evidence of improvements in voter registration and women's political participation. In 2018–19, the support provided by the Secretariat in relation to implementation of the Media Code of Conduct, through bespoke training and the publishing of a toolkit, contributed to improvements in the media and campaign environment, as acknowledged by the Media Institute in South Africa.

Evidence of progress against previous Commonwealth Observer Group recommendations were also witnessed in **Pakistan** and **Nigeria**. In the latter, for example, a 2015 recommendation to reduce the age limit for elected officials to encourage youth political participation was implemented through Not Too Young Act 2018. Dedicated technical assistance with regard to electoral reform was provided to **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** and **The Gambia**. In 2018–19, the Secretariat facilitated observation of nine electoral events, in accordance with the **Revised Commonwealth Guidelines for**

the Conduct of Election Observation in Member Countries, adopted at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2018. These took place in: **Bangladesh, Belize, Cameroon, Malawi, Maldives, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Solomon Islands** and **Zimbabwe**.

Gender mainstreaming in this area was pursued through equitable gender representation on Commonwealth Observer Groups (COGs), by ensuring (where possible) gender experts were present, and through the production of knowledge products on gender – for example, the Gender Checklist for Elections; and the Handbook on Gender-inclusive Elections in Commonwealth Africa.

To further the mandate of the Secretary-General's Good Offices, a detailed project was developed to foster inclusive dialogue and enhance women's political participation. The project is in its inception phase, with baseline data being collected in pilot countries (e.g. Jamaica). Work during 2018–19 also included capacity building of female candidates for parliamentary elections in **Malawi**.

Malawi is a signatory to the *Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development* and the *African Union Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa*, both of which advance the need for increasing female participation in politics and their representation in decision-making positions. The SADC Protocol sets a specific representation target of 50 per cent women in politics and decision-making positions. Despite having some robust legal and policy frameworks to promote gender equality, female political representation in Malawi remains low, albeit with an increasing wave of female political aspirants. Malawi's 50:50 Campaign Management Agency, under the auspices of the Ministry of Gender, is striving to achieve the SADC target.

In the lead up to the Malawi elections, the Commonwealth partnered with Malawi's Ministry of Gender, the 50:50 Campaign Management Agency, the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), the Centre for Multi-Party Democracy and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), among others, to prepare female candidates for campaigning. Female candidates across political

SUCCESS STORY: ELECTION CYCLE APPROACH BRINGS POLICY CHANGE IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

The Commonwealth has deployed COGs to Solomon Islands since 2001, when the country was grappling with a period of civil unrest. The Solomon Islands Election Commission (SIEC) has been consistently responsive to Commonwealth observers' recommendations. This was particularly notable during the most recent election cycle (2014–19), when a process of electoral reform was initiated and a new Electoral Act was passed. The 2019 COG observed that the following 2014 recommendations had been addressed:

- the SIEC's statutory and regulatory framework had been reviewed, enhancing its capacity to fully exercise its oversight functions in accordance with international standards;
- penalties provided under the National Parliament Electoral Provisions Act for election offences had been reviewed and increased to more effectively deter corrupt practices;
- established procedures for pre-poll voting had been put in place;
- the law had been amended, so that all electors who were present at a polling station before 5:00pm would be able to cast their vote;
- polling procedures had been reviewed, in particular the practice of recording the voter identification number on the ballot counterfoil; and
- training for journalists had been enhanced, to increase public confidence in the accuracy and integrity of the media's coverage of future elections.

'The Solomon Islands Electoral Commission has benefited immensely from Commonwealth observer reports from previous elections. The SIEC has extensively used the observations and recommendations in those reports in forming its policy position on certain aspects of the country's election process.'

SIEC Chair, HE Hon. Patteson Oti



A voter consults electoral lists in Solomon Islands, 2019

In their 2019 report, the observers noted the electoral reforms had helped to improve the conduct of the general election and made further recommendations. The Secretariat is scoping support needed, particularly in relation to strengthening women's political participation.

SIEC is also contributing its experience and expertise with other Commonwealth member countries through other Secretariat's projects. In July 2019, an SIEC representative contributed to the development of a Commonwealth Good Practice Guide on election cybersecurity

during regional training sessions. SIEC presented Solomon Islands' experience of introducing biometrics into the voter registration process and discussed the guidance required by small states to secure their elections against cyber threats. In September 2019, the Commonwealth Election Professionals Network partnered with the SIEC to host a week-long regional capacity-building workshop, with a focus on mobilising temporary election officials effectively; this is a challenge that has been identified by COGs in many member countries, particularly in the Pacific region.



Billboard acknowledging the Commonwealth's contribution to the election of female parliamentarians, Malawi, 2019

parties were supported to develop skills on political leadership, campaigning and constituency outreach. The Secretariat also supported district and constituency-based trainings and outreach which mobilised support for female candidates. The Secretariat was acknowledged by the Government of Malawi as contributing towards the increased

number of women parliamentarians in the 2019 election and emergence of the first female Speaker in Malawi, Hon. Katherine Gotani Hara.

The Commonwealth Election Professionals (CEP) initiative also progressed significantly during the reporting period. The initiative aims to support

Table 1: Summarised CEP survey data across the Caribbean, the Pacific and Africa regions (2018–2019)

Individual impact	Institutional impact	Regional impact
<p>85% of participants report enhanced understanding of key aspects of electoral administration.</p> <p>86% of participants agree that participation in CEP has had a positive impact on their career.</p> <p>83% of participants report participation in CEP has made them more effective and able electoral administrators.</p> <p>38% of participants have been promoted or have taken on new responsibilities.</p>	<p>65% of participants report the EMB is 'doing things differently' as a result of their recommendations. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> improved civic and voter education outreach in Guyana; improved public information and a website in Dominica; gender-awareness training delivered in Nauru; a gender and disability unit established in Zanzibar; and improved access to voting for persons with disabilities in Uganda. <p>94% of project participants remain employed by their EMB, enabling ongoing transfer of knowledge and embedding of best practices.</p>	<p>92% of participants report they are still in touch regularly with fellow participants in the region.</p> <p>42% report they have sought advice from their CEP peers on election-related issues.</p>

SUCCESS STORY: THE ADDED VALUE OF REGIONAL PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS IN JAMAICA

Making an election happen is no easy feat. It involves months of forward planning with different government agencies at the local and national levels. Tasks include the printing of ballots, voter and political party registration, nomination of candidates, campaign finance management, training of electoral workers, the list goes on. Increasingly, EMBs are administering and delivering elections in complex and evolving environments, while addressing internal challenges such as limited budgets. All EMBs recognise the importance of their role in ensuring that the democratic process is strengthened through the delivery of inclusive and credible elections that enjoy public confidence.

It was with these issues in mind that Llofraun Thompson began her research for her report. The Electoral Commission of Jamaica (EOJ) tasked Ms Thompson, as the Registrar of Political Parties in the EOJ, with the responsibility of reviewing a section in an electoral law that had defined the elections in Jamaica for three quarters of century. The section of the Representation of the People Act (Jamaica) limits the period between nomination day and election day to 16 days. With such a short election day preparation period, the EOJ noted staff challenges, including when recruiting and training the large numbers of election day workers and the procurement of election materials.

Ms Thompson decided to approach her task by reviewing similar electoral practices in other countries around the Caribbean region. In order to achieve this, she reached out to fellow election professionals in her Commonwealth Election Professional's (CEP) Network. She developed this network in 2018, when she attended the CEP Caribbean region's training convened by the Secretariat and hosted by the EMB of Antigua and Barbuda. Among CEP's objectives are to provide professional development opportunities to Commonwealth elections professionals and to create regional peer support mechanisms for the sharing of experience, challenges and identified solutions. Ms Thompson consulted CEP alumni in other regional Commonwealth countries, namely, **Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, and Dominica.**

Each CEP alumni in her network was able to confirm relevant listed laws and provided her with first-hand accounts of their respective EMB's conduct on nomination day and election preparedness activities. The feedback she received from Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago was particularly interesting, because it showed that their laws allowed for a longer nomination and election preparedness periods, at 32 days and 35 days respectively. This consultation with peers allowed Ms Thompson to develop an informed view of the commonalities and differences in election preparedness practices across the region. She completed her tasks by submitting recommendations to the EOJ for a proposed extension to a minimum of 18 days, which would give the commission more time to execute its mandate with election preparations. The proposal was well received by the EOJ and has been forwarded for submission to the House of Parliament.

The CEP is an integral part of the Secretariat's learning and exchange offer to EMBs, as they seek to organise ever more credible, inclusive and transparent elections. Ms Thompson's experience highlights the value of the CEP initiative: her participation in the Caribbean regional training allowed her to create institutional linkages and tap into a professional network that has supported her professional development to the benefit of the EOJ.

capacity and career progression of staff members of Commonwealth Election Management Bodies (EMBs). Capacity building has been delivered in the Pacific, Caribbean and Africa regions in the last two years. Data collected in 2018–19 shows evidence of impact at both the individual and institutional levels,

with evidence that knowledge and good practice is being transferred from individuals to institutions, as summarised in Table 1.



Youth activists in Cameroon supported to address hate speech, 2018

Countering violent extremism initiative

The initiative, taking forward the mandate of the 2015 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, continued to advance work in member countries, resulting in the implementation of new or improved mechanisms, policies and programmes to counter violent extremism (CVE). For example, with the support of the Secretariat, **Trinidad and Tobago** established the Nightingale Taskforce, mandated to address the return and reintegration of foreign fighters and their families. Moreover, furthering an enhanced mandate of the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the Secretariat established a Cadre of Experts as a mechanism to support member countries in identifying and understanding drivers of extremism and to identify actions.

The cadre has set priorities and is co-operating with countries – for example, to reform the police training curriculum in **Tanzania** or in the development and dissemination of research on gender and countering violent extremism.

One of the key outcomes sought by the Secretariat in this area is closer co-operation between civil society, and particularly with youth organisations and member governments.

In **Cameroon**, the Secretariat has supported the adoption of the Yaoundé Declaration on the Role of Youth and Women in Countering Violent

Extremism, the basis for future civil society and government co-operation on CVE. Another significant development in this area is the establishment of the Haki na Usalama Forum in Tanzania, a coalition of stakeholders and the police on CVE to foster greater community advocacy on community policing and prevention. Scoping work and engagement with governments is underway in **Ghana, Jamaica, Mozambique** and **Sri Lanka** to further develop the programme and replicate learning.

Lessons learned in democracy

During the reporting period, the Secretariat found that it was necessary to further develop and apply monitoring, evaluation and learning strategies for election support work. Post-election follow-up work with key stakeholders needs to be further prioritised and progressed to ensure sustainability. Flexibility remains of importance in the face of shifting circumstances (e.g. the postponement of a referendum and election in Belize and Nigeria, respectively), as well as the timely engagement of stakeholders in the post-election period (e.g. Sierra Leone). Delivery in the period also underscored the strategic importance of early engagement of election management bodies.

SUCCESS STORY: SUPPORTING TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO IN ADDRESSING VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Most people would associate Caribbean islands such as Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) with their unique cuisine, culture and carnival, while few would imagine challenges with violent extremism. And yet, these paradise islands are among the highest contributors to ISIS (the so-called 'Islamic State') on a per capita basis. Following the establishment of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, it is estimated that at least 153 T&T nationals have left the country to join ISIS. These recruits were men, women and families from all walks of life. Notwithstanding their diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic circumstances, something that all of these people had in common was exposure to extremist ideologies that misuse religious texts to justify violence.

A challenge that many countries across the world are currently grappling with is of those returning from foreign conflicts, also referred to as 'returnees'. Experts recommend that each country and agency develops protocols for managing the arrest, prosecution, incarceration and reintegration of returnees, as well as developing a strategic communications plan to minimise backlash. Of particular note and concern is that of reintegrating (former) extremists and terrorists into society. International best practice states that a cross-government and 'whole of society' collaboration is essential in working on preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), in particular, working on the returnees policy. The importance of a 'whole-of-society approach' to the prevention of P/CVE is sometimes understood more in the abstract than in application. The need for genuine partnerships between civil society and governments may be understood, but difficult to operationalise in practice.

Since 2017, the Secretariat has been supporting the Government of Trinidad and Tobago to develop P/CVE capacity. As a result of this support, the government has established a multidisciplinary and multiagency team, the Nightingale Taskforce, reporting to the Minister for National Security, to deal with possible repatriation and reintegration of citizens of Trinidad and Tobago from Iraq and Syria. The Secretariat delivered capacity building to the taskforce, including understanding how to deal with returnees (male, female and children, with further subcategories of combatants and non-combatants) and the policy and legislative implications of working with cross-government and civil society in designing policy and programmatic activities. One of the high-profile cases the taskforce had to deal with was the return of two minors in January 2019, a complex case of two young children stranded in Iraq after their biological father, without the knowledge of his ex-wife, took them to Iraq. The Secretariat's support in this instance contributed to the successful repatriation of the two minors, who have now been reacquainted with their mother.

In addition, the Secretariat's engagement with T&T's diverse Muslim communities has been well received by community members. The partnership resulted in some civil society organisations (CSOs) arranging their own month-long community cohesion programme, as well as an increase in community leaders engaging more with the media following the Secretariat's 'understanding media training'.

Given the positive progress in Trinidad and Tobago, the Commonwealth is now a trusted and sought-after partner in this area across the Caribbean. Following a number of requests, the Secretariat worked with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), as well as Guyana and Jamaica, on P/CVE.

In terms of the Secretariat's efforts to strengthen women's political participation and foster inclusive dialogue, it will continue to engage with pilot countries and support the leveraging of domestic capacity.

During this reporting period, the CVE Unit's monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) work has

highlighted the need for focus on building trust and co-operation between governments and CSOs. Although the vast majority of project stakeholders recognise that neither government nor civil society can counter violent extremism on their own, there remain real barriers to co-operation, including security protocols and trust. This learning has been reflected in the 2019–20 Delivery Plan.

Table 2: Technical assistance delivered to member countries to support participation in international human rights mechanisms (2018–2019)

Country	International human rights mechanisms	
	Universal Periodic Review	UN Treaty Bodies periodic reports
Belize	Institutional assessment for the establishment of a national human rights institution in furtherance of UPR recommendations.	
Dominica	In-country capacity building ahead of the UPR review. Technical advice and guidance for the delegation in Geneva.	Capacity building for the UN Treaty Body reporting and strategy session to support development of an approach to clear reporting backlog.
Grenada	Capacity building of the National Coordinating Committee, and consultation with government and civil society ahead of the next UPR.	Capacity building of the National Coordinating Committee, development of reporting work plan, and advice on finalisation of Common Core Document for treaty reporting.
The Gambia	Capacity building for the Inter-Ministerial Mechanism on reporting and follow-up to the UPR, inclusive of parliamentarians and civil society.	Capacity building for the Inter-Ministerial Mechanism on reporting and follow-up to Treaty Bodies.
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines		Technical advice and guidance for the national delegation in Geneva ahead of review by the Human Rights Committee (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR]).
Vanuatu	Pre-UPR session briefing for the delegation in Geneva.	

Public Institutions

Projects being implemented under this strategic stream are designed to support the strategic objective of **more effective, efficient and equitable public governance**. They encompass work in human rights, the rule of law and public sector governance.

Human rights

Throughout this reporting period, the Secretariat continued to support member countries, and particularly small states, to effectively engage with international human rights mechanisms. The support encompasses: in-country technical assistance to plan, prepare and present reports to the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the UN Treaty Bodies; support to delegations in Geneva undergoing the reviews; and technical assistance in-country to implement accepted

recommendations from these mechanisms, particularly recommendations regarding the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions (NHRIs). During the reporting period, support was provided to **Belize, Dominica, Grenada, The Gambia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Vanuatu**, as summarised in Table 2.

SUCCESS STORY: ENABLING SMALL STATES HUMAN RIGHTS REPORTING

Dominica is famously known as the 'Nature Island', and has about 72,000 inhabitants. Recently, this beautiful island was severely ravaged by natural disasters, specifically Tropical Storm Erika in 2015 and Hurricane Maria in 2017, which led to damage and losses equivalent to 90 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) and 224 per cent of GDP respectively. However, one of the less obvious factors has been the impact such disasters have made on Dominica's effective participation in international institutions and particularly international human rights mechanisms. The Secretariat is supporting Dominica to re-engage in this space.

In April 2019, the Secretariat supported senior government officials and several civil society organisations to plan for a more effective engagement with the UN Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism and Treaty Bodies going forward. The UPR is a peer review of the human rights record of a country, which occurs every four years; the next review of Dominica was scheduled for May 2019. The Treaty Bodies monitor Dominica's adherence to the core international human rights instruments, to which it has become a party. In some cases, national reports have been pending for over ten years. As a result of a two-day capacity building exercise to address the backlog of Treaty Body reports, the government agreed on the sharing of responsibilities among government agencies in a co-ordinated manner and work towards establishing a National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow-up (NMRF), a best-practice model. The small island state also received technical advice on its UPR national report.



Delegation from Dominica at the UN Human Rights Council, 2019

Subsequently, in Geneva in May 2019, additional technical and logistical support was extended to Dominica through the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO), when its UPR delegation, headed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Francine Baron, was in Geneva for Dominica's review.

'... I will take the opportunity to particularly thank the staff from the Commonwealth for working closely with us these last few days and for making the small states office available to us here in Geneva...'

The Hon. Francine Baron, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Commonwealth small states continue to face challenges in their effective participation in international human rights mechanisms based in Geneva. This is due to a number of factors, including the lack of resources to establish a permanent presence in Geneva, and limited financial and logistical support available for capital-based officials to participate in regular meetings in Geneva. Assisting small states to meet some of these challenges has therefore been one of the key priorities of the Secretariat. Dominica is just one example of a small state with no permanent mission in Geneva, which has benefitted from a support base through the CSSO and through the Secretariat's technical human rights expertise. This leads to more effective engagement with international human rights mechanisms and a stronger voice for small states in Geneva.

SUCCESS STORY: NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE COMMENCES IMPLEMENTATION

The Office of the Ombudsman of Samoa undertook a national inquiry into family violence – the first such inquiry in the Pacific. The inquiry report found that almost 9 in 10 women in Samoa had experienced physical or emotional violence at the hands of family members, with 6 in 10 experiencing intimate partner violence. One in 5 had been raped. According to the inquiry, 33 per cent of women who are raped contemplate suicide, while 13 per cent attempt suicide.

The Secretariat supported the national inquiry into family violence both financially and technically. On 12 September 2018, the Office of the Ombudsman publicly launched its inquiry report.

'We thank our partners, without whom the Inquiry and Report would not have been made possible. Their support and technical assistance throughout this project further reaffirms their commitment to the protection of women, girls and children of Samoa from family violence and promotion of their human rights.'

Maiava Iulai Toma, Ombudsman

Following the launch, the Secretariat continued to support the Ombudsman to develop a stakeholder engagement strategy, which now guides its advocacy on the report's recommendations and other rights issues, through an intensive course in high-level stakeholder engagement for the staff.

Since the launch of the report, and through advocacy and awareness raising by the Office of the Ombudsman, there has been high-level political buy-in to address family violence. Earlier this year (2019), Prime Minister Tuilaepa Malielegaoi declared: 'Enough is enough!' and called for 'a whole of country approach to address the issue with more proactive leadership', committing to taking action to implement the report's 39 recommendations.

A number of the report's recommendations are being given effect. It was recommended that village fonos (councils) should be empowered to play a role in bringing perpetrators of family violence to formal justice. Forty (40) per cent of villages are currently considering action and two villages have officially affirmed a zero-tolerance approach, with all forms of violence deemed punishable offenses under village laws. Another recommendation called for the justice system to be strengthened to ensure equal access to justice. The Attorney-General promoted new measures to support victims participating in court proceedings to give evidence without coming face to face with the defendant, such as applications for young witnesses to give evidence through CCTV from a location outside the main courtroom. Additionally, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture is reviewing its Family Life Education, with a view to incorporating topics around family violence and safety, as recommended by the report. The Samoa Law Reform Commission is undertaking a legislative review of the six core laws covering the family to ensure family violence is adequately addressed. The Commission's work is informed by the inquiry's findings and recommendations.

Rule of law

In the area of the rule of law, focus in the reporting period has been on implementing the mandate of the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in regard to the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration. Needs assessments were conducted in three pilot countries, and progress was made in the identification and capacity building of country focal points in terms of the provision and handling of electronic evidence in cross-border trials. The

Office of Civil and Criminal Justice Reform has progressed the development of legal tools, with the Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Benchmarks and Model Investment Contract Provisions and Revised Model Data Protection Provision finalised and receiving good feedback from perspective users. The Law and Climate Change Toolkit is being implemented in member countries; for example, Antigua and Barbuda is using the toolkit to revise its agriculture legislation.

SUCCESS STORY: HOW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IS TRANSFORMING CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM IN THE COMMONWEALTH

In today's world, there is increasing reliance on technology for daily transactions and interactions. This has correspondingly increased vulnerability to cybercriminals, including in Commonwealth countries. Consequently, electronic evidence in any form is relevant in around 85 per cent of total criminal investigations. In almost two-thirds of the investigations where electronic evidence is relevant, a request to special prosecutors based in another jurisdiction is needed, resulting in the need for cohesive cross-border action against cybercrime.

The Secretariat is leading on the use of digital technology to transform criminal justice. In 2018, the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration was endorsed by all Commonwealth member countries, underscoring Heads of Government's desire to maintain a free, open, inclusive and secure cyber space, setting out for the first time a common vision. The Secretariat has commenced work towards implementation of the Cyber Declaration, including building capacity on electronic evidence handling for judges, prosecutors and investigators in the Caribbean region; and strengthening international co-operation in cybercrime investigations in countries where legal reform and capacity building are required (this across all Commonwealth regions). This work is delivered in partnership with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization of American States (OAS). The collaboration between organisations has resulted in a multifaceted approach towards delivering electronic evidence training and legislative reform across the Commonwealth.

At the recent electronic evidence focal point meeting held in Sydney, participants were able to learn how to make requests for the preservation of electronic evidence, best practice regarding information exchange with foreign counterparts, and how to make expedited and emergency direct requests of service providers. Participants were engaged in practical cross-border simulated exercises to appreciate the dynamic nature of electronic evidence. The need for national co-ordination was stressed in dealing with requests for preservation and use of electronic evidence across borders.

'The workshop taught me the importance of preservation and policies of mutual legal assistance, with the group exercises highlighting the necessity of working together and communication between authorities.'

Ms Kylie Wilson, a Senior Legislative Drafter from Samoa

'The training is useful and practical. The knowledge and materials from the training would be a reference documents in my day-to-day work.'

Ms Angelina Aruke, the Cameroonian cybercrime contact point

The workshops highlighted that Commonwealth member countries are keen to build connections and partnerships to strengthen electronic evidence handling and put in place systems to support the development of national cybersecurity response, including planning, incident response and cybercrime legislation.

Public sector governance

The Secretariat continued to build the capacity of anti-corruption agencies and in establishing and strengthening networks through, inter alia, the Africa Anti-Corruption Centre. A survey of agencies supported by the centre highlighted that 80 per cent of trainees felt the courses had expanded their knowledge, 70 per cent reported increased ability to perform in their roles, and 68 per cent reported

making significant changes to their work as a result of the learning. Changes reported included in the adoption of financial investigations, development of strategic plans and amendments to anti-corruption legislation.

'Commonwealth member states have benefited significantly from the programmes and tangible capacity improvements have been realised by Commonwealth Anti-Corruption Agencies.'

PMF-Connect Evaluation of ACA project

In the area of strengthening public financial management, the Secretariat enabled member countries to enhance transparency in public procurement and implementation of audit recommendations. Member countries participating in the capacity building reported that, since the support was provided, at least 50 per cent of public procurement bids had been advertised and contract awards published, and more than half of audit recommendations had been implemented. Additionally, Enterprise Risk Management Policy and Frameworks were adopted in Botswana, Ghana, Jamaica and The Gambia. These enable member countries to achieve national strategic objectives and sustainable development through enhanced risk management and improved decision-making.

Lessons learned in public institutions

In the area of human rights, lessons learned included the importance of beneficiaries' needs being properly identified at the outset for targeted technical assistance delivery; for this reason, increased resources are being put into pre-training questionnaires. Such questionnaires are being incorporated into early planning for all projects to provide baselines against which to measure impact. On the logistical front, this team has recognised that for initiatives planned in **London** and **Geneva**, alternative strategies to secure visas should be investigated to ensure that all member state stakeholders are able to attend. The success of the team's long-standing engagement with member countries in **Geneva** has led to work to identify similar strategies to engage with member countries based in **New York**.

Youth and Social Development

Projects being implemented under this strategic stream are designed to support the strategic objective of **people of the Commonwealth fulfilling their potential with dignity and quality in a healthy environment**. They encompass work in youth, sport for development and peace, education, health, and addressing violence against women and girls.

Youth

Inspired by the Commonwealth Youth Index, a number of national and regional youth indices are now being created using the Secretariat's methodology, demonstrating the Commonwealth's thought leadership. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (**ASEAN**), the Caribbean Community (**CARICOM**) and **the African Union** have adopted regional indices, while **India** has adopted a subnational-level youth index. Youth mainstreaming strategies have been adopted in **Kenya** and **Ghana** as a result of the Secretariat's support and in **Belize**, a youth mainstreaming approach to the National Trade Policy has been adopted following the Secretariat's advisory support. Youth participation frameworks are being strengthened in **The Bahamas**, **Uganda** and **the UK** with the Secretariat's support. Higher education institutions in 15 member countries (**Bangladesh**, **Botswana**, **Ghana**, **Guyana**, **Jamaica**, **Malawi**, **Malaysia**, **Malta**, **Mauritius**, **Namibia**, **Seychelles**, **Sierra Leone**, **South Africa**, **Sri Lanka** and **Uganda**) have adopted courses and degrees to enhance youth work.



Commonwealth Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs meeting

SUCCESS STORY: THE GAMBIA IMPROVES GOVERNANCE, RISK MANAGEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

In recent times, there has been increased focus on effective risk management to address global challenges. The Government of The Gambia, upon re-joining the Commonwealth in February 2018, improved its governance, risk management and decision-making ability with the adoption of an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Policy and Framework, with the support of the Secretariat. ERM enables The Gambia to proactively identify, assess and manage risks impacting on achieving the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the country's NDP. It enables efficient service delivery across health, education, energy, agriculture and infrastructure, through effective decision-making on governance, transparency and accountability issues.

Adopting the ERM Policy in October 2018, The Gambia's Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, Hon. Mambureh Njai, expressed appreciation for the Secretariat's support in this process. The ERM Framework has now been piloted in the Ministries of Finance and Economic Affairs; Petroleum and Energy; Health and Social Welfare; Basic and Secondary Education; Agriculture; and Transport, Works and Infrastructure – representing 23 per cent of the total number of line ministries in The Gambia.



Commonwealth-sponsored ERM accredited training in session, 2018

'The need for broad-based risk management is [...] critical, as it will also ensure that risks that were not previously given adequate attention or are cross cutting are now properly managed.' Madam Ada Gaye, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs

In partnership with the West African Insurance Institute (headquartered in The Gambia), accredited training was delivered to key officials of the piloted ministries to provide the relevant

capacity required to improve governance and decision-making on risk management for delivery of services. Pilot line ministries have since instituted risk registers, which now play a pivotal role in the management of risks and decision-making.

The Gambia's strides in improving governance through ERM are widely recognised by partners including the resident United Nations Development Programme, which has subsequently collaborated with the government in strengthening governance through integrating the ERM Framework into monitoring the delivery of the objectives of the SDGs and NDP.

Managing risks in The Gambia's energy sector received a further boost by collaborating with Ghana's energy sector, thanks to the Secretariat's facilitated knowledge exchange between senior officials of both member countries.

The successful introduction of the ERM in The Gambia follows on from similar assistance provided by the Secretariat to the Government of Botswana in 2017. The replication of this technical assistance now successful in these two countries has generated interest from other Commonwealth member countries, including Jamaica.

'It was instructive and encouraging to see the significant work The Gambia has achieved since they started implementation of ERM. There are several elements of their approach that we will be exploring to determine suitability for adoption, as the Government of Jamaica implements its ERM in Central Government.'

Ms Suzette Campbell, Senior Director Internal Audit Directorate, Jamaica

SUCCESS STORY: COMMONWEALTH YOUTH LEADERS USE NEW MOBILE TECHNOLOGY TO CONNECT VOLUNTEERS ON GRASSROOTS PROJECTS AND MEASURE IMPACT

Since the creation of the 11 Commonwealth youth networks, youth leaders have been mobilising and implementing innovative development projects at the local and grassroots levels. Youth networks offer innovative and practical solutions, from tackling climate change, fighting for peace and social cohesion, to advocating for decent employment and fit-for-purpose education, standing up for gender equality and inclusion, and deepening democracy among young people. Youth-led projects across the Commonwealth are rapidly expanding, and there is a need for better monitoring and reporting on impact. At the last Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in 2017, therefore, ministers invited the Secretariat to consider how to increase visibility of the Commonwealth youth networks and create better linkages between the youth networks, national youth structures and member countries.

The Commonwealth worked with Verdentum.org, an innovative Commonwealth-based social enterprise founded by young people to implement cutting-edge mobile technology to help grassroots organisations and volunteers co-ordinate teams globally and report with ease. The technology is a first-of-its-kind effort which has paved the way for connectivity and evidence-driven reporting at the grassroots level. Through the technology, young people have the ability to scale activities and deliver results on the SDG targets in a combined manner. Co-ordinating teams and collecting data and results was a prohibitively difficult task when running projects across multiple nations. Today, it has been simplified and made possible by the technology.

'There was no way for young volunteers to connect with one another and work together to solve pressing issues. [...] This is the year of "a connected Commonwealth" – we hope that the Verdentum platform can help volunteers across the Commonwealth scale their work, collaborate with colleagues across the planet and increase the impact of their work through the power of data and connectivity.'

Rohit Pothukuchi, Founder & CEO, Verdentum.org

The I AM ABLE campaign of the Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) implemented the technology to connect volunteers working on disability rights and empower them to take an evidence-driven and data-driven approach to their work. The I AM ABLE campaign was developed by youth leaders to address the marginalisation and discrimination of people with disabilities in Commonwealth countries. The campaign involved educational outreach, 'myth-busting' on social media and leadership training for young people with disabilities. To connect members and enable reporting, the CYC implemented Verdentum and invited key stakeholders to upload data on activities. During the pilot, campaigners in nine Commonwealth countries shared information. Following the pilot, the platform has been open to participants in all 53 Commonwealth countries. The platform has allowed sharing of images and project data from places with poor internet access, which were previously difficult to connect.

As a result of this, the Secretariat has been able to: monitor and map the work of the youth networks and linkages to the Commonwealth and SDG targets; and have audio visual structured reports tied to remuneration in place for co-ordinators to carry out their advocacy and leadership work for the networks.

Sports for development and peace

In the area of sports for development and peace, a preliminary international indicator framework for measuring the contribution of sport to the SDGs has been produced and endorsed by multiple

United Nations agencies, and Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth member countries.

A National Gender and Sports Strategy was adopted in Botswana thanks to the Secretariat's support. The strategy was developed through consultation with more than 100 officials, including sports and gender equality leaders.

'The government's goal is to maximise the contribution of sport to achieving 100% gender equality and empowering women and girls across the country [...] Our new sports strategy focused on the positive impact of improved gender equality in sport and outlining how we will build capacity to promote gender equality in all sports in Botswana.'

Mr Kago Ramokate, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sport and Culture Development, Botswana

Education and health

In order to take forward education outcomes in the reporting period, the Secretariat partnered with several regional and sub-regional organisations to revise policies and strategies to improve learning outcomes. The Secretariat supported ten **SADC** members (**Botswana, Kingdom of eSwatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa and United Republic of Tanzania**) to develop action plans for the roll out of the Commonwealth Education Policy Framework (CEPF). At the country level, **Fiji Islands, Tuvalu** and **Solomon Islands** have taken into account recommendations stemming from the CEPF, in particular with regard to governance and the framework's education systems capacity enablers.

CARICOM requested technical support from the Secretariat for the revision of teachers and school leaders' standards. These standards, which are near finalisation, will support countries in the development or revision of their national standards. In **Jamaica**, the government is considering a multisectoral approach to address boys' educational under-achievement, as advised by the Secretariat.

In support of member countries in the Pacific, the Secretariat developed the Pacific Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) Legislative Framework.

Violence against women and girls

To further the strategic outcome to protect and empower women, girls and other vulnerable groups, the Secretariat is supporting countries to measure the economic cost of violence against women and girls (VAWG). In **Seychelles**, following a study conducted by the Secretariat, a review of the draft Gender-Based Violence Act is now underway and training for police officers is planned. In **Lesotho**, the project is commencing a review of

methodology, while both administrative and primary data are being collected to inform quantification of the cost of VAWG.

Lessons learned in youth and social development

All teams emphasised the need for internal policies, specifically on human resources, to be responsive to ensure fast and effective recruitment. In the area of sports for development and peace, there is a need for ongoing capacity and capability building in countries through the Mass Open Online Course. Resources are needed for ongoing engagement with countries already supported. A balanced approach to engagement in international/UN platforms versus engagement at the regional and national levels to ensure coherence needs to be refined.

In the area of health, a monitoring mission to assess progress on the NCD Legislative Framework in the Pacific, provided valuable insights. Delivery in the area of education highlighted the need for additional time to be built into the schedule for peers and stakeholder groups to review work progress. Proactive communication is required to strengthen partnerships. Collaboration with regional bodies allows for better synergy and outreach to member countries. There are increasing opportunities and a need to enhance country-to-country collaboration and improve sustainability.

In relation to the 'Economic Cost of Violence Against Women', delivery has underscored how this is a highly ambitious project which relies not only on securing governments' buy-in and support, but also on data availability. The project's timeframe is short; therefore, to ensure sustainability, including institutionalisation of the methodology, adoption and implementation of strategic initiatives aiming at VAWG reduction and periodic monitoring against results, the Secretariat needs to ensure adequate resources are earmarked beyond one Strategic Plan timeframe.

SUCCESS STORY: HEALTHIER CITIZENS, HAPPIER COMMUNITIES AND A STRONGER MAURITIAN NATION THROUGH SPORT

Sport is now a key strategy to improve health, well-being and community cohesion in Mauritius following technical assistance from the Secretariat. A new National Sport and Physical Activity Policy for 2018–28 is being implemented. The policy is aligned to deliver against the Sustainable Development Goals.

'Sport and physical activity have a truly distinctive role to play in binding our country together. A nation of healthy, active citizens will be the bedrock upon which we can continue to build a stronger Mauritius.'

The Rt Hon. Pravind Jugnauth, Prime Minister at policy launch

The Secretariat has played a key role in revolutionising the use of sport and physical activity as a strategic development tool in the country. The Secretariat's comprehensive report, entitled *Rising to the Challenge through Sport*, based on extensive consultation, capacity building and analysis in the country, was instrumental in informing the new policy direction.

'The Commonwealth's technical assistance supported the Mauritian government to set out future plans and prioritise resources to develop an inclusive policy focused on enhancing development and health outcomes for all Mauritians.'

Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint, Minister of Youth and Sports



Sports activities in Mauritius

The last three national budgets have included dedicated investment in sports and leisure, including direct budget allocations for small sports infrastructure, active schools and programmes to encourage the regular participation of senior citizens. The country has also embarked on a fundamental reform of the sport and physical activity sector. This has included restructuring the Ministry of Youth and Sports, as well as establishing new fit-for-purpose statutory bodies so there are dedicated agencies responsible for maximising the potential of sport to improve the lives of Mauritians of all ages. A new

Sports and Physical Activity Bill will also be tabled in parliament that will have a stronger focus on ethics, good governance and safeguarding sport participants.

Mauritius was also among the first countries to explicitly report on the role sport is playing in achieving its efforts to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals in the country.

In its Voluntary National Review (VNR) report to the 2019 High-Level Political Forum, Mauritius reported on its strategic use of sport and physical activity in working to deliver on SDG 3 on health, SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 17 on revitalising partnerships for sustainable development. Mauritius also used this opportunity to highlight that with the ongoing support of the Secretariat, it would introduce a common indicator framework on Sports and the SDGs into its national monitoring and evaluation system.

This ongoing work with Mauritius is one part of the Commonwealth's wider leadership of global efforts to develop common indicators to monitor and evaluate the contribution of sport to the SDGs. Through this work, the Commonwealth is leading global delivery of Action 2 of the Kazan Action Plan (adopted by the Sixth International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport and endorsed by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO] General Conference) and Action Area 4 of the UN Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace 2018–2020, focused on improving sport-related data. The Commonwealth's leadership of this initiative to date has improved knowledge and capacity on how to measure, evaluate and more effectively invest in sport as a tool to deliver on the SDGs in 90 organisations across 29 countries.

SUCCESS STORY: TACKLING NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDs) IN THE PACIFIC

NCDs – such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and respiratory diseases – are single largest cause of premature death in the Pacific islands, accounting for 70 per cent of deaths in the region. Unhealthy diets, tobacco use, alcohol misuse and inadequate physical activity contribute substantially to NCD incidence in the region.

Responding to a request from Pacific Health Ministers, the Secretariat is working with the Pacific Community (SPC) to provide a mechanism for countries in the region to review and reform their current laws around food, alcohol, tobacco and tax policies: i.e., a NCD legislative framework. In view of the importance and urgency of the work, the Secretariat has placed a legislative drafter in the SPC to support the development of the framework. The expertise provided is not readily available in the region. This is not just a collaboration with the SPC, but a project supported by other development partners, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the McCabe Centre for Law and Cancer.



NCD framework feedback session, 2019

Legislative drafters and experts from 12 Pacific countries, development agencies and academic institutions reviewed the draft framework in April 2019.

In depth interviews, conducted through a dedicated monitoring mission, indicated that they welcomed the framework content and commended the work. The drafters said the framework would help them with law reform, either by addressing gaps in current legislation or influencing the creation of new legislation.

By inspiring more effective law and policy, the framework has the potential to reduce alcohol and tobacco use in the region. Drafters believe tackling the advertising of unhealthy food, tobacco and alcohol, as well as labelling and taxation, through implementation of the framework, have the potential to allow for more informed choices. Particular areas of focus going forward include legislation for breast-milk substitute regulation, and control of sugar, salt and trans-unsaturated fatty acids.

At their 7th regional meeting, Heads of Health in the Pacific confirmed the need for legislation on tobacco industry interference, trans-fatty acids and alcohol advertising, as well as the marketing of unhealthy food and drinks to children. They identified legislative reform as a key strategy for progress of the Pacific NCD Roadmap and the WHO Global Action Plan on NCDs.

Legislative drafters also felt the consultation provided a valuable opportunity to build their capacity in this area of law, and increase their awareness and knowledge of NCDs, related risk factors and appropriate legislation. The Pacific NCD Legislative Framework was due to be presented to Pacific health ministers in August 2019, for their updates and consideration. The Pacific Community has requested ongoing assistance in this area.

Economic Development

Projects being implemented under this strategic stream are designed to support the strategic objective of more inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. **They encompass work on trade, economic policy and small states, debt management, and oceans and natural resources.**

Trade

In the area of trade, the Secretariat provided support to individual countries to develop trade policies and implement trade agreements, as well as taking forward advisory support on international trade policy issues, particularly to small states through the Trade Advisors Project in **Geneva**. Regional consultations in Africa, the Caribbean and

HUBS AND SPOKES PROJECT EVALUATION FINDINGS

The Hub & Spokes (H&S) II programme commenced in July 2012, following the closure of the H&S 1 Project which ran from 2004 to June 2012. The programme, through its 'Network of Advisers', provided advisory support and services on trade policy development at the national, regional and international levels in the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions.

Table 3: Advisers placed in the member countries and regional organisations by the Hubs and Spokes programme

Trade advisers		Beneficiary countries and institutions	
National trade advisers	11	Countries	19
Regional trade advisers	5	Regional international/economic organisations	7
Trade Advisers	4		
Total	20	Total	26

Africa	Caribbean	Pacific	Regional economic organisations /communities
Botswana	Belize	Tonga	PIF Secretariat
Kenya	Jamaica	Fiji	COMESA Secretariat
Malawi	Guyana	Republic of Marshall Islands	CARICOM Secretariat
Uganda	Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Federated States of Micronesia	EAC Secretariat
Lesotho		Kiribati	SADC Secretariat
Mauritius		Samoa	OECS Secretariat
Zambia			African Union Commission

The evaluation highlighted how the H&S programme delivered clear benefits to member countries and regional institutions. It provided meaningful capacity, supported regional and international trade integration, and has the potential to deliver greater results.

Positive results included the following:

- Policy and strategy delivery was one of the most positive achievements in the programme.
- Capacity was developed in target institutions through training, mentorship and also delivery of programmes, as advisers were fully integrated in delivery mechanisms.
- Agreements reached and progress towards ratification of national and regional trade agreements by some member countries.
- The delivery model of H&S in each region was effective, addressing individual national needs. It allowed national trade agendas to keep pace with the regional and international trade processes, while also ensuring a coherent approach to trade development. This model allows member countries to drive the trade agendas and support regional institutions in moving the agreements faster.
- The project management of the H&S programme was commended as remarkable by stakeholders and has been confirmed by the evaluation. The attention to detail of the Secretariat's project management team was excellent.

However, the evaluation highlighted challenges. These included the following in particular:

Due to under-resourced trade units in member countries, advisers ended up filling gaps as opposed to transferring skills to existing capacity. Because of the advisers' workload, the network was not able to always prioritise exchange of learning, exchange of information, and allow for coherent movement of policies and strategies across different countries.

- Implementation of policies and strategies put in place was slower and would remain a challenge due to limited funding and low technical capacity.
- Challenges still lie in the domestication of a number of the ratified agreements and protocols.
- Overall, advisers felt that the technical oversight of the programme from the Secretariat needed strengthening.
- There were clear areas of programme interface between the mainstream trade programme of the Secretariat and the H&S programme, and there were missed opportunities for engagements and utilisation of expertise of the regional and national trade advisers.
- Monitoring and evaluation was limited to progress reporting.
- Harmonised results and workplans for regional and national advisers did not support depth in highlighting the complexity of delivery involved at the regional level as opposed to the national level.

These lessons will be taken into account in the design of the successor programme.

Asia-Pacific helped improve member countries' understanding of new and emerging trade issues, and this improved capacity will enable more effective participation in negotiations, especially the next World Trade Organization (WTO) ministerial conference in June 2020.

With WTO reform being discussed in Geneva, a Secretariat publication on this topic supports members to participate more meaningfully in this process, as acknowledged by the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the WTO.

'The Commonwealth's contribution to the dialogue on important global matters is recognized and appreciated.'

Mr Wayne McCook, Senior Adviser to the Director General, WTO

The Hubs and Spokes programme, a flagship of the Secretariat, has concluded its second phase and undergone an evaluation.

Moreover, at the national level, the Secretariat has continued to support export diversification strategies, and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), two key drivers of increased trade for member countries.

Table 4 shows progress against key policies and frameworks to foster export diversification, at mid-point in the Strategic Plan.

Economic policy and small states

Building on the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government commitment, Commonwealth finance ministers endorsed the development of the Disaster Risk Finance portal. Disaster risk finance was also the focus of the Small States Biennial, in March 2019. This has now been developed and will be launched at the next meeting in October 2019. Central Bank governors have endorsed the development of a Commonwealth Fintech Toolkit, which will provide improved technical guidance regarding the implementation of Fintech activities.

The toolkit will also provide: a mechanism through which to advance financial inclusion; and mobilisation of domestic resources for improved health, education and other social indicators. The toolkit will also be used for information sharing and lessons learnt across the Commonwealth.

SUCCESS STORY: INTRA COMMONWEALTH SME ASSOCIATION (ICSA) SUSTAINABLE ADVOCATE FOR SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



SME Africa Summit, 2019

For Mr Bernard Takyi, CEO of Omanbapa Ghana Ltd, a young entrepreneur from Ghana, participating in the 1st Intra Commonwealth SME Association Trade Summit had a major impact on his business. At the summit, held in India in 2017, Mr Takyi signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kent RO Systems, the largest manufacturer of water purifiers in India, for the establishment of a water treatment plant in Ghana.

This plant would go on to create new jobs and contribute to the efforts toward achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 6, for clean water and sanitation to ensure safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030.

One of the results sought by the Secretariat is to create 'effective mechanisms for increasing trade, employment and business growth'. A key strategy to achieve this is to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) overcome challenges and network with others across the Commonwealth.

Challenges SMEs face include limited access to finance, slow uptake of new technologies, lack of awareness of international standards, lack of quality assurance, lack of research and development capacities, and innovation on new products. In partnership with the Government of India, the Secretariat launched the Intra Commonwealth SME Association (ICSA) in 2016, as a solution to the challenges many Commonwealth SMEs face. Following its launch, ICSA hosted the 1st ICSA Trade Summit in New Delhi in 2017, expanded to the Pacific in 2018 and to Africa in 2019.

ICSA enables the sharing of innovation, knowledge and technology – through virtual Commonwealth connection and networking opportunities like Trade Summit. With organised platforms for business-to-business networking and an innovation and technology hub, participating micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) can showcase their innovative ideas and pitch for partnership and investment. Business deals struck at ICSA Trade Summits can yield impressive dividends and bring benefits of economic growth included in the SDGs and Commonwealth Charter to member countries and communities.

The 2nd Trade Summit was held in Kenya in May 2019 with support from the Government of Kenya and attracted over 250 participants including policy-makers, private sector representatives and 169 MSMEs from across 21 countries. As with the Indian summit, the Kenya summit afforded entrepreneurs – many of them young Commonwealth citizens and members of the Commonwealth Alliance of Young Entrepreneurs (CAYE) – an opportunity to conclude business deals with their counterparts from the Commonwealth.

Among these participants was Mr Femi Akinrotimi, Chief Executive Officer of End2End acquisition Limited, a business based in Nigeria. The SME provides financial and tax advisory services for small companies, with a focus on the West African market. Thanks to the summit, Mr Akinrotimi secured a business partnership agreement with a Kenyan entrepreneur for the provision of financial advisory services on venture capital and export expansion. At both Trade Summits, participating MSMEs adopted and signed up to a declaration for co-operation and commitment to support one another to grow intra-Commonwealth trade.

SUCCESS STORY: SMALL STATES WEATHER THE STORM TOGETHER AT COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE ON DISASTER FINANCE

Many small states are at higher risk (compared to other states) of experiencing extreme weather events. Compounding their greater risk is the greater cost of these events for small states. The average economic cost of a natural disaster during 1950–2014 was nearly 13 per cent of GDP for small states, compared to less than 1 per cent of GDP for larger countries. During that same period, the average natural disaster affected 10 per cent of small states' populations, compared to just 1 per cent in non-small states. These averages over time and place mask the real devastation of individual countries like Dominica, which, following Hurricane Maria in 2017, suffered an estimated loss of US\$1.3 billion; this amounted to 224 per cent of GDP for 2016.



Properly managing and reducing disaster risk is therefore critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals by small states. Recognising the importance of knowledge exchange and increased capacity around disaster finance, the Secretariat brought together senior officials from 23 Commonwealth countries and from several regional and international development

partners for the Fifth Global Biennial Conference on Small States held in Apia, Samoa, under the theme 'Building Resilience through Disaster Risk Reduction'.

The 100 participants at the conference deepened their knowledge of disaster risk financing through training jointly facilitated by the Secretariat and the World Bank. The training covered financial protection instruments for pre-disaster planning, such as insurance and contingency funds, as well as support mechanisms for post-disaster relief, such as rapid release loans. Small states representatives also took away key tips on effectively communicating disaster risk, developing disaster risk management strategies, and data analytics for disaster risk reduction.

The conference put small states in direct contact with the latest disaster risk reduction innovations and finance products through presentations, networking and discussions. It also facilitated effective partnerships and knowledge sharing.

While a number of co-operative initiatives to reduce disaster risk were discussed, there were also important cross-regional exchanges among participants. For example, the representative from Tuvalu was eager to learn more about Jamaica's disaster contingency fund, which is a part of a range of disaster finance instruments the country is using. Likewise, the participants from the Caribbean were interested in the Pacific Resilience Partnership Platform, the Pacific's network of regional partnerships which support many of the islands' disaster financing efforts

'The training simplified the processes placed by donor agencies. Small states' officials are now able to unlock the development assistance more swiftly.'

Ms Branessa Tsiode, attending from Nauru

'Disaster risk management is a sustainable development issue for all [small state] governments. Ensuring adequate financing to effectively address the negative impacts of climate change and disasters is necessary.'

Hon. Sili Epa Tuioti, Minister of Finance, Samoa

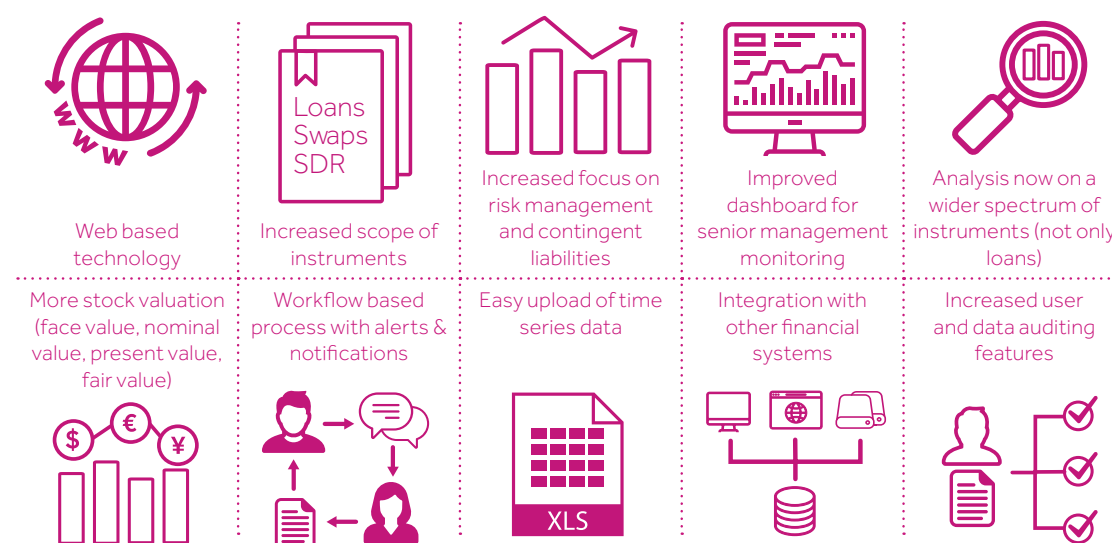
Table 4: Export diversification technical assistance, status by country

Diversification strategy/country	National Export Strategy	Country branding	New Products, New Market Strategy	E-commerce
Belize		Scoping mission undertaken.	Scoping mission undertaken.	
Botswana	National Export Strategy completed, published and launched.		New Products, New Market Study completed and submitted for stakeholder review in country. Development of marketing plan underway.	
Cameroon				E-commerce Strategy completed.
Grenada	Implementation on National Export Strategy underway.		Export marketing capacity building delivered. New Products, New Market Strategy adopted.	
Jamaica	Implementation on National Export Strategy underway.		Implementation of New Products, New Market Strategy underway.	
Lesotho		Country Brand Strategy adopted.	New Products, New Market Strategy developed. Train the trainer workshop on Product Development and Innovation delivered.	
Malawi	National Export Strategy draft under consultation.			
Mozambique	National Export Strategy completed. Adoption delayed because of national developments.			
Sri Lanka			New Products, New Market Study completed in 2016. New request for marketing plans received 2018.	E-readiness assessment report completed. Stakeholder review scheduled.
The Gambia	Formal request received.			

Table 5: Feedback received from member countries on the use of Commonwealth Meridian

Country	Feedback received
Cyprus	The recording process is more streamlined. Multiple options are available to build complex instruments. The Dashboard navigation is easier. It is more ergonomic and user friendly. Workflow authorisations are possible up to three levels. Many new audit reports have been added. The support from the Secretariat has been invaluable.
India (Reserve Bank)	The automatic creation of ECB database workflow authorisation, which is a feature of Meridian , can be used to improve the quality of debt information. Due to removal of transit time, the data will be available quickly.
Papua New Guinea	With the introduction of Meridian, we plan to configure it with the Department of Finance's Integrated Financial Management System and the Bank of Papua New Guinea's Auction system. We can also give the browser status to other interested users, such as the Central Bank, the Department of Finance and other divisions within the Treasury. This will save costs and time and allow for viewing of reports and transactions to respond to immediate needs.
Trinidad and Tobago	Meridian now allows greater flexibility for financing options and for recording. It better suits the needs of Trinidad and Tobago. While Meridian itself cannot counter the capacity constraints and institutional arrangements, transition and retraining of staff is simpler. The Audit component will greatly assist in the accurate reporting of Public Debt at the end of the financial year. The Accounting Module introduces a new dimension for Treasury Division involvement in the database to achieve their high-level goals.

Figure 1: Commonwealth Meridian Infographic, 2019



Debt management

In the area of debt management during this reporting period, Commonwealth Meridian, the new public debt management software and internet-based platform developed by the Secretariat, was implemented in four member countries: **Cyprus, India, Papua New Guinea, and Trinidad and Tobago**. Eighty-seven (87) debt managers were trained as part of the installation and implementation process.

During the launch of Commonwealth Meridian, representatives from the four countries outlined the benefits and the impact that the software and platform had on their debt management processes to date. The feedback is captured in Table 5.

The Secretariat also continued its one-to-one technical assistance in relation to debt management policies and frameworks in The **Bahamas** and **Fiji**.

SUCCESS STORY: STRENGTHENING PUBLIC DEBT MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND DEVELOPING THE DOMESTIC BOND MARKET IN THE BAHAMAS

The Government of The Bahamas, with the support of the Secretariat, is strengthening its public debt management framework and putting in place critical financial market infrastructure to develop its bond market. The global financial crisis of 2008 severely impacted The Bahamas, as it did its Caribbean peers. Economic activities which were highly dependent on the tourism and financial sectors slowed down, fiscal balances increased, and the public debt swelled from 25.3 per cent of GDP in 2008 to 61 per cent in 2018. The rating agencies downgraded the sovereign rating of The Bahamas from A3 in 2007 to Baa3 in 2016, reflecting increased risk of debt distress. The Bahamas approached the Secretariat for assistance to reduce the risk of debt distress, bring down long-term debt servicing costs and to achieve long-term debt sustainability. The Bahamas, due to its high-income country status, does not qualify for technical assistance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in the area of debt management under the Debt Management Facility (DMF).

The Secretariat provided advisory support through two in-country scoping missions, one relating to government bond market in 2014 and one regarding dematerialisation and securities settlement infrastructure in 2016. These missions identified a number of gaps and recommended the revision of the legal framework and institutional arrangements in line with best international practices, as well as a set of measures to reduce the cost and risk of the debt portfolio. The development of a bond market would strengthen the effectiveness of monetary policy and contribute to the development of related financial markets.

With the support from the Secretariat, the government initiated measures to improve debt management and make it credible, transparent and effective. A new Public Debt Management Act, which aims at promoting accountability, transparency and effectiveness with strategic underpinnings, has been developed and is at an advanced stage of enactment. The new Act will strengthen various strands of public debt management and bolster the public debt management framework in The Bahamas. To address financial infrastructure gaps, the Central Bank is setting up a new Central Securities Depository (CSD), which is nearing completion. The CSD will enable effective implementation of monetary and debt management policies, promote financial stability and assist in development of the bond market. The Central Bank has also initiated measures to improve the primary issuance process.

These reform measures initiated by the government and the Central Bank were recommended by the Secretariat. To complete the existing reform process, there are several sequenced measures which still need to be implemented by The Bahamas. These second-round reforms will address remaining fundamental and institutional gaps in the management of public debt, as well as bridge the gap in the area of financial infrastructure. These measures include setting up of a new debt management office, development of a Medium-Term Debt Strategy, establishing regulation for administration of market infrastructure and the primary issuance process, and developing procedure manuals for effective operations of the new Central Securities Depository and debt management office. To fund delivery of these interventions, the Secretariat is working with the Government of Bahamas and in partnership with the India–UN Development Partnership Fund.



Participants at the inaugural Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Forum, 2019

Oceans and natural resources

In the area of oceans and natural resources, advisory support continued to generate positive outcomes in member countries. The Secretariat provided technical assistance to 13 member countries in the development of policies, frameworks, laws, fiscal regimes and an overall regulatory framework that incorporates international best practice to promote and support the sustainable management of petroleum and minerals. Some examples are summarised in Table 6.

The Secretariat continues work to support international advocacy for its members, through a partnership with Chatham House and the Natural Resources Governance Institute, to convene the New Petroleum Producers' Group, and in advocating for the needs of small and other vulnerable states in the International Seabed Authority (ISA) negotiations of the Draft Regulations for Exploitation of Mineral Resources and the development of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-led Guiding Principles for Durable Extractive Contracts and the Intergovernmental Forum on Mining, Minerals, Metals and Sustainable Development Tax Incentives in Mining: Minimising Risks to Revenue. As mandated by the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, the inaugural Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Forum was successfully launched to support acceleration of the energy transition, while a partnership with the International Solar Alliance was also established.

The Commonwealth Blue Charter initiative, in furtherance of the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting mandate, continues to go from strength to strength – with 12 countries co-championing Action Groups and 33 countries participating in action.

Lessons learned

In the area of trade, some deliverables were not in the control of trade advisers – for example, the number of negotiated proposals or trade agreements resulting from advisory expertise – and trade facilitation remains largely a nationally focused initiative. Managing workload demands and schedule conflicts with respect to attending all WTO and other trade-related meetings in Geneva, across a very expansive scope of issues, remains a challenge. Targets and outputs had to be adapted and streamlined to accommodate changing needs. Contingency plans were put in place to mitigate unexpected obstacles to national-level work, such as countries coming under Abuja Guidelines restrictions.

In the area of debt management, the success of the Commonwealth Meridian implementation in member countries will depend on the successful migration of data from CS-DRMS to the new system. In previous migration exercises, there was not sufficient effort made to clean the database in CS-DMS before the migration, which resulted in unsuccessful migration and delays in member countries adopting Commonwealth Meridian. Through this knowledge, the project approach has now changed to focus on cleaning data in CS-DRMS before the migration takes place.

As far as economic policy and small states work was concerned, the team highlighted how working in collaboration with other divisions/units was key to leveraging extra resources and expertise, given human resource challenges experienced during the year.

The Blue Charter Action Group model is the Secretariat's new approach to move forward in a new way, learning from previous experience with one-to-one advice. Countries have been much slower than expected to integrate Blue Charter work into their budgets. Some of the common challenges identified by the 'Champion' countries contributing to the slow pace of progress was lack of personnel time and internal delays in allocating budgets. It was also noted that Action Groups

Table 6: Natural resources management technical assistance, status by country

Country	Outcome progress
The Bahamas	Accepted the Secretariat's guidance in the formulation of a Draft Mining Act and Draft Mining Regulations, which are being discussed by cabinet.
Barbados	The Secretariat supported the country's successful application to the India–UN Development Partnership Fund for furthering local content development in the petroleum and other energy sectors. It supported finalisation of an evidence-based Oceans Economy and Trade Strategy and Working Paper for Commonwealth Small States, in partnership with UNCTAD.
Belize	Accepted the Secretariat's recommendations to the Draft Exploration Planning Framework, the development on an Environmental Fund and for strengthening the legislative framework for the petroleum sector. The Secretariat is supporting Belize in the finalisation of an evidence-based Oceans Economy and Trade Strategy and Working Paper for Commonwealth Small States, in partnership with UNCTAD.
Cook Islands	Adopted the Secretariat's legal guidance in the reform of its seabed minerals management regime, which was issued for public consultation and culminated in the enactment of a new Seabed Minerals Act in 2019.
Guyana	Adopted National Resource Fund Legislation based on the Secretariat's advice. The fund will provide a strong basis for the management of approximately US\$40 billion of petroleum revenues, as well as for maintaining economic competitiveness, a fair intergenerational transfer of petroleum wealth and a sustainable long-term fiscal policy. The Secretariat is supporting the drafting of subsidiary legislation under the Maritime Zones Act 2010, which will allow for full exploitation of offshore natural resources, while balancing the interests of various sectors and protecting the marine environment.
Kiribati	Accepted the Secretariat's advisory support on the reform of the seabed minerals legal and economic regime.
Malawi	Reflected the Secretariat's advice in the National Petroleum Policy, which is awaiting cabinet approval after an extensive consultation process.
Namibia	Accepted the Secretariat's guidance in the development of a draft Upstream Petroleum Sector Local Content Policy, which is currently at the consultation phase. Received support from the Secretariat for consultations with industry on new legislation for the petroleum sector. Training to the Government Negotiating Team was also delivered.
Papua New Guinea	The Secretariat is supporting the establishment of a Sovereign Wealth Fund for the effective management of natural resource revenues. Progress has included training on investment policy, as well as drafting the investment mandate, board selection criteria and board governance procedures.
Vanuatu	Accepted the Secretariat's recommendations on the development of an Upstream Petroleum Policy, which has passed public consultation and is now before cabinet for adoption.
Caribbean Group (Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States [OECS])	Continuing implementation of Action Items in the Eastern Caribbean Regional Oceans Policy (ECROP), i.e. promoting a shift from traditional sector-specific approaches to ocean management to a more integrated 'whole of government' governance approach that recognises the contribution the ocean economy can make to national development goals. This is being done by the Secretariat supporting the institutional strengthening of regional ocean governance teams and the establishment of national ocean governance committees. Similar work is also being conducted with the national maritime administrations in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Saint Lucia.
East African Community (EAC)	The Commonwealth Secretariat is supporting the EAC Secretariat in the development of a Regional Mineral Value Addition Policy and Strategy as part of its industrialisation policy to enable the socioeconomic transformation of partner states' economies. It also participated in the first regional taskforce workshop in June 2019. Countries include Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.
African Group	Adopted the Secretariat's advice on the negotiation of seabed minerals regulations in the International Seabed Authority (ISA) negotiations of the Draft Regulations for Exploitation of Mineral Resources in areas beyond national jurisdiction. It also delivered training on the economics, legal aspects and environmental considerations of deep-sea mining. Countries include: Ghana, eSwatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa and The Gambia.
Pacific Group	The Secretariat delivered training on the economics, legal aspects and environmental considerations of deep-sea mining. In partnership with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), it is developing a strategy and programme to revitalise resource capacity for Pacific island countries in settling outstanding maritime boundaries and securing and managing marine space, including analysing baseline data on maritime zone limits, extended continental shelf submissions, legislative revision and maritime boundary negotiations, and supports innovation in digitisation of boundaries, fisheries, maritime security and other spatial data. Countries include Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

SUCCESS STORY: THE COMMONWEALTH BLUE CHARTER – CHAMPIONING A NEW MODEL OF GLOBAL CO-OPERATION

One of the biggest threats to ocean life, from giant whales to seabirds to microscopic plankton, is marine plastic pollution. It is estimated that more than 12 million tonnes of plastic waste pollute the ocean each year. If current trends continue, it is estimated there will be more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050. This global threat warrants a global response. Under the Commonwealth Blue Charter, 28 Commonwealth countries are turning the tide on marine plastic pollution. They are pledging action to cut down single-use plastic bags and ban microbeads and are taking measures to eliminate plastic waste. Vanuatu and the United Kingdom stepped forward in April 2018 to create an Action Group on marine plastic pollution: the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA).

Made at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in 2018, the Commonwealth Blue Charter is a multilateral commitment by the 53 member countries to preserve the health of the ocean. This was monumental, as the Commonwealth covers a third of the world's coastal oceans and 46 out of 53 Commonwealth members have a coastline. Last year, Vanuatu became one of the first countries in the world to implement a ban on single-use plastic bags, straws and polystyrene food containers. A number of Commonwealth countries are currently undertaking consultations to ban single-use plastics within their own jurisdictions. More recently, the Canadian government pledged to ban single-use plastics as early as 2021. The UK has also availed assistance of £61.4 million through the Commonwealth Oceans Plastic Package to support Commonwealth countries to act on this issue.

'I'm really proud to be working with Vanuatu taking forward action on the Clean Ocean Alliance. This is something the Commonwealth can really celebrate. I'm really pleased the Secretariat is continuing to make sure that these things come through.'

Rt Hon. Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, (then) Minister of State of UK Government's Environment Department

The Secretariat is supporting the Blue Charter Action Groups by guiding, convening and communicating their results. An online knowledge exchange platform has been set up to enable governments to share and learn best practice. In June 2019, the Secretariat convened a Blue Charter 'All-Champions' meeting in London. Blue Charter 'Champion' countries are Australia, Belize, Canada, Cyprus, Fiji, Kenya, Mauritius, New Zealand, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, the UK and Vanuatu. Attended by 28 participants from 12 'Champion' countries, the meeting laid the groundwork to develop Action Group strategies. Alongside this meeting, the Secretariat convened an intensive partnership forum where around 40 potential partners from the private sector, the science and research community, civil society and charities made 'pitches' and participated in panels on how they could collaborate with the Action Groups to accelerate action on sustainable ocean development.

The scale and pace of action needed to tackle marine plastic pollution requires collaboration with and across all levels of stakeholders. The governments involved in the Action Groups have already recognised this and have started building partnerships. Other governments can follow suit and translate their Blue Charter commitments into tangible actions to move the global ocean agenda forward.

'The Commonwealth Blue Charter is very important for us because it commits a number of countries to the same objectives. If Vanuatu had to do it alone, it wouldn't get very far.'

Hon Ralph Regenvanu, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vanuatu

with more than one champion, despite the initial challenges of co-ordinating between themselves, had made substantial progress once up and running. As a result, the Secretariat is encouraging Action Groups that have not made progress to consider identifying co-champions to share the effort and resources.

Small and Other Vulnerable States

Projects being implemented under this strategic stream are designed to support the strategic objective of **strengthened resilience of small and other vulnerable states, including adaptation and mitigation against climate change.**

SUCCESS STORY: SUPPORTING POST-DISASTER RECOVERY EFFORTS IN THE CARIBBEAN - UNLOCKING FUNDS TO BUILD BACK BETTER

Small and vulnerable developing countries require a significant amount of funding to address climate change, especially as they are already experiencing adverse impacts such as sea-level rise, increased extreme weather and natural disasters. Some funds have already been provided by the international community through funding institutions such as the Green Environment Facility (GEF) and Adaptation Fund (AF). Unfortunately, small and developing countries find it extremely difficult to draw on these funds, due to lack of technical capacity and the complex processes and requirements involved.



The Secretariat is therefore helping member countries to access urgently needed funding, by strengthening national capacity through placement of experts under the Commonwealth's flagship programme, the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH). Unlike other programmes of support, this Commonwealth initiative places long-term experts known as National Climate Finance Advisers (NCFA). The experts work directly

with ministries, departments and agencies to support national efforts to access and effectively use international climate finance, with particular focus on developing local capacity and South-South co-operation. One of the ways the advisers do this, is by helping to develop bankable climate change projects and submit them for funding. For example, in the last reporting period, the NCFA supported Jamaica to access US\$0.6 million from the GCF by drafting a proposal on REDD+ (reducing emissions for deforestation and forest degradation) readiness actions.

In 2017, Eastern Caribbean states were hit by two Category 5 storms, Irma and Maria, with Hurricane Irma said to be the most powerful hurricane recorded in the Atlantic Ocean. These hurricanes had catastrophic impacts; in Antigua and Barbuda alone, it is estimated that they caused approximately US\$130 million worth of damage and approximately US\$18 million in economic losses. Recovery assessments indicate that approximately US\$70 million will be required to repair and replace housing. In response, this year alone, the Commonwealth supported Antigua and Barbuda to unlock a grant of US\$20 million from the GCF through the Enhanced Direct Access Project (EDA).

The project will provide climate financing via grants using the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP). In addition, it will set up small grant facilities for communities, as well as revolving loan facilities with no more than 2 per cent interest to rebuild private homes and businesses, which will be 'built back better', resulting in more resilient communities.

'The goal is to build capacity and sustainable financing mechanisms within the Eastern Caribbean to access climate finance. When the cost to natural disasters is equivalent to 5 per cent of GDP in Eastern Caribbean countries, recovery would mean a difference between positive and negative growth for these economies, which have an average yearly growth of only 2 per cent.'

Ambassador Diann Black Layne, Director of the Department of Environment of Antigua and Barbuda, and main architect behind the Enhanced Direct Access Project

The assistance provided by CCFAH to Antigua and Barbuda is part of the overall global figures as at end of June 2019, amounting to a total of US\$25 million of mobilised funds for five beneficiary countries. This is in addition to a further US\$492 million in the pipeline for eight countries. These funds are critical for supporting Commonwealth small and vulnerable states in their efforts to meet targets under the Paris Agreement.

The Commonwealth Small States Offices in **Geneva** and **New York** continue to provide subsidised office space for small states to maintain a presence in the two cities. This has enabled small states to engage in global issues and discussions taking place in these key UN locations. Notable in this reporting period, was the role that the New York Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO) played in enabling **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** to run a successful campaign to be elected as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council in June 2019. This work shows it is possible for small states to participate in international decision-making at the highest level, thanks to the support provided by the Secretariat through the CSSOs. In **Geneva**, services provided by the Small States Office enabled Malawi to become the co-ordinator of the ACP Group of States until March 2019.

The Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) initiative went from strength to strength (see box below).

Lessons learned

For the CCFAH, key lessons learned included the need to allow for more time for results to mature, as capacity building for climate finance projects is resource intensive and a funding proposal can take up to two and a half years to come to fruition. For this reason, it is proposed that advisers should be placed for a minimum of three years. Management of national advisers in different locations is complex. Providing them with guidance and timely responses requires more capacity than is currently available. Demand for co-ordination and management is going to increase as the hub grows and places more advisers and secures more and more finance.

Partnerships and Innovation

Partnership is at the core of the Commonwealth Secretariat 2017/2018 to 2020/2021 Strategic Plan. The Secretariat's first Partnership Strategy was adopted in July 2018. The strategy, in line with Goal 17 of the SDGs, outlines the ambition to partner across member countries, Commonwealth organisations, international partners, regional organisations and private sector/ philanthropic organisations to enable the Secretariat to achieve greater impact with its work, deliver better value for money, and improve its visibility and reputation.

Partnerships underway during this reporting period are included in the following section, as well as Annex A.

Member countries

As highlighted in the Commonwealth Partnership Strategy, member countries are primary partners in the Commonwealth family. They shape policies and priority areas of work at the highest level, at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs) and through the Commonwealth Strategic Plan. The engagement, collaboration and contribution of member countries is visible throughout this report. In line with the identified impact pathways, the Secretariat and member countries collaborate in four ways: development of policy and legislation; creation and strengthening of national institutions; consensus building and advocacy on key international issues; and creation of networks and platforms for the exchange of information, best practice and knowledge across Commonwealth regions.

Member countries provide in-kind and financial support to the Secretariat through the COMSEC and CFTC (Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation) funds and through Extra Budgetary Resources.

In relation to the latter, in November 2018 the Secretariat signed two grant agreements with the Government of Australia, one providing financial support to the Commonwealth's Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH) and the other providing financial support to implement the second phase of the Commonwealth Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) Strategy. Further to this, a total of 15 Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) were signed with member countries, with Commonwealth regional and international organisations, and with private sector and philanthropic organisations (see list in Annex A).

Partnerships were also strengthened with 12 member countries in relation to innovation. Member countries participated in the Commonwealth Africa Region Innovation Ecosystem Workshop. The workshop took place in June 2019, in partnership with the Seychelles government and the national Institute of Science, Technology and Innovation.

'We believe in the critical importance of Commonwealth countries adopting a whole government approach to innovation, which is key to our future development, prosperity and security.'

The Rt Hon. Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary-General

The key objectives of the workshop included: sensitising the government and stakeholders from member countries in the region on the importance of innovation, digital transformation and regional connectivity in achieving the SDGs at the national level; and building awareness of global, regional and Commonwealth initiatives.

The Commonwealth Innovation Network was launched in 2019, connecting policy-makers, innovators, entrepreneurs, professionals, investors, donors, partners, the private sector and civil society to share information and knowledge and explore ideas collaboration.

The Commonwealth inaugural Innovation for Sustainable Development Awards also highlighted the commitment of the Secretariat to support innovation in member countries.

Commonwealth organisations

The Secretariat's Human Rights Unit (HRU) is working in partnership with the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), a Commonwealth Accredited Organisation. CHRI has been identified as a civil society implementing partner for HRU's project, supporting Commonwealth small states to effectively and constructively participate in Geneva-based international human rights mechanisms,

and give effect to their outcomes. The partnership includes activities to build the capacity of small states and strengthen their ability to engage with bodies and forums such as the UN Human Rights Council. In addition, a new report, titled *The Global Human Rights Implementation Agenda: The role of National Parliaments*, was published by the Secretariat's Human Rights Unit in partnership with the Universal Rights Group (URG).

To take forward the outcomes of the Secretariat's Learning for Life project, a partnership has been developed by the Education and Youth teams with the Commonwealth of Learning (CoL). The Secretariat and CoL, along with the University of West Indies (UWI), are collaborating as lead partners for the Commonwealth Higher Education Consortium for Youth Work (CHEC4YW). An MoU was renewed between CoL, UWI and the Commonwealth Secretariat in November 2018, and 15 higher education institutions have signed Letters of Understanding for course delivery. The consortium is a response to increasing demand from within member countries to professionalise the youth work sector and provide access to qualifications. It will deliver an upgraded Diploma in Youth Work and bachelor's degree-level modules



Commonwealth Innovation Ecosystem Workshop

SUCCESS STORY: SECRETARY-GENERAL LAUNCHES INNOVATION AWARDS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The firsts Innovation for Sustainable Development Awards were awarded in June 2019. These awards seek to showcase innovations that are helping Commonwealth countries and people achieve the SDGs. The awards will honour innovations by Commonwealth citizens working in government, business or civil society. More than 480 nominations were received from across member countries and in June 2019, 15 winners from across the Commonwealth were announced, including: a campaigner against gender-based violence, an inventor of life-saving medical devices and the head of a pioneering recycling company.

Winner and company CEO, Elizabeth Kperun, was chosen for her idea to simplify learning for children and young adults in the Africa region, by creating mobile applications and video content which educated them in their native languages. She said: 'This award will give us more visibility. It goes a long way towards helping us achieve our objective of making education more accessible for under-privileged kids in Africa'.



HRH The Duke of Sussex, The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary-General, Ms Elizabeth Kperun, 2019

on youth work practice. The programme aims to provide clear qualification pathways for youth workers, youth work managers and policy-makers.

Also, in November 2018, the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM) signed a Letter of Understanding that sets out the commitments of both partners to develop a pan-Commonwealth school leadership and management programme. At the 20th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers (20CCEM) and at the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM 2018), it was agreed that high-quality teaching was a priority and that member countries should focus on how teachers and school leaders were trained, recruited and motivated. They recommended the strengthening of educational partnerships and the implementation of specific actions to provide the opportunity for at least 12 years of quality education and learning for girls and boys by 2030.

Engagement with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) took place on a number of levels. The Secretariat's Portfolio Management team held a joint monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) workshop with ACU to share experiences and best practice. With

funding from the UK government's Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the ACU has launched 35 new 'Blue Charter Fellowships', guided by the Commonwealth's technical experts on oceans. In addition, in October 2018, the ACU was invited to speak at the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM). The Global Innovation Fund (GIF) was also a guest speaker at this ministerial meeting.

In the Secretariat's work on the rule of law, engagement took place with a number of Commonwealth accredited organisations. The Commonwealth Lawyers Association, the Commonwealth Judges' and Magistrates' Association, the Commonwealth Legal Education Association, the Commonwealth Association of Legislative Counsel, the Commonwealth Association of Law Reform Agencies and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association all presented reports of their activities to delegates at the meeting of Law Ministers and Attorneys General of Small Commonwealth Jurisdictions (LMSCJ) held in October 2018. Collaboration was also underway in regard to preparation for the 2019 Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting (CLMM).

SUCCESS STORY: COMMONWEALTH FAMILY JOINS IN CELEBRATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH 70TH ANNIVERSARY

A Commonwealth committee inclusive of commonwealth organisations and member states was convened to facilitate planning, co-ordination and delivery of the Commonwealth's 70th Anniversary activities. A number of activities have taken place since the committee first met in January 2019.

The Commonwealth family gathered at to the Secretary-General's 70th Anniversary Reception at Marlborough House, at which the winners of the inaugural Commonwealth Secretary-General's Innovation for Sustainable Development Awards received their prizes from HRH The Duke of Sussex and the Secretary-General. At the 70th Anniversary Reception, the 'Commonwealth Declarations' was also launched (available on our website). This is a collection of Commonwealth declarations since 1944.

Supported by a grant from the Commonwealth Secretariat, approved by the Commonwealth@70 Committee, and in partnership with the Government of Antigua and Barbuda, a group of award-winning musicians from the Royal Over-Seas League, Commonwealth Resounds, and talented students from the Purcell School for Young Musicians and Wells Cathedral School travelled to Antigua and Barbuda to perform at a special concert in commemoration of the Commonwealth's 70th Anniversary.

The Secretariat provided Commonwealth flags to all member governments and invited them to host flag-hoisting ceremonies on Commonwealth Day this year [2019] to mark the 70th Anniversary. This was an idea put forward by the UK government.

A Commonwealth@70 brand toolkit is available to Commonwealth organisations.

A Commonwealth@70 webpage includes a full list of activities available reflecting what the wider Commonwealth family are doing (<https://thecommonwealth.org/commonwealth-70>).



Islamic Republic of Pakistan
Commonwealth @ 70
Commemorative stamp, 2019

International partners

In July 2018, an MoU was signed with the **Global Infrastructure Connectivity Alliance (GICA)** outlining activities, sectors and regions where the Secretariat considers itself to have a specific expertise and comparative advantage, and is interested in contributing its expertise to GICA. In September 2018, a partnership agreement was signed with the **UN Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)**, to provide a framework of co-operation and facilitate and strengthen collaboration in areas of common interest. And in October 2018, the Secretariat signed a co-operation agreement with the **UN System Staff College (UNSSC)** to support joint leadership development programmes geared towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Commonwealth Innovation Fund, which was announced at CHOGM 2018 and is managed in partnership with the **Global Innovation Fund**,

also progressed. This fund will support scale of innovation in lower middle-income countries in the Commonwealth. An MoU was signed at the **Seychelles Innovation Ecosystem Workshop** with the **Global Innovation & Technology Alliance (GITA)**, a public-private platform established by the Government of India. The MoU outlines how both parties wish to strengthen South-South partnerships and innovations to support member countries and Commonwealth organisations to achieve economic growth and sustainable development.

Regional organisations

Through a partnership with the **Caribbean Development Bank (CDB)**, the Secretariat's Debt Management Unit (DMU) is strengthening the roll out and implementation of the Meridian debt management software. Pilot implementation of the software in **Saint Lucia and Saint Kitts and Nevis** was delivered in collaboration with CDB, and the

bank has also provided the hardware to be hosted at CDB and remotely accessed by its members. DMU is working with CDB to build capacity within the bank to enable it to provide user support to the region. The Secretariat is also providing technical assistance to CARICOM in the area of education and results-based management, contributing to the development of the CARICOM Strategic Plan.

Private sector and philanthropic organisations

The Secretariat's Rule of Law Division continues to work with the non-governmental organisation (NGO) **Small Arms Survey** for the development of country profiles and baselines that will enable the tackling of illicit proliferation of conventional weapons.

The Secretariat's Sport for Development and Peace Section continued its partnerships with **Durham University** and the **Swinburne University of Technology**, which are providing expert pro-bono support for Commonwealth projects. The aims of the partnership with the Swinburne University of Technology have been expanded to support scaling up of the Secretariat's work on mapping alignment of member states' sport policies to the SDGs. During the reporting period, the Secretariat has also been the beneficiary of an award of funding by the **University of Durham** to support a research project entitled 'Enhancing policy development and implementation to further the contribution of sport to the Sustainable Development Goals'.

In Ocean governance, partnerships are underway to help deliver the Commonwealth Blue Charter. In November 2018, an MoU was signed with the **Nekton Foundation**, a not-for-profit research organisation undertaking deep-sea scientific studies. Through the partnership, Commonwealth governments are set to benefit from a ground-breaking scientific research expedition into the unexplored depths of the Indian Ocean. A further MoU with the **African Institute for Mathematical Sciences – Next Einstein Initiative Foundation** outlines plans to contribute to the sustainable economic development and social progress of Commonwealth African member countries through innovative scientific foresight and innovative policy design.

Gender Mainstreaming

The Secretariat promotes gender equality and women's empowerment as core values enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter and the Secretariat's

Gender Policy. Guided by this policy, the Secretariat aims to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in its own internal policies, structures, processes, systems, operations and programmes of assistance. The Commonwealth supports 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 following are examples of work during this reporting period that enhance gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment.

The Commonwealth Election Professionals (CEP) project aims to foster equality and inclusion in the development of staff of EMBs. The requirement of gender balance in training and networking opportunities has the purpose of ensuring upskilling junior and mid-level female EMBs' 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.

The Secretariat's work on countering violent extremism (CVE) includes women's organisations, such as the International Civil Society Action Network for Women's Rights, Peace and Security in its cadre of experts, which provide guidance to the Secretariat's 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. In **Cameroon**, the Secretariat engaged with civil society and government officials to understand the factors that drive women to violent extremism. In **Guyana** and **Jamaica**, the 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 their courses and to increase women's representation in college instructor and leadership positions.

In September 2018, an issue of Commonwealth Trade Hot Topics, a publication by the Secretariat, explored the possibility of incorporating gender issues into multilateral trade negotiations at the WTO, as well as discussing the likely implications

for least developed countries (LDCs), small, vulnerable economies (SVEs) and sub-Saharan African countries.

The Secretariat delivered internal training for staff with a view to promoting greater integration of gender into project design and monitoring frameworks. Thirty-five (35) Secretariat staff were trained on gender-sensitive indicators, the design of gender-sensitive indicators and practical inclusion of these in projects. During the reporting period, the Secretariat produced a draft Gender Equality Results Framework and a draft Capacity Development Strategy for the Commonwealth Secretariat in 2018/2019. These are two key components needed to achieve the enabling outcome of gender mainstreaming across the Secretariat's programmes, policies, frameworks and projects. An analysis of ministerial meeting outcomes from a gender perspective has been conducted and a gender audit has also been initiated.

The Secretariat's Gender Section also supported the delivery of gender mainstreaming training for **Tonga's** Public Service Commission (PSC) staff from government ministries. The training was delivered in response to a gender audit of the PSC, and focused on providing participants with a clear understanding of gender equality and social inclusion in the context of the commission's work, and developing capability for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming. Thirty-eight (38) civil servants benefited from the training initiative. The Secretariat has also partnered with the Ministry of Finance of **Mauritius** to conduct a study on the feasibility of gender budgeting in the national budgeting process.

Enabling and Internal Outcomes

Improved organisational performance and results

Planning for 2019–20 started early. The Secretariat developed a calendar to outline the timelines for the 2018–2019 reporting cycles and the 2019–2020 Delivery Plan and budgeting cycle. Training and briefing sessions were delivered for staff on quarterly and six-monthly reporting and on the 2018–2019 Delivery Plan and budgeting process. Impact reporting training was delivered together



Participants from the 35th Diplomats Induction Programme

with the Communication team. One-to-one sessions to further support technical teams were delivered throughout the year.

The Delivery Plan and budget were approved on time and with commendations by stakeholders, while annual project reviews were also completed in a timely manner. Gender is increasingly mainstreamed in all of the Secretariat's planning, monitoring and reporting systems, with the 2019–20 Delivery Plan and the 2018–2019 Annual Report including gender equality work throughout. Gender considerations also form part of the Quarterly Performance Review and annual project review process. Senior management expressed satisfaction with the first Quarterly Performance Review (QPR) and their feedback was incorporated in planning for the following quarter QPRs. To strengthen cross-divisional working, a programme coherence mechanism was scoped and will be implemented by the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General.

The 2017–18 review of the Secretariat against the Memorandum of Understanding with the UK Department of International Development in May 2018 granted it an A+ rating. The 2018–2019 review is currently underway.

In the reporting period, the Secretariat successfully supported meetings of the Board of Governors, the Executive Committee and the Accreditation Committee, as well as a substantial number of ad-hoc working group meetings. The Secretariat provided support logistically and through the provision of papers and outcome documents. A total of 19 papers were presented. In addition, the Diplomats Induction Programme was conducted successfully. Twenty-four (24) delegates from all four regions attended. During the induction

feedback, 95 per cent of attendees indicated that their objectives for the meeting were either 'well met' or 'very-well met'.

Consensus Building

The meeting of **Commonwealth Senior Officials of Law Ministries** (October 2018) brought together senior officials from across the Commonwealth to agree on the items to be featured on the agenda of the Commonwealth Law Ministers' Meeting in 2019. During their meeting, senior officials looked at ways to increase access to justice in their jurisdictions and discussed issues such as the over-representation of vulnerable persons in the justice system, reform of civil procedure and international commercial arbitration. The meeting also offered an opportunity to examine the latest developments in areas such as data protection, electronic evidence and international co-operation in criminal matters.

The outcome statement reflected consensus on areas of the law and their importance to Commonwealth jurisdictions, including the following:

- Law ministers and attorneys general agreed to continue to exchange experiences and viewpoints on law reform, including through the Commonwealth Legal Exchange Portal, with other Commonwealth member countries.
- Law ministers and attorneys general agreed to consider the proposal to form an Action Group of the Blue Charter to consider, review and make recommendations for action concerning the legal implications of sea-level rise. Several member countries expressed their interest in joining such a group, should it be formed.
- They renewed their call made in 2016 for conventional arms control to remain on the agenda of Commonwealth Heads of Government due to the magnitude of the problem in a number of small Commonwealth jurisdictions.

Convening of Commonwealth health ministers:

Building on the 2017 and 2018 ministerial deliberations on the call for collective action on cervical cancer, the Secretariat convened a Ministerial Roundtable in the **East Africa region**, on the theme 'Partnering to Tackle Cervical Cancer', with a focus on resource mobilisation.

The outcomes, which closely align with CHMM outcomes, were included in the Conference Resolutions – which urged member countries to:

- adopt policies to integrate cancer screening and care in primary healthcare programmes;
- roll out available cancer vaccination programmes, including HPV vaccine, coupled with vigorous community sensitisation to improve uptake, while working together as a region to ensure availability of these vaccines;
- develop evidence-based priorities and costed national cancer plans;
- prioritise sustainable resource mobilisation for cancers; and
- strengthen generation of data and evidence on effective cancer interventions.

The Ministerial Roundtable discussion was delivered in collaboration with the Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT).

The Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting was convened in May 2019, with representatives from the 44 out of 53 member states in attendance. There has been increased attendance, interest and satisfaction with the Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting since 2016. The number of countries attending has also increased from 34 countries (21 ministers) in 2016 to 44 countries (32 ministers, including 2 Deputy Prime Ministers) in 2019. The satisfaction rate with the meeting, as reported by respondents, has risen from 69 per cent in 2017 to 79 per cent in 2018. In 2019, 97 per cent of the respondents attending the meeting said they found the organisation and conduct of the meeting satisfactory (6%), good (65%) or outstanding (26%).

This increase in attendance and satisfaction is partly due to the Commonwealth Secretariat's increased engagement with member countries, leading to greater alignment to global, regional and national priorities and commitments. This in turn results in

'Great opportunities to share best practices, lessons learned and come together to strengthen bilateral relations in a multilateral format.'

Ms Tammy Bell, Director, Bilateral Engagement, Office of International Affairs for the Health Portfolio, Canada

SUCCESS STORY: CONNECTIVITY AGENDA – ENABLING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

The 4th Industrial Revolution poses substantial opportunities and challenges for all economies. For advanced economies with aging demographics, it provides a way to boost growth by increasing productivity. For larger emerging and developing economies with young populations who can provide a natural stimulus to growth, it will challenge the poverty eradication model, as manufacturing and agriculture go through



Businesswomen urge the Connectivity Agenda to prioritise gender:
Digital Cluster meeting, 2019

significant technological changes. For small island developing states who benefit from low- to high middle-income status but have low productivity and low demographic growth, it provides an avenue to boost growth and avoid the middle-income trap.

To engage with this complex and multifaceted process to the benefit of all its members, the Secretariat has evolved its convening power for the modern age. It has created multidisciplinary, multi-institutional clusters, composed of 75 ministries, departments and agencies from 35 members, working to find solutions to these challenges together. Clusters are designed for the cross-cutting nature of the problem, by including all relevant government stakeholders and sharing the best knowledge and expertise available globally to suit the institutional capabilities of all members.

To ensure that the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (CCA) also remains relevant to the needs of the core constituents, i.e. the private sector, a feedback loop process has been developed: 600 stakeholders from across the Commonwealth have been consulted on the specifics of the work of the clusters. Some 350 women businesses, business associations and policy-makers were also consulted before the clusters started their work and their suggestions were fed directly into the focus of the first round of cluster meetings. After the first round of clusters, a further 250 stakeholders made up of MSMEs and local government actors were engaged on those outcomes, which are being fed into the second round of cluster meetings.

This new Commonwealth approach has provided a safe space for discussion and resulted in practical steps to address thorny policy issues. Countries have focused on baselining where the Commonwealth is on its digital transformation journey. This has informed a Connectivity Dashboard to track how Commonwealth members are performing on key connectivity indicators. The Secretariat is also compiling policy-maker and private sector-written best practice case studies to capture lessons learned, building a repository of digital policies and frameworks. The clusters have agreed to work on Commonwealth Good Regulatory Practice Principles for trade and investment, as well as other challenging issues in the digital policy space. Looking ahead, the next challenge is for members to translate these global principles into domestic policy reform. This process will require even greater mutual support and deeper co-operation among Commonwealth members.

greater relevance and interest in consensus building at ministerial meetings, which are seen as more practical and responsive to these priorities.

Resulting from the May 2019 Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting, a Ministerial Statement was produced and signed by the meeting Chair, the Hon. Rosy Akbar, Minister of Health and Medical Services of **Fiji**. The statement was delivered at the 72nd World Health Assembly in **Geneva**. A side event was held in collaboration with the Gender team: 'Peace in the Home: Health Sector Responses to Ending Violence against Women and Girls in the Commonwealth'.

Convening of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting and G20 Outreach: The Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM) was held in October 2018 in Bali, **Indonesia**, in the margins of the IMF/World Bank Annual Meetings. The Secretariat partnered with the IMF, UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and the Global Innovation Fund. As a result of the meeting, **Samoa** confirmed its willingness to host the Global Biennial Conference on Small States, to which **Australia** then pledged AUD\$60,000 in funding support. This took place in March 2019. Finance ministers endorsed the three programmatic outputs proposed for CFMM, and the output-focused nature of CFMM was applauded by some participants.

As part of the G20 preparations, the Secretariat participated in the UN Committee for Development Policy's review of the UN's least developed country graduation criteria. As a result, Commonwealth perspectives on the application of vulnerability for access to concessional finance and the small states special category were heard, and the Secretariat was invited to observe the 38th Dedicated Session on Small Economies of the WTO Committee on Trade and Development 2019.

Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda: At the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Heads agreed to deepen the Commonwealth's co-operation on trade by launching the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda (CCA) to boost trade and investment to US\$2 trillion by 2030. The CCA focuses on building the evidence base for policy-making, sharing best practice and experiences, and supporting domestic reform, convening thematic clusters. In the reporting period, a preparatory phase saw the selection of the focus areas for clusters to address megatrends on digitalisation, demographics, urbanisation

and multipolarity. In the last six months of 2019, taking forward these priorities, the Digital, Physical, Regulatory and Supply Side Clusters held their launch meeting, during which they adopted terms of reference and action plans and began developing the evidence base through member-written case studies. Gender issues arising from the special session on Women in the Digital Economy were fed into all clusters.

Communications

This has been a period of high visibility, with excellent pick up by high-profile global media and with more than 60,000 articles appearing in mainstream media. For example, the visit of their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of Sussex to Marlborough House to meet with young people had wide coverage on the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, ITV, Sky News, the BBC, Channel 4 and the Voice Newspaper. For the COP24 Climate Change Conference in Poland, media interviews with the Commonwealth Secretary-General and Commonwealth experts were featured on the BBC, Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and Deutsche-Welle. There was also wide coverage of the Commonwealth election observation missions in Zimbabwe and Pakistan, including by the Al Jazeera, the BBC, France 24, **The Guardian**, SABC, **The Zimbabwean**, **The Herald** and Zim Eye. The Commonwealth Day message by Her Majesty The Queen was viewed by almost 5,000 people. Over 450 press releases and stories were written and published by the Secretariat, while citations of Commonwealth publications in other publications/ materials increased by almost 100 per cent.

There were more than 5.2 million visitors to the website, indicating a 47 per cent increase since 2017–18. Some 1,207 posts on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram were achieved, following a new strategy to promote content to a wide range of audiences.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

In recent years, the Secretariat has made concerted efforts to systematise its approach to delivery and measurement of results. It has developed a suite of smart portfolio practices, including annual delivery plans, Quarterly Performance Reviews

SUCCESS STORY: THE SECRETARIAT AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION

The Monitoring Evaluation and Learning Fund was adopted in July 2018. A policy was developed as well, as guidance for teams. The fund enables the implementation of individual projects' MEL plans, the funding of actions to review and evaluate the implementation of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan, the development and delivery of MEL training and capacity building, the development of approaches and tools, and the development and retention of MEL expertise throughout the organisation.

Monitoring

During the reporting period, through the fund, the Secretariat MEL team undertook monitoring missions in support of Secretariat programming in member countries. Staff monitored the delivery of the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM) 2018, to explore the effectiveness of the meeting with respect to its benefit and value to the membership of the Commonwealth, and visited **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** to monitor the placement of a long-term expert, explore the effectiveness of the project and make recommendations for its sustainability. Further monitoring missions assessed the effectiveness of the Secretariat's technical assistance to **Barbados** in relation to debt management and to **Fiji and the Pacific** region in relation to a legislative framework for non-communicable diseases. The Secretariat's MEL team further advised other Secretariat teams on completing their own monitoring activities. This included advice to the Oceans and Natural Resources team to monitor progress on the Seychelles Blue Economy Roadmap project and the work of the New Petroleum Producers Group, an initiative being undertaken by the Secretariat in partnership with Chatham House. The MEL team advised the Trade team on assessing progress on a National Export Strategy in Botswana, while outcomes of the Small States Biennial were also monitored through a mission. The outcomes of the monitoring missions will enable delivery in 2019–20 to be adjusted. A tailored MEL approach and session was delivered in collaboration with Blue Charter leads to track and report the progress of the Action Groups in June 2019.

Evaluation

Country evaluation took place in **Guyana** and **Sierra Leone** and reports from country evaluations in **Grenada** and **Papua New Guinea** were finalised and published. An evaluation of the Hubs and Spokes Project was also conducted (see the Economic Development section for findings).

An evaluation of the Secretariat's Democracy programme took place. The evaluation highlighted that overall the democratic governance work of the Secretariat was highly relevant to the needs of member countries and found that in recent years, the Secretariat had been more proactive and had grasped a number of opportunities to link in broader needs at times of elections. The programme was seen to be particularly effective where there had been a sustained and regular engagement with member countries. The evaluation recommended that the Secretariat be provided with the necessary levels of funding, expertise and autonomy to monitor and show results at the country level and make meaningful contributions to the democratic values set out in the Commonwealth Charter. Secretariat staff are now working to implement the recommendations from the evaluation.

Findings from both monitoring missions and evaluation studies will be discussed at the Senior Management Committee and will feed into the learning process of the organisation. Other evaluations were also completed, with management responses drafted for Anti-Corruption, the Gender Equality Plan of Action, the Strategic Plan Evaluation, Meta Evaluation, and the **Namibia** Country Evaluation. The evaluations showed satisfactory progress in the implementation of recommendations, with a total of 78 per cent of agreed actions either being implemented or in progress of implementation.

The Secretariat's MEL is also working in partnership with Commonwealth and regional organisations to provide technical support and share learnings across the Commonwealth. Following up on a refreshed Memorandum of Understanding in 2018, CARICOM requested support to complete an evaluation of its Strategic Plan in preparation for the development of a new plan in 2020. This

technical assistance was initiated in June 2018, with field missions completed over the summer 2019. A final report was due to be submitted in December 2019. Also, in response to a request for assistance from the Association of Emerging Leaders Dialogue (AELD), the Secretariat is conducting an impact assessment of the Emerging Leaders Dialogues – Canada (ELD-C) Caribbean–Canadian Emerging Leaders' Dialogue Programmes delivered in 2011 and 2015. The final report was expected in October 2019. It was expected to be a resource for advocacy and promotion of AELD programmes, as well as informing the development of the Commonwealth Leadership Framework.

Learning

In order to foster learning across the organisation, a series of learning initiatives was initiated in the reporting period. A Memorandum of Understanding with the United Nations System Staff College was developed to explore areas of collaboration to foster shared learning across the sector. Gender-sensitive indicator development training was conducted, as well as work to develop a gender results framework. In order to build skills towards outcome reporting, impact story writing workshops were planned. An organisation-wide learning strategy is being scoped, with a needs assessment underway in collaboration with the Human Resources and Delivery Directorates. This will include training, coaching and capacity building for the Secretariat and Commonwealth system organisations.

and enhanced results-based management (RBM). It introduced a Results-Based Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning system, which is now in implementation. It has further developed the Programme Management and Information System (PMIS) to better harmonise planning, monitoring, evaluation, learning and reporting. A number of monitoring practices have been piloted and embedded, including detailed project monitoring plans, gender-sensitive indicator training, delivery tracking and quarterly performance reporting and monitoring missions. These practices have improved project performances through the production of quality monitoring information and by enabling adaptive learning.

The Secretariat has an Evaluation Strategy and an Evaluation Plan that is revised every year. A three-tier approach is in place: project evaluations are carried out by consultants engaged by teams, with oversight and quality assurance provided by the evaluation team; country evaluations are carried out by the evaluation team; and projects and programme evaluation are conducted by independent evaluators, competitively tendered. A new peer review mechanism has been established and all country and programme evaluations are to be peer reviewed by external subject experts.

In the past two years, RBM learning has been rolled out across the organisation; 52 programme staff have now been certified as Prince2 Project Management Professionals and an online RBM training course is accessible to all staff

and Commonwealth organisations. Gender-sensitive indicators training was conducted and information and training sessions on MEL and planning, monitoring and reporting have been held regularly. This greater focus on learning has been emphasised through new evaluation and learning strategies: facilitating the co-ordination and publication of management responses to all evaluations, tracking the utilisation of evaluations, extending the suite of communication products to ensure wider engagement with evaluation findings, and implementing quarterly evaluation seminars and an annual evaluation and learning week.

The MEL strategy and outcomes was further strengthened in 2018–2019 thanks to the establishment of the MEL Designated Fund. The fund follows international good practice in ensuring ring-fenced funding for Secretariat programmes and encouraging the generation and use of quality results information.

The first Commonwealth Evaluation and Learning Week took place in April 2019.

Lessons learned

In order to achieve sustainability of partnerships and innovation outcomes, it is important to focus on optimal resourcing, planning for uncertainty and managing stakeholder expectations. With regards to improving organisational performance, the team has learned that dedicated support to individual teams is beneficial to outcomes. However, this process is very resource intensive and not

SUCCESS STORY: THE EVALUATION AND LEARNING WEEK

The Secretariat hosted the Evaluation and Learning Week, with the participation of over 40 staff members, as well as representatives from member countries, accredited organisations and external partners. Experts were able to engage with the Secretariat's programme staff and management on the Secretariat's internal system processes. In addition, it also afforded the space for participants to reflect on the Commonwealth's role in supporting the global and national agenda of its members. Discussions focused on maximising the effectiveness of the Secretariat's monitoring, evaluation and learning system, and ensuring that lessons learned are translated into organisational improvements.



Evaluation and Learning Week, 2019

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, members of the Board of Governors, the Secretariat's senior management and staff committed to take forward evidence-based change at all levels in the organisation. For evaluative evidence to inform learning, it has to be driven by the vision and commitment to change. The consistent demand and utilisation of evaluative evidence will further inspire the development of a culture for evaluative thinking and learning.

necessarily sustainable in the long term. Thus, return on investment considerations will continue to inform planning in this area. Engagement with members of the Executive Boards, through advance briefing session on the Delivery Plan and budget, facilitated timely approval – so this practice should be continued.

In the area of consensus building, several key learnings were highlighted:

- **Political:** Early policy consultations have proved to be helpful in securing early agreement on policy areas for CHOGM, while the consultations with the CHOGM host task force should be included more consistently.
- **Rule of law:** The key lessons were related to the topics and numbers of papers presented at the meetings. In selecting the topics to be discussed at the meeting of Senior Officials of Law Ministries (SOLM) 2018, senior officials were consulted on potential topics and their suggestions subsequently incorporated.

Topics have been more focused on activities directly within the remit of law ministers' responsibilities, while keeping in mind the role of law ministers in upholding the rule of law. These lessons were due to be applied in preparing CLMM 2019.

- **Health:** Similar to rule of law, earlier commissioning of papers was cited as an important improvement. One key challenge identified was the timely recruitment of support. This will be addressed in 2019–20. The strategy for better engaging observers and increasing their feedback post-event will also be reviewed.
- **Education:** Through the establishment of the Education Ministers Action Group (EMAG) and the Commonwealth Accelerated Development Mechanism for Education (CADME) Technical Working Group, the traditional expectation that all ministerial outcomes were to be led or delivered by the Secretariat has shifted to a new approach based on moving towards a collective responsibility involving member countries and, where appropriate, partner organisations. This recent shift in approach would benefit from more comprehensive guidelines on monitoring the effectiveness of ministerial meetings.
- **Finance:** Earlier planning and engagement of consultants and experts proved to be crucial to the successful planning and delivery of CFMM 2018. Early engagement with the Chair also proved important to the early agreement and finalisation of the agenda.
- **Gender:** In the preparations for the Commonwealth's 12th Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting (12WAMM), a Drafting Committee involving High Commissioners in London from early on. This facilitated the selection of two countries per region to be part of the Drafting Committee in advance. This guaranteed the attendance of ten member countries at 12WAMM. Further, members of the committee were more motivated to take forward the outcomes and recommendations of 12WAMM.

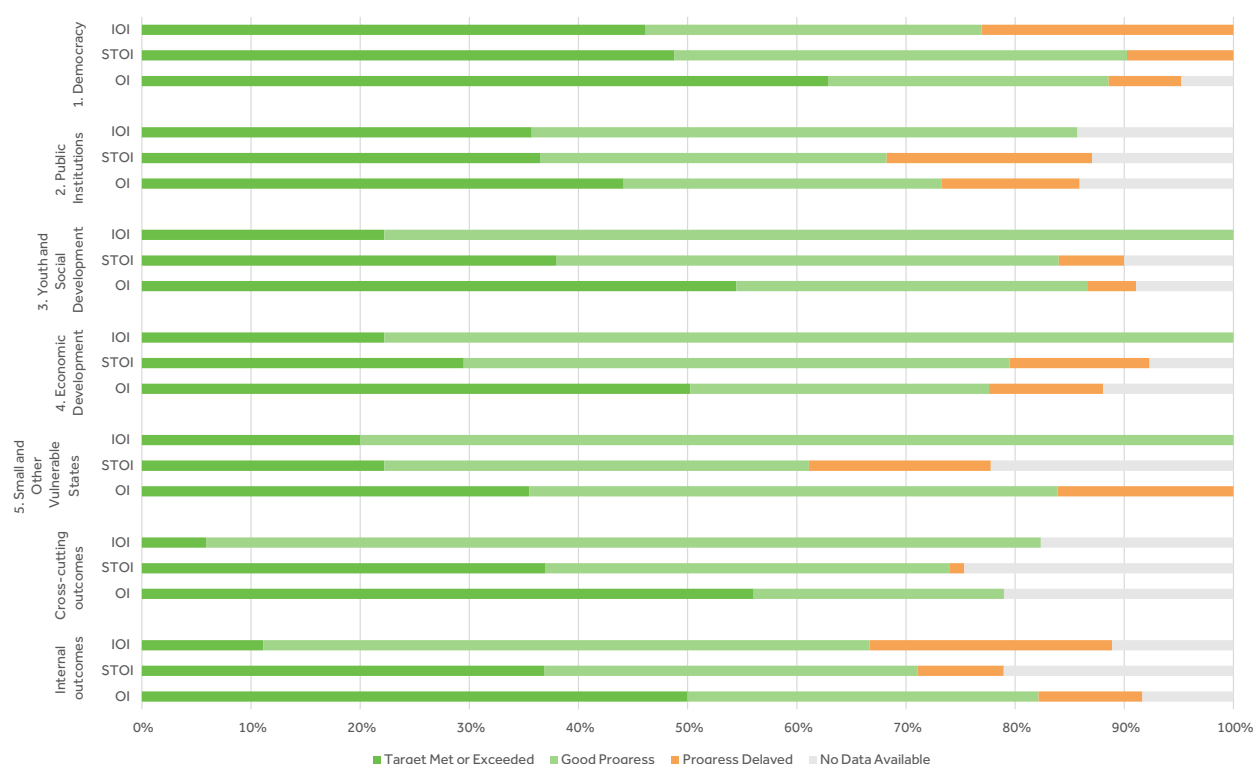
- **Connectivity Agenda:** The key lessons learned included the importance of flexibility in approach to respond to members. This was shown in Q1, where consultations needed to be extended to achieve consensus. Similarly, as flexibility is one of the principles adopted by members, outputs and targets will need to remain sufficiently flexible to respond to new priorities – for example, those decided at CHOGM 2020. The terms of reference of each cluster have been written to take this into account.

In regard to communications, there has been a tendency for programme to focus on Commonwealth events rather than Commonwealth priorities and objectives. A new media strategy will identify the priorities and objectives of the Commonwealth's programme areas and include media approaches designed to assist in achieving said objectives, as opposed to publicising events.

Delivery Progress for 2018–2019

Two years into the Strategic Plan, the Secretariat is starting to see progress towards intermediate outcome-level results. At the intermediate outcome level, the Secretariat is looking specifically at **changes in behaviour, practice or performance**

of intermediaries or beneficiaries. The chart below demonstrates progress against the Secretariat's intermediate outcome indicators, alongside short-term outcome indicators and output indicators per area of the Strategic Plan.



IOI	Intermediate outcome indicators – 4 years
STOI	Short-term outcome indicators – 2 years
OI	Output indicators – yearly

Making change happen across multiple years and complex systems

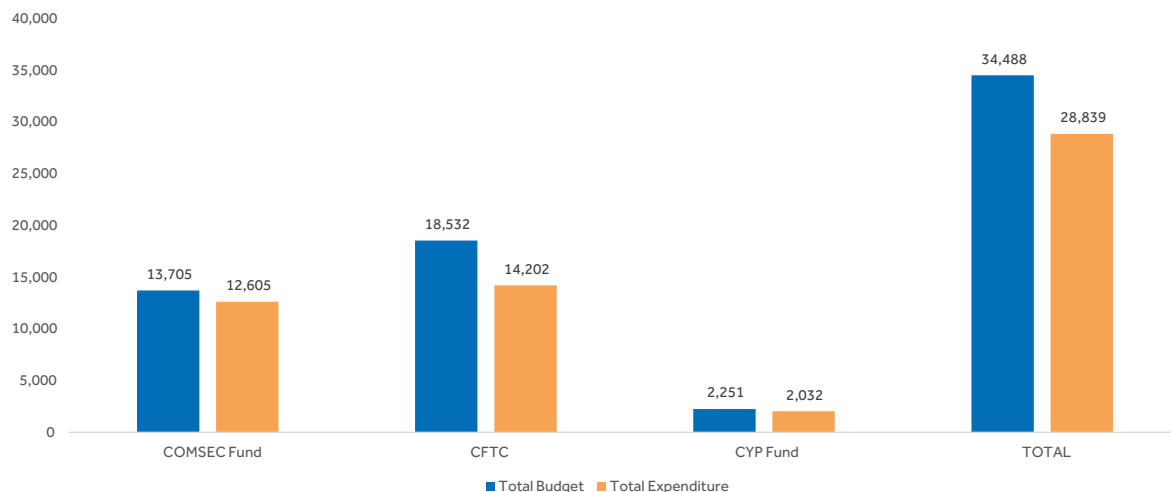
In many of the projects that the Secretariat is delivering, intermediate outcome level changes take multiple years for the results to be realised and involve engaging and influencing complex systems. The Secretariat's works influence these complex and systemic changes through a number of impact pathways, while it measures progress through 79 intermediate outcome indicators. Changes at the intermediate outcome level are not small-scale changes, but large shifts in policy, governance and

decision-making at the national and global levels. Across these aggregated percentages, it should be recognised that the Commonwealth Secretariat is tracking vastly different indicators of change, depending on the impact pathway it is pursuing.

Financial Performance

2018 – 2019

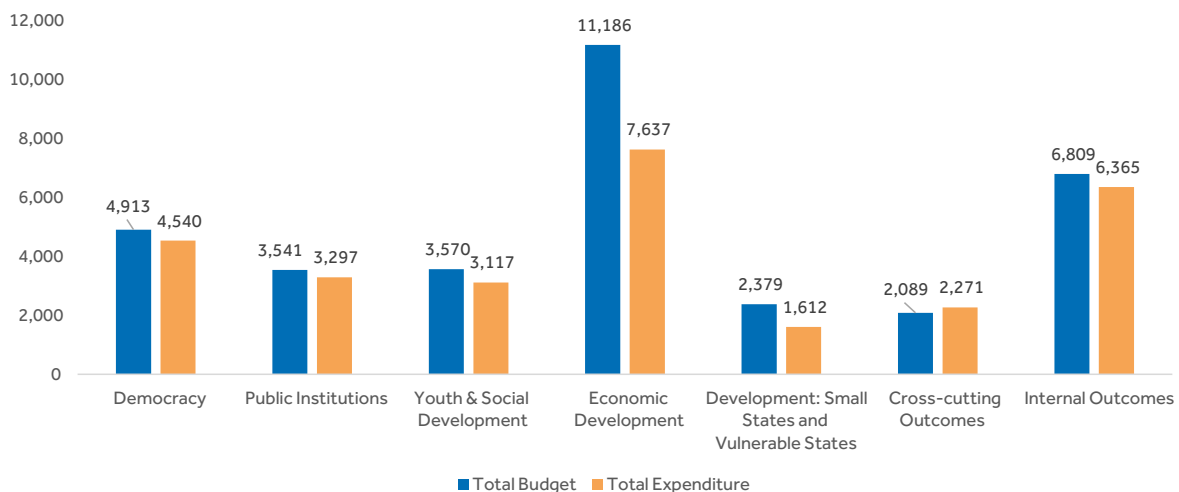
Figure 2: Total direct budget – summary performance by fund [£'000]



The Secretariat's total direct budget expenditures during the financial year ending 30 June 2019 amounted to **£28.8 million**. Of the approved budget, **53 per cent** was allocated to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), while **40 per cent** and **7 per cent** were allocated to the COMSEC fund and the Commonwealth Youth Programme fund respectively (see Figure 2).

Of the total approved direct budget for the financial year 2018–19, the Secretariat allocated the largest share to its strategic outcomes, amounting to **£25.6 million (74%)**, where expenditure reached **£20.2 million (79% of the budget)**. Internal outcomes received a **20% share of the budget at £6.8 million**, with **£6.4 million (93%)** spent. The remainder of the share of the budget was allocated to enabling outcomes at **£2.1 million (6%)**, with **£2.3 million (108%)** spent. Figure 3 illustrates expenditure versus budget across each outcome.

Figure 3: Total direct budget – summary performance by outcome [£'000]



Annex A – List of New Partnerships 2018–2019

PARTNER	PARTNER DESCRIPTION	OUTCOMES IMPACTED BY MoU
Malta (Malta Council for Voluntary Sector (MCVS))	MCVS supports the development of a more effective and efficient voluntary and community sector in Malta and Gozo.	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.
Australia	The Government of Australia represented by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.	1.4 Strengthened mechanisms of civil paths to peace in member states to counter violent extremism.
Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM)	The CCEAM is an organisation dedicated to fostering co-operative and collaborative exchanges internationally among education leadership, administration and management professionals.	3.3 Strengthened sustainable policies reduce disparities and improve health and education outcomes.
The African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) – Next Einstein Initiative Foundation	AIMS is Africa's first network of centres of excellence in mathematical sciences. AIMS enables youth to shape the continent's future through science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) education.	Overall Youth and Social Development Strategic Outcome, Information and ICT.
Wilton Park	Focusing on issues of international security, prosperity and justice, Wilton Park organises over 60 events bringing together leading representatives from the worlds of politics, diplomacy, academia, business, civil society, the military and the media.	1.4 Strengthened mechanisms of civil paths to peace in member states to counter violent extremism.
Global Innovation & Technology Alliance	The Global Innovation & Technology Alliance (GITA) aims to strengthen India's innovation ecosystem through supporting and enabling technology and innovation-driven enterprises.	CCI. Partnerships and Innovation: Strengthened partnerships and innovations to support member countries and Commonwealth organisations.
International Solar Alliance	The International Solar Alliance provides a dedicated platform for co-operation among solar resource-rich countries to achieve the common goals of increasing the use of solar energy in a safe, convenient, affordable, equitable and sustainable manner.	4.4 Sustainable development of marine, other natural resources, including 'blue economies'.

PARTNER	PARTNER DESCRIPTION	OUTCOMES IMPACTED BY MoU
United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC)	UNSSC aims to provide the skills and knowledge to empower the most valuable resource of the UN system: its people.	Overall Strategic Plan.
United Nations Office for South–South Cooperation (UNOSSC)	The UNOSSC was established to promote, co-ordinate and support South–South and triangular co-operation globally and within the United Nations system.	Overall Strategic Plan.
The International Trade Centre (ITC)	ITC enables SMEs in developing and transition economies to become more competitive and connect to international markets for trade and investment, thus raising incomes and creating job opportunities, especially for women, young people and poor communities.	4.1 Effective mechanisms for increased trade, employment and business growth.
Global Infrastructure Connectivity Alliance (GICA)	GICA strives to promote co-operation, knowledge exchange and meaningful progress in the field of global interconnectivity.	Overall Strategic Plan.
Nekton Foundation	A marine research organisation dedicated to exploring and protecting the deep ocean.	4.4 Sustainable development of marine, other natural resources, including 'blue economies'.
Daffodil International University	University in Bangladesh.	3.3 Strengthened sustainable policies reduce disparities and improve health and education outcomes.
University of Durham	University in UK.	3.2 Sports contributes to sustainable development, health, and peaceful and just societies.
Bangladesh Open University	University in Bangladesh.	3.3 Strengthened sustainable policies reduce disparities and improve health and education outcomes

Commonwealth Secretariat

Marlborough House, Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom

thecommonwealth.org



The Commonwealth