



# **Commonwealth Secretariat**

## **Briefing Note – Public Sector Development**

### **The challenge**

The main objective is to develop the public sector in Commonwealth countries with effective public administration that supports an appropriately balanced system of democratic governance, economic competitiveness, social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

Other challenges include: limited resources; a shortage of trained officials in key areas; corruption; the lack of knowledge and technology necessary to provide effective public services; brain-drain of emigrating young talent; and a high rate of HIV and AIDS infection among public servants.

### **The Commonwealth strategy**

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Public Sector Development programme helps developing member countries strengthen their structures of governance and administration. It focuses on such areas as the promotion of good governance as a key factor for economic development. The Secretariat has established five principles of good governance, namely, accountability, transparency, predictability, capacity and participation.

As part of its Human Resource and Leadership Development programme, the Secretariat facilitates annual forums and other meetings for heads of public services in Africa and the Caribbean in order for them to share ideas and experiences on how to effectively deliver on their mandates.

Senior public executives have also learned about leadership performance management, and personal efficiency and the challenges of implementing and sustaining change.

The Secretariat promotes use of information and communication technology (ICT) which has a direct relationship with economic growth. ICT is also critical in bridging the digital divide and facilitating opportunities to achieve development goals. Much of the Secretariat's work in ICT focuses on e-governance, which includes e-democracy, e-government and e-business. It is about modernising government to make public services prompt, convenient and easy to use. The Commonwealth Connects website [www.commonwealthconnects.net](http://www.commonwealthconnects.net) allows member countries to share the ICT wealth of the Commonwealth.

Many Commonwealth countries suffer from persistent budgetary shortfalls. The Secretariat has developed a web-based interactive toolkit – the Commonwealth Public Financial Management Self Assessment Toolkit (CPFM–SAT) – which evaluates a country's public finance reforms.

## **Key principles**

The Secretariat promotes a 'public service' ethos in the Commonwealth. We work to facilitate:

- Trained professional public services, capable of implementing programmes and providing efficient and effective services.
- Capable and well-functioning public sector training institutions and professional public sector bodies and associations.
- Robust, independent constitutional bodies that monitor the work of governments and public administrations, and act as avenues for citizen redress.
- A predictable and transparent regulatory environment conducive to private sector development and good corporate governance.
- E-governance strategies developed in selected countries.

## **The practical response**

At the request of governments, assistance is provided through policy advice from in-house advisers, by creating and facilitating knowledge networks, and through training and capacity enhancement. Each programme is tailored to the needs of the country concerned, the region, or the Commonwealth as a whole.

Specific pan-Commonwealth programmes exist in sub-national administration and government, public financial management, public-private partnerships, information and communication technologies, and human resource management and leadership.

Through the regions of the Commonwealth, assistance is provided to help national governments transform their public services into responsive, citizen-focused, results-oriented, sustained, and effective service delivery systems.

The Second Commonwealth Ministers Forum on Public Sector Development took place in Barbados in October 2008 under the theme 'Managing relationships for good governance and development'. The forum provided the opportunity to share examples of best practice, identify public sector development priorities for action, and review progress made against the priorities identified at the 2006 forum.

Interaction between cabinet members and senior civil servants has been strengthened through an ongoing series of joint workshops for cabinet ministers and principal secretaries in Commonwealth countries. These very successful sessions, following changes of government in Belize, Grenada, Lesotho, Mozambique, St Lucia, and Montserrat, have strengthened administrative-political interface under the facilitation of Commonwealth advisers including a former prime minister as well as former cabinet secretaries and government ministers.

Twinning relationships between Commonwealth member country institutions have been created – for example, police in Sierra Leone were trained by the Botswana Police College in crime investigation; human rights; and community based, local needs policing.

Public-private partnership (PPP) programmes are increasingly important in the global financial crisis as more countries look to the private sector to finance infrastructure. The Commonwealth has assisted in the creation of PPP units in Fiji Islands, Namibia, Sri Lanka, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Zambia. .

Assistance is also being provided to the public sector in Commonwealth countries in Southern and East Africa to build their capacity to respond effectively to the impact of HIV/AIDS on human resources and delivery of public goods and services.

And, more than one hundred practitioners from 40 countries were helped to develop the CPM-SAT toolkit in 2007 – Commonwealth leaders and finance ministers officially endorsed it and made a commitment to use it biennially.

### **Other Commonwealth players and their work**

The Secretariat has worked closely with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) in supporting advocacy programmes in local governance in the Commonwealth.

It has also engaged in joint work with the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) to enhance the quality and effectiveness of public administration in Commonwealth countries.

### **Relations with other bodies involved in the sector**

The Secretariat works with other key players, including civil society organisations and other Commonwealth organisations and associations, in appropriate fields and builds partnerships to support the needs of governments and provide essential assistance for often significant tasks.

For example, we work with the UK's Department for International Development to place high court judges and prosecutors in Malta, Sierra Leone and The Gambia in order to strengthen their judiciaries and promote the rule of law.

We also work with the Government of Singapore in conducting training programmes for Commonwealth member countries in a range of areas that promote good governance, public sector reform and public expenditure management.