

# Supporting public sector reform



Efficient public services are essential for good governance and development, and the Commonwealth Secretariat provides a range of targeted technical assistance services to support member countries' efforts to reform their public sectors. These technical assistance services offer a combination of continuity and change: they respond to the short-term needs of Commonwealth countries, and sustain the longer term restructuring of their public sectors.

Such restructuring is one of the foundation stones for a competitive economy, democratic governance, the rule of law and human development. The Commonwealth approach to good public administration recognises the full spectrum of the public sector, from the core state-funded civil service to the public goods and services increasingly delivered by the private sector.

More than 70 public sector reform assignments in some 30 countries (involving participants from over 50 countries) have been completed during the reporting period. These activities fall into five groups: public administrative structures for good governance; new public administrative structures and systems; public sector performance management; public-private sector partnership; and e-governance.

## **Public administrative structures for good governance**

In line with the aims declared in the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, the Secretariat continues to work to strengthen oversight institutions, including ombudsman offices, human rights bodies, anti-corruption agencies, the office of the Auditor-General, parliamentary committees and consumer protection instruments. This work includes training, policy advice and institutional development and has benefited more than 230 officials of these institutions.

Activities in this area included workshops on the changing role of the permanent secretary and the minister-permanent secretary relationship, held in Canada and Singapore. The Secretariat supported four regional training programmes for ombudsman offices in Africa, the Caribbean

and the Pacific. Seven pan-Commonwealth study programmes were implemented in New Zealand, South Africa and the UK; and nine national training activities in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

This work has helped to bring about significant improvements in the performance of these various oversight institutions, which in turn raises public confidence in the democratic process. The Secretariat also initiated new training programmes on strengthening public service integrity, and on helping governments to improve the quality of public services through citizens' empowerment. It has published an updated series of country profiles on public sector reform.

## **New public administration structures and systems**

Increased capacity within the Secretariat enabled the successful launch of the Public Expenditure Management Programme in the Caribbean, in line with the mandate to increase countries' capacities in budget and financial management from the 2002 Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting. The programme has begun in Trinidad and Tobago and is due to be extended to Belize and St Lucia. The Secretariat's Senior Executive Programme, delivered by the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management, examined the reform challenges of three African nations: Botswana, Namibia and Nigeria. Each will have in-country programmes funded by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, focusing on the implementation of their reform agenda. In addition, specialists from the Secretariat and

### **Above:**

Participants in a public sector reform programme visit a Maori meeting house in New Zealand

### **Opposite:**

The Commonwealth Secretariat supports training programmes for ombudsman offices



member countries contributed to Nigeria's Public Service Reform Programme. The annual Commonwealth workshop specialising in long-term changes for the civil service, held at Victoria University in New Zealand, attracted more than 40 participants at ministerial and senior official level. A programme to deal with the impact of HIV/AIDS on human resources in the public sector was started in Africa, with follow-on programmes in the Southern Africa region in co-operation with the Southern African Development Community and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

### **Public sector performance management**

This area covers quality as well as performance management to improve the services delivered to the public. Regional policy seminars were organised on integrated performance management systems in the public sector. These have contributed towards significant improvements in the performance of the public sectors of the participating countries. A series of regional workshops on quality and productivity management in the public sector is helping to establish a culture where citizens are treated with the respect afforded to commercial customers; and where the importance of cost-effectiveness

and 'value for money' in public services is fully appreciated. With technical advice from the Secretariat, national productivity centres have been established in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia as the focal points for quality and productivity improvement in the public sector.

### **Public-private sector partnership**

A series of specialist seminars on the restructuring, privatisation and regulation of the electricity and railway industries was organised in Africa, contributing towards the capacity-building of critical infrastructural sectors. In addition, technical advice has been provided to Botswana and Kerala State in India, assisting the process of public enterprise reform and privatisation.

The successful Commonwealth corporate governance programme has been extended to cover 40 countries. It has trained more than 1,500 company directors and trainers, and established self-sufficient institutions for corporate governance in Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific. The Commonwealth Association for Corporate Governance has recently received an award for its work in promoting corporate governance from the International Corporate Governance Network, which represents many of the largest institutional investors and corporations in the world.

### **E-governance**

The Secretariat's Public Sector Informatics Programme has focused on electronic government (e-government) for good governance, under which a National eGovernment Masterplan for Mauritius was prepared, as well as a similar plan for Lesotho's education sector. Both projects defined a roadmap to e-government, delivered a 'bankable' product which the countries concerned should be able to implement through bilateral or multilateral donor partnerships, and developed a toolkit that can be adapted for other countries. The Mauritius project involved a team approach between the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Centre for Electronic Governance. Specialist executive training programmes in e-governance, knowledge management and public sector informatics were organised under the auspices of the Third Country Singapore-Commonwealth and Malta-Commonwealth Programmes. For the SADC region they were undertaken in collaboration with the Centre of Specialisation in Public Administration and Management, GTZ and the Commonwealth Network of Information Technology for Development (COMNET-IT). The Secretariat's recently published e-governance titles have been well received in the Commonwealth and beyond.