



Annual Report

2021–2022



‘Parliaments and governments should recognise the role that civil society plays in the implementation of the Commonwealth’s fundamental values and should strive for a constructive relationship with civil society to ensure that there is broader opportunity for lawful participation in the democratic process.’

Principle X, Commonwealth Principles on the Three Branches of Government
(Latimer House Principles, 2004)

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Cover photo: Participants at the 2018 Commonwealth People's Forum

The Commonwealth Foundation is mandated by its Member States to advance the interests of Commonwealth civil society. Upholding a firm commitment to the principles and ideals of the Commonwealth, the Foundation seeks to nurture the growth of vibrant and free societies: championing the active and constructive participation of people in all aspects of governance.

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Welcome from the Chair



As the Chair of the Board of Governors of the Commonwealth Foundation I am pleased to welcome this comprehensive annual report, a document that does much to bring to life the important work that the Foundation is doing on behalf of the people of the Commonwealth.

This report marks my first full year in office, and I have appreciated the opportunity afforded me over the past year to learn more about the Foundation and its place in our Commonwealth family. It is very clear to me that the existence of the Foundation—and the ongoing support it receives from Member States—affirms members' shared commitment to a vision of the Commonwealth that is much more than a sum of its parts. By establishing an intergovernmental body with a specific mandate to support and advance the interests of Commonwealth civil society, Member States accept that the people they serve are entitled to a voice. They accept that the business of governance is necessarily participatory; that a strong and flourishing civic space is evidence of a healthy and prosperous society.

It has been a pleasure to accompany the Foundation team over the past year and I must commend the hard work and dedication to the Commonwealth that is so abundantly evident throughout this report. The team has benefitted from wise and dynamic leadership and in that I express my appreciation of the Director-General, Dr Anne Gallagher, and Deputy Director-General, Mr Shem Ochola.

In late 2021 we welcomed H.E. Dr Farahanaz Faizal, High Commissioner of the Maldives, as the new Chair of the Executive Committee. My sincere thanks to High Commissioner Faizal for taking up this important responsibility and to her predecessor, H.E. Mr Milton Inniss, who continues as Chair of the Foundation's Grants Committee. A unique feature of our governance structure is of course the Civil Society Advisory Governors, whose presence serves as an important reminder of those the Foundation has been established to serve. I thank our current governors: Goretti Kyomuhendo (Africa); Kalpana Kannabiran (Asia); Marlene Attzs (Caribbean);

Celia Wade-Brown (Pacific); and Ajay Chhabra (Europe) for their dedication and commitment.

Almost every Commonwealth Member State is a member of the Foundation and important work is being undertaken to achieve universal membership as soon as possible. In that regard I am delighted to welcome Saint Kitts and Nevis, which joined the Foundation in June 2021. Universal membership sends an unambiguous signal that all Commonwealth countries value the unique character of the Commonwealth, including its support for genuinely participatory governance. I ask fellow governors to do all they can to encourage those few countries that are not yet members to join the Foundation family.

I close by affirming the central role of our Member States in the Foundation's present and future success. It was a great pleasure for me to meet so many governors at the High Commissioners' Festive Poetry Evening; an event that served as a strong reminder to us all that the Foundation belongs to its members. It is our responsibility, individually and collectively, to ensure it succeeds. This requires us to provide the Foundation all necessary guidance, resources and support. The people of the Commonwealth deserve nothing less.

Dato' Sudha Devi K.R. Vasudevan
Chair

Chair of the Executive Committee



H.E. Dr Farahanaz Faizal
High Commissioner
of the Maldives

Chair of the Grants Committee



H.E. Mr Milton Inniss
High Commissioner
of Barbados

Civil Society Advisory Governors



Goretti Kyomuhendo
Africa



Kalpana Kannabiran
Asia



Marlene Attzs
Caribbean



Celia Wade-Brown
Pacific



Ajay Chhabra
Europe

'It is very clear to me that the existence of the Foundation—and the ongoing support it receives from Member States—affirms members' shared commitment to a vision of the Commonwealth that is much more than a sum of its parts.'



Introduction from the Director-General



‘Over the past year we have sought to use our platform to ask the questions that matter to the lives and wellbeing of the people of the Commonwealth—and to seek answers from the activists, thinkers and policy makers who are at the forefront of change.’

This report is being released at the time of turbulence and hardship. Too many people—too many citizens of the Commonwealth—are enduring lives marked by uncertainty, instability and want. Democracy: one of the core values of our Commonwealth, is under real threat.

In such times, our mission seems more relevant than ever. The Foundation was established by its Member States to support the voices of Commonwealth civil society: to bring those voices into policy formation and decision-making. Over the past year we have sought to use our platform to ask the questions that matter to the lives and wellbeing of the people of the Commonwealth—and to seek answers from the activists, thinkers and policy makers who are at the forefront of change. Why, for example, does it matter to support a free and independent press? What does solidarity and justice mean in practice when it comes to difficult issues such as vaccine equity and the uneven impacts of climate change? Perhaps most importantly: why is a vibrant and flourishing civil society the very best guarantee of democracy and democratic values?

Our ambitious new strategic plan takes the principles and ideals of the Commonwealth Charter as our inspiration and guide, setting a very clear course for the Foundation. We are focusing attention and resources on three big issues: health, environment and climate change, and freedom of expression. We are continuing to prioritise gender and equality in everything we do. We are championing the young people of the Commonwealth and the concerns of the Commonwealth's small and vulnerable states. We are working to support the entire Commonwealth family: collaborating with the Secretariat and Member States to help deliver the broader Commonwealth agenda.

This report documents the first exciting year of the new strategic plan and confirms that there is much to be proud of. We have fulfilled our commitment to ensure that a greater proportion of Foundation

resources flow directly to Commonwealth civil society through an expanded grants programme. We have taken up the challenge of reaching out to civil society organisations in small and vulnerable states; identifying ways in which the Foundation can help them survive and thrive. We have expanded the reach of our creative programme: exceeding previous records for entries into the Commonwealth Short Story Prize and submissions to our online literary magazine. The Foundation's *Critical Conversations* event series is now reaching audiences in the hundreds of thousands: bringing citizens from all corners of the Commonwealth together to debate issues that matter most to them. These achievements have been made possible by the hard work of our staff: a dedicated and professional team that make my job a pleasure and the Foundation a happy and healthy place to work.

Amongst a myriad of non-programmatic highlights, I must include the entry of Saint Kitts and Nevis to the Foundation. Just a small handful of Commonwealth Member States remain outside our family, and I am confident that with the full support of our governors we will work towards universal membership within the next few years. Another highlight for me was the High Commissioners' Festive Poetry Evening (see page 33). This event was memorable on so many levels: not just for the care that High Commissioners (and one distinguished Honorary Consul) put into their selection and recital, but also for the atmosphere of warmth and friendship that so many present remarked on.

The Foundation's Member States are its custodians: the stewards of its future. I take this opportunity to thank our governors for the role they have played—and will continue to play—in ensuring the continued success of their organisation. In this regard special mention must be made of the Chair of the Board of Governors, Ambassador Sudha Devi Vasudevan; Chair of the Executive Committee, H.E. Dr Farahanaz Faizal; and Chair of the Foundation's Grants Committee,

H.E. Mr Milton Inniss. Your close presence, wise guidance and confidence in our ability to deliver during these uncertain times has been much needed and deeply appreciated.

Dr Anne T. Gallagher AO
Director-General

Our story

The Commonwealth Foundation was established by Heads of Government in 1965, reflecting the commitment of Member States to ensuring that the Commonwealth would be as much an association of peoples as of governments.

Occupying one of the three intergovernmental pillars of the Commonwealth, the Foundation is a unique interlocutor between government and civil society. Our Member States guide the Foundation's strategic direction and fund our programmes through assessed contributions. It is to our Member States, first and foremost, that we are accountable.

We are explicitly mandated to advance the interests of civil society, placing the Foundation firmly in the service of the 2.5 billion members of the Commonwealth family. We support the voice of civil society to engage in all aspects of governance to shape policies and practices.

'We recognise the important role that civil society plays in our communities and countries as partners in promoting and supporting Commonwealth values and principles, including the freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and in achieving development goals.'

The Commonwealth Charter, agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government, 2012

Commonwealth Charter

The Foundation's obligations, to our Member States and to the people of the Commonwealth, are complementary and mutually reinforcing. This is demonstrated, most clearly, in the [Commonwealth Charter](#). In affirming the commitment of all Commonwealth countries to the development of free and democratic societies, it explicitly acknowledges the role of civil society 'as partners in promoting and supporting Commonwealth values and principles.'

The values and principles enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter—including justice, equality and inclusion—provide a focus and framework for everything we do.



Marlborough House in London is the international headquarters of the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation

Our Commonwealth

Our governance, our strength

Our governors are critical to the success of the Foundation's mission, providing much-valued guidance through their participation in the Foundation's governance bodies: Board of Governors, Executive Committee and Grants Committee.

Over the past year, communication between the Foundation and Member States has been strengthened. We have especially appreciated the support of High Commissioners in helping us source high-level speakers for events. The Grants Committee has settled into its new enhanced role; establishing a revised meeting schedule with a new set of procedures for review and approval of grant proposals.

Membership of the Foundation is open to all Commonwealth States: their support is essential to our mission and their financial contributions are what enable us to do our work. We are proud that most Commonwealth countries (48) are part of the Foundation family and are working actively towards universal membership. Currently, only one country from Asia (Singapore), one country from Africa (The Gambia) and four countries from the Pacific region (Fiji, Nauru, Samoa, and Tuvalu) remain outside the Foundation. Over the past year, the Director-General has met, or sought to meet with, representatives of these countries to discuss membership. The Chair of the Board of Governors has also supported these efforts. In relation to several countries, these contacts have been followed up with a combination of further meetings and the provision of requested information.

Working with the Commonwealth Secretariat

The identity of the Commonwealth as an organisation of peoples, as well as of States, finds natural resonance in the partnership between the Foundation and the Secretariat.

That relationship is crucial to the successful delivery of our strategic plan, which focuses heavily on the Foundation's intergovernmental character, and which places the principles and ideals of the Commonwealth Charter at the centre of its work.

The Foundation has continued to strengthen its working relationship with the Secretariat over the past year, finding natural synergies across our thematic areas, especially health and freedom of expression. The Director-General was appointed to the Standing Group of Experts advising the Expert

Working Group on the *Commonwealth principles on freedom of expression and the role of the media in good governance*, supporting the vital work of standard-setting in this area.

Relationships were strengthened further through collaboration on events such as the Diplomats Induction Programme, as well as the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and the associated forums. Other examples include: (i) practical engagement with the Secretariat in the area of electoral support; and (ii) joint advocacy with the Secretariat in advancing resilient health systems in the Commonwealth countries. The Foundation did seek, for the first time, to involve Secretariat colleagues in review and consideration of grant proposals. It is hoped that those efforts will bear fruit next year.

Working with—and for—the wider Commonwealth

Our Commonwealth identity is a guiding compass throughout the strategic plan, calling for the Foundation to cultivate and sustain strong relationships across the wider Commonwealth system: most especially with those organisations whose areas of work align with our own.

Over the past year the Foundation has worked to solidify these relationships including through: (i) involving Commonwealth Accredited Organisations (AOs) in planning for our *Critical Conversations* and the Commonwealth People's

Forum; (ii) delivering regular briefings on our work to individual AOs as well as to joint meetings convened by AOs; (iii) providing speakers and technical support to events hosted by AOs; and (iv) sponsoring the attendance of AO delegates at the Commonwealth People's Forum.

In March 2022, the Director-General joined the editorial board of the Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs, ahead of the Foundation editing a special edition of the Journal focusing on the future of the Commonwealth.



Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary-General, speaking at the 2022 Commonwealth Diplomats Induction Programme

Our approach

In June 2021, the Foundation's Board of Governors approved a new [five-year strategic plan](#). The strategic plan affirms the Foundation's vision of a Commonwealth of **equal, just** and **inclusive** societies. It articulates our mission as contributing to that vision by:

Supporting the active and constructive participation of Commonwealth citizens in all aspects of their governance

Nurturing the growth of vibrant and free civil societies in all Commonwealth countries

Advancing the principles and ideals of the Commonwealth

Our areas of work

Our work is organised around three main areas of focus and three cross-cutting themes that reflect the broader Commonwealth and international development agenda, as well as the needs and aspirations of Commonwealth civil society.

Areas of focus



Health



Environment and climate change



Freedom of expression

Cross-cutting themes



Gender equality



Small and vulnerable states



Young people

What we do

Our work is delivered through three substantive programmes: **Commonwealth Civil Society**, **Creative Commonwealth** and **People of the Commonwealth**. A fourth programme, **Knowledge, Learning and Communications**, oversees our communications and outreach, as well as our monitoring, evaluation and learning.

Our grant-making

Grants are the means by which the Foundation delivers the majority of its programme work. This year we set aside £1.2 million (a 20% increase on last year's budget) for this partner-led approach for projects that seek to advance Commonwealth ideals and principles. We have three grants streams:

Commonwealth Civil Society Grants – Open Call

The competitive open grants call offers support to the work of Commonwealth civil society around our core themes within the broad framework of 'participatory governance'. It is the largest of the Foundation's grant streams, awarding civil society organisations from Member States up to £60,000 over a period of up to 2 years.

Capacity Strengthening Grants

This new stream combines grant-making and tailored assistance to strengthen civil society organisations in the Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean countries, recognising our commitment to enabling civil society in small and vulnerable states to secure spaces for inclusive, active and constructive engagement in governance.

Creative Grants

Another new stream of support, affirming the role that creative expression can play in contributing to the development of societies and promoting positive change. This flexible facility has a special focus on amplifying the voices of storytellers and artists within small and vulnerable states who are using their craft to contribute to change.

Our cultural initiatives

Our cultural work is a unique feature of the Foundation. We work to inspire and connect storytellers and artists across all regions of the Commonwealth, bringing personal stories to a global audience with a specific purpose of contributing to vibrant and free civil societies through our Creative Grants and a range of platforms. At the heart of this work is the Commonwealth Short Story Prize: the world's most global literary award.

Our advocacy and engagement

Through multiple platforms, including the *Critical Conversations* series, the Commonwealth People's Forum and engagement in Commonwealth policy spaces, we aim to bring Commonwealth citizens and their views into the centre of discussion and decision-making about critical issues that affect the lives of individuals and communities.



Grant partners participating in a learning exchange



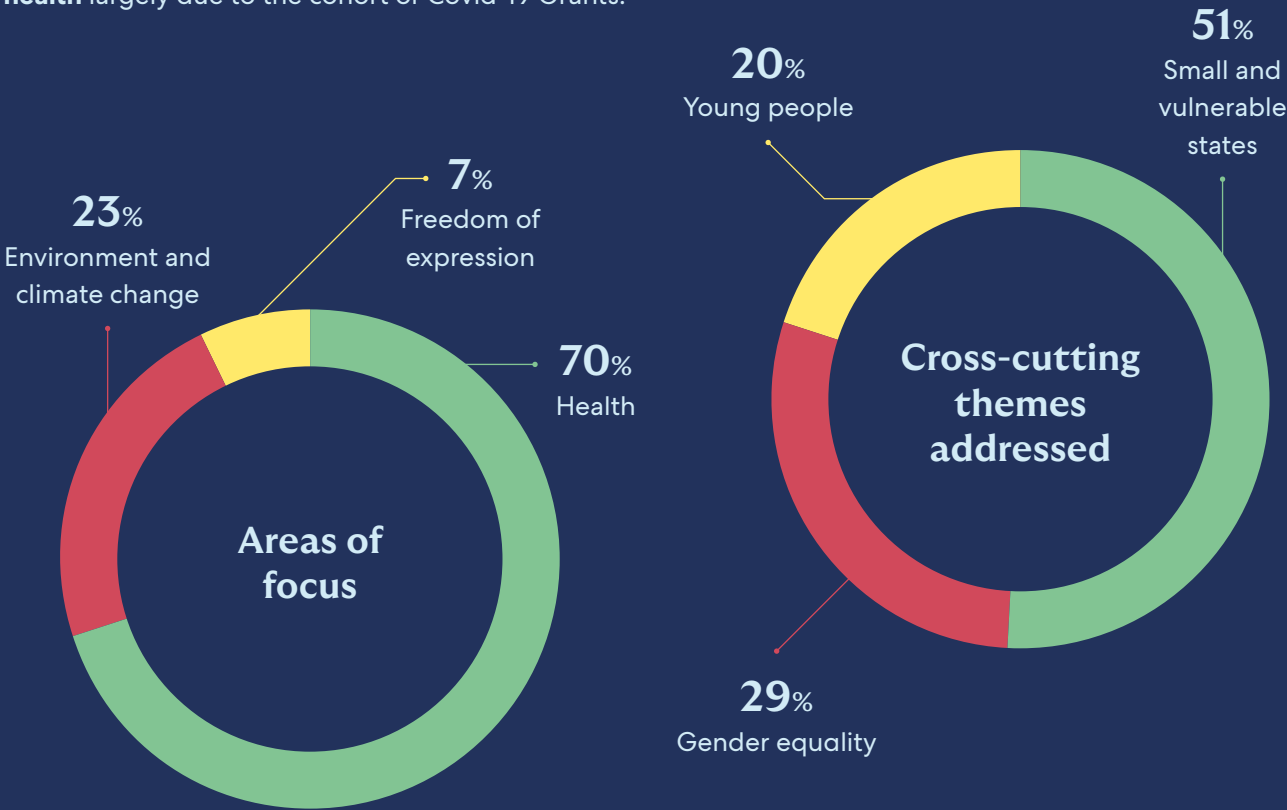
Year at a glance

The Foundation’s achievements over the past year are documented throughout this report. The data below provides an overview of the nature and scope of our work, specifically: where we have been working; who we have been engaging with; and how we have addressed our thematic areas of focus over the reporting period.

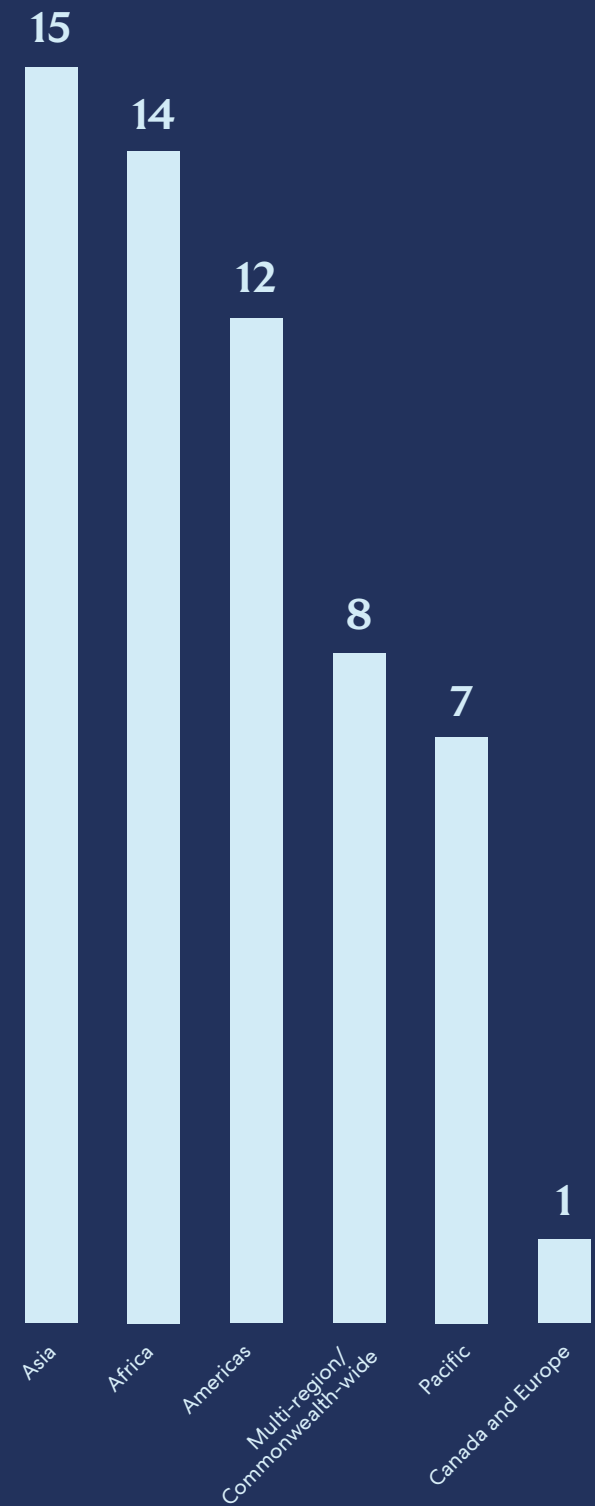
Data was gathered from ongoing and recently completed activity across all programmes, comprising: *Critical Conversations*, Covid-19 Grants, Open Call Grants, Commonwealth Short Story Prize, Caribbean Voices Film Projects and Creative Grants.

We have addressed our three areas of focus throughout the year. We note an emphasis on **health** largely due to the cohort of Covid-19 Grants.

We have demonstrated our commitment to our cross-cutting themes with a focus on **small and vulnerable states**, particularly through our restructured grants streams, several of our **Critical Conversations** events and targeted outreach for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize.

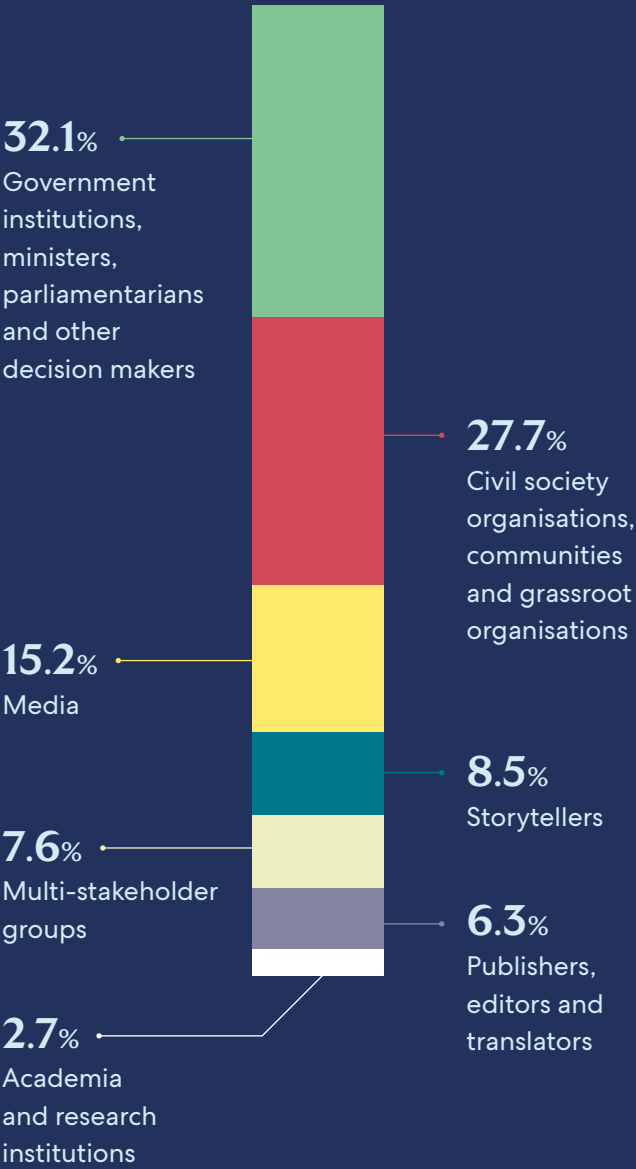


Activity by region



Social actors are the individuals, groups, organisations and institutions that we aim to reach and influence. Our work this year has targeted seven main social actor groups, most notably: (i) government institutions, ministers, parliamentarians and other decision makers; and (ii) civil society organisations.

Social actors targeted



Programme overview from the Deputy Director-General



This report reflects on the first year of the Foundation's new strategic plan which ushered in a refreshed vision, mission, and theory of change. The work undertaken has been directed towards establishing the structures necessary to ensure its successful implementation; securing real results to validate the new strategy; and providing the insights to enable any necessary course correction.

In operationalising our strategic plan, we reoriented our work around the themes agreed by our governors—health, environment and climate change, and freedom of expression—to reflect the broader Commonwealth and international development agenda with consideration for the needs and aspirations of Commonwealth civil society.

From a programmatic perspective, this first year of the strategic plan has been both busy and successful. We achieved our goal of commencing implementation quickly so that we could report real progress. We have established and strengthened partnerships including our collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, particularly in the areas of health, human rights and the rule of law. Future engagement in the area of electoral support is being considered and we very much welcomed the opportunity to partner with the Secretariat in fielding a team to The Gambia to identify what value the Foundation could add to this important aspect of the Commonwealth's work.

Our growing engagement with Commonwealth civil society across multiple fronts is evidenced in the steadily increasing number of submissions to the Commonwealth Short Story Prize and our online magazine; a similar growth in the number of grant applications; and an exponential rise in participation in events and social media traffic. The Foundation exists to serve Commonwealth civil society and we see the strength of this connection as a valuable indicator of our success and our continued relevance.

'The Foundation understands the importance of tracking what we are doing: identifying the impact we are having and the change we are contributing to.'

The Foundation understands the importance of tracking what we are doing: identifying the impact we are having and the change we are contributing to. Our 'pathway to change' at the centre of the strategic plan sets out a roadmap of how our work is expected (or hoped) to lead to certain outcomes. During the reporting period we took the next step: developing a streamlined performance measurement framework that is anchored in clear progress markers. More information on our work in this area can be found on page 42.

Looking ahead, we are determined to continue our commitment to learning—and to adapting accordingly. Our new strategic plan has proved its worth over the past year, but it is a living document that must grow and develop with us as we seek to do even better in promoting and supporting civil society in line with Commonwealth values and principles.

Shem Ochola
Deputy Director-General

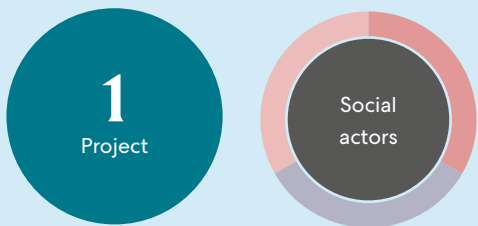
'Our new strategic plan has proved its worth over the past year, but it is a living document that must grow and develop with us as we seek to do even better in promoting and supporting civil society in line with Commonwealth values and principles.'



Project support for Commonwealth civil society

Our support to Commonwealth civil society through grant-funded projects spans 24 countries over the reporting year. A full list of funded projects, including country locations, is provided as an annex to this report.

Canada and Europe



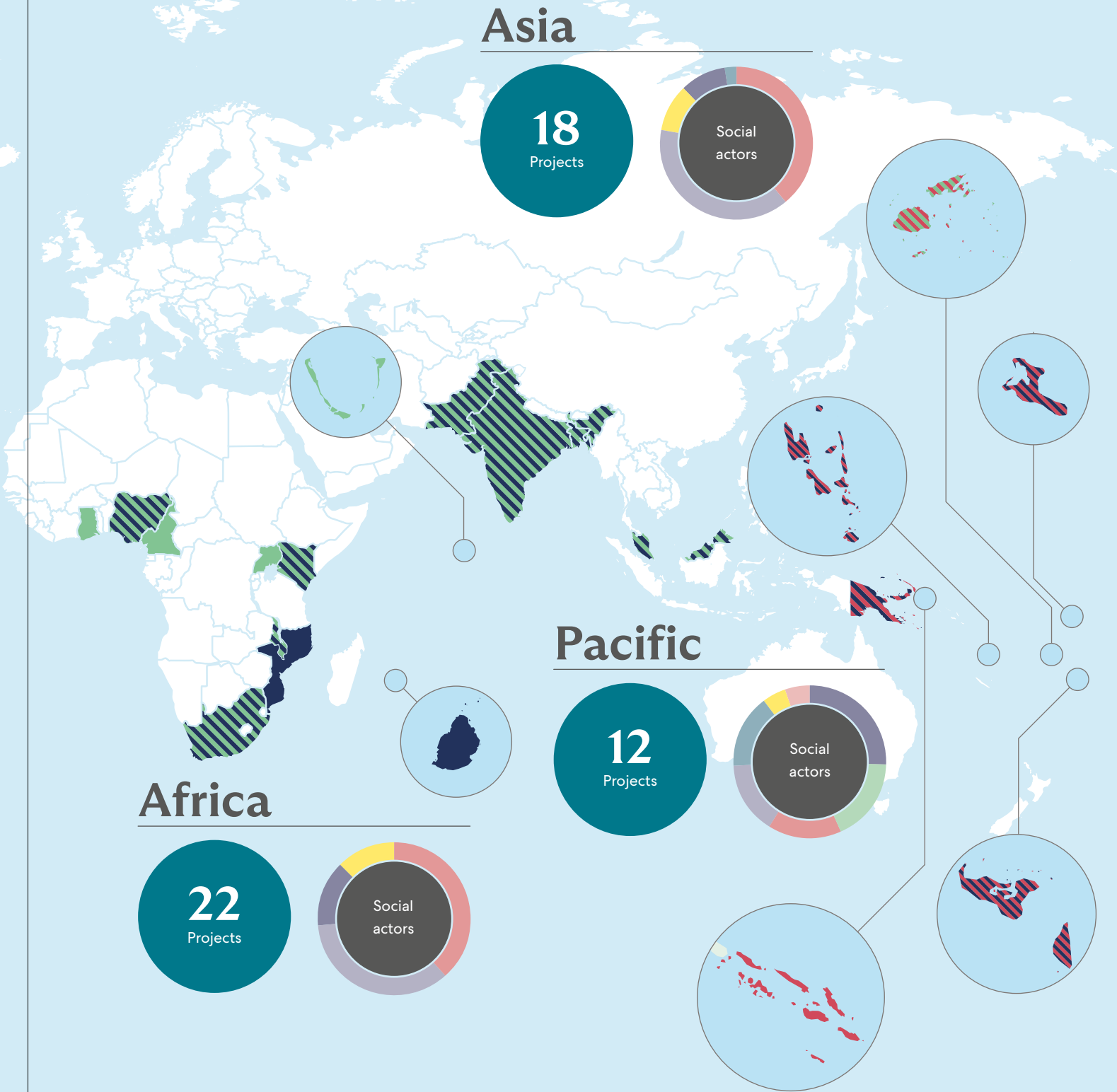
Americas



List of social actors:

- Government institutions, ministers, parliamentarians and other decision makers
- Civil society organisations, communities and grassroots organisations
- Multi-stakeholder groups
- Publishers, editors and translators
- Storytellers
- Media
- Academia and research institutions

- Covid-19 Grants
- Ongoing Open Call Grants
- Creative Grants



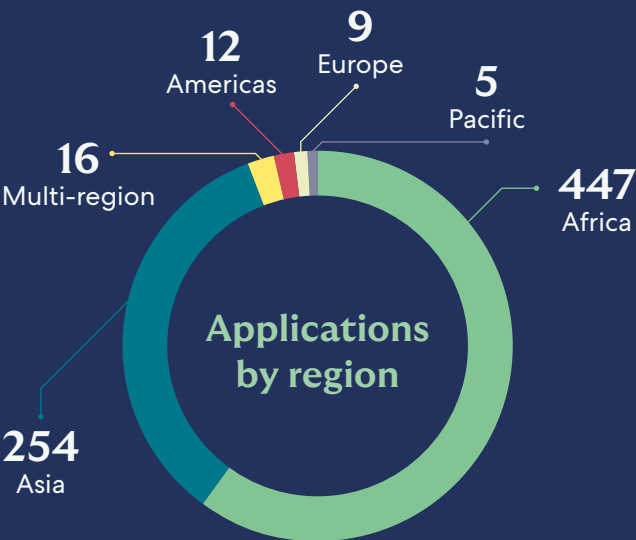


Commonwealth Civil Society Grants – Open Call

At a glance: 2021–2022:

743
applications received

18
projects selected for approval
by the Grants Committee



The selection process for this largest of the Foundation’s three grants streams was reviewed and revised to improve accessibility, resulting in 80% of applications this year coming from smaller organisations. The Foundation will continue this process of review and refinement as part of our commitment to widening access and further empowering our partner organisations while ensuring accountability of funds.

At the time of writing, a list of projects for approval by the Grants Committee was being finalised. The Foundation is confident that the list will amply meet our goals of expanding the reach of the open call to countries that have previously been underrepresented in this aspect of our work and we are pleased with initial indications that this year’s projects will enable us to engage with organisations in a number of small and vulnerable states.

Capacity Strengthening Grants

This is the first year of the Capacity Strengthening Grants stream and the Foundation focused attention on building strong and coherent internal processes. We began with a mapping exercise that sought to identify promising smaller and less well-established organisations in our target regions (Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean).

This provided us the insight to engage with a number of organisations that could potentially

benefit from Foundation support. We expect to award our first grants under this new stream in mid-2022 for a selection of strong projects aimed at bringing civil society into policy development and decision-making around one or more of our thematic areas of focus. We will use the lessons of this first year to further refine the Capacity Strengthening Grants stream, ensuring it makes a real contribution towards our goal of promoting vibrant and free civil societies throughout the Commonwealth.

Creative Grants

This is also the first year of the Creative Grants stream and, as with the Capacity Strengthening Grants stream, the Foundation focused its initial efforts on establishing strong and coherent internal processes. This led to the development of two pilot initiatives, the results of which will guide us into the future.

The first pilot involves the competitive open call for Commonwealth Civil Society Grants. Applicants under this stream were invited to include an optional creative component comprising up to an additional 15% of the total project budget.

The second pilot focuses exclusively on small states of the Pacific region. This involved significant preparatory work: researching and reaching out to individuals and organisations working in the creative space in one or more of our thematic areas of focus. Six groups of creative practitioners from Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu have been provisionally awarded grants of approximately £8,000 for creative projects that are supporting advocacy for change in a range of different fields including climate and environment.



Covid-19 Grants

In 2020 the Board of Governors approved a Special Grants Call, launched in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Through this facility, the Foundation was able to provide timely and much-needed support to civil society organisations engaged in recovery and rebuilding efforts for projects over a 12-month period.

We extended the call for proposals to all Commonwealth Member States, irrespective of their membership in the Foundation. More than 800 grant applications were received, and, with the benefit of additional funds received from the Government of Canada, the Foundation was able to fund 26 strong projects.

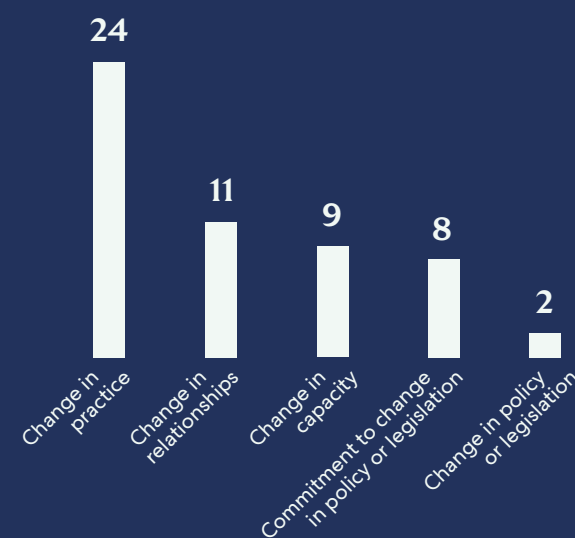
Nine projects have now been completed and assessed; using the outcome harvesting methodology, we can begin to see some interesting results. An analysis of the full cohort of 26 projects will be included in next year's annual report.

The majority of projects have targeted their efforts at national level. However, there have been a significant number of local level changes and even some at international level.



Grant partner, Center for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, facilitating community engagement to increase Covid-19 testing and vaccination rates in Malawi

Figure 1
Behaviour changes



Note: The chart represents the number of outcomes harvested from the nine sampled projects in relation to five types of behaviour change. Each project has recorded several outcomes and one outcome may relate to one or multiple behaviour changes.

Behaviour changes

When we look deeper at the types of changes, we see that our Covid-19 projects have inspired a range of behavioural changes which are quantified in Figure 1 and further described through representative examples on pages 24–25.

So far, projects have evidenced greatest success in contributing to changes in government practice around Covid-19 procedures improving transparency, accountability and support to marginalised groups to cope with the effects of the pandemic. Due to the complex and slow nature of advocacy and policy change, results regarding policy and legislative changes are lowest. However, there is good progress on gaining commitments to policy change, highlighted by the example of the Community Health Care Services Bill in Kenya that will improve conditions for frontline health workers.

Social actors

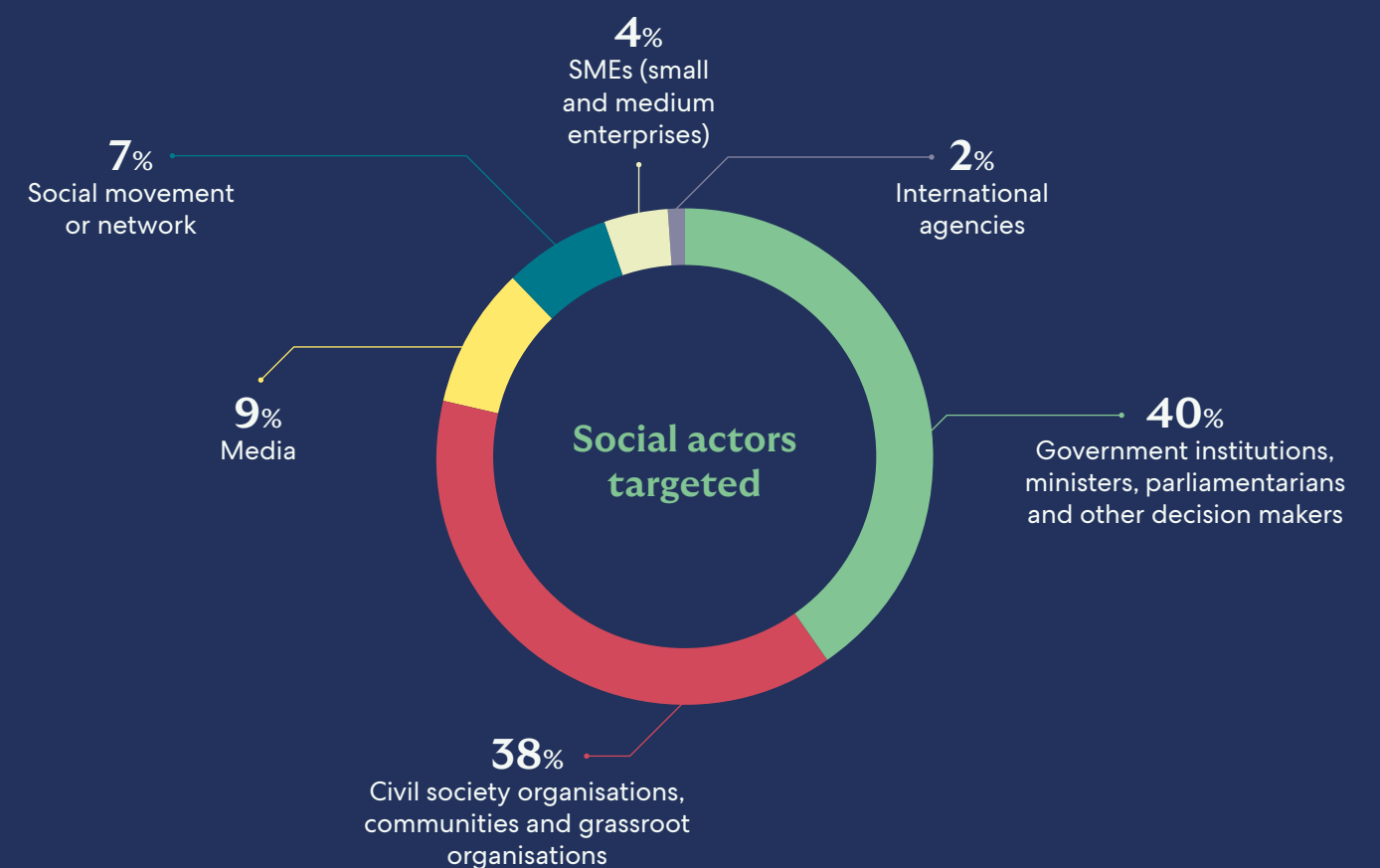
Projects have reached a broad range of stakeholders. Figure 2 shows the breadth of social actors involved. More importantly, it shows that the projects have actively engaged in key interventions of the Foundation's 'pathway to change'.

40% of targeted social actors are government institutions, ministers, parliamentarians, and other decision makers. A similar proportion of targeted actors (45%) are civil society organisations and networks. These two clusters of relationships are critical to building partnerships and the collective power of civil society to participate actively in governance and decision-making spaces.

'We feel very grateful for the opportunity to have been working so in depth on Covid-19 health technology access issues especially local patent law reform issues. Because of this grant, tight relationships between many different health orientated activist organisations were created which will continue to have an impact on the work we will continue to do together.'

Anneleen De Keukelaere, People's Health Movement South Africa

Figure 2





Selection of Covid-19 project results

Change in practice

In July 2021, the parliament of Ghana constituted a nine-member adhoc bi-partisan committee to investigate procurement contracts with private companies for the supply of Covid-19 Sputnik-V vaccines in response to citizens’ demands for accountability.

Project Strengthening Covid-19 accountability mechanisms	Partner Community Development Alliance, Ghana
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Change in relationships

In December 2021, in Malaysia, a coalition of community leaders and civil society organisations was formed to find collective solutions and responses to community challenges during the pandemic. The coalition has continued to address other community crises, such as providing assistance for victims of the 2021 flood disaster.

Project Strengthening community responses to mitigate impacts of Covid-19 on vulnerable communities	Partner Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas, Malaysia
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Commitment to change in policy or legislation

In August 2021, officials in Kisumu and Vihiga counties in Kenya committed to ensure resources are available to meet the needs of Community Health volunteers. Both counties have begun work on a Community Health Services Bill to cement this commitment.

Project Supporting health at the grassroots	Partner OGRA Foundation, Kenya
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‘The project interventions contributed to youth activism and demands for accountability leading to the rapid emergence of youth movements such as the #FixTheCountry and other related civil society coalitions for accountability and anti-corruption in Ghana.’

Issifu Salifu, CDA Ghana

Change in practice

In March 2021, in India, the Nodal Ministry regulating street vendors acknowledged the importance of empowering women street vendors and provided working capital loans of Rs 10,000 to cope with the losses induced by the pandemic.

Project Voices from the street: people, policy and pandemic	Partner Centre for Civil Society, India
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Change in practice and capacity

In late 2021, leaders of 153 communities in Malaysia reached out to support members of vulnerable communities by providing current and verified information on government assistance and Covid-19 standard operating procedures, as well as supporting applications and registrations for government and agencies aid assistance.

Project Strengthening community responses to mitigate impacts of Covid-19 on vulnerable communities	Partner Development of Human Resources in Rural Areas, Malaysia
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Change in policy or legislation

In early 2022, the South African coalition 'Fix the Patent Law Campaign' provided leadership and direction to a national push for reform to domestic and international Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in order to secure access to Covid-19 technologies.

Project Monitoring and promoting equitable access to Covid-19 prevention and treatment technologies	Partner People’s Health Movement South Africa
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Grants highlights

Six legacy projects (approved 2015–2017 under the previous strategic plan) were appraised this year. All had benefitted from a special extension provided as part of the Foundation's response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Supporting persons living with disabilities to advocate for their rights

Bangladesh, 2016–2019

The Government of Bangladesh signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2007 and enacted the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disability Act and the Protection of Persons with Neuro-Developmental Disability Trust Act in 2013. Our grant enabled Turning Point Foundation to strengthen the capacity of Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) to engage in the implementation of disability laws at local and national level.

Training for 20 DPOs improved organisational and financial management practices, policies and procedures. DPOs subsequently engaged in policy advocacy at national and local level including with the Ministry of Health on sexual and reproductive rights of persons with disabilities which led to the inclusion of adolescents with disabilities in the National Plan of Action for Adolescent Health



Advocacy training with Disabled People's Organisations in Dhaka, Bangladesh

Strategy. A directory of DPOs in Bangladesh was published. Turning Point Foundation gained recognition as the go-to organisation for capacity development to support DPOs, and UNDP made a grant award on 'sexual and reproductive health and rights of people living with disabilities' to a group of participating DPOs as a result of their improved knowledge and skills.

448

persons with disabilities trained

50%

of participating DPOs were women-led

'The trainings we attended have opened our eyes and given us courage to demand for rights and services.'

Representative of Sobar Sathe Mishbo (Disabled People's Organisation in Bangladesh that received training from Turning Point Foundation)



Improving health and safety for female garment factory workers

Sri Lanka, 2015–2019

This project focused on strengthening policies that safeguard occupational safety and health (OSH) for factory workers. Our grant enabled War on Want UK and the Free Trade Zones and General Services Employees Trade Union to capitalise on renewed government commitment by building workers' knowledge of health and safety laws and improving their ability to negotiate with employers.

Training, exchange visits, learning workshops and campaigns made possible through the grant resulted in enhanced awareness, skills and leadership among workers. Exchange visits and learning workshops enabled women to compare their situations to workers in other provinces and identify the opportunity for improvements through collective worker bargaining. The project established 18 committees to represent workers which have demonstrated their ability to resolve health and safety issues and effect change in the workplace through negotiation with factory management.

340

women trained

8

exchange visits

10

learning workshops



Financial services training for refugees in New Delhi, India

Advocating for financial inclusion for refugees

India, 2017–2019

Refugees in India encounter difficulties accessing the formal labour market and mainstream systems including financial services, particularly since the introduction of the government's demonetisation policy in 2016. With our support, The Ara Trust's 'Migration and Asylum Project' was able to analyse the evolving financial policies, identifying a range of avenues that refugees can use to access financial systems and services.

The demonetisation policy removed large currency notes from circulation as a step towards a cashless economy. The impact of the policy was severe for refugees in India, most of whom lack the documentation required to access banking services. The project supported research that confirmed the barriers to inclusion. Through sharing this information with the refugee community, the Ministry of Finance, the Reserve Bank of India and service providers, a pathway for better access was developed. The project contributed to a better-informed public discourse around the economic inclusion and integration of refugees.

The first-ever published study on the financial inclusion landscape for refugees in India has been widely accepted by national institutions and relevant intergovernmental organisations including UNHCR.

270

refugees trained on financial services

45

stakeholder organisations participated



Mobilising communities to confront child marriage and improve retention of girls in schools

India, 2016–2019

The rate of child marriage remains persistently high in some regions of the world, and fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic threatens to reverse hard-won gains. It is well understood that addressing child marriage requires a range of responses including addressing deep-rooted social norms, improving girls access to education and economic opportunities. Our grant enabled Jana Sanskriti Centre for Theatre of the Oppressed to facilitate dialogue within local communities around child marriage and how it can be challenged.

Students and volunteers were trained to stage forum theatre performances that address deep-seated patriarchal norms related to child marriage and retention of girls in schools. Teachers, communities, and local authorities engaged with the issues, developing stronger links and brokering inter-generational dialogue between students, parents and grandparents. Local authorities were encouraged to maintain a marriage register database to enable intervention in cases of child marriages.

In the project area of Purulia, West Bengal a 30% reduction in the incidence of child marriage has been reported.

30
high schools participated

279
forum plays performed

829
audience members (including 537 women) joined the actors on stage



Forum theatre to address child marriage in Purulia, India

Affirming the rights of women with disabilities

India, 2016–2019

The Government of India is party to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), obliging the government to provide periodic reports to the UNCRPD Committee on its fulfilment of provisions for the rights of disabled citizens. With our grant, Shanta Memorial Rehabilitation Centre worked with the Women with Disabilities Network, UNCRPD Committee, Disabled People's Organisations, government officials and policy makers to give public voice to women with disabilities: ensuring for them a role in decision-making processes on issues affecting their rights and contributing to greater awareness among policy makers.

Consultations with women with disabilities in 23 of the 29 states in India led to the *Alternative report on the actions of government towards people with disabilities* that was submitted to the UNCRPD alongside the government's national report—the contents of which informed the Committee's recommendations to government. Training on national laws and in advocacy skills enabled women with disabilities to engage with policy makers. Disaggregated disabilities data generated during the project represents the first time such data has been available to civil society and government for the planning of programmes and services.



Women with disabilities advocating for enhanced dialogue with policy makers in Bhubaneswar, India

419
women with disabilities trained

21
women engaged in dialogue with government officials and policy makers

250
DPOs participated in project workshops

Fostering effective implementation of the Right to Information Act

Sri Lanka, 2016–2019

The Government of Sri Lanka enacted the Right to Information Act (RTI) in 2016. With our support, Transparency International Sri Lanka increased public awareness and facilitated engagement between civil society, the RTI Commission and the Ministry of Mass Media to shape effective implementation.

Public officials were trained to ensure they were better equipped to provide clarifications on the implementation of the Act during a series of town hall meetings organised through the project. RTI hubs

were established to support citizens and civil society organisations filing RTI requests and a database was created in order to notify the RTI Commission when requested information was not provided by the relevant government ministry or department. Constructive engagement between civil society and the state resulted in improved information disclosure and a mindset change among public officials. Increased public awareness empowered civil society organisations and citizens to actively exercise their fundamental right to information.



Our cultural initiatives

Amplifying lesser-heard voices: the Commonwealth Short Story Prize

Presented annually for the best piece of unpublished short fiction, the Commonwealth Short Story Prize brings stories from new and emerging voices to an international audience. Stories are invited in 12 languages—with the addition of Creole this year—as well as translated into English from any language.



© Maria D'Almeida

The 2021 prize was awarded to Sri Lankan writer Kanya D'Almeida for her story, *I Cleaned The—*. Kanya signed with an agent following the announcement of her win, cementing the Foundation's reputation as a springboard for emerging talent. In announcing the five regional winners last year, judges recognised the 'captivating' stories that tackled themes including exploitation, social justice, exclusion and belonging. The regional winning stories were again published online by *Granta* and the remaining shortlisted stories were published on *adda*, our online magazine.

From invitations to moderate events, lead workshops, and join judging panels, to being approached by agents, the prize gives visibility to all the shortlisted writers.

'If you are a writer—which is to say, a person who cannot exist without writing—then you must avail yourself of this opportunity to have your work read and amplified and championed by one of the most diverse communities of writers anywhere in the literary world.'

Kanya D'Almeida, Sri Lanka, 2021 winner

'As a queer writer, queer stories and writers are still marginalised in our culture. The prize, because of its reach, can make the marginal central.'

Moso Sematlane, Lesotho, shortlisted in 2021

Commonwealth Short Story Prize 2022

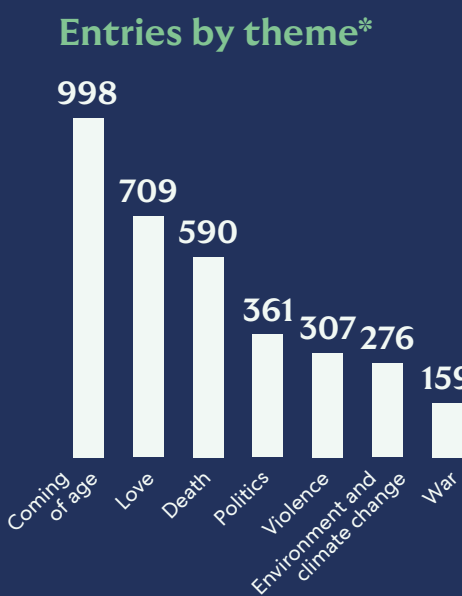
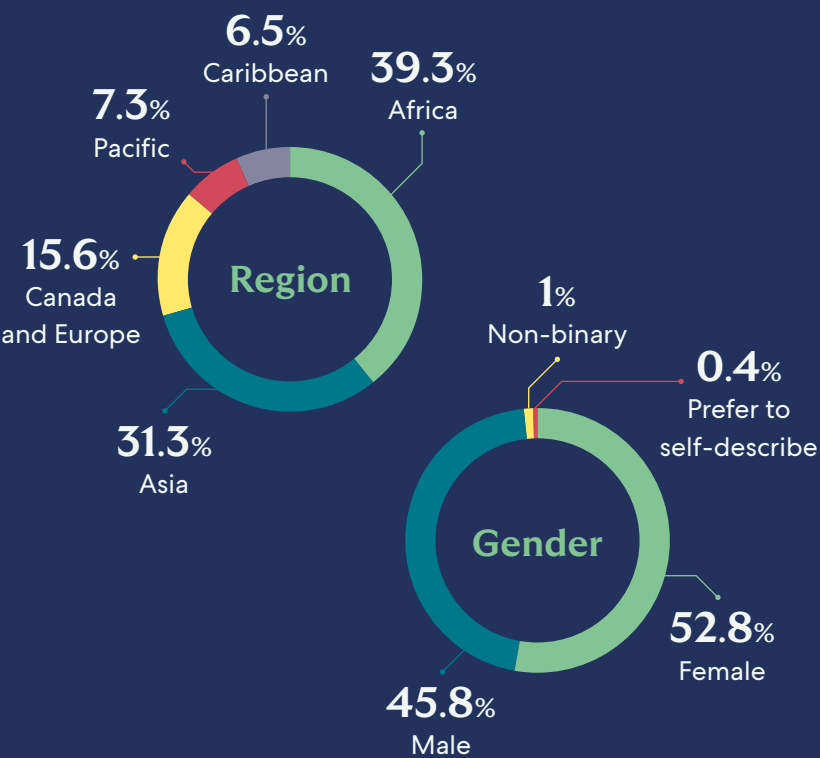
The Short Story Prize continues to go from strength to strength. A record 6,730 entries were received for the 2022 prize, from writers in 52 Commonwealth countries. Three countries, Eswatini, Papua New Guinea and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, featured on the shortlist for the first time. We worked hard to widen the reach of the prize and these efforts resulted in an increase in entries from previously under-represented regions and countries: the Pacific islands, the Caribbean (particularly Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada and Saint Lucia), Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia and the Seychelles.

The 2022 judging panel is chaired by Guyanese writer Fred D'Aguiar. His fellow judges, drawn from the five regions of the Commonwealth, are Rwandan publisher Louise Umutoni-Bower (Africa), Indian short story writer and novelist Jahnvi Barua (Asia), Cypriot writer and academic Stephanos Stephanides (Canada and Europe), Trinidadian novelist and former winner of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize Kevin Jared Hosein (Caribbean), and Australian Wiradjuri writer, poet and academic

Jeanine Leane (Pacific). Regional winners were announced in May 2022, drawn from the longest and most diverse shortlist of 26 entries from 20 countries. The overall winner will be announced in June 2022 at the Commonwealth People's Forum in Kigali.

Regional winners

Africa	<i>and the earth drank deep</i> Ntsika Kota (Eswatini)
Asia	<i>The Last Diver on Earth</i> Sofia Mariah Ma (Singapore)
Canada and Europe	<i>A Hat for Lemer</i> Cecil Browne (United Kingdom / Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)
Caribbean	<i>Bridge over the Yallahs River</i> Diana McCaulay (Jamaica)
Pacific	<i>The Nightwatch</i> Mary Rokonadravu (Fiji)



* 1,922 Other (including pandemic, mental health, religion, femicide, friendship, racism, class, identity, motherhood, health, homelessness)



Illustration by Madhri Samaranayake for *Can you recall your dreams?* (Sapna) by Manav Kaul

Sharing stories to connect people: *adda*

Our online magazine *adda* is a platform for writers to share new stories and narratives. We publish authors who might not have the chance elsewhere, featuring their work together with that of more established writers. To attract young people, graphic fiction was included alongside fiction, non-fiction and poetry in the call for submissions for the first time this year.

The flexible online format enables us to deliver tailored and timely responses to contemporary issues and to address the Foundation's key themes. A special call for creative responses to Article 5 of the Commonwealth Charter, which affirms the commitment of Member States to freedom of expression, resulted in 1,130 entries from 48 Commonwealth countries: almost twice as many as the previous open call. A panel of four editors from Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Fiji and Uganda selected seven works for the first issue, published in April, which related to the subthemes of politics and gender and sexuality. Three further issues will be published between May and July 2022.

The most viewed collection this year featured 32 pieces of fiction, non-fiction and poetry from 15 languages, published alongside *translations* into English. The compilation was edited by Bilal Tanweer from Pakistan and Pauline Fan from Malaysia, published with specially commissioned illustrations, as part of the South and Southeast Asia Translations project.



Cast and crew prepare to film a scene for *Forget Me Not* by Amanda John from Grenada

Developing the craft of filmmakers: Caribbean Voices

Caribbean Voices is the third in the Commonwealth Shorts series, an initiative that seeks to strengthen the capacity of filmmakers and the wider film infrastructure. Caribbean Voices brought emerging filmmakers together with four experienced filmmakers from the region: Juliette McCawley from Trinidad and Tobago, Kareem Mortimer from The Bahamas, Mitzi Allen from Antigua and Barbuda and Shakirah Bourne from Barbados.

The selected emerging filmmakers (from The Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago) took part in online masterclasses led by experienced professionals and also received individualised script-writing support with the specific goal of improving their knowledge of the industry as well as strengthening their

'The masterclasses were extremely helpful. I have never worked with a producer before, so it allowed me to gain insight into their roles and responsibilities on set and how the money is managed during production.'

Melanie Grant, Caribbean Voices filmmaker, Barbados

technical skills. They were then provided grants of £6,000–£8,000 to develop their own films, with ongoing guidance and support.

In their films, participants are exploring themes of direct and immediate relevance to them and their communities, with several focusing their work on the issue of climate change. In accordance with our commitment to supporting our partners during the current difficult times, the Foundation has extended timelines for those filmmakers affected by the pandemic (and, in one case, the volcanic eruption in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). Seven of the eight commissioned films are now in the later stages of post-production. Once complete, the Foundation will support filmmakers in submitting their films to international film festivals.

Cultural events

Translation Across Borders: Voices from Southeast Asia and South Asia

In partnership with the Singapore Book Council as part of the Singapore Translation Symposium, this discussion addressed challenges and opportunities for translation in the region and showcased the *adda* Translations Collection as an innovative and good practice example of inter-regional translation. The symposium closed with a video showcase of poets from India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore and Sri Lanka, reading their poetry from the Translations Collection in the original language.

The Indenture Remembered

In collaboration with the Aameena Gafoor Institute, the Foundation commissioned three playwrights from Guyana, Mauritius and South Africa to write



Vinesha Bissoondeel performing as an 18th century Indian indentured worker moved to Mauritius. Monologue written by Poonam Seetohul, directed by Ashish Beesoondial

short dramatic monologues based on historical legal testimonies of indentured workers from the respective countries. The monologues were broadcast as part of an *online panel discussion* where the role of creative expression in bringing awareness to lesser-known histories was discussed, reaching several thousand people.



Festive Poetry Evening at the Royal Over-Seas League, London

Celebrating Commonwealth Culture: High Commissioners' Festive Poetry Evening

On 1 December 2021, we were honoured to welcome High Commissioners to the Royal Over-Seas League for a unique celebration of Commonwealth culture. Distinguished attendees shared a favourite piece of *poetry* from their country. Themes of climate change, the experiences of colonialism, the beauty of the natural world, love of country and love of people shone through. The focus on poetry as a lens through which to celebrate Commonwealth culture reflected our appreciation of the elevated place that poetry holds in the heart and soul of every country. Poets are the truth-tellers, the transmitters of knowledge and values and meaning. Poetry is central to protest and rebellion, cutting through the abuse of language that so often goes with abuse of power: signalling eternal truths that all of us can recognise.

While the creation of poetry is a solitary endeavour, the results are intended to be shared. That sharing serves as a powerful reminder of our common humanity, of the ties that bind us together. Our thanks to the High Commissioners and their representatives whose readiness to share the words and ideas that matter to them made possible this memorable event.



Our advocacy and engagement

Bringing ideas to life: *Critical Conversations*

Critical Conversations is our online event series which provides opportunities for Commonwealth leaders, thinkers, practitioners and activists to share their ideas and perspectives on how to address the challenges of today.

Now in its second year, *Critical Conversations* is bringing together ever larger audiences to discuss and debate issues that matter to the people of the Commonwealth: from climate change to vaccine equity; from media freedom to the future of the Commonwealth itself.

Almost 8,000 people from 128 countries registered to participate in 7 events this year, with many more engaging with the recordings which are immediately made available online. The Foundation is delighted that the record for engagement is currently held by our three-part mini-series, 'A Commonwealth of the People?', which aired in November 2021 and has been viewed by over 300,000 people. The biggest live crowds joined the two events related to the climate crisis—over 1,500 people in total. This year's series has seen a 120% increase in registrations from small island states including first-time attendance from Papua New Guinea, Samoa and Tuvalu.

Throughout the year we have continued to adapt and change, trying out different formats and approaches including the use of pre-recordings that have enabled us to incorporate civil society voices from all Commonwealth regions and to bring high-level speakers—including current and former heads of state—into our conversations.

Small island states and climate justice: looking ahead to COP26 convened government and civil society leaders from Commonwealth small island states to discuss the political and technical challenges ahead for those countries on the frontline of climate change. To open the event, we produced a video of the poem, *Global Line Up*, written by Pasifika poet Karlo Mila in response to scientific research that was published in the lead up to COP25, performed by 16 young people from across the Commonwealth.



120% increase in registrations from small island states

Climate reparations: opportunities and obstacles for the Commonwealth's small island states brought together climate negotiators, climate justice advocates, decision makers and legal experts from—or working with—small island states to discuss ways to achieve compensation for 'loss and damage' from global warming. The Prime Minister of Tuvalu and the former President of the Maldives both provided compelling video contributions.



300,000 views of our Commonwealth miniseries

Registrations by event

2,904

Small island states and climate justice: looking ahead to COP26

2,107

Climate reparations: opportunities and obstacles for the Commonwealth's small island states

1,673

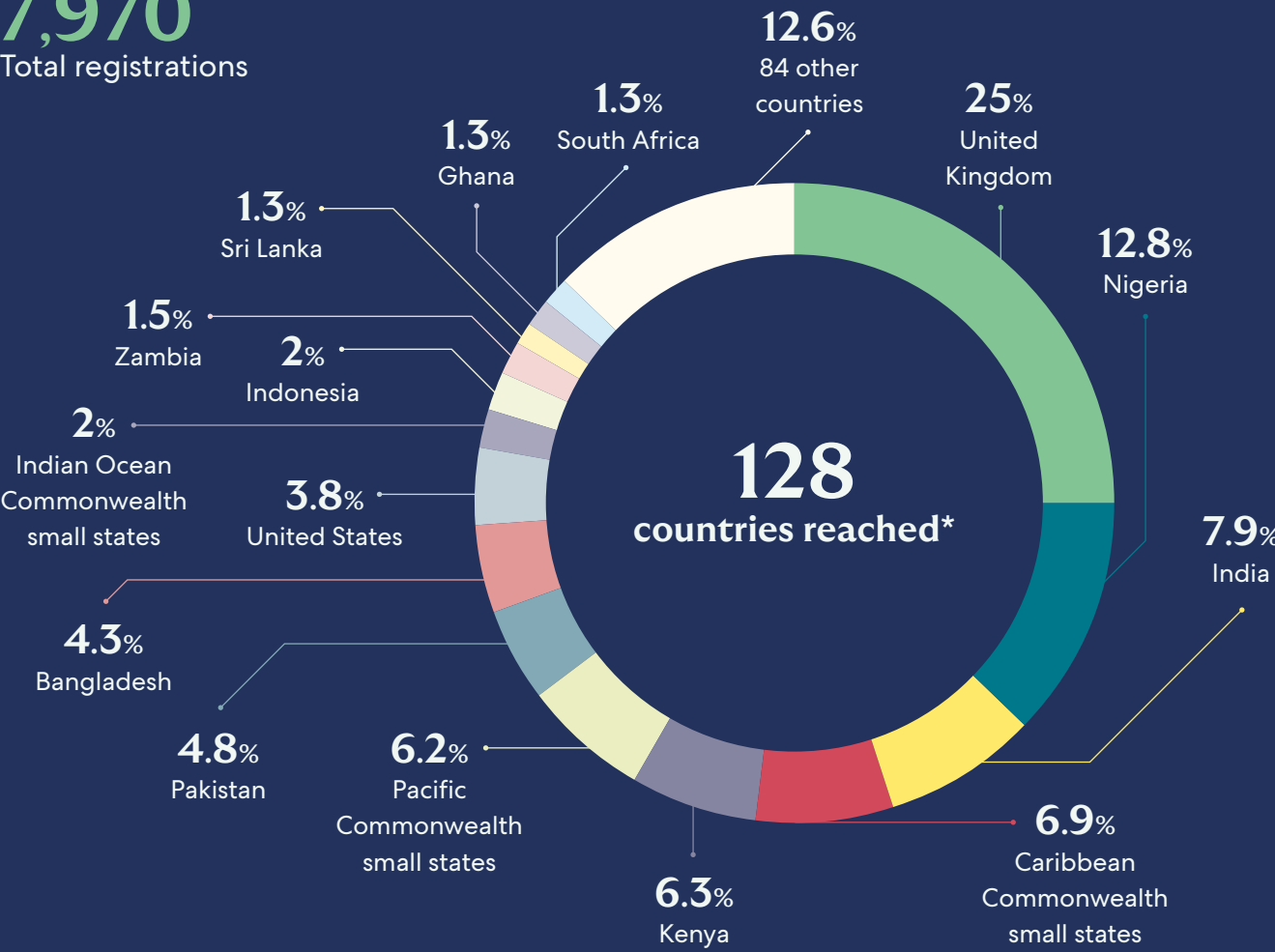
Towards equitable access to vaccines, medicines and technology

1,286

A Commonwealth of the People?

7,970

Total registrations



* For registrations where an exact country location is not detected, the country defaults to the United Kingdom. A 5–7% margin of error should be assumed.



A Commonwealth of the People?

This three-part mini-series commemorated the 10th anniversary of the 2011 Eminent Persons Group report, *A Commonwealth of the People: Time for Urgent Reform*. It aimed to provoke deep reflection and discussion about the place of the Commonwealth in the contemporary world and what is needed for its long-term relevance. In a deliberate effort to initiate an intergenerational dialogue on the future of the Commonwealth, the Foundation assembled a formidable group of speakers comprising former leaders of Commonwealth Member States, authors of the Eminent Persons Group report and young Commonwealth leaders and activists.

Towards equitable access to vaccines, medicines and technology convened health experts, policy makers, thought leaders and activists to address the unconscionable reality that close to half of all Commonwealth citizens remain unvaccinated against Covid-19. Panellists discussed solutions to the widened inequalities between countries revealed during the pandemic, alongside the challenges of an intellectual property system that obstructs access to vital medicines and the power of pharmaceutical companies to influence global health decision-making.

Power of the arts: when artists use their work

for change was being finalised as our seventh at the time of writing. It will examine the freedom of creative practitioners to express themselves and use their creativity to advocate for positive change. This event will bring together young creatives and activists from different regions and representing different art forms (music, performance poetry, visual art and film). In a moderated discussion, panellists will explore how artists work in a political and social arena, and how the arts can be most effectively leveraged to promote social change.

‘Critical Conversations has allowed me to look at issues and challenges in a more panoramic way by offering thought-provoking opinions and ideas, some of which are very practical and I could identify with.’

Audience member

Our Health, Our Planet, Our Future: Commonwealth People’s Forum 2022

Kigali, Rwanda 21–22 June 2022

The Commonwealth People’s Forum is an opportunity for a collective and interactive exchange of ideas about the issues that matter most to the 2.5 billion citizens of the Commonwealth. Organised in collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Rwanda, the People’s Forum will bring the voices of civil society into the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

The People’s Forum is especially significant this year, as Commonwealth countries and communities work to recover from multiple crises and to build resilience for an uncertain future. The Forum will ask and try to answer the big, important questions of our age. How do we harness the best of humanity—the forces of love, compassion, equality and justice—to advance our common future and protect our planet? How do we work together to build—or re-fashion—our

institutions so that they support a world that leaves no one behind? And what role could—or should—the Commonwealth of Nations play in these vital steps towards a better world for all its people?

The 2022 Forum is a streamlined version of what was initially proposed in 2020. It will comprise six sessions dealing with issues related to health, climate change, freedom of expression and participatory governance. Across all these issues there will be a strong focus on how the Commonwealth—its Member States and its institutions—can better serve its people. Disappointingly, host country policies mean that the Foundation will be unable to livestream all CPF sessions as we had planned. We will nevertheless do everything possible to provide rapid post-event access for as many Commonwealth citizens as possible.

Building partnerships to engage in governance and decision-making

The Foundation works to identify, build, and cultivate alliances and partnerships with other like-minded organisations within and outside the Commonwealth with the specific purpose of advancing Commonwealth values and principles. We use our resources and our platforms to amplify voices of those who are too often unheard when decisions are being made about their lives and their futures. We continue to strengthen our working relationship with the Secretariat, finding natural synergies across our thematic areas. This year we have partnered with a range of regional thematic experts, thought-leaders, journalists and practitioners to widen and deepen our Commonwealth footprint.

Engagement at COP26

The Foundation supported the Earth Journalism Network (EJN, a global network of environmental journalists) to hold a side event at COP26, *‘Journalism in a changing world: improving climate coverage and including more voices’*. Our support also enabled 10 young EJN journalists from eight Commonwealth countries to research and publish investigative reports on the impact of climate change in their country with their stories featuring in the Scotsman newspaper. We co-hosted an event with the Government of Namibia launching a new green hydrogen initiative. In collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat, we identified relevant speakers to discuss and present the Foundation’s Gender Analysis Tool for climate programming at an event on strengthening gender and youth engagement in climate action.

38th Commonwealth Diplomats Induction Programme

The Foundation was delighted to jointly host the 38th Commonwealth Diplomats Induction Programme alongside the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth of Learning. The three-day programme provided diplomats with a space for critical reflection, opportunities to network, exchange views and understand the Commonwealth’s role in meeting global challenges.

Civil society experts shared their perspectives in the interactive sessions on climate change, universal health coverage, trade and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Video clips from the ***Critical Conversations*** event on climate reparations and *‘A Commonwealth of the People?’* miniseries were especially well-received.

Working with partners on media freedom in the Commonwealth

Since October 2020, The Foundation has been an active member of UNESCO’s Intergovernmental ‘Light Touch’ Taskforce on the Safety of Journalists, a collective of IGOs seeking to deepen collaboration and coordination to advance the *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*. The work of the Taskforce has helped shape aspects of the Foundation’s work on freedom of expression, widening our audience for events and expanding our network of contacts. The Foundation has also provided expert advice to—and facilitated the involvement of Commonwealth civil society in—the process for development of a set of Commonwealth principles on media freedom.

‘I found that the sessions relating to the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth of Learning were most useful as they provided great insight into how Member States can fully benefit and capitalise on the opportunities offered by these institutions.’

Participant, 38th Commonwealth Diplomats Induction Programme



Thematic highlights



Our work on climate change and the environment

- Our *Critical Conversation* '**Small island states and climate justice: looking ahead to COP26**' highlighted the crucial role the Commonwealth had to play at COP26 with a focus on the challenges for small island states on the frontline of climate change.
- We commissioned two freelance journalists from Fiji and Trinidad and Tobago to write articles on the priorities for COP26 from their own regional perspective.
- Over 2,000 people from 72 countries including 21 small states registered to attend our *Critical Conversation* '**Climate reparations: opportunities and obstacles for the Commonwealth's small island states**' which explored options for loss and damage compensation including legal redress through the new Commission on Small Island States.
- One of the Caribbean Voices films in production as part of the Commonwealth Shorts initiative, *Parable of the Bees* by Melanie Grant from Barbados, specifically addresses the theme of climate change.
- 276 entries for this year's Commonwealth Short Story Prize were written on the theme of climate change and the environment, with five reaching the shortlist.



Our work on health

- Much-needed support to civil society organisations working at the frontline of pandemic recovery and rebuilding efforts is being delivered through 26 Covid-19 grants.
- Our *Critical Conversation* '**Towards equitable access to vaccines, medicines and technology**' highlighted the legal and regulatory challenges that are obstructing access to vital medicines and technology for so many Commonwealth countries.
- **Grant highlight:** In Mauritius, our grant enabled Prévention Information et Lutte contre le Sida (PILS) to advocate for a national drug and HIV response, with better coordination in the management of HIV and drug programmes across the country. Through their efforts, the National Drug Control Masterplan 2019–2023 was

formulated in 2018 and PILS was invited by the Prime Minister of Mauritius to be on the High-Level Drugs and HIV Council, alongside officials from several ministries, law enforcement officers and representatives from the private sector.



Our work on freedom of expression

- The Foundation supported journalists—many from small states—to participate in and write about COP26.
- 24 creative responses to Article 5 of the Commonwealth Charter, which affirms the commitment of Member States to freedom of expression, were published on *adda*, our online magazine.
- The Director-General has provided expert advice to Commonwealth Member States as they finalise a set of principles on media freedom and has published several opinion pieces on the issue of media freedom in the Commonwealth.
- Our *Critical Conversation* '**Power of the arts: when artists use their work for change**' will highlight how artists contribute to the political arena and how opportunities for self-expression can effect change on social issues.



Our commitment to gender equality

- Our *Gender Analysis Tool* was presented at COP26 during a Commonwealth event on strengthening gender and youth engagement in climate action. The presentation was made by Dr Leith Dunn of the University of the West Indies—demonstrating the growing confidence of Caribbean civil society organisations to conduct gender analysis in their climate change programming.
- Gender has been a major focus of the 10 Covid-19 grants awarded under the extra-budgetary contribution from the Government of Canada. Through their projects, grants partners have

been supported to better integrate gender and to monitor results.

- **Grant highlight:** In parts of Nigeria, women living with HIV face multiple challenges accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. With our grant, International Community of Women Living with HIV in West Africa (ICWWA) was able to influence decision makers in providing non-discriminatory and non-coercive SRH while building the capacity of women living with HIV with training on rights-based advocacy and how to document and report violations of rights.



Our commitment to small and vulnerable states

- We expect to award substantial grants to small civil society organisations in Pacific, Caribbean and Indian Ocean countries under our new Capacity Strengthening Grants stream.
- We identified six groups of creative practitioners in the Pacific region and awarded grants of approximately £8,000 as part of a pilot initiative to strengthen creative capacity to advocate for change under our new Creative Grants stream.
- We secured greater representation of small states in the 2022 Short Story Prize as well as in our online literary magazine *adda*.
- Ten filmmakers from the Caribbean have participated in Caribbean Voices; the third Commonwealth Shorts initiative which strengthens the capacity of filmmakers and the wider film infrastructure with a combination of grant-making and tailored support.
- Several of our *Critical Conversations* events dealt specifically with the climate crisis as it is affecting the Commonwealth's small and vulnerable states.
- Our outreach and advocacy around vaccine equity is directly aimed at supporting the needs of the Commonwealth's small and vulnerable states.

DEMANDS FROM Small Island States

- 1 Decarbonise by rapidly phasing out fossil fuel extraction and ending subsidies.
- 2 Commit to 'climate finance' or dedicated funding for small island states to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change.
- 3 Ensure international institutions push for greater cooperation.
- 4 Cancel developing countries debt so they can deal with impacts of climate change.
- 5 Implement a 'climate damages' tax to make corporations compensate countries for climate-related damages.
- 6 Committing to limit global heating to below 1.5°C.

SHARE IF YOU AGREE

Commonwealth Foundation

© Small Axe

Communications and outreach

The Foundation is committed to using its platforms to build an online community of Commonwealth citizens who are engaged with us and each other in fostering positive change. Our work in building that community is paying off. Each month, more than 1,000 people from across all Commonwealth regions join our mailing lists. Each new subscriber is a potential amplifier, ensuring messaging on the issues that matter most—on health, climate, and free expression—goes further and wider. The benefits of online community building are seen across all aspects of our work: from the increasing geographic spread of grant applications and Short Story Prize submissions to the growing number of people attending our online events.

Our new brand

Rebranding the Foundation has been a major achievement of the past year. Launched on 1 December 2021, our new visual identity affirms the Foundation's Commonwealth identity and our role as advocate and champion for the people of the Commonwealth.



Online engagement

Our social media posts over the past year have been seen 14.4 million times around the world. Since July 2021, our social media following has increased by over 15% to 88,000 and our mailing list has seen steady and consistent growth, month on month. We have employed new email marketing techniques to deliver more relevant content to members of our community. This has been combined with more intensive social media activity aimed at driving users to our website to attend events, read stories from civil society, participate in our programmes, and apply for our funding opportunities. This year we have amassed over one million page views across our three websites.

14.4 million
social media views over the year

One million
page views across our three websites

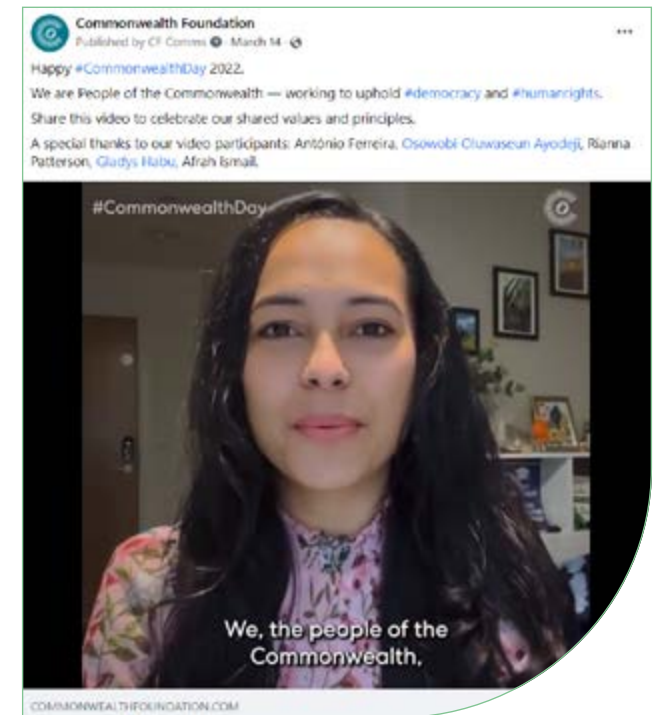
1,000
new mailing list subscribers each month

Expanding our reach

We use paid advertising carefully and strategically to increase our reach where it matters. For example, during our competitive open call for **Commonwealth Civil Society Grants**, social media advertising led to a 34.6% increase in applications from previously hard-to-reach countries compared to the previous grants call. The chart below presents the countries where a significant increase was recorded.

For this year's **Commonwealth Short Story Prize**, we targeted countries with typically low numbers of entries. In a record year for submissions, we saw a 40% increase in entries from the Pacific and a 20% increase from the Caribbean.

In celebration of **Commonwealth Day** on 14 March, we launched a **video** featuring prominent youth activists from each of the Commonwealth's five regions, each reaffirming their commitment to the values and principles of the Commonwealth's Charter—to good governance, democracy and human rights. The clip reached almost half a million social media users over the course of the day.



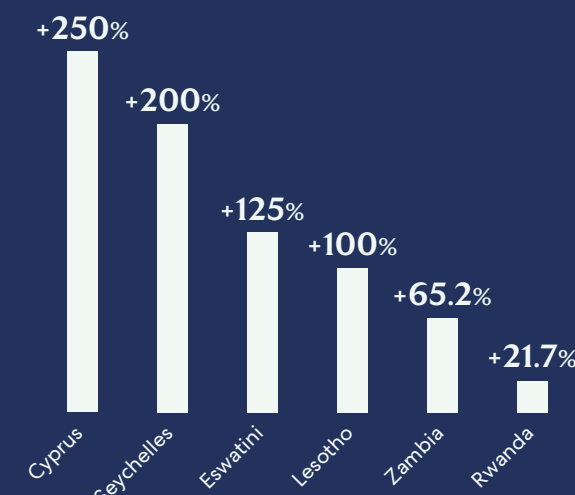
Gladys Habu, climate activist from the Solomon Islands, participating in the Foundation's Commonwealth Day video, which reached almost half a million people in 24 hours.

Media coverage and speaking engagements

We have recorded over 75 appearances in major national and international media outlets across the Commonwealth over the past year. We commissioned two freelance journalists from Fiji and Trinidad and Tobago to write articles on the priorities for COP26 from the perspective of their own region. The Director-General has published a range of opinion pieces and spoken at events throughout the year alongside government and civil society partners; engagements include academic conferences, commemorative Commonwealth events, and major international meetings such as COP26 and the Global Conference for Media Freedom.

Targeted outreach led to a 40% increase in Commonwealth Short Story Prize entries from the Pacific and a 20% increase from the Caribbean.

Increase in applications for Commonwealth Civil Society Grants following targeted outreach



Monitoring, evaluation and learning

Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) is critical to understanding the impact of the Foundation's work; giving us the insight necessary to constantly refine and improve what we do and how we do it. Our approach to measuring results is guided by a MEL framework and accompanying implementation plan that reflect a shift towards more adaptive, participatory and learning-oriented practices.



Data collecting with grant partners in India

MEL framework and implementation plan

In December 2021, the Foundation's Board of Governors approved the new MEL framework which guides the collection, assessment and analysis of results over the next five years. It sets out how a mixed-method approach will be used to understand the contribution of our work to the Foundation's 'pathway to change'. Our commitment to learning is embodied in the MEL framework, placing emphasis on meaningful dialogue between our programme teams, partners and thematic experts to help build ownership and ultimately strengthen the credibility of our evidence.

A MEL implementation plan, completed in February 2022, outlines the programme-specific MEL activities and associated timelines. The plan strives for integration across our programmes by connecting activities to our progress markers, learning questions and higher-level results. Progress markers allow us to describe gradual change, capture unintended change and make adjustments where needed. Over the last year, programme teams have reflected on their key activities, data sources, learning activities and outputs. Templates have been honed to ensure we capture the evidence and insights that we need and that answer the Foundation's learning questions.

Cross-cutting outcomes

The implementation plan includes a map of cross-cutting progress markers for each programme team and a set of corresponding indicators to ensure that teams also capture data on our cross-cutting outcomes. Our learning exchanges and our 'stop and reflect' evaluation at the end of the second year of the strategic plan will be important moments to consider adjustments to cross-cutting progress markers.

Outcome harvesting trial

An innovation of our MEL is the use of the outcome harvesting methodology to assess grants at annual and final reporting stages. We are currently trialling the approach with our cohort of Covid-19 grants. Staff received training and two online monitoring and reporting workshops were held for grant partners. Three animated videos were produced to illustrate this approach for reporting. Nine grant partners have now reported successfully, and collective learning sessions have enabled staff to identify outcomes in the project reports. Overall, the methodology has proven to be well suited to the Foundation's work where change is determined by many different actors and influences.

Information management

The Foundation's information management has been significantly strengthened this year. Document storage has been optimised by migrating our main SharePoint libraries into a new structure, archiving legacy documents and establishing conventions to better classify, store and manage our data. SharePoint training was offered to all staff as part of the process.

Our people

In accordance with commitments set out in the strategic plan, the Foundation has continued to prioritise its people and to advance work already underway in strengthening our systems of governance.

Recruitment

The new strategic plan demanded substantial changes to the staffing structure of the Foundation including a reduction in management level positions to free up resources for more officer-level staff. Recruitment for new and vacant positions (using the new job descriptions and competencies framework) has been accelerated and all vacancies created by the restructuring have now been filled. Changes to the recruitment process aimed at improving its overall quality have been successfully implemented and we will fine-tune those changes as we learn from experience. Refinements to staffing will continue to be made to ensure that our team is best structured to meet the demands of the strategic plan in a dynamic operating environment. Special attention is being paid to strengthening the Office of the Directorate, which now brings together core functions including financial and people management.

Graduate internship programme

The new approach to our highly successful graduate internship programme—aimed at ensuring it is as accessible as possible to talented young people for whom such a life-changing opportunity might not be readily available—is in place and functioning well. The Foundation continues to use the success of our former interns in securing strong employment opportunities as a metric for the overall success of the programme. On that measure, it continues to perform very strongly.

Health and wellbeing

The operating environment presented ongoing challenges for the Foundation's team over much of the reporting period and it has been necessary to continue a 'watch and see' approach. By the end of the first quarter of 2022, all staff were back at Marlborough House for at least several days each week. We are monitoring the return to in-office work to ensure that the Foundation can properly absorb the lessons of the past several years in ways that allow us to maintain productivity and wellbeing.

Learning and development

The revised appraisal process introduced in mid-2021 incorporates a much-strengthened element of learning and development. During the reporting period, the Foundation has benefitted enormously from the generosity of the Secretariat in relation to learning and development opportunities, most notably through access to its accredited 'Future Leaders' programme, which was successfully completed by our Senior Office and People Manager. Three more 'future leaders' will take up this opportunity in the coming year. The appraisal system itself continues to be refined with the goal of maximising its usefulness as a tool of learning and growth. The introduction of an element of 360-degree feedback is expected to help support the professional development of managers and line supervisors.

Governance

The strategic plan envisages a stronger role for the Foundation's governors as both champions and guides. Since the adoption of the strategic plan, we have confirmed the agreed changes to the frequency of meetings of the Grants Committee (now meeting twice each year in June and December, immediately before meetings of the Executive Committee). A new Governance Handbook that provides detailed procedural guidance to all current and future governors is presented alongside this Annual Report in June 2022.

The strategic plan commits the Foundation to encouraging more targeted involvement of our valuable Civil Society Advisory Governors (CSAG). In accordance with a decision of the Board of Governors the term of current CSAG has been extended by one year and work is already beginning on reviewing this aspect of our organisation to ensure it is best supported to provide that critical link between the Foundation's governance and Commonwealth civil society.



Participants at the 2022 Commonwealth Diplomats Induction Programme

Our finances

The Foundation's approach to its finances is shaped by an appreciation of our position as a values-based organisation and as a custodian of public money.

Our main source of income is assessed contributions from Member States. We are committed to demonstrating that we are spending this income wisely and effectively, using a robust results-based management system to that end.

The Foundation's accounts are independently audited by the accounting firm Saffery Champness to a standard compatible with International Financial and Reporting Standards.

This year the Foundation will once again meet our self-imposed target of completing the external audit process within four months of the end of the financial year. As has become our standard practice for the last five financial years, and in keeping with our commitment to full transparency and accountability, the audited financial statements will be made publicly available on the Foundation's website.

Summary of financial performance for financial year 2021–2022

Annual assessed contributions

As of 10 April 2022, the Foundation had received 85.04% of the projected income from assessed membership contributions (an increase from 75.35% for the corresponding period in 2020–2021). Figure 1 illustrates the trend of income received from Member States for the last four financial years.

Arrears recovery project

The recovery of current accumulated arrears is critical to the financial health and sustainability of the Foundation. As of 10 April 2022 our accumulated arrears (excluding withdrawn members) stood at £1,404,543, with £92,062 collected in the current financial year. Figure 2 illustrates the trend of outstanding arrears for the last four financial years.

The Directorate has continued to take a proactive approach to current and accumulated arrears throughout the reporting period. This has involved targeted outreach to affected Member States and the preparation of tailored payment plans that seek to recognise the ongoing difficulties that many Commonwealth countries are experiencing. We look to our governors for support in encouraging Member States in arrears to participate in payment plans. The Foundation has been especially attentive in making sure that High Commissioners of countries in arrears are kept well-informed of our work and encouraged to continue their engagement.

Figure 1
Annual assessed contributions received

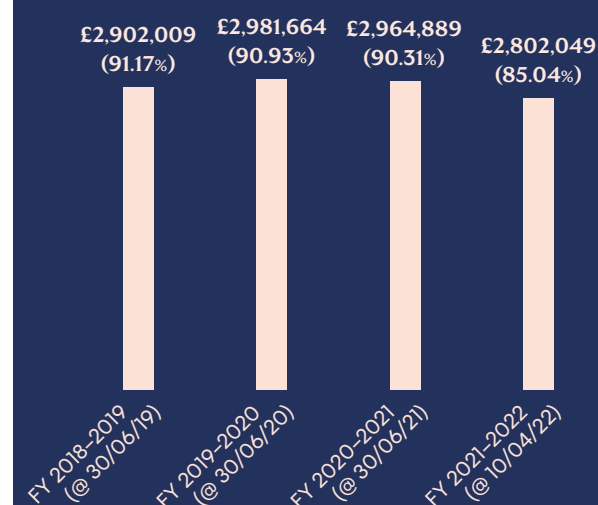
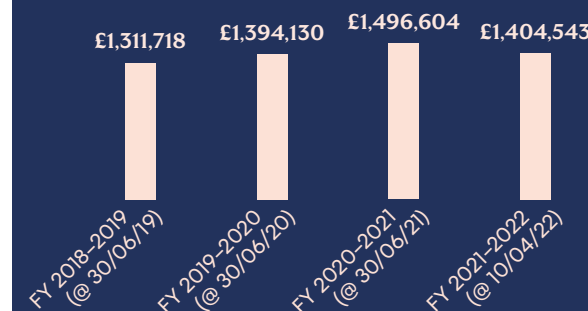


Figure 2
Arrears outstanding (excluding withdrawn members)



Expenditure

Of the total approved budget of £3,274,305 for the financial year 2021–2022, the Commonwealth Foundation allocated the highest share of the budget expenditure to its programme (including staff costs for the programme) amounting to £2,725,468 (83.24%). The remainder of the budget expenditure of £548,837 was allocated to the organisational core administration and staff costs (16.76%). Following the Board of Governors directive in 2013–2014, we continue to observe the 80:20 ratio of programme to overhead expenditure while

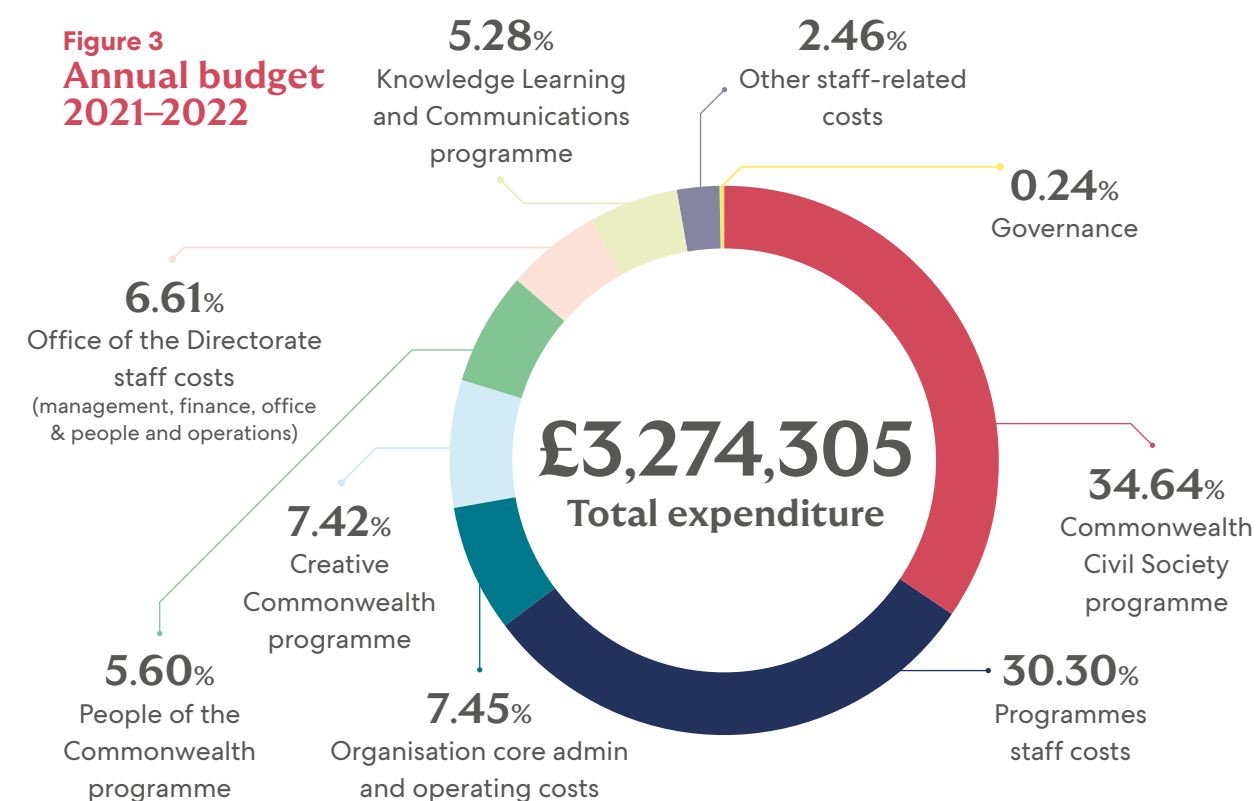
noting to our governors that this is a policy that should be kept under review. Figure 3 illustrates the allocation of annual budget to different categories of the current strategy outcomes.

Extra-budgetary resources

Extra-budgetary resources (EBR) are additional funds sought for discrete projects that form part of the Foundation's agreed workplan. Resources must come from sources that comply with guidelines approved by the Board of Governors. EBR have not been a significant part of the Foundation's funding base until 2021 when the Foundation secured EBR of CAD 550,000 (equivalent to GBP 315,862) from the Government of Canada to enhance our Special Grants Call in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

This welcome contribution enabled the Foundation to extend the number of projects supported under this call, thereby further strengthening civic engagement and resilience of communities impacted by the pandemic. As of September 2021, £241,240 had been committed for 10 EBR Covid-19 Grants. The Foundation will continue to encourage extra-budgetary resources for the sole and specific purpose of supplementing our grants allocation.

Figure 3
Annual budget 2021–2022





Annex:

Funded projects 2021–2022

Covid-19 Grants

Supporting health at the grassroots	Kenya
Strengthening community responses to mitigate impacts of Covid-19 on vulnerable communities	Malaysia
Fostering multi-stakeholder outreach to improve policy action in the context of Covid-19 and beyond	The Maldives
Using government-developed transparency frameworks for accountability in Nigeria Covid-19 spending	Nigeria
Developing and implemenating inclusive policies in response to the Covid-19 pandemic	Pakistan
Civil society engagement for effective Covid-19 response	Pakistan
Monitoring and promoting equitable access to Covid-19 prevention and treatment technologies	South Africa
Supporting the development of gender-balanced public health policies during emergencies	Saint Kitts and Nevis
Disability response to Covid-19 pandemic	Uganda
Strengthening voices of micro and small-scale entrepreneurs in the post Covid-19 economic policy reforms	Uganda
Ensuring effective municipal responses to housing needs and homelessness during Covid-19	Canada
Strengthening citizen engagement in Fiji's Covid-19 response	Fiji
Strengthening Covid-19 accountability mechanisms	Ghana
Voices from the street: people, policy and pandemic	India
Building capacity of women and girls with disabilities in India to meet the challenges of Covid-19	India
Raising awareness of the impact of Covid-19 on persons with deafblindness and multiple disabilities	India

Covid-19 grants funded through an additional contribution from the Government of Canada

Raising voices: strengthening civil society participation and supporting health at the grassroots	Cameroon
Enhancing citizens participation for effective Covid-19 responses	Ghana
Strengthening community access to Covid-19 information and involvement in pandemic responses	Malawi
Strengthening inter-cluster capacity to engage in policy and programme review	Malawi
Eliminating sexual and gender-based violence – collaboration, advocacy, awareness and protection	Nigeria
Basic income support in the context of Covid-19 and beyond	South Africa
Strengthening community involvement in Covid-19 response plans	India
Safeguarding India's itinerant maritime fisheries labour	India
Strengthening disability inclusion in Covid-19 responses	Bangladesh
Strengthening multi-sectoral responses to the Covid-19 pandemic	Jamaica



Ongoing Open Call Grants

Strengthening the capacity of young people to reduce gun violence in their communities	South Africa
Safeguarding the rights of older women and men	Malawi
Enabling young people to shape the future	Mozambique
Strengthening inclusion of young people's voices in violence prevention and programming	Jamaica
Strengthening the implementation of legislation to end violence against women and girls	Nigeria
Protecting the rights of the transgender community through legislative development	Pakistan
Strengthening implementation of the laws that address violence against women	India
Promoting increased women's representation in government	Vanuatu
Strengthening the capacity of transgender and intersex persons to advocate for protection of their rights	South Africa
Promoting the rights of street children	Bangladesh
Strengthening the voices of communities to participate in the inland fisheries policy process	South Africa
Strengthening advocacy for better implementation of the Prevention of Atrocities Act	India
Promoting women's rights to inheritance	Pakistan
Empowering community paralegals to address statelessness	Malaysia
Helping rural women engage in land reform	South Africa
Strengthening the inclusion of i-Kiribati civic voices in climate change induced displacement policies	Kiribati
Ensuring the inclusive education of children with disabilities in Guyana and Jamaica	Guyana and Jamaica
Family caregiving and public policy in India: creating new opportunities for recognition and support	India
Amplifying the voices of women community leaders in city-planning processes in India	India
Advocating for better health for people living with HIV and people who use drugs	Mauritius
Increasing access to sexual and reproductive health rights and HIV services for women and adolescent girls	Nigeria
Enhancing the ability of civil society to monitor the implementation of the Tonga Strategic Development Framework	Tonga
Enhancing localisation of the Papua New Guinea informal economy act	Papua New Guinea
Ensuring the right to health for vulnerable people	Kenya
Strengthening legislation and policy development on natural resource management	Papua New Guinea

Creative Grants

Enhancing skills and techniques of literary artists in Fiji	Fiji
Inspiring and developing non-fiction writers in Kiribati	Kiribati
Building a national literature through discussion, competition and collaboration	Papua New Guinea
Developing the skills of writers to advocate around issues of health	Solomon Islands
Developing skills and self-expression through mural design, and highlighting the importance of visual art	Tonga
Developing musical compositions to support climate change advocacy	Vanuatu



Flag bearers from the Pacific Islands at the 2022 Commonwealth Day service at Westminster Abbey, London

