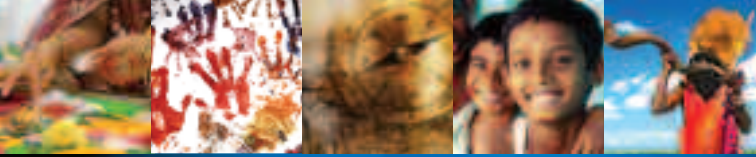




**Commonwealth  
Foundation**



# **COMMONGROUND**

**A practical guide to the Commonwealth**

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## COMMONGROUND

The Commonwealth is an association of 54 independent countries, who work together to promote democracy, good government, human rights and economic development.

This book has been written to explain how the Commonwealth came about and to describe its purpose and function today.

# Foreword



The Commonwealth is sometimes seen as a complex body, due in part, perhaps, to the number of levels on which it operates. This timely and helpful booklet could not be clearer in explaining the history, organisation and work of the modern Commonwealth. Based on a values system that embraces consultation, negotiation and consensus, the Commonwealth today spans 54 countries and represents over 2 billion individuals – almost one third of the world's population. It reaches across geographical, political and social divides to help individuals and communities build stronger nations; and stronger nations are better placed to meet the increasing number of global challenges we face today. I am sure you will find CommonGround both interesting and informative, and essential background reading for a better understanding of the modern Commonwealth.

**Kamalesh Sharma,  
Commonwealth Secretary-General**



'Strength in diversity' is a saying that could have been invented specifically to describe the Commonwealth. With a membership extending from Australia to Zambia, Trinidad and Tobago to Tuvalu, today's Commonwealth represents an amazing diversity of cultures, beliefs, and nationalities. The Commonwealth Foundation is instrumental in promoting the rights of individuals across this broad spectrum. Working with not-for-profit groups, charities, professional networks, and other similar organisations, we encourage individuals to speak out on a range of development issues that affect them. CommonGround provides an invaluable resource not only for those wishing to find out more about the Commonwealth, but for those who seek to play a more active role in helping to shape and develop it.

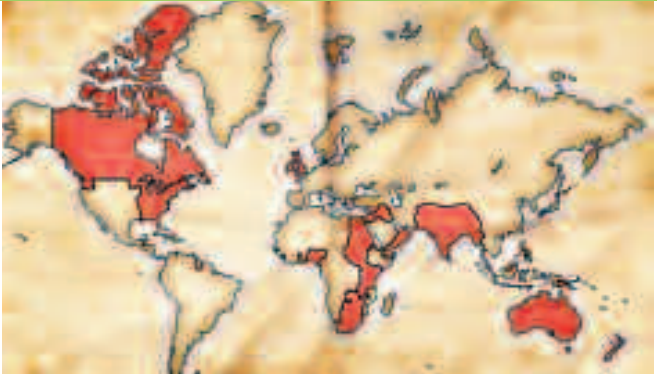
**Dr. Mark Collins, Director,  
Commonwealth Foundation**



# Origins

**Empire roots 04**  
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# Origins



## Empire roots

The Commonwealth is the world's oldest political association of sovereign states. Its roots go back to the British Empire, which once covered a quarter of the world's land area, and included about the same proportion of the world's population.

### How did the Empire develop?

Unlike many previous empires, the British Empire was not created by conquest, although military support did play an important part. Instead, it grew haphazardly, in piecemeal fashion, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. It was driven by a number of factors, listed below, and involved the settlement and control of lands in Africa, India, North America, South East Asia, and the Caribbean.

**Trade** ● The British government's rule in India originally developed from the

activities of merchants, trading mainly in cotton, silk and tea. Trade also formed the basis of what became British control in South East Asian states, including Hong Kong, Malaya and Borneo.

**Piracy** ● The British presence in the Caribbean and southern parts of the United States was initially prompted by piracy and an opportunity to establish gains over rival Spanish and Portuguese empires. In time, this led to establishment of plantations growing sugar and tobacco and the extensive involvement of Britain in the slave trade with West and Central Africa.

**Settlement and exploration** ● Settlement was an important driving force in the expansion of the Empire. In the 1620s, pilgrims left England to establish a new social and religious order in America; the early colonisation of Australia was partly a result of Britain's policy of sentencing large numbers of convicts to compulsory transportation; and millions, in the



nineteenth century, settled in North America, Australia and New Zealand to escape from poverty in Britain.

Britons were also prominent, during the nineteenth century, in exploring the interior of Africa – searching for mineral wealth and markets for goods, and seeking to spread Christianity. Although these areas had long-established indigenous populations, Britain claimed the lands as its own.



**War** ● In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Britain's victory in the Napoleonic War against France added further countries to the Empire, including Mauritius, Sri Lanka (then known as Ceylon), Trinidad and Tobago, St Lucia and Malta.

At the end of the First World War, a number of German colonies in Africa also became part of the British Empire, as reparations. These included parts or all of the states today known as Cameroon and Tanzania.

## Power and control

The main motive behind the establishment and expansion of the Empire was to increase Britain's wealth and political power. Often, but not always, this was at the expense of local people, particularly the non-white populations.

## Towards independence

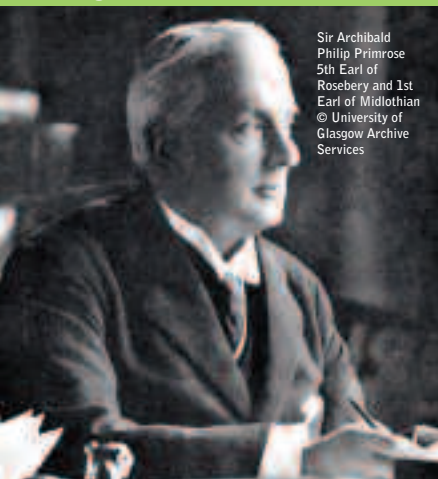
In the early years of the Empire, the British government made little attempt to influence the way in which the colonies were governed. However, by the end of the seventeenth century, more direct rule began to be imposed from London. This was not welcomed by the American colonies, and a tug of war developed between central government in London and the colonists' own elected assemblies. This became the major cause of the push for independence by the settlers in North America.

## Assemblies and advisory councils

After the defeat of British troops and the loss of its American colony in 1781, Britain no longer tried to direct its colonies centrally from London. Instead power was placed in the hands of the colonies' own assemblies or advisory councils. Although members of councils were often nominated by Britain, the councils and assemblies nevertheless had some authority. People of local standing could not generally be ignored by those with responsibility for governing the colony.

## Independence

The movement towards independence started in the colonies of settlement. In 1867, Canada became the first British colony to gain a significant degree of independence, followed by Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.



Sir Archibald  
Philip Primrose  
5th Earl of  
Rosebery and 1st  
Earl of Midlothian  
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Services

**A Commonwealth of nations** ► The first time the word 'Commonwealth' was publicly used in the context of the Empire was by the British statesman Lord Rosebery in 1884, in a speech in Adelaide. In commenting on Australia's bid for nationhood, Lord Rosebery said "Does this fact of your being a nation imply separation from the Empire? God forbid! There is no need for any nation, however great, leaving the Empire because the Empire is a Commonwealth of Nations."

Britain was slow to allow representative government in India, and resisted calls for a democratically elected parliament. But, in 1909, it did permit the introduction of a small elected element into the Legislative Council; and this was extended in 1919. By 1921, the main law-making body in India was composed of a majority of locally elected representatives, but progress towards full independence was interrupted by the Second World War. However in 1947, after partition, India and Pakistan came into existence as separate and independent nations.

Independence was granted to Sri Lanka in 1948 and to Malaya in 1957. Ghana became independent in 1957, and Nigeria, in 1960. During the 1960s, several Caribbean states achieved independence, including Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago (both 1962) and Barbados (1966).

## Creation of the Commonwealth

### Dominion

When a colony was granted the right to self-government, usually before full independence, it became known as a dominion. The term was first applied to the Canadian province of Nova Scotia in 1848.

At first, however, dominion status did not necessarily give a country greater political or legal power. For example, when Canada itself became a dominion in 1867, the Parliament in Westminster was still able to overrule local Canadian law. This power, however was rarely used, and by the end of the nineteenth century was increasingly seen as unacceptable.

Over the next 20 years, the constitutional position of the Dominions (which by then also





included Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa) was gradually strengthened. No new laws were passed, but Britain's dealings with each country allowed them an increasing degree of independence.

The First World War acted as a further catalyst for change, largely because of the very significant part played by troops, nurses, porters and labourers from the Empire. A third of all British troops came from the colonies, with the largest contingent from India. A tenth of the population of New Zealand served overseas, either in the armed forces, or as nurses.

During the War itself, the colonies were represented in the Imperial War Cabinet, and when hostilities came to an end, the Dominions signed the *Treaty of Versailles* independently, alongside Britain.

The great contribution made by colonial troops signalled a new relationship between Britain and the Dominions.

## Equality of status

This new relationship, however, was slow to evolve. Britain was often resistant to the Dominions acting on their own behalf, although during the 1920s, things gradually began to change.

**The Halibut Treaty** ► In 1923, Canada became involved in negotiations with the United States over fishing rights in the North Pacific. Under normal circumstances the final agreement would need to be signed by Britain, as well as Canada and the US. This practice, however, was opposed by the Canadian Prime Minister, who successfully argued that the treaty was a matter between Canada and the United States alone, and something that Canada should sign in its own right.

In 1926, at the Imperial Conference in London, an agreement was reached establishing the principle that the Dominions were self-governing states within the British Empire, equal in status, and not subordinate to the United Kingdom. This declaration was made law in 1931 under the *Statute of Westminster*. From this stage, the Empire became known as the British Commonwealth of Nations, or British Commonwealth, for short.

## The modern Commonwealth

As they had done 25 years previously, Commonwealth countries provided a major part of the fighting force against Germany, Italy and Japan in the Second World War. Almost as many fighting troops came from the Dominions, India and Africa as from Britain itself.

By the end of the war, however, it was clear that Britain no longer had the means, or the wish, to sustain an empire and, in the years that followed, a new order came about.



# Origins

Of particular significance at this time was the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, the outcome of which established a pattern for the modern Commonwealth.

Until this point, all self-governing Commonwealth states had retained Britain's King or Queen as Head of State. However, India's constitutional assembly wanted the country to become a republic *and* to remain within the Commonwealth. These twin ambitions precluded the Monarch from remaining as India's head of state. At the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Meeting in 1949, it was agreed in the *London Declaration* that India might remain a member of the Commonwealth, and a republic, by accepting the Monarch "as a symbol of the free association of independent member nations, and as such Head of the Commonwealth".

This development allowed other countries that had become republics (or had a national monarch) to become Commonwealth members.

## The Commonwealth today

The use of the word 'British' in the title of the Commonwealth has long gone. Today, the Commonwealth is the world's oldest political association of sovereign states, with 54 independent member states. Thirty three of these are republics, five have their own monarchs, and 16 have Queen Elizabeth II as Head of State.

Queen Elizabeth II is Head of the Commonwealth, but has no authority to interfere in the affairs of Commonwealth member states. (See also page 20).

Although the focus of the Commonwealth today is on improving the lives of people living in its member states, it also addresses issues of wider international concern, such as terrorism and climate change.

The Commonwealth runs a range of programmes focussing on economic development, democracy and governance, education, health, environment and the strengthening of civil society.



HM Queen Elizabeth II, Head of the Commonwealth, speaking at the opening ceremony of the 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 27 November 2009.





# Membership

**A different kind of organisation 10**

**Common aims 11**

**Joining the Commonwealth 12**

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# Membership

## A different kind of organisation

It is not always recognised how much the Commonwealth differs from other international organisations. There is no formal treaty or document marking its establishment, nor is there a pre-defined set of rules that all countries are expected to follow. Instead, Commonwealth policy is established, shaped, and developed through agreement between member states, and is characterised by an emphasis on negotiation and flexibility.

Unlike the United Nations and European Union, countries that belong to the Commonwealth have an equal say within the organisation.

**Free from Empire** ► In the mid 1980s, the leaders of Commonwealth states argued for stronger sanctions against apartheid in South Africa. They were opposed by Britain's Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Although the measures eventually taken were not as strong as some Commonwealth leaders would have wished, the Commonwealth's programme of action nevertheless did include an arms embargo, the cutting of sporting and cultural ties, and a ban on certain exports to South Africa.



### Diversity

Although sharing a common language and history, the Commonwealth is also characterised by its great diversity.

Commonwealth member states are amongst both the largest and smallest countries in the world. Canada has the second greatest land area of any nation, and India the second highest population. By contrast, Nauru and Tuvalu each have a population of about 10,000, and Nauru is no more than six kilometres at its widest point.

Wide differences also exist in culture and religion. An estimated 800 million Hindus live in Commonwealth countries, 500 million Muslims and about 400 million Christians.

Commonwealth states also vary considerably in the life chances they afford to their citizens. For example, life expectancy in Singapore, Australia, Canada and New Zealand is over 80 years. In Zambia and Swaziland, it is under 40.

10



Fiji  
(suspended 2009)



The Gambia



Ghana



Grenada

## Common aims

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In 1971, at a conference in Singapore, Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed that the Commonwealth was based on a number of key principles.

These include:

- international peace and co-operation
- equal rights for all citizens, regardless of race, colour, religious or political belief, and
- the right of all citizens to be able to shape the society in which they live through free and democratic politics.

Member states also agreed to:

- fight against racial prejudice
- work to overcome poverty, ignorance and disease, and
- encourage the flow of resources towards helping developing countries.



## Confirmation

Twenty years after the *Singapore Declaration*, the world had changed significantly. Far fewer countries remained under colonial rule, many states had moved to more democratic forms of government, and the political situation in countries such as South Africa and the Soviet Union was very different from what it had been in 1971.

At their conference in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, in 1991 (a time when Zimbabwe was still a member of the Commonwealth), Commonwealth Heads of Government reaffirmed the *Singapore Principles*, and agreed in the *Harare Declaration* to concentrate on:

- developing just and honest government
- protecting human rights
- providing universal access to education
- reducing poverty
- supporting free and fair trade
- promoting sustainable development
- helping small Commonwealth states, and
- working towards international agreement on world economic, political and social issues.

In 2009, the Commonwealth's core beliefs were brought together in one document, the *Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation of Commonwealth Values and Principles*.

Opening session of the first Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Singapore, 1971.

## Joining the Commonwealth

Almost all Commonwealth member states have at one time been directly or indirectly ruled by Britain. However, not all eligible states, such as Burma, Israel, Jordan, and the Republic of Ireland have chosen to apply.

**Not a member** ➤ The Republic of Ireland was briefly a member of the Commonwealth between 1931 and 1949, although it did not attend any Commonwealth meetings beyond 1936. Its struggle against incorporation into the United Kingdom placed it in a very different situation from other Commonwealth member states.

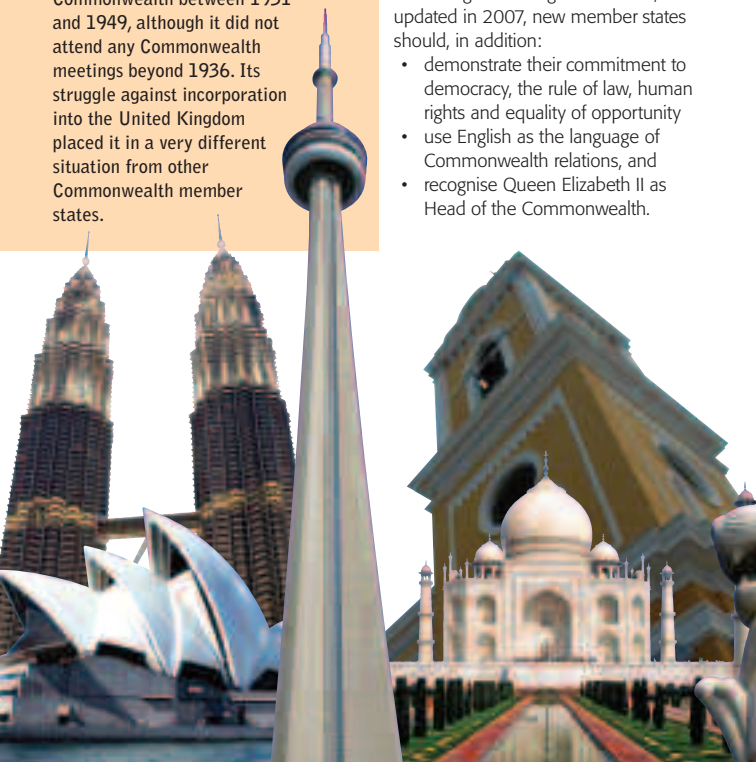
## New members

The criteria for new members joining the Commonwealth have been gradually developed since 1931, through a series of documents, shaped and agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government, and reaffirmed in 2009.

Amongst the most important of these are the *Singapore and Harare Declarations*, see page 11, requiring all Commonwealth member states to respect and uphold democracy and human rights.

Under guidance agreed in 1997, and updated in 2007, new member states should, in addition:

- demonstrate their commitment to democracy, the rule of law, human rights and equality of opportunity
- use English as the language of Commonwealth relations, and
- recognise Queen Elizabeth II as Head of the Commonwealth.



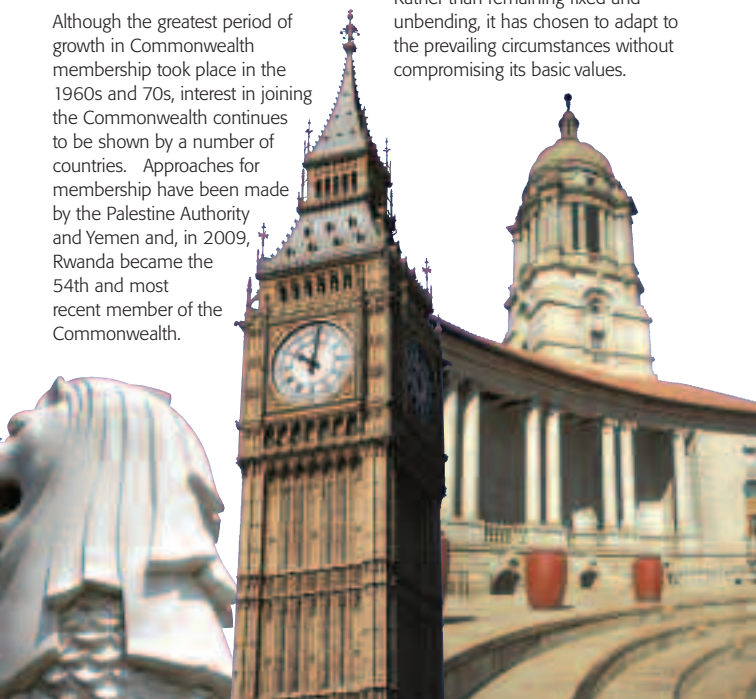
**Outside the Empire** ► Mozambique, a former Portuguese colony, joined the Commonwealth in 1995. It was the first member state not to have associations with the British Empire.

Mozambique was admitted to the Commonwealth as a special case, after holding democratic elections in 1994 and in recognition of its support for the Commonwealth's stand against white-minority rule in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and South Africa. Mozambique also had close links with a number of member states, including its five immediate neighbours.

Although the greatest period of growth in Commonwealth membership took place in the 1960s and 70s, interest in joining the Commonwealth continues to be shown by a number of countries. Approaches for membership have been made by the Palestine Authority and Yemen and, in 2009, Rwanda became the 54th and most recent member of the Commonwealth.

**An enlarged membership?** ● The number of states belonging to the Commonwealth has steadily increased over the last 60 years and, during this time, the criteria for membership have also changed. Once upon a time it was unthinkable that a republic or communist state could become a member of the Commonwealth. The question of membership for small states was also, at one stage, widely debated, particularly in the context of joining the Commonwealth as equal members.

None of these issues, however, has thrown the Commonwealth off course. Rather than remaining fixed and unbending, it has chosen to adapt to the prevailing circumstances without compromising its basic values.



## Around the world

	Capital	Population (2008)	First joined the Commonwealth
<b>Africa</b>			
Botswana	Gaborone	1.9m	1966
Cameroon	Yaoundé	18.9m	1995
The Gambia	Banjul	1.8m	1965
Ghana	Accra	24.0m	1957
Kenya	Nairobi	38.6m	1963
Lesotho	Maseru	2.0m	1966
Malawi	Lilongwe	14.3m	1964
Mauritius	Port Louis	1.3m	1968
Mozambique	Maputo	21.8m	1995
Namibia	Windhoek	2.1m	1990
Nigeria	Abuja	151.5m	1960
Rwanda	Kigali	10.0m	2009
Seychelles	Victoria	85,000*	1976
Sierra Leone	Freetown	6.0m	1961
South Africa	Tshwane	48.9m	1931
Swaziland	Mbabane	1.1m	1968
Uganda	Kampala	31.9m	1962
United Republic of Tanzania	Dar es Salaam	41.5m	1961
Zambia	Lusaka	12.1m	1964
<b>Asia</b>			
Bangladesh	Dhaka	161.3m	1972
Brunei Darussalam	Bandar Seri Begawan	398,000	1984
India	New Delhi	1,186.2m	1947
Malaysia	Kuala Lumpur	27.0m	1957
Maldives	Malé	311,000	1982
Pakistan	Islamabad	167.0m	1947
Singapore	Singapore	4.5m	1965
Sri Lanka	Colombo	19.4m	1948
<b>Caribbean</b>			
Antigua & Barbuda	St John's	84,000	1981
The Bahamas	Nassau	335,000	1973
Barbados	Bridgetown	295,000	1966





	Capital	Population (2008)	First joined the Commonwealth
<b>Caribbean (cont)</b>			
Belize	Belmopan	294,000	1981
Dominica	Roseau	72,000*	1978
Grenada	St George's	106,000	1974
Guyana	Georgetown	736,000	1966
Jamaica	Kingston	2.7m	1962
St Kitts and Nevis	Basseterre	48,400	1983
St Lucia	Castries	167,000	1979
St Vincent and the Grenadines	Kingstown	121,000	1979
Trinidad and Tobago	Port of Spain	1.3m	1962
<b>Europe</b>			
Malta	Valletta	408,000	1964
Republic of Cyprus	Nicosia	864,000	1961
United Kingdom	London	61.0m	
<b>North America</b>			
Canada	Ottawa	33.2m	1931
<b>Pacific</b>			
Australia	Canberra	21.0m	1931
Fiji (suspended 2009)	Suva	844,000	1970
Kiribati	Tarawa	100,000	1979
Nauru	<i>No official capital</i>	10,000	1968
New Zealand	Wellington	4.2m	1931
Papua New Guinea	Port Moresby	6.5m	1975
Samoa	Apia	189,000	1970
Solomon Islands	Honiara	507,000	1978
Tonga	Nuku'alofa	101,000	1970
Tuvalu	Funafuti	10,000*	1978
Vanuatu	Port Vila	232,000	1980

\* Figures for 2006.

Source: Commonwealth Yearbook 2009

## Suspension and expulsion

A Commonwealth member state that fails to uphold the basic principles of democracy, human rights, or the rule of law, risks being partly or fully suspended, or even expelled, from the organisation.

Decisions on this are taken by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG), made up of the Foreign Ministers from nine member states, with the authority to recommend the suspension or expulsion of any state that infringes any of the Commonwealth's fundamental principles.

Action of this kind is a public indication to the rest of the world of the failure of a member state. Suspension means that a country will be prevented from taking part in Commonwealth programmes and meetings, and will no longer be eligible for aid and technical support. However, existing programmes may be allowed to continue in order to limit the effects of suspension on a country's citizens.

However, suspended states are deliberately not isolated. For instance, when Nigeria was suspended from the Commonwealth in 1995, after the military government ordered the execution of nine dissidents, the

Commonwealth continued to work to restore just and fair government, with its voluntary and civic organisations keeping their links. Suspension was lifted in 1999, as the country returned to democracy.

**Fiji** ► In 2009, Fiji faced full suspension from the Commonwealth following the failure of the interim military government to meet the Commonwealth's deadline to restore democracy after taking power in a bloodless coup in 2006.

Although Fiji has lost access to new Commonwealth aid and has been excluded from the Commonwealth Games, contact between the Commonwealth and Fiji will continue in an effort to restore democracy.

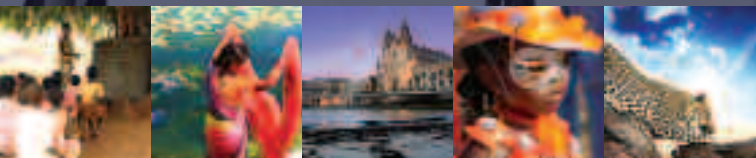
**Withdrawal** ● Sometimes governments choose to withdraw from the Commonwealth. This happened in 1972, when the Government of Pakistan decided to leave the Commonwealth after other member states had agreed to recognise Bangladesh. Pakistan, however, rejoined the association in 1989.

Following suspension from the Commonwealth in 2002, Zimbabwe decided to end its membership in 2003. The communiqué issued by Commonwealth Heads of Government at the end of their meeting in 2009 said that they looked forward to the conditions being created in which Zimbabwe could return to the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 1995. New Zealand Prime Minister James Bolger (left) and Commonwealth Secretary-General Chief Emeka Anyaoku announce the suspension of Nigeria in Queenstown, New Zealand.



Marlborough House, gardens and  
member country flags.



# Organisation

**How does the Commonwealth work? 18**

# Organisation

## How does the Commonwealth work?

Every two years, Commonwealth Heads of Government meet to discuss issues affecting both the Commonwealth itself, and the wider world – now and in the future. Their decisions shape and determine Commonwealth policy and priorities for the next two or three years.

It is the job of the Commonwealth Secretariat – the Commonwealth's administrative centre – to put these decisions and plans into action.

### Deciding on policy

**CHOGM** ● Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings are normally held each time in a different member state. The Meeting in 2009 was held in Port of Spain, in Trinidad and Tobago. The next summit, in 2011, will be in Perth, Australia.

At the Meeting, Commonwealth leaders discuss a wide range of global and Commonwealth issues. The opening ceremony is held in public, but, for the most part, discussions between leaders take place in private, where the atmosphere is less formal. This is designed to enable people to speak more frankly than they might under the public gaze of the media.

Decisions are normally reached by consensus and, at the end of the conference, a series of statements are issued on which all member states have agreed.

CHOGM 2009 Final Press Conference



**The consensus debate** ● Public statements from CHOGM meetings are unusual in that they are almost always based on the unanimous view of those present. Consensus of this kind ensures that the organisation is speaking with one voice and enables the views of small states, like St Lucia and Tonga, to carry as much weight as their much larger counterparts.

Whilst this approach has clear benefits, critics argue that it can result in bland statements that do not challenge the status quo.

**Other meetings** ● CHOGMs are not the only way in which the Commonwealth discusses and develops its policies. Numerous other conferences take place between Commonwealth ministers on more specialised issues, such as education, health, and economic development.

**Grass roots** ● Although the Commonwealth is a major inter-governmental organisation, its priorities and direction do not entirely come from senior politicians in member states. The Commonwealth is also driven by the ideas and vision of its peoples, through the mechanism of civil society.





CHOGM 2009 Family Photo

The Commonwealth fosters, listens to, and draws upon the expertise of a huge number of organisations, such as those represented in the Commonwealth People’s Forum, which takes place before each CHOGM. This could be seen at the 2009 CHOGM meeting in Trinidad and Tobago, where Heads acknowledged a number of civil society concerns over, for example, human rights, climate change, unsustainable fishing and the burgeoning use of small arms.

**The Commonwealth Foundation: strengthening civil society** ► Civil society refers to all those groups that are not part of government or business in which people come together to achieve a particular objective. These groups take many forms, including pressure groups, trade unions, faith groups, NGOs and those representing professions or academic interests.

The strengthening of civil society within the Commonwealth is a major part of the work of the Commonwealth Foundation, an intergovernmental body established in 1965 and based at Marlborough House in London.



The current director of the Commonwealth Foundation is Dr Mark Collins of the UK.

## Putting policy into action

### The Commonwealth Secretariat ●

The Commonwealth Secretariat is rather like the civil service of the Commonwealth. It organises all the major Commonwealth meetings; it gives advice and technical assistance to member states; and develops the programmes to carry out decisions made by the Commonwealth Heads of Government. It is based, along with the Commonwealth Foundation, in London at Marlborough House – a royal residence until 1953.

The Secretariat is headed by the Commonwealth Secretary-General, who has responsibility to ensure that decisions and plans agreed at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings are properly carried out.

The Secretary-General must be impartial, putting the needs and interests of the Commonwealth as a whole before those of individual member states.

The holder of the post is chosen by all the Heads of Government of member states. The current Secretary General is Mr Kamalesh Sharma, from India, who took office in April 2008. His four predecessors have come from Canada, Guyana, Nigeria and New Zealand.

**The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group ●** The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group is made up of a rotating group of Foreign Ministers from nine Commonwealth states. It has the job of investigating and assessing reports of Commonwealth countries failing to uphold any of the basic

# Organisation

principles of Commonwealth membership, such as respect for human rights and the rule of law. See also page 11.

## Upholding Commonwealth

**values** ● Today, there is some debate over the way in which the Commonwealth should respond to oppressive or undemocratic actions by member states.

Many believe that the most effective strategy is for the Commonwealth to work quietly and discreetly behind the scenes, persuading and helping a particular member state address particular difficulties and challenges.

However others argue for a more direct approach and public stand, particularly where human rights are concerned.



HM Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster Abbey at Commonwealth Day Observance, 10 March 2008.

## The Head of the Commonwealth

The present Head of the Commonwealth is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Her position, however, is not inherited, and it is up to the Commonwealth Heads of

Government to decide who, if anyone, will be her successor.

About a third of the Queen's overseas visits are to Commonwealth countries, where she often meets community groups, as well as Heads of Government. She also has regular contact with the Commonwealth Secretary-General, through whom she keeps up to date with current developments.

## Commonwealth Day >

Commonwealth Day is celebrated every year on the second Monday in March. The idea was proposed and discussed by Commonwealth leaders in 1975, and it is marked by a large number of events, including a message from The Queen, designed to promote understanding about the work of the Commonwealth, and highlight areas of concern.

## How is the Commonwealth financed?

Compared to many other international organisations, the Commonwealth has a tiny budget. It works on less than one per cent of the budget of the UK Department for International Development.

The work of the Commonwealth is funded principally through annual subscriptions by member states paid to the Secretariat and Foundation in London. Levels are fixed according to each nation's gross national product. In addition, voluntary contributions are made to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation, the Commonwealth Youth Programme (with offices in Guyana, India, Solomon Islands and Zambia), and the Vancouver-based Commonwealth of Learning.





# Co-operation

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# Co-operation

## Just and honest government

### A democratic promise

The *Singapore and Harare Declarations* in 1971 and 1991 (see page 11) commit the Commonwealth to promoting and supporting democracy in all member states. Democracy is the best guarantee for the maintenance of the rule of law, human rights, and good governance. It doesn't guarantee the absence of serious conflict within or between states, but it does reduce the likelihood of it occurring. Good governance is also an effective remedy against poverty.

**What is democracy?** ► Democracy refers to a system of government where decisions are taken either by people directly, or through representatives whom they have elected.

Government based on representative democracy has a number of further characteristics; it ...

- is based on regular and free elections
- shows a willingness to reflect and respond to public opinion
- allows individuals, civil society organisations, and the media to criticise government policy, and it
  - protects the rights of individuals and minority groups.

Over the past 60 years, the Commonwealth has acted on many occasions to reduce conflict and to support or help restore democracy in member states. Central to the Commonwealth's work is the establishment of dialogue between governments, political parties, and civil society groups. The Commonwealth also offers member states training and guidance on managing elections, helping citizens understand more about the election process, and monitoring the conduct of elections, including the role of the media.

**Conflict resolution** ► In 2002, the President of Guyana asked for the Commonwealth's support in dealing with hostility between the country's two main political parties, which was hampering effective democratic government. For the next four years, the Commonwealth's special envoy, Sir Paul Reeves, worked in Guyana, with groups right across the political spectrum, encouraging dialogue and transparency in government.

After a while, Parliament began to work noticeably better, the Opposition returned, and a new party emerged just before the 2006 election. A media monitoring unit was set up, and the major media outlets agreed not to report statements inciting racial hatred.

The elections were the most peaceful in 40 years, but distrust and insecurity remain of concern. The Commonwealth continues to monitor events in Guyana and provide advice and support.





**Encouraging civil society** ● The Commonwealth believes that civil society organisations are of particular importance in promoting democracy and protecting human rights. There can be a tendency, particularly in times of heightened international security, for governments to limit the scope for debate and dissent. The Commonwealth encourages people's participation in government, actively promoting this through the work of the Commonwealth Foundation (see page 19)

## Human rights

The protection of human rights is a fundamental principle of Commonwealth membership, and the Commonwealth works in a number of ways to develop and uphold human rights standards in member states.

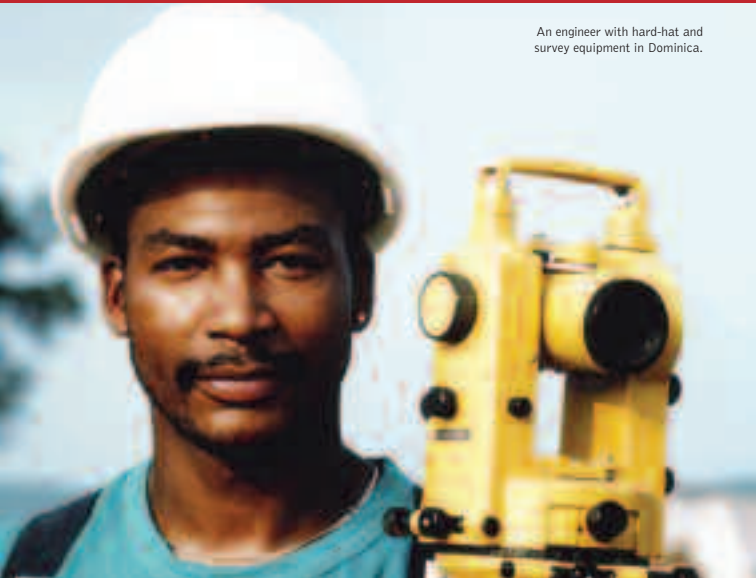
**Best practice** ● A wide network of Commonwealth professional and civil society organisations provide advice and training on human rights. This can take many forms, including helping member states to establish their own human rights commission; training groups like the police, civil servants and judges, on ways of upholding human rights; and encouraging member states to adopt practices reflecting the highest human rights standards.

**Too low** ► New Zealand is one of many countries working to achieve the Commonwealth target of having women occupying at least 30 per cent of the seats on local councils. In response to this, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission ran a series of regional workshops and events designed to increase the national representation of women.

**Dealing with abuse** ● Although a great deal of work is done by the Commonwealth helping member states deal with human rights issues, the Commonwealth nevertheless faces criticism for failing to be more vigilant in dealing with member states who fall seriously below accepted international standards. At the recent CHOGM meeting in Trinidad and Tobago, representatives from a number of member states and civil society organisations urged the Commonwealth to take a more proactive role in dealing with this.

Commonwealth Photographic Awards 2004: Runner Up - Africa. This photograph was taken in a small rural village in southern Botswana.





An engineer with hard-hat and survey equipment in Dominica.

## Closing the gap

### Another way

Amongst its members, the Commonwealth has some of the richest and poorest nations in the world. It has some of the fastest-growing economies, but also some of the world's smallest states.

This diversity equips the Commonwealth with considerable expertise, but its budget for the alleviation of poverty is very small, particularly compared to other specialist organisations.

The Commonwealth, therefore, is not a big player in providing cash for aid or economic development. Instead, as in other aspects of its work, it tends to operate behind the scenes, advising and guiding member nations, and helping them obtain the support they need, often directly from other member nations.

### Programmes and initiatives

The Commonwealth, through its many affiliated organisations, runs a large number of development programmes and initiatives for both the public and private sectors, helping member states improve their efficiency in finance, manufacturing, and farming, and advising on ways of diversifying exports and attracting new investment.

**Fast track** ► At the request of the Kenyan authorities, the Commonwealth Secretariat undertook a study of the organisation of the customs facilities at Nairobi airport and at the docks in Mombasa. Recommendations from this work led to the time taken for goods to pass through customs falling from an average of eight to two days.



Support for agricultural research and training programmes is an important part of the Commonwealth's work, using its professional links and networks to disseminate information and good practice to help farmers more effectively manage the effects of climate change.

The size and extent of the Commonwealth also enables it to create partnerships with other major international organisations and to have a direct impact on world opinion. One of the best examples of this is the pioneering work of the Commonwealth on debt relief for the world's poorest nations.

It was at a meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers in Barbados in 1987, that debt relief was first discussed. Commonwealth Foreign Ministers and civil society groups continued to lobby for the idea during the 1990s and, because of their initiative, more than \$110m of debt has been removed from some of the poorest states, releasing funds for health, education and other improvements.

**New businesses** ● Commonwealth support is particularly directed at the development of small and medium size businesses and helping to improve prospects for younger people.

**Small states** ● Thirty two Commonwealth countries are classified as small states. These are technically defined as having a population of 1.5 million people or less. With limited resources, small states face particular challenges. However, as members of the Commonwealth, they have an equal voice with larger member states, and a major international organisation as a platform for representation.



**Starting off** ► The Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative helps young people start businesses by offering them small loans and business training. The scheme has helped thousands of businesses get off the ground. One business owner, a young woman from Ahmadabad, in Gujarat, in India, said: "I didn't know I could ever do something useful. My family is very proud of me. I have money over every week, after making the repayments. I put some of it back into my laundrette and most of the rest goes to support my children".

**Help and guidance** ► Under present international law, coastal states control the undersea resources up to 200 miles from their shore. However, the United Nations', has recently given countries the opportunity to apply to extend this limit to give themselves rights over a much wider area, if they can show that the national natural landmass extends beyond this limit.

Making a case of this kind requires detailed scientific surveys and analysis, which small nations may find difficult to organise. To date, the Commonwealth has helped 15 countries lodge claims for additional areas of the seabed, giving greater access to mineral deposits and other marine resources, and providing an opportunity for greater long term economic development.

## Health and education

### The need for good health care

People in Commonwealth developing countries often suffer as a result of poor health care. With relatively little investment in public hospitals and medical staff, patients either fail to seek help, or are required to travel long distances for treatment. The problem can be heightened by the loss of trained medical staff overseas. One way in which the Commonwealth has worked to address this has been through the development of a code of practice for the international recruitment of health workers, which aims to protect the most vulnerable states from the unmanaged exodus of skilled staff.

### The challenge of HIV and AIDS ●

More than 65 million people have become infected with HIV since the pandemic began more than 20 years ago; and more than 25 million of these have died. Today, about 60 per cent of the world's HIV cases are amongst Commonwealth citizens, and dealing with this is a major challenge.

Through advice and training obtained from Commonwealth programmes, government officials in a number of Commonwealth countries have been able to negotiate better access to antiretroviral drugs, which slow down the progress of the disease. Today, almost 30 per cent of Commonwealth citizens requiring antiretroviral therapy are receiving it, compared with just two per cent in 2003.

Children receiving dietary supplements from a mobile clinic in Garissa district, Kenya.

**Positive living** ► The Commonwealth Young Ambassadors for Positive Living Programme enables young people living with HIV to share their experiences with others, and create greater awareness. There are now national and regional Programmes in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, particularly targeting young people in the 15-29 age group.

With support from the Secretariat and Foundation, the Commonwealth HIV and AIDS Action Group is working to reduce the stigma and discrimination often associated with people living with HIV and AIDS.

### Crisis in non-communicable diseases ●

Heart disease, diabetes and other non-communicable diseases cause half of all deaths worldwide, often tipping vulnerable families below the poverty line. In 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government called for a worldwide strategic approach to monitor the diseases and address their causes and repercussions.



## The importance of education

Education is one of the most effective long-term ways of raising a nation's standard of living. It is a central priority for the Commonwealth, which works in many ways to enhance the lives of young people, in school, at work, and in higher education, see page 11.

### Millennium Development Goals ●

In September 2000, under the auspices of the UN, leaders of the world's nations committed their countries to a long-term programme of help for the poorest people in the world. Their declaration took the form of eight Millennium Development Goals, to be achieved by a target date of 2015.

One of the Goals is the provision of universal primary education; another is gender equality. With an estimated 30 million of its children not attending primary school, and a disproportionate number of these being girls, the Commonwealth is an active partner in working to achieve these aims.

**Closing the gap ►** Nearly 30 Commonwealth education networks come together under the banner of the Commonwealth Consortium for Education. The Consortium draws together voices from across the Commonwealth to make recommendations to the three-yearly meetings of the Commonwealth Education Ministers.

**A key initiative is the Commonwealth Scholarships and Fellowships Plan which, for fifty years, has enabled students to undertake courses overseas. Many go on to make significant contributions towards their areas of specialism.**

**Meeting the demand ●** Bringing more children into school requires greater funding, more teaching resources, and the creation of an increased number of qualified staff. The Commonwealth works with a large number of groups helping member states to address these issues.

### The Commonwealth of Learning ►

Based in Vancouver, and created by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, the Commonwealth of Learning specialises in open and distance learning through information and communications technology. Its school-focussed projects include teacher development, teacher education resources, and the electronic networking of schools and teacher training colleges.

**Gender equality ●** Equal access to education for boys and girls, and the equal treatment within schools, are important ways of improving the lives of both individuals and entire communities. The Commonwealth works in partnership with a wide range of organisations to help achieve this Millennium Development Goal.



Pupils at Budo Junior school in the district of Wakiso.

# Climate change and sustainable development

## Climate change

Dealing with climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today. All countries are affected; but some are especially vulnerable – particularly small and low-income states.

In 1987, the Commonwealth was the first major inter-governmental organisation to commission a scientific study on the effects of variations in the world's climate. Published two years later, the Holdgate Report warned: "Changes in climate will change the frequency of extreme climatic events such as severe tropical storms, floods, droughts or extremes of heat", and called for a major international initiative to establish global responsibilities for preventing unmanageable rises in the world's temperature.

The same year, at their meeting in Malaysia, Commonwealth Heads of Government issued the *Langkawi Declaration*, in which they undertook to take immediate action to promote sustainable development. They also called for a wider international agreement under the auspices of the United Nations. This came three years later at the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit.

**Small states** ● The wording of the *Langkawi Declaration* also drew attention to the distinct environmental problems faced by some developing countries arising from poverty and population pressures, and by some island and low-lying areas, threatened by rising sea levels.

Today, the Commonwealth takes a leading role in representing small states on the international stage, and provides them with training and guidance to increase their effectiveness in climate change negotiations.

**Under threat** ► The Maldives comprise 1,190 islands and atolls in the Indian Ocean, with a land area of about 115 sq miles (300 sq km). The highest point of the islands reaches no more than eight feet (just over two metres) above sea level, which means that, as sea levels rise, the very existence of Maldives becomes in jeopardy. If nothing is done to combat this, it is believed between 50 and 80 per cent of the islands will disappear in 50 years time.





## Forestry

As well as providing a habitat for millions of species, the world's forests are of both economic and ecological value. Forests provide many valuable products, but also exert a significant influence on climate patterns.

**An international centre** ➤ At the 1989 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, Guyana's President announced the setting aside of one million acres (370,000 hectares) of rain forest for purposes of research as a wilderness preserve and for sustainable use. Today the Iwokrama International Centre provides practical guidance on the best ways of managing and maintaining forests of this kind, along with important data on the ways in which forests regulate climate.

Iwokrama now works under a broad alliance that includes the European Commission, the United Nations, and a wide range of specialist agencies.

## Fisheries

The decline of fish stocks is a problem concerning many countries throughout the world, and is of particular importance to the 47 member states with coastlines.

The impact of over-fishing is greatest on those least responsible for the problem – members of poorer, more vulnerable, communities, who fish primarily to survive. As well as marginalising these groups, the loss of fish stocks means that people may turn to hunting – something generally much less desirable than coastal fishing.

**Commitment to action** ➤ Between 2007 and 2009, three Commonwealth organisations, headed by the Commonwealth Foundation, ran a series of programmes designed to raise awareness about the problem of illegal fishing and the need for greater measures to help sustain existing stocks.

These concerns were put to Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Trinidad and Tobago, with leaders agreeing to undertake urgent action to strengthen marine management, particularly in the waters of more vulnerable member states.

## Mining

Mining and energy production are important industries for any country, but not all governments have the knowledge of how to develop these sectors in the long term national interest. However, Commonwealth states such as Australia, Botswana, and South Africa have considerable experience in this kind of resource management and, with help from the Commonwealth, are able to share this expertise with other member nations.

Since the discovery of significant oil stocks in Belize in 2005, the Commonwealth has been helping the Government develop a petroleum tax and royalty structure designed to benefit the management and investment of the new oil revenues.

## Culture and sport

The promotion of culture and sport are not obvious ways in which to address some of the world's most pressing issues. But the Commonwealth believes that cultural expression, creativity, and competition can be a strong force for human development and social justice.

### The cultural connection

Culture – in the sense of arts and cultural expression – may be harnessed to benefit communities in many ways.

Creative industries can make a significant contribution to both local and national economies. With relatively low start-up costs, they may also offer an effective means of introducing greater economic diversity.

**A legal framework** ► The Commonwealth supports the Pacific Islands Forum in its work to develop laws and guidelines designed to help producers of traditional arts and crafts protect their intellectual property from unwanted commercial exploitation.

Culture may also be used as an instrument of social or political change. The visual and performing arts can be particularly effective (especially in hard-to-reach communities) in conveying messages about legal and political rights, or health and environmental concerns.

Promoting and valuing culture is also central to developing respect and understanding between people with different identities. A failure to take culture seriously may result in missed

opportunities, the marginalisation of groups or communities, and the destruction of habitats and livelihoods.

### Taking culture seriously

The promotion of culture is central to the work of the Commonwealth Foundation, see page 19. It runs a number of prizes and programmes helping Commonwealth artists, writers, musicians and filmmakers to make a living from their work. Amongst the best-known of these is the Commonwealth Writers' Prize, established in 1987 to take the best of Commonwealth writing in English to a wider audience.

Culture also plays an important part in the Foundation's other work on governance, democracy and human development, through the use of music, drama, and street theatre to convey key ideas about political rights or health concerns, to both mass and hard-to-reach audiences.



Musicians performing at a Commonwealth Day celebration in the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) Africa Regional Centre in Lusaka, Zambia.





Medal Winners at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, UK.



## Sport

The Commonwealth Games are arguably one of the most widely-known Commonwealth activities. The idea was first raised in 1891 by the Rev Astley Cooper, who suggested the competition “as a means of increasing the goodwill and good understanding of the Empire.”

The first Games, however, were not held until 1930, after a proposal by Canadian, Bobby Robinson. Known initially as the British Empire Games, the first competition took place in the Canadian city of Hamilton, with \$30,000 being provided by the city to help cover the travel costs of the participating nations.

Since then, the Games have been held every four years, except in 1942 and 1946 as a result of the Second World War, and today they are known simply as the Commonwealth Games.

For many years, the programme consisted of only single sports competitions, such as athletics, boxing and swimming. The 1998 Games in Kuala Lumpur were the first to include team sports.

A further development took place in 2000, with the introduction of the

Commonwealth Youth Games, open to athletes aged 18 and under. The first competition was held in Edinburgh and the next, in 2011, will be on the Isle of Man.

In 2002, Manchester hosted the Games and, for the first time, at any multi-sport world event, a number of events were held for athletes with a disability.

New Delhi won the right to hold the Games in 2010 and Glasgow in 2014. In the first Commonwealth Games, 400 competitors took part in 59 events in six sports. Today there are 17 sports; and the Games village in Delhi has the capacity to welcome 8,500 competitors and officials.

**The ties of sport** • Although the Commonwealth Games is the sporting event that unites all Commonwealth countries, other sports, such as cricket, football, rugby, hockey, and badminton, are also played widely throughout the Commonwealth, serving to bring people and nations together. International Test cricket is played primarily between Commonwealth member states.

## Opportunities

Although the Commonwealth is rightly perceived as a major international organisation, its structure is built around a wide array of civil society groups, which play a vital part in informing and shaping Commonwealth policy. However, the Commonwealth also encourages involvement from individuals through consultation, competitions and exchanges. A number of these opportunities are listed below.

### The Commonwealth People's Forum

For more than ten years, the Commonwealth Foundation has provided an opportunity, at each CHOGM venue, for individuals as well as civil society groups, to meet and discuss issues of current concern. A parallel event for 15-29 year-olds is also held alongside the main Forum. Details of the most recent meetings in Trinidad and Tobago are available from the Foundation's website, [www.commonwealthfoundation.com](http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com).

### Youth programmes

A great deal of the Commonwealth's work relates to the present and future needs of younger people. The Royal Commonwealth Society organises a number of activities specifically for young people, and some of these are listed below. More details can be found on the Society's website, [www.thercs.org](http://www.thercs.org)

**Youth Summits** ● An opportunity for young people to come together and debate important issues of the day.

**Youth leadership** ● Nkabom, meaning 'coming together', is a ten-day programme open to about thirty 18-26 year-olds, from all parts of the Commonwealth. Held every two years, in a different Commonwealth location, the Programme aims to help young people engage more effectively with their own and the international community, and to give them skills and confidence to act as effective agents of change.

**Competitions and awards** ● Each year the Royal Commonwealth Society holds competitions and awards for essay writing, photography and film-making. They are open to anyone under the age of 30, with prizes that include cash, equipment and further guidance.

**Exchange Schemes** ● The Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council can provide support, guidance and funding for youth exchanges between the UK and other Commonwealth countries. Details of planning and organising this are available from the Council's website, [www.cyec.org.uk](http://www.cyec.org.uk).

Delegates at the sixth Commonwealth Youth Forum, Entebbe, Uganda, November 2007.



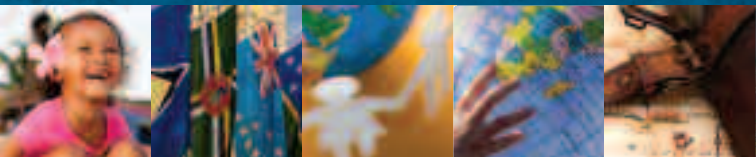
# Contacts

Listed below are some of the many organisations associated with the Commonwealth.

- A** Association of Commonwealth Archivists and Records Managers [www.acarm.org](http://www.acarm.org)  
Commonwealth Association of Architects [www.comarchitect.org](http://www.comarchitect.org)  
Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth [www.commagshow.org](http://www.commagshow.org)
- B** Commonwealth Broadcasting Association [www.cba.org.uk/index.php](http://www.cba.org.uk/index.php)  
Commonwealth Business Council [www.cbcglobal.org](http://www.cbcglobal.org)
- C** Commonwealth Countries League [www.cd-int.org](http://www.cd-int.org)  
Royal Commonwealth Society [www.thercs.org](http://www.thercs.org)  
The Commonwealth Association [www.comassoc.org](http://www.comassoc.org)
- D** Commonwealth Dental Association [www.cdauk.com](http://www.cdauk.com)
- E** Commonwealth Consortium for Education [www.commonwealtheducation.org](http://www.commonwealtheducation.org)  
Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management [www.cceam.org](http://www.cceam.org)  
Commonwealth Education Trust [www.cet1886.org](http://www.cet1886.org)  
Commonwealth Engineers Council [www.ice.org.uk](http://www.ice.org.uk)  
Council for Education in the Commonwealth [www.cecomm.org.uk/home](http://www.cecomm.org.uk/home)
- F** Commonwealth Forestry Association [www.cfa-international.org](http://www.cfa-international.org)  
Commonwealth Foundation [www.commonwealthfoundation.com](http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com)  
Friends of the Commonwealth [www.commonwealthfriends.org](http://www.commonwealthfriends.org)
- G** Commonwealth Games Federation [www.thecgf.com](http://www.thecgf.com)  
Commonwealth Geographical Bureau [www.commonwealthgeography.org](http://www.commonwealthgeography.org)
- H** Commonwealth Association for Health and Disabilities [supramaniam@lineone.net](mailto:supramaniam@lineone.net)  
Commonwealth HIV and AIDs Action Group (Para55) [www.para55.org](http://www.para55.org)  
Commonwealth Human Ecology Council [www.chechq.org](http://www.chechq.org)  
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative [www.humanrightsinitiative.org](http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org)
- J** Commonwealth Journalists Association [www.commonwealthjournalists.com](http://www.commonwealthjournalists.com)  
Commonwealth Judicial Education Institute [www.cjei.org](http://www.cjei.org)
- L** Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies [www.aclals.ulg.ac.be/](http://www.aclals.ulg.ac.be/)  
Commonwealth Association of Law Reform Agencies [www.calras.org](http://www.calras.org)  
Commonwealth Lawyers Association [www.commonwealthlawyers.com](http://www.commonwealthlawyers.com)  
Commonwealth of Learning [www.col.org](http://www.col.org)  
Commonwealth Legal Education Association [www.cleaonline.org](http://www.cleaonline.org)  
Commonwealth Local Government Forum [www.dlgf.org.uk](http://www.dlgf.org.uk)
- M** Commonwealth Association of Museums [www.maltwood.uvic.ca/cam](http://www.maltwood.uvic.ca/cam)  
Commonwealth Magistrates and Judges Association [www.cmja.org](http://www.cmja.org)  
Commonwealth Medical Association [www.commonwealthmedics.org](http://www.commonwealthmedics.org)  
Conference of Commonwealth Meteorologists [www.commonwealthmet.org](http://www.commonwealthmet.org)
- N** Commonwealth Nurses Federation [www.commonwealthnurses.org](http://www.commonwealthnurses.org)
- P** Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management [www.capam.org](http://www.capam.org)  
Commonwealth Association of Paediatric Gastroenterology and Nutrition [www.capgan.org](http://www.capgan.org)  
Commonwealth Association of Planners [www.commonwealth-planners.org](http://www.commonwealth-planners.org)  
Commonwealth Parliamentary Association [www.cpahq.org](http://www.cpahq.org)  
Commonwealth Pharmacists Association [www.commonwealthpharmacy.org](http://www.commonwealthpharmacy.org)
- R** Royal Overseas League [www.rosl.org.uk](http://www.rosl.org.uk)
- S** Commonwealth Secretariat [www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)  
Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators [www.castme.org](http://www.castme.org)  
Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work [www.sasw.org.sg/cosw](http://www.sasw.org.sg/cosw)  
Commonwealth Association of Surveying and Land Economy [www.casle.org](http://www.casle.org)  
Commonwealth Scholarships Commission [www.cscuk.org.uk](http://www.cscuk.org.uk)  
Institute of Commonwealth Studies [www.commonwealth.sas.ac.uk](http://www.commonwealth.sas.ac.uk)  
Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League [www.commonwealthveterans.org.uk](http://www.commonwealthveterans.org.uk)
- T** Commonwealth Association of Tax Administrators [www.catatax.org](http://www.catatax.org)  
Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation [www.cto.int](http://www.cto.int)  
Commonwealth Trade Union Group [www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-17116-f0.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-17116-f0.cfm)  
League for the Exchange of Commonwealth Teachers [www.lect.org.uk/home.aspx](http://www.lect.org.uk/home.aspx)
- U** Association of Commonwealth Universities [www.acu.ac.uk](http://www.acu.ac.uk)
- W** Commonwealth War Graves Commission [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)  
Commonwealth Women's Network [www.commonwealthwomen.net](http://www.commonwealthwomen.net)
- Y** Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council [www.cyec.org.uk](http://www.cyec.org.uk)



Commonwealth  
Foundation



# COMMONGROUND

**CommonGround** *A practical guide to the Commonwealth is written for anyone who wants to know more about the history and work of the Commonwealth today.*

Written in a simple and accessible style, with illustrated case studies and information panels, **CommonGround** outlines changes from the former British Empire to the modern Commonwealth of today, including information on:

- how the Commonwealth was created
- its members
- aims and purposes
- how it reaches decisions
- the actions that it takes, and
- the opportunities that it provides ...

... with full details of where to get further help and information

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