

## Introduction

1 *People are at the heart of development: at the same time its architects and its beneficiaries. Among ordinary people – villagers and slum dwellers, farmers and factory workers, nurses and teachers, mothers and children, students and youths – this is a truism; ever valid as infants are reared, food is produced and livelihoods are earned. The promotion of individual, family and community well-being provides a human development agenda the world over.*

2 *National and international policy-makers have found the centrality of people to the development process a more elusive truth. Development paradigms come and go: over the past 40 years economic growth, meeting basic needs, state socialism, and variations of these have been proclaimed, challenged and discarded. The backdrop to such debates is at least one billion people living in absolute poverty.*

3 *In the 1990s the importance of the human factor in development is being reasserted. Higher priority in developmental agendas is being accorded to measures with a direct impact on human well-being. Investment in the basic health and education of people is also recognised to be an essential prerequisite for economic and social development. The empowerment of women through equal access to health and the conditions that safeguard it, to education, to the courts, and to political power is acknowledged to be capable of releasing a vast and largely untapped human potential. Technologies with the capacity to provide access to information, learning, and decision-making are opening new paths to education, employment and economic growth. The forces of democracy and participation are strengthening, calling into question concentrations of political and economic power. The role of government, and its accountability, is under scrutiny.*

4 *Such ideas and trends find expression both at national level in reconceptualised policies and in a variety of international fora. They have been articulated particularly in the series of Human Development Reports from UNDP, starting in 1990 and the three most recent World Development Reports from the World Bank on The Challenge of Development (1991), Development and the Environment (1992) and Investing in Health (1993). They find a common focus in the notions of human development and human resource development: paradigms which define development as the process of enlarging people's choices; of developing capabilities and competencies and of enabling people to put them to productive and socially responsible use.*

5 *These concerns find a natural resonance in the Commonwealth association which accords a high priority to human welfare and human rights and the development of the potential of its peoples. Commonwealth countries have a long tradition of working together in key areas like education, health and institution-building across the public service. A significant part of inter-governmental co-operation bilaterally, as well as multilaterally through Commonwealth Secretariat activities and assistance programmes under the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, focuses on human resource development. These official efforts are complemented by extensive networks of Commonwealth professional associations and non-governmental organisations working to the same ends.*

6 *When Commonwealth Heads of Government met in Zimbabwe in 1991 they recognised, in their Harare Commonwealth Declaration, that human resource development was central to the promotion of sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty in all Commonwealth member countries, despite a wide diversity in terms of population, of income and of ratings on any human resource development index ( see Box 1).*

**Box 1 Human Development in Commonwealth Countries**

The 50 countries of the Commonwealth comprise a group of great diversity:

**Population:** Member countries range in size from India with over 860 million people to Tuvalu with 9,000. Twenty four member states have a population of under one million (Table 1).

**Income (GNP per capita):** Canada in 1990 stood at US\$20,380 and Tanzania at US\$110. Using the World Bank classification (1990) of low-income (US\$610 p.a. per capita or less); middle-income (US\$611-7619); and high-income (US\$7620 and above) the 48 Commonwealth countries, excluding Nauru and Tuvalu, split 17:23:8 and by population 90.54%, 1.92%, 7.54%.

**Human resource development indices:** These also show great variations:

- ❖ eighteen Commonwealth countries, 14 of them in Africa, are projected to have an annual population growth rate of over 2.5 per cent in the period 1991 to 2000
- ❖ life expectancy at birth ranges from 77 in Canada to 42 in Sierra Leone (Table 1)
- ❖ eleven Commonwealth countries have adult literacy rates under 60 per cent
- ❖ only six countries have a mean of over eight years of schooling for people over 25 years of age (Table 2).

7 Foundation for the Future, *the Report of the Commonwealth Working Group on Human Resource Development Strategies*, seeks to elaborate the message from Harare. It is addressed to governments and focuses on the strategies which they can employ in support of their own human resource development programmes and those of their partners in the private and non-government sectors. The Group's intention is not so much to contribute to the debate in a conceptual sense, as to develop a more concrete, specific and operational approach. This approach is encapsulated in five key strategies which are elaborated in Part II of our report.

8 The report of the Working Group is backed by five short studies which were specially commissioned to assist its work:

- ❖ *Co-ordination of Human Resources Development: Policy-making, Planning and Implementation*
- ❖ *Decentralisation for Human Resource Development*
- ❖ *The Role of Non-Government Organisations in Human Resource Development*
- ❖ *Mobilising Resources for Human Resource Development Programmes: The Roles of Government, Non-Government Bodies and Individuals*
- ❖ *Human Resource Development in Four Asian Countries: Some Lessons for the Commonwealth Countries.*

9 The views expressed in these five studies, which were felt to deserve a wider audience, are those of the authors alone: they, and other studies specially commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat, (in the bibliography) provided a helpful input to the deliberations of the Working Group.