

## The Iwokrama Rainforest Programme

In many Commonwealth countries, forests are a critical resource for national economic development and also provide services and livelihoods for forest dwellers. At the same time, forests perform a number of essential environmental functions. As there are no technological 'quick-fixes' to identify successful methods for conserving and using the forests' resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of present and future generations, further research, learning and experimentation are necessary.

The Iwokrama Rainforest Programme is the Commonwealth's contribution to this research. It was launched in 1990 following the Government of Guyana's offer, at the 1989 CHOGM, to set aside about 360,000 hectares of pristine rainforest for research to demonstrate methods for conservation and sustainable use of forest resources and biodiversity. Seed-funding for this project was provided by the Global Environment Facility through the UNDP, and a number of other institutions, such as Canada's IDRC and

Britain's ODA, make important contributions.

On the Interim Board of Trustees for the Programme, the Secretariat contributes towards policy and scientific guidance. The Interim Director-General in conjunction with the IDRC is drawing up a medium-term plan (1995-2000) for the Programme and also guides the three CFTC-funded experts who are part of the Interim Management Group. These experts are expediting progress in several areas, including surveys of flora and fauna, training of Guyanese nationals in the use of Geographical Information Systems, institution-building, research and training projects focusing on Amerindian communities and the sustainable utilisation of biological resources, and the assessment of the potential for eco-tourism at the Iwokrama site. The Secretariat is also helping to finalise a legal framework for the Programme.

Once the medium-term plan is ready, a donor support group will be established to provide the core funding that is necessary to place the Programme on a sound financial footing. A consortium of scientific research institutions and a scientific and technical advisory committee will also be created in order to support the continued development of the Programme.

## DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION: BACKBONE OF ASSISTANCE

**P**ractical assistance is one of the primary means by which the Commonwealth helps member countries advance their economic and social well-being. This assistance is provided by the Secretariat through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC).

At the request of developing member governments, the Secretariat provides specialist skills which are not available, or in short supply, in these countries

through experts, advisers and consultancy services. It also organises the training of nationals in key development areas. In addition, special assistance is given to regional economic, training or other organisations to strengthen their capacities to deliver development services.

In the two years since mid-1993, more than 300 experts and consultants were sent to over 40 developing member countries, a number of dependent

territories and about 20 regional organisations. They offered advice in administrative, technical, social, managerial and economic matters, and assisted in training in a variety of disciplines. Some provided advice on developing export markets and new products or on upgrading industries and strengthening industrial infrastructure.

Experts can be placed in senior government positions where the lack of qualified nationals hinders socio-economic development, or they may help with the development of the private sector where a shortage of business, marketing or technical skills is holding up industrial or export projects.

Improving skills through training in a wide range of areas crucial for development is also a priority. In the two years since mid-1993, more than 4,000 Commonwealth nationals were trained under Secretariat programmes. Many were middle- and senior-level professional, technical and administrative managers who studied at some of the Commonwealth's best institutions, or took up practical work training attachments.



*An expert helps with quantity surveying training in Mauritius*

The training programmes which aim to enhance the human resources of developing member countries are also supported by integrated packages of consultancy, advice and training. These assist managers in the public and private sectors to adapt to economic reforms and restructuring and to upgrade the quality of products and services.

Secretariat training was considerably enhanced with the signing of Memorandums of Understanding with the Singapore Government in April 1994 and with the Malta Government in May 1995 establishing Third Country Training Programmes. Under these programmes, both countries will provide experts and training in a range of areas while the Secretariat will contribute additional expertise, and arrange travel and accommodation.

Secretariat in-house consultants who offer confidential services to governments in legal and economic matters continue to be a crucial part of Commonwealth development co-operation. Their work and that of technical experts and the training activities are described elsewhere in this Report. In mid-1995, a Volunteer Scheme was launched by the Secretariat in order to draw on additional expertise from Commonwealth citizens who have retired from the public or private sector but who may be willing to serve other Commonwealth countries without asking for fees other than expenses.

## **Sectoral Policy and Assistance**

The nerve centre of the Secretariat's development assistance activities is its work in sectoral policy and assistance in pursuit of economic and social development goals. The main thrust of this assistance is in key economic sectors whose growth is crucial for more rapid overall economic development. The areas covered include industrial development, exploitation of terrestrial and marine resources, export market development, the services sector, and economic and social infrastructure.

Activities covering industrial and export market development, and the exploitation of terrestrial and marine resources are described more fully in later chapters in this Report, and assistance in the services sector and in economic and social infrastructure below.

### **The Services Sector**

One way of helping member countries increase the level of resources available for economic and social progress is through the development of efficient

and competitive domestic markets and local financial services, managerial and marketing skills and the institutional capacity for promotion of tourism and transport services, especially in small states.

In the two years since mid-1993, experts funded by the CFTC have helped to restructure banks and financial institutions and develop computerised systems in banks. Financial specialists, banking operations experts and bank managers, as well as banking legislation consultants, have assisted in a number of countries, such as Bermuda, Ghana, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda and Vanuatu. The Secretariat has also supported training programmes in banking, financial management and computer training to meet regional needs, particularly in Africa and Asia.

Expertise has also been provided to countries such as St Lucia to assist in raising the standard of insurance industry policy and practice, and efforts have been especially made to raise local skills by providing on-the-job training.

Tourism has continued to be a very important source of revenue to many governments, especially for small island developing states. Secretariat experts help governments address tourism policy, develop tourism products and access markets as well as enhance the skills of nationals in the industry. The services of advisers in Grenada, Montserrat, Seychelles, Vanuatu and the Caribbean Tourism Organisation are examples of how small states have benefited from Secretariat assistance in this area.



*Working towards better infrastructure*

## Economic and Social Infrastructure

Efficient transport, public utilities, better health systems and sound planning of the construction of physical assets are important foundations for economic and social growth.

In the two years since mid-1993, experts have served in the following areas: planning control and enforcement (Cyprus), quality control for building materials (Maldives), reviewing a health laboratory (Bermuda), soil and materials engineering (Grenada)



*Privatisation of industry in the Caribbean with help from the Commonwealth*

and quantity surveying and valuation to the National Housing Corporation (Zambia). In the Pacific, an architect and engineer have been sent to Vanuatu, an Energy Secretary provided for the Cook Islands, a marine legal expert assigned to Papua New Guinea and a technical adviser appointed to upgrade and maintain electrical power-generating and other mechanical equipment in Niue.

In the transport sector, Guyana and Tuvalu have benefited from experts in the areas of airworthiness and civil aviation, and a civil engineer has helped build roads in Lesotho.

In the area of social development, an expert has helped with consumer legislation in Cyprus, a health planner assisted with the formulation and preparation of a new policy for the health sector in Mauritius, and health policy formulation and skills development were addressed by experts assigned to the Cook Islands and Grenada.