

## South Africa

### *Consolidating the Transition*



*Commonwealth electoral commissions and advisers provided technical assistance and support for local government elections in South Africa*

The three years since South Africa's transformation into a multiracial democracy and its return to Commonwealth membership have seen a remarkable exercise in rebuilding a nation. Following the first democratic national elections in April 1994, the Government of National Unity embarked on a broad programme of change to consolidate multiracial democracy. The final Constitution, which came into force in 1997, entrenched a Bill of Rights and provided a range of new institutions to buttress the young democracy.

Democratic elections for local government in November 1995 and June 1996 completed the electoral process under the redefined system of governance. Issues of gender equality, which had been submerged in the struggle against apartheid, were accorded high priority. Reform of the public service began in a systematic manner. While tackling pressing economic and development issues, the country also sought to come to terms with the conflicts of the past through the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

The scope and depth of change across government and society is already considerable, but the process is not yet complete. The three major challenges, as defined by President Nelson Mandela, for South

Africa to achieve its goals are: co-operative governance, management and capacity-building. Commonwealth expertise has contributed towards meeting these and will continue to play a role in helping South Africa to refashion and strengthen its institutions of democratic governance.

At the 1995 CHOGM, Commonwealth Heads of Government pledged continued assistance to South Africa to consolidate the process of transition for two years to the end of June 1998, after which assistance to South Africa will continue under regular Secretariat programmes.

Assistance has accordingly been provided in close co-operation with member governments throughout the Commonwealth. Resources have been mobilised including special contributions from AusAID between 1 January 1995 and 30 June 1998, and British funding to meet the local costs of Commonwealth police officers provided at the expense of their governments to train South Africans in community policing. Expert services have been contributed in kind by 18 member countries.

In keeping with the priorities of the South African Government and those of the Millbrook Commonwealth Action Programme, the Commonwealth Secretariat, through the CFTC, has focused on three priority areas: democratic and constitutional development; justice, safety and security (community policing); and public sector reform. Consideration for gender issues is included in all these areas and Commonwealth expertise has contributed to the development of national machinery for gender equality.

In all, some 100 experts from 19 Commonwealth countries have contributed advice and assistance in the two years since 1 July 1995. Approximately one-third of those experts were women.

### Strengthening Democratic Institutions

The Commonwealth has supported the constitution-making process which originated in the negotiations that established the 1994 Interim Constitution. Technical experts have assisted with the establishment of new institutions, including the Human Rights Commission, the Commission for Gender Equality, the Public Protector (Ombudsman) and the Youth Commission. Links with peer institutions in the Commonwealth have been forged to facilitate access to relevant best-practice for the development of policies and programmes.

### TOWARDS BETTER MANAGED PUBLIC ENTERPRISES

South Africa's macroeconomic strategy identifies the restructuring of state assets as critical to attracting investments and technology, improving efficiency and orienting public enterprises towards reconstruction and development.

Employing over 200,000 personnel and located in strategic sectors such as energy, transport and natural resources, these enterprises also face the challenge of opening themselves up to the majority population and devising more dynamic training and development plans to meet their staffing needs.

In January 1997, 21 senior managers from six South African parastatal organisations spent two weeks in Singapore attending the Top Management Programme for Public Enterprises. The programme, funded by the Government of Singapore and the CFTC, addresses critical trends in public enterprise management.

Related assistance included a study tour to Malaysia for some participants and an expert to assist the Ministry of Public Enterprises with a personnel audit and to develop new strategies to link human resource policy and training to the transformation of public enterprises. The Secretariat also provided two specialist resource persons to seminars on privatisation and commercialisation for senior managers and to a Parliamentary Committee meeting.

*Voter education in South Africa ... the country's first multiracial democratic local government elections were held in November 1995*



## COMPLETING THE JOURNEY TO DEMOCRACY

In November 1995, millions of South Africans completed South Africa's journey to democracy when they went to the polls to elect the country's first multiracial democratic local governments. The elections were managed by the country's new provincial governments and were the first held using an electoral roll.

Commonwealth electoral commissions and advisers provided technical assistance and support throughout this process. Invited by the Local Government Elections Task Group, 37 electoral advisers from 13 Commonwealth countries (Australia, Barbados, Britain, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Pakistan, Trinidad and Tobago, and Zimbabwe) assisted in preparation for the elections. The joint project, sponsored by Australia, Britain and the CFTC, established a small Technical Resource Group and deployed Regional Resource Officers to the provincial electoral management teams.

Following the elections, a team of Commonwealth advisers, in conjunction with the then British Overseas Development Administration, provided support to the Community Elections Evaluation Group which made recommendations for future electoral management. The Group's report was presented at a national consultative conference in July 1996.

The Commonwealth's contribution to the elections and the subsequent report has helped to prepare the way for further capacity-building assistance in the establishment of permanent electoral machinery including the independent Electoral Commission.

Electoral management represents the single biggest area of Commonwealth technical assistance to South Africa's transition, with a combined total of some 100 experts assisting in the national, provincial and local government elections since 1994.



*Electoral management represents the single biggest area of Commonwealth technical assistance to South Africa's transition*

An expert has helped the Human Rights Commission develop a strategic planning exercise, and two experts trained staff in preparation for the Commission's first annual conference on the Bill of Rights in March 1997. Other Commonwealth experts in socio-economic rights also participated in that conference.

Two advisers served on the Government Communications Task Group which reviewed and made wide-ranging recommendations on restructuring national, provincial and local government communications. The Government's programme for 1997 includes implementation of the Group's report.

## Advancing Gender Equality

Commonwealth Secretariat assistance in this field has focused on support for the inclusion of gender considerations in all policies and programmes as well as specific activities to help promote equality.

An adviser from Zimbabwe and experts in specialised areas have provided advice and assistance with development of the institutional framework and policies which advance gender equality. In this way, the Commonwealth has contributed to the establishment of gender structures within and outside government, including the Office on the Status of Women in the Deputy President's Office, the system of gender units in line departments and provinces, and the Commission for Gender Equality.

The National Women's Empowerment Policy, which was developed with Commonwealth Secretariat assistance, is currently being expanded into a National Gender Policy. Assistance in developing gender policies has been provided to a number of departments, including justice, land, water and forestry, welfare and population development, and trade and industry.

In late 1995, the Commonwealth Secretariat and AusAID sponsored exchange visits by South African, Ugandan and Australian officials to discuss national machinery for advancing gender equality. Experts from Australia and Canada have provided support to the multi-party Parliamentary Women's Group, a lobbying body which provides practical support to women parliamentarians.

The Commonwealth has also supported the Women's Budget Initiative, which involves analysing the implications for women of the national budget in all sectors. This initiative provided input for a set of policy options, developed by the Secretariat and endorsed by the Fifth Commonwealth Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs in November 1996, for integrating gender concerns into the national budgetary process of member countries (see page 32). In May 1997, a Secretariat mission to South Africa explored the possibility of the country being selected to pilot the policy options.

Technical assistance is being provided to assist the Government in drawing up its first report to the United Nations on compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which South Africa ratified in December 1995.

## Regional Co-operation on Gender Issues

Close links are being forged between the Commonwealth, the new institutions established in South Africa and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to advance gender equality.



In January 1997, the Commonwealth assisted with a workshop for Southern African women which prepared a set of recommendations on gender mainstreaming in the region. The recommendations, which were accepted at the SADC Council of Ministers meeting in February 1997 and are to be presented for the consideration of SADC leaders at their summit in September 1997, include making a declaration of commitment to gender equality as well as establishing policy and institutional frameworks for including gender considerations in all SADC policies and programmes.

### A New Vision for Justice

The Commonwealth has provided assistance to help with the reform of the South African criminal justice system and the transformation of institutions involved in the prevention, detection and prosecution of crime. Since 1995, the Ministry of Justice has undertaken a major review of the justice system and has prepared a transformation plan, Justice Vision 2000, which sets out a strategy for rationalising the system. Commonwealth advisers from Australia, Britain, Canada and Zimbabwe have contributed to the development and implementation of the plan in areas including court management, gender equity and budgeting. Advice has also been provided on strategies for employment equity and communications.

In the second half of 1995, senior Commonwealth police officers from seven countries assisted the South African Police Service (SAPS) in implementing the first national training programme on community policing methods. An Australian expert has assisted the Department of Justice and SAPS to examine ways to address the problem of violence against women and children, which include public information and education campaigns, reviewing the adequacy of the law and of court arrangements, and the sensitisation of legal personnel involved in managing cases.



*(top) South Africa's enterprises face the challenge of attracting investment, improving efficiency and opening themselves up to the majority population. Many senior managers were trained through Secretariat programmes*

*(above) Girls at the Street Kid Shelter in Durban run by the youth group Youth for Christ, which won a Commonwealth Youth Programme Award*



*Many Commonwealth governments provided expertise to train South Africans in community policing*

## **Transforming the Public Sector**

South Africa's public service is being restructured and reformed in order to make it more representative, accountable and responsive, as well as more efficient.

Commonwealth expertise contributed to the development of the November 1995 White Paper on Public Service Transformation which set out the national strategy for change. Support was provided to the Ministry of Public Service and Administration, to the Portfolio Committee of Parliament responsible for the new Public Service Act, and also to the Presidential Review Commission on the Public Service. Senior Commonwealth officials contributed to the National Forum on Service Delivery in February 1997. South Africa has become an active participant in the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM).

Nearly 70 per cent of South Africa's 1.19 million public servants work in the provinces. Since 1995, more than 20 Commonwealth experts have provided assistance to provincial administrations in such areas as personnel and performance management, devolution of responsibilities to local government, labour relations, records management and internal audit. In order to co-ordinate assistance and maximise its impact, the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have developed jointly a special programme for capacity-building for six provinces.

The transformation of South Africa's public enterprises is also an important part of the reform of the public sector (*see page 25*).