

The Human Dimension of Development



The competitive power of countries is more and more reliant on the quality of their human resource base

Development entails sensible use of available resources, especially human resources. This was emphasised in the report *Foundation for the Future* (1993) which has been the basis for Secretariat initiatives in human resource development since then. The report reiterated that an educated and healthy population should be at the core of efforts to raise skills and knowledge needed for social, economic and political progress. It also recommended that human resource development as a whole should be characterised

by good governance; partnerships between the government, NGOs and the private sector; promotion of gender equality; appropriate use of technology; and innovative mobilisation of resources.

Since mid-1997, these mandates for activity in human resource development strategies, education and health have been reviewed and renewed by Commonwealth Education Ministers who met in Botswana in July 1997 and Commonwealth Health Ministers who met in Barbados in November 1998. Pan-Commonwealth workshops were organised to help build capacity and develop training materials for implementation of these principles. Participants reviewed difficulties involved in promoting partnerships between ministries, the private sector and NGOs at a workshop in Zambia, while others met in India to review the plight of urban poor and rural landless women and how non-formal education could help them. A workshop in Bangladesh explored how non-formal education programmes could be reformed to help poor women by making greater use of technology.

Human resource development activities in small states are discussed in Chapter 5.

Education

The competitive power of countries is more and more reliant on the quality of their human resource base. Better education has therefore always been a central concern for the Commonwealth

and the Secretariat's current priorities are in:

- ❖ basic education – school management, supervision and professional support for teachers;
- ❖ non-formal education – promoting improved links between providers and better management;
- ❖ inclusive education – advocating the removal of obstacles to access faced by people with disabilities;
- ❖ science, technology and mathematics education – increased access to and improved

performance, especially by girls, in these subjects;

- ❖ higher/tertiary education – quality assurance, increased access, especially for women, promoting student exchange and improving the role of women in management; and
- ❖ education in small states.

Basic Education: Promotion of basic education in the formal school system has concentrated mainly in African member countries where the need is greatest. The emphasis is on school management and

supervision, advocating change in the conditions under which teachers work and ensuring they are properly equipped.

The Secretariat has produced high quality modules for training head teachers, school inspectors and supervisors, trained local trainers in using these materials and worked with senior education officials to ensure these initiatives enter education systems.

The state of the teaching profession has been reviewed, especially in the wake of public sector reform programmes that have badly affected education budgets, and a baseline study of Teacher Resource Centres designed to establish how these centres could give more professional support to teachers. The Secretariat is also working with ministries of education and teachers unions to develop strategies that would encourage and empower teachers to take greater responsibility for their own professional development and ethical standards.

Non-Formal Education: A substantial percentage of people in developing countries either have not had any formal education or have had to leave school prematurely. In most countries, very little provision is made for these people to access non-formal education such as adult classes. The Secretariat has sought to change this by working with partner agencies to raise the profile of non-formal education, strengthening community schools in Zambia, for example, and making it more available to nomadic populations and street children in Kenya. A major workshop on the state of non-formal education in East and Southern Africa was also organised in Botswana in June 1999.



Some countries struggle with basics ... here (top) a school library has few books. Elsewhere, adult education classes are arranged (right) for those who had to leave school prematurely



Inclusive Education: This new area of work has been introduced at the request of Education Ministers in 1997. Given its limited resources, the Secretariat is working with partner agencies that provide support for including learners with disabilities in standard education institutions. It also helped shape the agenda and programme of the International Working Group on Disability and Development.

Science, Technology and Mathematics Education: The Secretariat has continued to encourage more boys and especially girls to study these subjects and improve their performance (see Chapter 13). Studies on gender bias in the

primary school mathematics curriculum in India have been carried out and work initiated to enable teachers in South Africa to teach these subjects more effectively. Laboratory technicians can now be trained through distance learning.

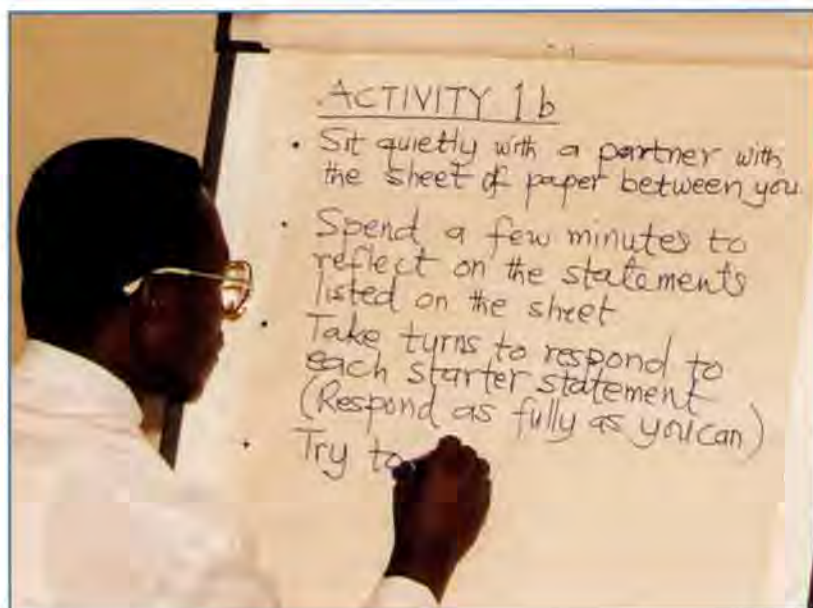
The Secretariat, in collaboration with other agencies, such as UNESCO, is promoting science and technology as an integral part of popular culture in developing societies. Regional Expert Group meetings for Commonwealth countries were held in Malawi, Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago, and a training programme on communications skills for popularising the subjects is being developed.

Higher/Tertiary Education: Mindful of the fact that universities can play a role in serving the development of basic education, the Secretariat launched a project designed to identify and replicate best practice in universities in this area. Guidelines and case studies have been produced.

The Secretariat has also worked on a project to strengthen the role of women in the management of universities. Modules developed for training senior women university staff were tested at workshops in India in 1997 and Malaysia in 1999.

The Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium (CUSAC), launched by the Secretariat in 1993, has developed into a viable partnership of 44 Commonwealth institutions. It allows for students and staff to transfer between institutions on a short-term basis as part of a formal course or research programme. The administration of CUSAC was taken over by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) in July 1999 and it will be expanded into a pan-Commonwealth scheme by the ACU.

Education in Small States: The Association of Commonwealth Examination and Accreditation Bodies was launched in New Zealand in October 1998 to assist small states which do not have the resources to conduct examinations or have difficulty in accreditation, equivalencies and recognition of qualifications. A concern over the management of tertiary institutions in states with low economies of scale and limited human resources has also led to the formation, with support from UNESCO, of a Network for the Management of Tertiary Institutions in Developing Small States.



Training modules have been produced for head teachers, school inspectors and supervisors

Health

Priority areas in the development of health have been in women and health, child survival, human resource development for health, reduction of substance abuse, HIV/AIDS and health sector reform, with the latter replacing women and health as the main activity following the meeting of Health Ministers in 1998.

Women and Health: The Secretariat recognises the need for a comprehensive gender perspective that acknowledges the different health experiences and health care needs of women and men.

With the Commonwealth Medical Association, the Secretariat continued to assist member countries to develop national plans of action for mainstreaming gender in the health sector, using the strategy of Gender Management Systems (GMS). Six GMS training workshops were convened in Cape Town, South Africa, 1997; Colombo, Sri Lanka, 1997; Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 1998; Nadi, Fiji Islands, 1998;



The Secretariat promotes training for key health workers and the sharing of information and expertise among countries

Frigate Bay, St Kitts and Nevis, 1999; and Halifax, Canada, 1999. These workshops have attracted support from the World Health Organisation (WHO), Pan-American Health Organisation (PAHO), United Nations Population Fund, Canadian International Development Agency and Unicef.

A publication exploring the role of community participation in the development of projects on women's health was produced and related issues discussed by community-based health workers and NGOs working with women at a training workshop in Tanzania in 1998.

Curriculum outlines for 15 distance learning courses in gender and health have been published and strategies identified for enhancing their delivery as well as supporting those institutions who wish to adopt these curricula.

Child Survival: Immunisation programmes are achieving poorer coverage in some countries because of resource constraints, slowing progress in achieving decade goals for child survival. Two papers on the sustainability and financing of immunisation programmes were prepared for the pre-World Health Assembly meeting in 1998. Models of sustainable immunisation programmes are being identified.

Human Resource Development for Health: The Secretariat continued to promote the development of human resources for the health sector through stimulating regional training programmes for key health workers, encouraging the sharing of expertise and information among countries, and providing technical assistance by supplying experts, facilitating training and assisting individual projects.

Assessing the achievements of the Commonwealth Action Plan for Nursing and Midwifery, Ministers in 1998 praised the work of the Commonwealth Nurses Federation in providing technical assistance to nursing and midwifery leaders to enable them to develop their national plans of action. Close working relationships with Commonwealth NGOs continue in the field of health.

Reduction of Substance Abuse: The Secretariat is using its advocacy role with WHO, PAHO and other organisations to encourage the adoption of strategies that reduce dependence on the use of tobacco. Documents on the subject can be downloaded from the Secretariat's health page on the Internet.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome: The HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to be a major source of concern for many member states. The 1999 report to Health Ministers addressed the current trends of the epidemic, the development of national multi-sectoral responses and how these could be implemented. The Secretariat participated in two UNDP-funded training workshops in Ghana and South Africa aimed at helping policy-makers and programme officers to develop their skills in implementing multi-sectoral programmes. Training materials have been developed on gender and HIV/AIDS for youth leaders.

Health Sector Reform: Since health sector reform replaced women and health in the work programme in November 1998, the Secretariat has begun to identify models of good practice in health sector reform. It is also developing a directory of NGOs involved in health to facilitate collaboration between the Secretariat, governments and NGOs.