

## PARTNERSHIP FOR PROGRESS

The Commonwealth is an association of peoples as much as it is of governments. This 'people' link is partly maintained through the many voluntary bodies in member countries. It has long been recognised that these non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are important, not only for national development and the quality of life in member countries but also for the promotion of understanding and co-operation within the Commonwealth.

In 1965, governments set up both the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation—the former to co-ordinate consultation and development assistance at the official or government level, the latter to support and strengthen links among the voluntary professional, development, cultural and other bodies which make up the 'people's' or 'unofficial' Commonwealth. The ties between the two organisations are close.

Increasingly, it is being recognised that the delivery of development assistance cannot fall into neat government and non-government lines. Indeed, the involvement of NGOs with grassroots support is often crucial. It was to work more closely with these NGOs as partners in development that the Secretariat set up in mid-1993 a formal contact and co-ordination point, the NGO Desk. Through this point, relations with NGOs are harmonised, particularly in economic and social development at the local level.

Between 1993 and 1995, many new partnership projects with NGOs were developed which have enhanced the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of Secretariat activities in a number of areas. In the majority of cases, especially those where grassroots NGOs were involved, the NGOs helped provide skills, specialised knowledge of the local situation and contacts in the community. Where activities involved co-operative work with other development agencies or academic institutions, the presence of an NGO partner sometimes assisted in

attracting extra funding from governments, the private sector and other sources.

Through Commonwealth media NGOs, for example, professional, technical and managerial training and advice is given to journalists and print and broadcast media organisations. Women's and youth NGOs have long been partners with Secretariat activities in their specialist areas. Appropriate NGOs are welcomed as observers at Commonwealth education and other ministerial meetings. In 1993, for the first time, Commonwealth NGOs were officially accredited to CHOGM where they held meetings and interacted in the wings.

Close co-operation between the Secretariat and the Commonwealth Foundation continues to ensure activities complement each other and duplication is avoided, and the Secretariat is represented on the Foundation's Board and Grants Committee meetings.

The Secretariat has been represented at the quarterly meetings of the Organisation of Commonwealth Associations and roundtable discussions have been arranged with NGOs to address particular issues, such as co-operation regarding the newly established Commonwealth Secretariat Volunteer Scheme and the Iwokrama International Rainforest Programme.

A number of other important links with the unofficial Commonwealth have been forged. For example, the Secretariat worked closely with the Cambridge Commonwealth Trust in connection with the setting up of the Malaysian Commonwealth Studies Centre which was established in Cambridge, Britain, in March 1995. A Commission on Commonwealth Studies has also been appointed to consider opportunities and facilities for the study of the Commonwealth with a view to promoting teaching and research of the association as it is today.

# Sport and Development

At the XV Commonwealth Games in August 1994, a group of researchers worked to identify opportunities and barriers to Commonwealth women in sport. The researchers collected data from women competitors, their team managers and national managers at the Games, which were held in Victoria, Canada. Questionnaires were distributed to all female competitors, each national team manager and to national delegations at the Commonwealth Games General Assembly. Their report will be submitted to Heads of Government at CHOGM 1995.

Their research was part of a larger Commonwealth initiative to encourage the linking of sport with wider developmental efforts. Although sport has been one of the traditional links between Commonwealth peoples, and the Games are the association's most public display of fellowship and unity, it was not until 1989 that Heads of Government decided to explore whether sport might be used in a more consistent and strategic manner to reinforce existing Commonwealth connections and to strengthen development.

A CHOGM Committee on Co-operation Through Sport was set up in 1991, chaired by Mr Justice Roy McMurtry of Canada. Its brief was to recommend ways to strengthen Commonwealth sport and one of its main recommendations has been that governments should recognise the importance of sport in nation-building and development.

Secretariat activities reflecting this committee's recommendations began in 1994. The Secretariat's objectives reflect those of the McMurtry Committee and also broader human resource development goals for national development and increasing women's participation in sport. Dr Margaret Talbot, Carnegie Professor and Head of Sport at Leeds Metropolitan University in Britain, began research in 1994 into the opportunities and barriers to Commonwealth women in sport. A second project, on research into links between national sports policies and development, is being planned.

The McMurtry Committee keeps Commonwealth co-operation in this area under regular review and reports to CHOGM on progress. It prepared papers on sport and development for Commonwealth Education Ministers who met in Islamabad, Pakistan, in November 1994, and for Commonwealth Youth Affairs Ministers in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in May 1995.

Both ministerial meetings endorsed the papers' recommendations and Youth Affairs Ministers urged all governments to press for the inclusion of sport and physical education, particularly if it involved grassroots youth development, in bilateral and multilateral Official Development Assistance programmes.

The Secretariat continues to build working relations with sports agencies, the McMurtry Committee, the Commonwealth Games Federation and SUKOM Ninety-Eight Berhad, the Malaysian organisation which is responsible for organising the XVI Commonwealth Games in Kuala Lumpur in 1998. The Secretary-General attended the XV Commonwealth Games which involved over 3,500 competitors and officials.



*Nigeria's Mary Onyali at the 1994 Commonwealth Games*