

Capacity-Building

Member countries are experiencing rapid economic, social and political change and need to strengthen their capabilities in order to cope with and take advantage of the opportunities in the new global economic environment. Many, however, especially small states, do not have sufficiently skilled personnel or the institutional structure they need to formulate and implement appropriate government policies.

For the Secretariat, the provision of technical assistance aimed at building national capacities and strengthening institutions is therefore critical for fulfilling the potential of these developing countries. It does so in three ways: providing experts to fill identified gaps in skills, training to enhance

skills in specified needs, and consultancy in critical systems and processes.

In the two years since mid-1997, more than 580 long- and short-term experts were assigned and consultancies carried out in 53 countries or overseas territories and in regional organisations. Over 6,000 participants from 50 developing countries and 10 overseas territories were trained in workshops and seminars. These programmes were funded by the CFTC and the Secretariat worked closely with multilateral and bilateral agencies to ensure that programmes met the particular needs of individual countries.

A full list of Secretariat projects in capacity-building is at *Appendix II*.

Expert Skills

In some cases, experts fill operational posts within a government ministry and in others they have an advisory role working alongside national counterpart staff. They not only fill gaps where skills are needed but also transfer the necessary expertise to local officials. In this way they are able to enhance the local capacity. Similar assistance is provided to regional or sub-regional organisations, especially in the Caribbean, South Pacific and Southern Africa, which serve a substantial number of Commonwealth members.

Most experts recruited on long-term assignments are from developing Commonwealth countries, and offer ideas and solutions which have proved successful in their own environments. The range of sectors in which the Secretariat is able to respond to priority needs identified by governments is wide: in the two years since mid-1997, experts have commenced assignments throughout the Commonwealth, and especially in small states, in such sectors as electoral management, legal drafting, tertiary education lecturing, fisheries development, livestock production, trade statistics, public health, gender studies, civil aviation, taxation, financial management and infrastructure development.

A number of short-term assignments have also been undertaken to meet specific urgent priorities – some of which have been carried



A CFTC expert (*above*) talks with Barbados fisherfolk on the importance of the Fisherfolk Organisations Development project. CFTC experts work in a wide range of areas which are critical for developing countries (*right*)



out by volunteer experts under the Commonwealth Service Abroad Programme, which in this review period fielded 28 male and 12 female experts.

Some examples of assistance by Secretariat experts are described below.

Strengthening Democratic Values and the Rule of Law: Lesotho and Malawi received expert assistance before their elections in 1998 and 1999 respectively and election management advice has been given to The Gambia Electoral Commission. A senior legal adviser has been provided to the Ministry of Justice in South Africa for the implementation of the Vision 2000 strategy aimed at the development of a more fair, efficient and effective justice system, and a constitutional adviser is assigned to Fiji Islands.

In Belize, a volunteer judge assisted the Government to clear a backlog of more than 500 civil cases and trained the Court Registry staff. An expert also provided policy guidance to assist in the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman in Belize, and another is providing legal advice to the Office of the Ombudsman in Vanuatu.

Economic Management: Support to member countries has included fielding experts in such areas as taxation policy and revenue collection (Antigua and Barbuda, Maldives and Papua New Guinea) and banking (Namibia, Uganda and Vanuatu). In Maldives, where previously there had been no structure for tax administration and proper collection of revenue, an appropriate administration system has been established and local counterparts trained.

Trade, Industry, Agriculture, Poverty Alleviation and Infrastructural Development: The Secretariat sent two civil

engineers to Seychelles in early 1998, following a flood disaster, to plan and implement drainage schemes and advise on flood prevention measures. An expert has been assisting Guyana to manage and develop the national drainage and irrigation systems which are crucial to the economic development of the country. Other experts working on infrastructure projects

livestock production, veterinary science and cocoa production.

Human Resource Development: Upgrading of local skills through the provision of curriculum advisers, trainers and lecturers has continued to be a priority. Lecturers and curriculum development experts have been fielded at tertiary and technical institutions in a range of subjects



Senior auditors in Lesotho discuss a review of audit reports with a CFTC expert (left)

especially involving the upgrading of land and air transport links have been assigned in The Gambia, Grenada, Jamaica, Maldives, Mauritius, Solomon Islands and Tanzania. Over 100 local counterparts have been trained in these projects.

Advisers have assisted a number of countries to address their obligations under the WTO, develop for SADC countries a regional trade database which supports trade liberalisation negotiations in the region, and produce a service sector development plan for CARICOM countries in pursuit of economic diversification.

Agriculture and poverty alleviation programmes have been supported through experts working in fisheries, dairy and



Speech therapist working in Botswana

Commonwealth experts in health included an anesthetist posted to a major hospital in Tonga, a management expert to the National Health Training College in Lesotho, a speech therapist to Botswana, and experts in health insurance and environmental health to St Lucia. Another speech therapist assigned to Mauritius has given rehabilitation support to over 600 patients, as well as provided training to parents of children with speech disorders.

including chemical pathology, physics, legal drafting, information technology and marine engineering. National institutions in Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ghana, Guyana, Kiribati, Namibia, St Lucia, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe, and the regional Universities of the West Indies and the South Pacific, have been assisted in this way. Experts have helped Cayman Islands and The Gambia review and plan new human resource development strategies.

Gender and Youth Affairs: In support of Secretariat programmes promoting gender equality, an adviser has assisted in the implementation of a pilot gender management system in St Kitts and Nevis (see Chapter 14). Other experts in gender training have been assigned to Makerere University in Uganda (gender teaching, research and training outreach workers) and in South Africa where an adviser is attached to the Gender Equality Commission. The Zambian Government has

Tax First

In Maldives, Mr Bob Mitchell has an important task: together with an Indian colleague, Mr Surwa Wadhaya, the British officer from the UK Inland Revenue training centre in Leeds has been drafting the first-ever income tax legislation for the country, a string of small islands in the Indian Ocean. Up till this point in time, the Government's main sources of revenue had been taxes on tourists, customs duties and vehicle licences. Income tax had never been levied.

The decision to introduce direct taxation was made after a visit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the beginning of 1997. The IMF suggested that instead of applying for further international loans, the Government should raise the money from its own inhabitants. In turn,



the Maldives Government turned to the CFTC

In Maldives, a CFTC expert helped draft that country's first ever income tax legislation

received assistance with developing a policy framework for youth as part of the implementation of the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment.

Environment: Three long-term experts continue to assist Pacific small states – two at the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme in Samoa (building capacity for environmental management and public sensitisation of environmental issues) and a hydrographer in Tonga (surveying and consolidating a database on coastal areas and monitoring environmental effects). In the Caribbean, CFTC-funded projects have supported public awareness programmes, and the strengthening of natural resource management capabilities.

Public Sector and Public Service Reform: A number of experts were assigned to assist governments review their regulatory frameworks, improve delivery of public sector services, promote commercialisation of public sector activities, and carry out training in public sector management. For example, a consultant was posted to the public service training centre in Namibia to strengthen its institutional capacity for providing high-quality training programmes for senior managers in the public service, and two experts addressed civil service performance and management issues in Swaziland. Experts developed new public records management systems for Belize, Cameroon and Namibia.

Training and Institutional Development

The Secretariat training programme supports a mix of mainly short-term, with some long-term, activities for specific

needs. It is also linked to advisory assignments as part of a broader reform initiative. Courses and related training activities are carried out in-country, regionally and at pan-Commonwealth level.

Training activities are designed either for a 'cluster' of people in priority areas or a few select individuals who have a key role in national development. The objective is to establish a 'critical

ment in the public sector and information technology.

There has also been some support for long-term training for critical skills in national development where the lack of relevant skills in a few key individuals, especially in small states, has been a significant constraint. This type of training (largely in the form of courses for Masters degrees) has been arranged in specialist subjects such as



CFTC expert demonstrates equipment at a medical school in Ghana

mass' of resources, whether in the form of a cadre of skilled personnel in an important area or a strengthened institution which will fulfil a strategic role in national development. The overarching goal is to upgrade the human resource base of a country, enabling it to sustain a higher level of development.

In the two years since mid-1997, assistance has been largely provided for short-term training in areas designated as high priority by countries. These include developing middle management cadres for organisational effectiveness, records management, tourism management, environmental education, human resource planning and development, financial manage-

computer science, business administration, public sector management, international marketing, accountancy, finance and taxation, environmental science, education, occupational health and safety, statistics and demography, international maritime law, international shipping, legislative drafting, control engineering, banking and finance.



The Commonwealth meets over the effects of the 'Millennium Bug'

In-country training on a cost-shared basis with governments was arranged in a wide range of areas, from high-level specialised training programmes for senior civil servants to capacity-building programmes such as the training of trainers. There were other initiatives to build linkages between institutions in the more developed member countries and those in developing countries.

The Secretariat continued to promote various training institutions as Centres of Excellence. Formal agreements reached with Malta and Singapore to jointly conduct Commonwealth training programmes have led to nine specialist courses provided each year in Singapore and four in Malta. Centres of Excellence now provide pan-Commonwealth training programmes in all regions, and a Secretariat-initiated centre of excellence in training senior public executives in performance budgeting and financial management has recently been established for the Africa region.

Public sector policy and planning in information technology (IT) continued to be a focus. Training in techniques and best practice have assisted governments to address issues related to IT, communications and the Internet, and to move towards knowledge-based learning organisations.

One particular outcome was the Commonwealth Year 2000 Preparedness Initiative which was funded by a special grant from the UK Government. This initiative is designed to ensure that Commonwealth governments have taken steps to prevent, or at least remedy, the potential harm to administrative, economic and other structures by the 'Millennium Bug' which could cause computer systems to fail when the new century is ushered in. After initial work, the initiative was launched by Commonwealth Finance Ministers in 1998. A series of regional and national programmes have been held since then.

Bananas to Beaches

As in many other island states in the Caribbean, farmers in St Vincent and the Grenadines harvest bananas as a principal crop. For decades, it has been the mainstay of the economy.

That idyll was shattered early in 1999 when a trade row erupted between the United States and the UK and other European markets which were importing Caribbean bananas under special trade arrangements. The US said this was against WTO agreements and put US-owned South American banana companies at a disadvantage. After a protracted argument, Europe agreed to terminate the special arrangements.

Mr Geoff Hyde, an Australian expert in tourism who finished his CFIC contract

with St Vincent and the Grenadines in early 1999, said the islands now have to look to other means for revenue – and tourism as an industry is being seriously considered. While on assignment, he assisted the Government with the development of a strategy to attract more 'stayover' holiday tourists. "They stay longer and spend more," he explained.

Mr Hyde also helped to develop a cruise marketing plan. As many cruise ships ply Caribbean waters, he suggested that the Government attract them by building a new cruise ship berth in the main harbour in Kingstown. His plan outlines a number of initiatives and activities which could convince the main cruise operator companies to place St Vincent on their itineraries.



CFIC expert who helped develop a strategy to encourage tourism in St Vincent and the Grenadines