



Commonwealth
Foundation

Annual Report

2019-2020

The Commonwealth Foundation is an intergovernmental organisation, established by Member States of the Commonwealth. Uniquely placed at the interface between government and civil society, the Foundation works to support civil society engagement in shaping the policies and decisions that affect people's lives.

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Introduction from the Director-General

It is with great pleasure that I introduce the 2019-2020 Annual Report of the Commonwealth Foundation. After almost 12 months at the helm as Director-General, I am proud to present this record of a well-spent, if challenging year.

The report confirms that, despite significant operational limitations since February, much of the Foundation's planned work for this year has been completed to the highest standards. Our Grants programme, for example, has continued uninterrupted, as has the Commonwealth Short Story Prize, which this year received a record number and breadth of entries. As documented in this report, our work to advance participatory governance throughout the Commonwealth has led to real and lasting change, including within Commonwealth Ministerial processes. And our work on inclusion of lesser heard voices in complex areas such as peace processes and climate justice has helped drive shifts in attitudes and approaches. We have forged new and stronger partnerships, most critically with our Commonwealth partners and colleagues. And we have continued to work on strengthening our own internal procedures: prioritising transparency and accountability in all aspects of our work.

As Director-General, I have many reasons to be proud of the Foundation and its contribution to the mission of the Commonwealth. I am especially appreciative of its demonstrated capacity to adapt and change in a difficult and dynamic environment. The onset of the COVID-19 emergency was sudden and profound for everyone. Within the Foundation it required the team to develop new ways of thinking and working.

Thus far, the results have been impressive. Within our Grants programme for example, changes were quickly made to allow the delivery of tailored, short-term support to partners, so they are best positioned to continue working as the situation normalises. In late March, Commonwealth Writers launched a new online platform #StoriesToConnectUs for civil society across the Commonwealth to share pandemic-related experiences and insights.



As I wrote to colleagues and partners back in March, we will have much time ahead to reflect on what COVID-19 has revealed to us – about ourselves, our world, and our relationship with each other. Undoubtedly this will lead to some hard questions that are directly relevant to the Foundation and its work. For example: have our civil society structures and networks proved sufficiently resilient to sustain our countries and communities through these difficult times? Have our governments provided the courageous leadership that we have a right to expect? And have we, as individuals, demonstrated the compassion, generosity and gratitude that we would want to receive from others?

Looking ahead, the Foundation's team has worked diligently to develop a programme for the coming year that directly engages with these questions, and with the challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead.

As nations and communities strive to rebuild, civil society engagement will be vital to ensuring the emergence and nurturing of decent, inclusive societies. It follows that our core mission – to support the active, constructive participation of the people in governance – has never been more important, or more urgent.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Anne Gallagher'.

Dr. Anne T. Gallagher AO
Director-General

'We have forged new and stronger partnerships, most critically with our Commonwealth partners and colleagues. And we have continued to work on strengthening our own internal procedures: prioritising transparency and accountability in all aspects of our work.'

Welcome from the Chair

As Chair of the Foundation's Board of Governors, I am delighted to welcome this report. 2019-2020 has been a year to remember for many reasons. In June 2019, Dr Anne Gallagher commenced her appointment as Director-General and, in early January of this year, Mr Shem Ochola assumed office as Deputy Director-General. Under Anne and Shem's leadership I have no doubt that the Foundation will continue its strong record of achievement, learning and growth.

Also during this reporting period, H.E. Mr Milton Inniss, High Commissioner of Barbados, assumed Chairmanship of the Board's Executive Committee. On behalf of the Board I express our gratitude to High Commissioner Inniss for taking on this important leadership role.

The Commonwealth Foundation has a proud tradition of involving civil society in its governance structures and I am especially pleased to welcome the new cohort of Civil Society Advisory Governors to our Board: Goretti Kyomuhendo (Africa); Kalpana Kannabiran (Asia); Marlene Attzs (Caribbean); Celia Wade-Brown (Pacific); and Ajay Chhabra (Europe). Each of the five new members brings to the Foundation complementary skills and a diversity of cultural experiences. Together, they bring to the deliberations of the Board a vital resource of advice and guidance.

The unique challenges confronted by the whole world over the past several months will leave deep scars on our lives and livelihoods and undoubtedly change the operating landscape of the Foundation in the months and years ahead. I echo Dr Gallagher's reminder that our central mission – to elevate and support the role of civil society throughout the Commonwealth – is more relevant today than ever. The constructive engagement of civil society in governance will be critical to the future health of our communities, our countries, and our Commonwealth. I encourage the Foundation team to be daring and visionary in executing its mission in this new and challenging world. As it navigates its way forward, I am especially pleased to note the stronger relationships that have been nurtured with



'The unique challenges confronted by the whole world over the past several months will leave deep scars on our lives and livelihoods and undoubtedly change the operating landscape of the Foundation in the months and years ahead.'

key Commonwealth partners, not least the Secretariat. The Commonwealth is indeed one family and it is appropriate that we find ways to work even more closely with each other.

I close by affirming the vital role played by the Member States. It is your financial contributions, your guidance, your involvement that have made possible the achievements detailed in this report. As the outgoing Chair I am confident that the Foundation can count on even greater levels of support into the future. It is also my dear hope that the very few Commonwealth Member States who are not yet members of the Foundation, will join and play an active role in its development and growth.

Shree Baboo Chekitan Servansing
Chair

'I encourage the Foundation team to be daring and visionary in executing its mission in this new and challenging world.'

Chair of the Executive Committee



H.E. Mr Milton Inniss, High Commissioner of Barbados

Civil Society Advisory Governors



Civil Society Advisory Governors (Left-Right). Goretti Kyomuhendo (Africa); Kalpana Kannabiran (Asia); Marlene Attzs (Caribbean); Celia Wade-Brown (Pacific); and Ajay Chhabra (Europe).

Our story

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

As one of the three intergovernmental pillars of the Commonwealth, the Foundation's task is to bring the voice of civil society into all aspects of governance: supporting civil society engagement in shaping the policies and decisions that affect people's lives.

This support is delivered through grant-making, capacity development and cultural initiatives underpinned by the Commonwealth Writers programme.

'Inclusive, transparent and accountable governance' are the ideals that guide our work. The stories in this report reflect our commitment to amplifying less-heard voices from all corners of the Commonwealth: from the smallest rural community to the largest international forum.



Our focus

The Foundation’s mandate is a broad one and, in order to ensure impact and effectiveness, we have worked hard to identify areas of work that meet real needs and harness our unique strengths. The present report covers the penultimate year of our current strategic plan, which began in 2017 and will be completed mid-2021.

Participatory governance

Within its commitment to supporting people’s participation in democracy and development, the 2017-2021 strategic plan established ‘participatory governance’ as the umbrella under which the Foundation would develop and implement its work for the four-year period. In this context, ‘participatory governance’ specifically refers to the engagement of the people in shaping the decisions, institutions, laws and policies that affect their lives.

The idea of participatory governance recognises that such engagement affirms the legitimacy of the governance process. This is especially the case when it deliberately seeks to include those whose voices might not otherwise be heard. More practically, participatory governance helps to shape governance processes in ways that actively support the wellbeing of individuals and communities.

‘Stronger civic voices’

The current strategic plan is geared towards supporting ‘stronger civic voices’: a recognition that without strong voices, including those voices that are too often on the margins, genuinely participatory and accountable governance will remain elusive. Support to civic voices cuts across all aspects of the Foundation’s work, including:

Capacity development to support civil society groups to: (i) establish and network; (ii) shape policy; (iii) hold key institutions to account including through monitoring government action in key areas; (iv) communicate and learn from each other; and (v) secure meaningful access to influential policy spaces and platforms.

Support to amplify less-heard voices through: (i) strengthening their ability to tell stories; and (ii) providing avenues and platforms for stories to be heard.

Two overarching themes cut across all aspects of the Foundation’s work:

Gender and inclusion

The Foundation’s commitment to less-heard voices and to improving participation is informed by a recognition that social structures and systems are not neutral: rather, they are shaped by (and operate within) power dynamics that too often reflect and perpetuate inequality and discrimination. These power dynamics shape the spaces within which people live, the constraints on their lives, and the ways in which they are able to participate in and influence wider social life.

In all aspects of its work, the Foundation explicitly recognises gender as a major basis of oppression, inequality and exclusion. Our programming in particular reflects an understanding that many Commonwealth citizens are living at the intersections of overlapping systems of privilege and oppression. If we are to make real progress towards inclusion, then we must pay close attention to the many factors that influence the capability of individuals and communities to shape lives of value and meaning.

A commitment to learning

The 2017-2021 strategy explicitly affirms the identity of the Foundation as a ‘learning organisation’. In other words, we take deliberate steps to learn from what we do: to carefully document that learning; and to incorporate it into all aspects of our organisation with the goal of improving our work and the delivery of our programmes. Our commitment to learning extends to our partners: we actively seek out opportunities to learn from them – and to provide them with opportunities to learn from each other, as well as from us.

Our place in the Commonwealth family

An intergovernmental organisation at the service of the people of the Commonwealth

The Foundation occupies one of the Commonwealth's three intergovernmental pillars, standing alongside the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth of Learning. Our intergovernmental status is critical to our identity and to how we work. It is our Member States who oversee and guide the Foundation's strategic direction, workplan and budget. It is the assessed contributions of our Member States that fund Foundation programmes and activities. And it is to our Member States, first and foremost, that we are accountable. Together with our intergovernmental identity, the Foundation's unique mandate requires us to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of Commonwealth civil society: to place ourselves firmly in the service of the 2.3 billion members of the Commonwealth family.

Commonwealth Charter

These 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.' Those values and principles set out in the Commonwealth Charter – including democracy, human rights, good governance and the rule of law, gender equality and women's empowerment, environmental protection, and access to basic services – also guide the Foundation in both the development and delivery of its programmes and activities.



The Commonwealth Charter was agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government on 14 December 2012
© Commonwealth Secretariat

Our work with the Commonwealth Secretariat

The Foundation is fortunate to occupy, at Marlborough House, the same premises as our sister organisation, the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec). Over the period covered by this report, substantial progress has been made in strengthening this critical relationship. The Secretary-General and the Foundation's Director-General have actively sought out opportunities to meet and to present publicly together, including in briefings to the Commonwealth's highly valued accredited organisations.

Planning for CHOGM and related meetings including the Commonwealth People's Forum and civil society roundtable with Foreign Ministers provided additional opportunities for cooperation between ComSec and the Foundation. Other examples of cooperation during the reporting period include: (i) the Director-General's involvement in the ComSec assessment mission leading up to the re-entry of the Maldives into the Commonwealth; (ii) co-convening (with both ComSec and the Commonwealth of Learning) the annual Diplomats Induction programme; and (iii) collaboration aimed at securing civil society input into Commonwealth ministerial processes. Moving forward, the Foundation is working with ComSec to further strengthen this critical alliance: identifying specific areas and opportunities for us to collaborate over the coming year.

'The Commonwealth Foundation plays a vital role in mobilising and strengthening the capacity of civil society to develop partnerships and connections among the nations and governments of the Commonwealth and our 2.4 billion people. A continuing and fruitful relationship of mutual support between the Secretariat and the Foundation is vital to developing our respective work in innovative ways as we respond to fresh circumstances and emerging needs. So too are leadership and partnership, and as we fulfil the Commonwealth responsibilities entrusted to us by Heads of Government, Dr Gallagher and I are committed to delivering a common future by innovating, connecting and transforming. We do so through mutual support to one another, and by jointly encouraging and facilitating deeper cooperation and engagement among those we serve.'

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC, Commonwealth Secretary-General



Anne T. Gallagher AO (left) meets Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC on her appointment as Director-General of the Commonwealth Foundation © Commonwealth Secretariat

Where we work

| Programme activity | Location |
|--|------------------------------|
| Commonwealth Short Story Prize | Commonwealth-wide |
| Craft development workshops for storytellers | Guyana and Cyprus |
| <i>adda</i> : connecting emerging writers through online storytelling | Commonwealth-wide |
| Amplifying less-heard voices: translation and anthologies | South and South-East Asia |
| Enhancing the capacity of women to engage in peace processes | Cyprus and Commonwealth-wide |
| Advocating for gender equality in West Africa | Ghana and Sierra Leone |
| Convening practitioners to improve understanding of the impact of climate change on women in the Caribbean | Jamaica and Caribbean |
| Bringing civil society into the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting | Kenya and Commonwealth-wide |
| Learning exchange on disability rights and accountable governance | India |

| Grants completed and appraised in 2019-2020 | |
|---|-------------------------|
| Empowering communities to influence policy for improved urban settlements | Sri Lanka |
| Generating public awareness to increase women's participation in governance | India |
| Strengthening indigenous stewardship of natural resources | Malaysia |
| Collaborating to monitor government action on gender equality | Southern Africa |
| Improving youth participation in public policymaking | Ghana |
| Shaping mental health legislation | Botswana and Seychelles |
| Monitoring the improvement of human rights | Malaysia |

| Ongoing grants | |
|---|--------------|
| 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 and co-manage fisheries resources | 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 |

| Ongoing grants | |
|---|--------------------|
| Strengthening the inclusion of i-Kiribati civic voices in migration and climate change 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 |
| Promoting rights of persons with disabilities through community-led initiatives in Bangladesh | Bangladesh |
| 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 |
| Realising the right of health in the sustainable development goals | India and Malaysia |
| Strengthening governance and democracy in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with the participation of young women | Pakistan |
| Increasing access to sexual and reproductive health rights and HIV services for women and adolescent girls | Nigeria |
| Strengthening women's participation in governance in Balochistan | Pakistan |
| 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 |
| Accelerating national commitments to reduce non-communicable diseases | India |
| Strengthening legislation and policy development on natural resource management | Papua New Guinea |
| Strengthening the capacity of civil society to advocate for the rights of young people with disabilities | Kenya |
| Empowering women living in institutional settings | Malta |
| Building civil society organisations' capacity to advocate for Right to Information | Kenya |
| Promoting education for all in Quetta | Pakistan |
| Strengthening statutory regulation for civil society organisations | Nigeria |
| Improving the environment and livelihoods of waste pickers | South Africa |

Our programmes and highlights

Introduction from the Deputy Director-General

As the incoming Deputy Director-General, I am very pleased to present this part of our Annual Report: an overview of Foundation's work and achievements over the past year. This report is delivered under the Foundation's 2017-2021 strategic plan and reflects the emphasis of that strategy on supporting the development of stronger civic voices and civil society.



In continuing to sharpen our approach, the Foundation has paid increasing attention to building internal capacity to respond creatively and flexibly in a complex operating environment through innovation and adaptability. This has proved to be vital as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to alter schedules and change modes of implementation and delivery. We are acutely aware that the impact will be felt disproportionately by our Commonwealth Member States that are already facing great economic, social and environmental challenges. The challenges ahead will require substantial policy and institutional reforms. Without change, there is a real risk that the crisis will lead to greater inequality and instability, that it will stall progress towards achievement of peaceful and inclusive societies.

The Foundation is aware that its mandate: to support civil society throughout the Commonwealth, is especially relevant and important at this time. Civil society must be – and must be seen to be – a partner and ally to governments: working together to forge a path towards a more positive future. The Foundation is seeking to pivot its work, during the final year of the current strategy, to ensure that it is able to make a meaningful contribution to Commonwealth civil society as communities and countries repair and recover from the global pandemic.

In the coming year we will also undertake a comprehensive evaluation of the current strategy 2017-2021, using the results to inform the development of the new strategic plan 2021-2025. The Foundation will work hard to affirm its relevance and importance for all Commonwealth countries. To that end we will redouble our outreach efforts, especially in regions that are currently underserved. Alongside this will be our re-energized engagement with our Member State High Commissions, as well as in intergovernmental policy spaces.

'Without change, there is a real risk that the crisis will lead to greater inequality and instability, that it will stall progress towards achievement of peaceful and inclusive societies.'

The reporting year has indeed been one of significant achievement for the Foundation. I take this opportunity to draw attention to several highlights that I have found especially inspirational:

- This year's Commonwealth Short Story Prize received the highest number of entries from the widest reach of countries.
- The Foundation initiated the first-ever civil society roundtable ahead of the 12th Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting in September 2019, demonstrating to our Commonwealth partners that civil society is a critical partner in policy development. This significant advance in participatory governance will be a permanent part of future meetings.
- Grant projects appraised this year demonstrate civil society achievements in: improving the quality of life for people in informal settlements and indigenous communities; influencing and shaping national policy and its implementation; and bringing human rights, gender equality and mental health further up government's agenda.

As we move into a new year of work, I am sure that I speak on behalf of all colleagues when I say that, despite great challenges, we remain optimistic and confident that we will be able to continue our service to the people of the Commonwealth.



Shem Ochola
Deputy Director-General

'Civil society must be – and must be seen to be – a partner and ally to governments: working together to forge a path towards a more positive future.'



Shem Ochola (centre) hands out certificates of participation to learning exchange participants, India, February 2020

The Foundation sets aside £1,000,000 each year for the Grants programme, awarding civil society organisations from Member States up to £200,000 over a period of up to four years. Our grants support innovative project ideas and approaches that seek to strengthen the ability of civic voices to engage with governments and that have the potential to improve governance and development outcomes through their active participation.

The selection process is rigorous and regularly refined to ensure continuous improvement. An internal review process results in a final list of applications that is submitted to the Foundation's Grants Committee. Member States on this Committee make the final decision on which projects to support.

Eight new civil society organisations (from Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Pakistan, South Africa, and Vanuatu) were awarded grants in June 2019, bringing the total grant portfolio for the 2019-2020 year to 29 projects. In October 2019, representatives from each new grantee organisation participated in a monitoring, evaluation and learning workshop at Marlborough House. Member State representatives met with grantees during this workshop: a unique opportunity for engagement between government and civil society that was highly appreciated on both sides.

Seven completed projects were appraised during this period. Of these grants, YES Ghana's work to develop a shadow national youth policy and the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation's project to reform mental health legislation in Botswana and Seychelles deserve special mention because of their demonstrated impact on national policy.

The selection process for this year's grants is currently underway with the Grants committee scheduled to meet in June 2020.

Key achievements during this reporting period:

- The Grants programme has seen a steady increase in the quantity and quality of applications. This year, 662 grant applications were received; an increase of 30 per cent on the previous year.
- Our grants portfolio supports communities from all reaches of the Commonwealth to engage with government on some of the most pressing issues of our time: migration, climate change, environmental protection and inclusion of persons with disabilities.
- The grants portfolio in the Pacific was enhanced with the addition of a project in Vanuatu; an initiative to increase women's political representation, organised by Further Arts, Vanuatu. This was particularly rewarding following Vanuatu's entry into the Commonwealth Foundation family in 2018.

The following is a selection of projects that have been supported by the Foundation through our Grants programme. Each was completed and appraised during the reporting period.

Empowering communities to influence policy for improved urban settlements

Sri Lanka, 2014-2017

The rate of population growth in Colombo exceeds the city's capacity to build sufficient housing, leading to an increase in informal settlements with poor living conditions. With Foundation support, REALL and its partner organisation, Sevanatha Urban Resource Centre formed community development councils and established partnerships with the Colombo Municipal Council to improve settlements across the city.

By empowering people with a collective community voice, the project was successful in leveraging funds for 40 infrastructure improvement projects, providing vital facilities such as sanitation, water and other basic services which have improved the quality of life in informal settlements across Colombo.

Generating public awareness to increase women's participation in governance

India, 2016-2019



The Women's Reservation Bill recognises that women in India are under-represented in governance and proposes to reserve one third of all seats for women in national and

state legislative assemblies. The Centre for Social Research, with support from the Foundation, developed an extensive media campaign to generate awareness of the contribution women make to policy processes and to garner support for the Bill's future passage.

The Centre for Social Research convened two national and five state press conferences to improve both public and governmental understanding of the importance of women's participation in political decision making. The campaign drew strong media attention, with 285 national and regional newspaper mentions. The Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha (Upper House of Parliament) in 2010. It is hoped that advocacy efforts throughout this project have contributed to the momentum that will support its successful passage through the Lok Sabha (Lower House).

Ranjana Kumari, Director of the Centre for Social Research, campaigns for greater representation of women in parliament in New Delhi, India © The Centre for Social Research

Strengthening indigenous stewardship of natural resources

Malaysia, 2014-2018

Indigenous communities in the Eastern Malaysian state of Sabah play a critical role in the stewardship of the region's abundant ecological and natural resources. With support from the Foundation, the PACOS Trust improved the resilience of traditional practices and raised awareness of the value of this expertise, leading to greater recognition of indigenous involvement in policy formation and the development of tools to facilitate that engagement.

PACOS Trust held a series of dialogues between indigenous communities, judges, government and policy makers to highlight this need and to raise awareness of the impact of large-scale developments on the environment and communities in Sabah, Malaysia. As a result, the Minister of Laws and Native Affairs promised a state government review of development projects affecting indigenous communities as well as a review of the legal framework as it relates to indigenous peoples.

The grant supported the development of protocols which documented good practices, plans and priorities of indigenous communities. The tools have been endorsed by the Chief



Justice and indigenous leaders and are expected to be integrated into the legal system. PACOS Trust has since issued a guidebook to help other indigenous communities develop their own community protocols.

Sabah, Malaysia
© Ryan 'O'Neil

Collaborating to monitor government action on gender equality

Southern Africa, 2015-2018

In 2008, Southern African governments adopted the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. A grant to Gender Links enabled civil society organisations from eight Southern African countries to participate in the drafting of a revised Gender Protocol and to follow up on its implementation using a 'Gender Barometer'.

Gender Links acts as Secretariat of the SADC Gender Protocol Alliance, which is made up of civil society organisations from 15 countries and 9 regional networks. Gender Links participated in a taskforce comprising the SADC Gender Unit,

national gender ministries and UN Women, ensuring that the voice of civil society was included in revisions to the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.

The Protocol entered into force in 2018. It has now been adopted by 14 of the 16 Member States. Implementation is of course critical, and the Foundation's support also allowed Gender Links to: (i) contribute to the development of an Implementation Framework; (ii) track implementation progress of the Protocol at national level, involving annual follow-up data collection, analysis and dissemination, through a 'Gender Barometer'.

Improving youth participation in public policymaking

Ghana, 2015-2018



Ghana adopted its National Youth Policy in 2010, acknowledging the potential for young people to participate effectively in the national development agenda. A grant from the Foundation enabled YES Ghana to increase youth participation in shaping the development policy discourse and develop a

shadow youth policy. In the process, young people were trained to advocate for improvements in both policy review and implementation.

YES Ghana strengthened the membership of its 'Voices of Youth Coalition' to include 426 youth groups and organisations. Together they developed a shadow national youth policy, making a collective contribution to the review of the 2010 policy. The grant enabled a series of youth policy dialogues that brought together more than 1500 participants, including representatives of the government's National Youth Authority, as well as UN agencies, international and national organisations and the private sector.

Recommendations have been acknowledged by the government and YES Ghana (representing the Voice of Youth Coalition) is now a key actor in the committee responsible for drafting the new policy.

Youth gather to participate in a YES Ghana policy dialogue

Shaping mental health legislation

Botswana and Seychelles, 2014-2018

With support from the Foundation, the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation (CNMF) reviewed and updated mental health legislation in Botswana and Seychelles to align national legal frameworks with new international human rights standards.

The CNMF facilitated the reform of mental health legislation in both Botswana and Seychelles to ensure alliance with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In Botswana, the draft bill is currently being reviewed by the government. In Seychelles, the draft has been submitted to Parliament, with the government publicly acknowledging that Commonwealth support has been critical throughout this process.

'We appreciate immensely the support of the Commonwealth Foundation, as well as the Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation and the Commonwealth family in general in the drafting of our new [mental health] legislation.'

Jean-Paul Adam, Minister of Health, Geneva, 2019

Monitoring the improvement of human rights

Malaysia, 2015-2018

The UN's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process provides a unique opportunity for civil society and governments to collaborate in advancing their country's human rights agenda. With support from the Foundation, EMPOWER worked with the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs (COMANGO) to monitor the implementation of UPR recommendations.

COMANGO participated in a series of meetings with the Government of Malaysia to discuss implementation of UPR recommendations and ways to improve monitoring. Affirming the importance of civil society engagement, COMANGO was invited onto a working group, alongside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Human Rights Commission of Malaysia and UN Office Malaysia.

The working group developed a UPR monitoring matrix which is now being used by government ministries and others to monitor



Civil society representatives gather in Malaysia to learn how to support the implementation of human rights recommendations made under the Universal Periodic Review
© EMPOWER

implementation of international human rights obligations, as well as progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. It is notable that the process also led to an overall strengthening of working relations between the government and human rights groups, including those working on LGBTIQ rights.

Commonwealth Writers is the Foundation's cultural initiative: working to inspire and connect writers and storytellers across all regions of the Commonwealth, bringing personal stories to a global audience. This programme enables individuals to develop their craft and gain access to spaces where their voice can be heard.

The Commonwealth Short Story Prize, launched in 2012, attracts more than 5000 entries each year, representing all Commonwealth regions. Stories often come from countries with little or no publishing infrastructure and are invited in 11 languages as well as translated into English from any language.

Commonwealth Writers works to develop the craft of writers, filmmakers and storytellers through workshops and mentoring. Collaboration with translators provides opportunities for writers of languages other than English. Our online magazine, *adda*, offers a platform for a growing community of writers to share unpublished stories with the world, helping to realise our commitment to amplifying less-heard voices. Partnerships with publishers have enabled the work of new writers to be shared through published anthologies.

'Though we share many elements of a complex history, we are divided by geography, and Commonwealth Writers provides diverse spaces for the exchange of ideas. I have found Commonwealth Writers invaluable for my writing life.'

Diana McCaulay, Jamaican regional winner of the Commonwealth Short Story Prize

Key achievements during this reporting period:

- The Commonwealth Short Story Prize has continued its positive growth trajectory: the 2020 prize attracted entries from 49 countries. Increased submissions over the previous year were recorded from 26 countries. Entries received in a language other than English doubled from last year. Entries from the Caribbean increased by over 10 per cent following targeted outreach efforts over the past year. The Gambia is represented on the shortlist for the first time this year.
- Creative expression was a significant dimension in the Commonwealth People's Forum in London in 2018. Poets and performers from Malaysia, New Zealand/Tonga, St Lucia, and diaspora communities in the UK provided a fresh perspective and energised audiences. *Poem For The Commonwealth*, by Karlo Mila, which was commissioned by Commonwealth Writers for the Forum, was later quoted during this year's televised Commonwealth Day Service at Westminster Abbey.
- *We Mark Your Memory*, produced by Commonwealth Writers to mark the centenary of the abolition of indenture has emerged as the publisher's best-selling anthology. Launched in 2018, it features 28 writers from around the Commonwealth (Guyana, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Trinidad and Tobago, UK). The anthology has brought together diasporas from around the Commonwealth, inspired two theatre productions, and been the stimulus for each of the past two annual Gafoor Lectures on Indentureship Studies at the University of London.

Commonwealth Short Story Prize: recognising literary excellence



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. The prize continues to grow, in 2020 reaching more new writers from more countries, literary traditions and languages. Reflecting the Foundation's staunch commitment to amplifying lesser-heard voices, it is now open to entries in 11 languages (Bengali, Chinese, English, French, Greek, Kiswahili, Malay, Portuguese, Samoan, Tamil and Turkish), as well as translated entries.

The 2019 prize was awarded, at the Maison de la littérature in Quebec City, Canada, to Cypriot writer, Constantia Soteriou for a story that was submitted in Greek and translated into English by Cypriot translator Lina Protopapa. Beyond the prize, past winners and other shortlisted writers have achieved many successes this year: four writers have published works, two writers were shortlisted for the 2019 BBC National Short Story Award and two writers were included in Granta's top ten fiction reads of 2019. The Caribbean regional winner, Alexia Tolas, has been longlisted for the 2020 Sunday Times Short Story Award. Alexia's story was developed following a craft development workshop and subsequent mentoring organised by Commonwealth Writers.

The 2020 shortlist has just been announced. As part of our COVID-19 adaptation plans, the award ceremony will take place online. The Foundation produced a brief film of the shortlisted authors sharing their personal insights into the impact of the virus on their lives and communities.

Constantia Soteriou gives her acceptance speech at the Maison de la littérature in Quebec City, Canada, July 2019 © Helene Bouffard

Craft development throughout the Commonwealth

Craft development for new and emerging Commonwealth voices is an important part of the Commonwealth Writers programme. During the year, the Foundation supported craft development workshops on fiction, performance poetry and playwrighting in Cyprus and Guyana, strengthening the storytelling capacity of 40 new and emerging writers.

'From the shortlist announcement, to the Commonwealth Writers workshop and now the formation of the Writers' Group, the people at Stabroek News took notice and were inspired to lend support to local writers.'

Kevin Garbaran, Guyana



Preparatory work on a similar initiative for early-career filmmakers in the Caribbean is underway. A film skills development workshop will take place in the coming year, with participants being given the opportunity to apply for £8000 bursaries that will enable them to make a short film to show at local and international film festivals.

Adele Dube and Costantia Manoli at the Commonwealth Writers Workshop in Nicosia, Cyprus, June 2019 © Spyros Christofi

adda: connecting emerging writers through online storytelling

New and emerging writers struggle to get their work out into the world. The Foundation's online magazine *adda* has become an important platform for emerging talent and lesser-heard narratives from across the Commonwealth.

This year saw an increase in *adda*'s scope: more writers, from more diverse backgrounds, from more Commonwealth countries. The range of issues tackled by *adda*'s talented writers continues to broaden: gender-based violence (*The Bride, Dancing With Ma*), identity (*Knowing Time, To An American Stranger, By Way of An Answer*), conflict (*Pathi and I, Deserted*), labour, migration, race (*The Black Man's Burden – Not for Rudyard Kipling*), and politics (*How to Marry an African President*). Readership has also increased: up over 40 per cent from last year's figures.

'[adda is] a great platform for a range of eclectic stories to be showcased...I am also glad that I got to write something that wasn't bound by most themes that plague publications or a set-template magazines expect you to follow, so it was very freeing.'

Shikha Tripathi, Indian writer and environmentalist

Amplifying less-heard voices: translation and anthologies

The Commonwealth is home to rich and diverse linguistic traditions. Translation has the potential to deepen the connections within and between Commonwealth communities. The Foundation continues to prioritise translation as an essential building block in amplifying voices that are not being heard – or that should be heard more widely.

During the year, the Foundation developed this initiative with local and international partners, working towards the publication of more translated works and future activities to support capacity development for translators and editors of translated texts.

Two anthologies of significant writing from across the Commonwealth were recently released. *We Mark Your Memory* (Peekash Edition), which dealt with indenture from multiple perspectives, was launched in Trinidad (April 2019) and Guyana (May 2019). *Nicosia Beyond Barriers: Voices from a Divided City* (Saqi Books), another Foundation-supported anthology bringing together diverse voices and experiences, launched in Cyprus (June 2019) and London (August 2019). The book has received considerable acclaim and was recently a finalist for the 2019-2020 People's Book Prize, a UK literary competition aimed at finding, supporting and promoting new and undiscovered works.



'These pieces of fiction, poetry, and journalism offer a cast of diverse narrators ... this book is perceptive and peppered with fresh detail... in ways large and small, they [the writers] question political orthodoxies about Cypriot identity.'
Times Literary Supplement, UK

Athol Williams reads from *We Mark Your Memory* during a panel event at the 8th edition of the Bangalore Literature Festival, November 2019 © Leo Kiss

Through this dedicated programme, the Foundation works to support the capacity of Commonwealth civil society to constructively participate in genuinely inclusive governance: in shaping the institutions, policies and practices that affect the lives of individuals and the communities within which they live. Capacity development takes a range of forms: from brokering access to critical platforms for policy development and decision making, to facilitating the development of coalitions that can work with government to effect real and lasting change.

The programme team works with partners to jointly plan, reflect, learn and adapt project approaches to improve governance and inclusion. In keeping with the Foundation's emphasis on addressing exclusion, gender equality and inclusion are overarching themes of the capacity development approach across a range of critical issues including peace processes, climate change programming and local governance.

Key achievements during this reporting period:

- The differentiated impacts of climate change were highlighted and explored by Caribbean civil society practitioners, who also had the opportunity to examine ways of making policy around climate change mitigation and adaptation more inclusive.
- For the first time, the Foundation organised a civil society roundtable ahead of the 12th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting. Policy priorities, developed at the roundtable, were presented to Commonwealth Ministers and Senior Officials. This engagement will be a permanent fixture of future meetings.
- Women peace-builders from around the Commonwealth came together to identify priorities to amplify the women's agenda for peace, in the process strengthening their networks and capacity to influence policy.
- Through multiple projects across a range of Commonwealth civil society organisations, the programme has fostered an increased awareness of the importance of addressing power imbalances and ensuring inclusion in policy processes.

Enhancing the capacity of women to engage in peace processes

Women shoulder complex burdens during conflict, and their involvement in peace processes has been shown to be vital to securing and sustaining peace. Through Security Council Resolution 1325, the international community has affirmed the critical importance of a gender perspective in ensuring that the special needs of women and girls are recognised during conflict and post-conflict repatriation, resettlement and reconstruction.

Building on a major theme of the 2018 Commonwealth People's Forum, the Foundation is supporting a network of diverse women peace

builders from 11 Commonwealth countries in their efforts to secure implementation of this international commitment. In February 2020 the second meeting of the coalition was convened in Malaysia, focusing specifically on expanding the conversation to include the voices of women of all ages and from all sections of society.

Also under this project, the Foundation supported coalition building as well as capacity development of women in Cyprus who are engaged in peace building. Progress towards the goal – more inclusive peace-building approaches and policies – is being carefully documented.

Advocating for gender equality in West Africa

Women in West Africa continue to face challenges making their collective voice heard in decision-making spaces. The Foundation is providing targeted guidance and support to the Network for Women's Rights (NETRIGHT) in Ghana and the Advocacy Movement Network (AMNET) in Sierra Leone, aimed at strengthening the capacity of rural women to engage more effectively in local policy processes. The project focuses specifically on inclusion, intergenerational dialogue and challenging discrimination.

A workshop in Ghana in February 2020 brought together 27 women to explore strategies for engaging with local governance structures. This group then went on to convene intergenerational dialogues within rural communities, reporting that these dialogues improved understanding between generations, laying the ground for more effective partnerships to secure real and lasting change.

In Sierra Leone, similar dialogues in rural communities, followed by radio discussions, are building broad-based support to address gender discrimination and enabling informal and



diverse coalitions of women to engage with each other and with local authorities on sensitive issues affecting their communities. Advocacy platforms have been set up in four districts to advance gender-specific actions based on public pledges.

Participating organisations from Ghana and Sierra Leone met Foundation staff during a coordination meeting

Convening practitioners to improve understanding of the impact of climate change on women in the Caribbean



Vulnerability to the impacts of climate change is shaped by a multitude of factors. The Commonwealth Foundation is supporting civil society groups in the Caribbean to understand the complex intersectional impact of climate change, especially on women and vulnerable communities, and to advocate effectively for the inclusion of less-heard voices in policy processes.

The Foundation's 'gender and climate change' project is delivered in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme in Barbados and the Institute for Gender and Development Studies at the University of the West Indies Mona Campus. During 2019, the Foundation supported the convening of a 'conversation' in Jamaica (the second in a series), where civil society climate change practitioners from across the region deepened their understanding of 'differentiated vulnerabilities', including through the lenses of gender and intersectionality.

Through a project partner based in Trinidad and Tobago that is working on mitigation strategies, the Foundation was able to support the piloting of a 'gender and climate change guidance tool', which had been designed by practitioners. The tool is available online.

Melrose Henry (left) represented the Amerindian People's Association and Mitchell Lay represented the Caribbean Network of Fisherfolk Organisations at the first 'conversation' in Barbados, June 2018
© Leo Kiss

Bringing civil society into the Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting

The Foundation prioritises its role in supporting – sometimes even brokering – constructive engagement between civil society and government including at international and Commonwealth levels. Working closely with the Commonwealth Secretariat and a local partner, the Foundation convened the inaugural civil society roundtable ahead of the 12th Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting (12WAMM) in Kenya, September 2019.

The Roundtable brought together 45 participants from all regions of the Commonwealth, with the goal of bringing civil society perspective into the 12WAMM's four priority areas: women's economic empowerment; women in leadership; ending violence against women and girls; gender and climate change. Participants delivered a comprehensive Communiqué to the Senior



Officials Meeting, which contributed directly to the development of the outcome statement of the Ministers Meeting. It was agreed that such involvement was valuable and would become a permanent fixture of future WAMMs.

Journalist and activist Nuong Faalong (Ghana) representing the Alliance for Women in Media Africa is interviewed by KTN News Kenya during the civil society roundtable, September 2019
© Government of Kenya

The mandate of this core programme is to capture, distil and share knowledge and learning to strengthen participatory governance practices and the visibility of the Foundation.

The programme brings together a range of functions critical to the Foundation's identity, coherence and effectiveness. These include the facility to learn internally; support for learning activities with partners; management of information and infrastructure; leadership of the Foundation's monitoring and evaluation work; and all aspects of our communications and outreach.

Key achievements during this reporting period:

- Ongoing improvements to the Foundation's monitoring and assessment practices; this support has been extended to our grant project partners at an annual workshop that helps new grantees improve understanding and skills around monitoring & evaluation, including their capacity to document and report results.
- The completion of two learning exchanges: bringing together grant project partners from 11 Commonwealth countries working on both health and disability rights. The exchanges yielded important insights for participants and provided a valuable opportunity for diverse organisations to connect with – and learn from – each other. The Foundation was also able to directly benefit through improved insights and strengthened relationships that have helped advance our work between partners from different Commonwealth regions.
- In the past year, we have mapped out a global network of spokespeople among our partners and have begun working closely with them to identify opportunities for interviews and opinion pieces. This has enabled us to further partners' advocacy goals while building our own profile and relationships in the media. Using this strategy, we have raised the voices of civil society partners in every Commonwealth region in features covering natural disasters, global governance, and gender equality.
- The Foundation has continued to deliver multimedia content across a range of online and traditional channels. Our willingness to experiment with different media, as well as explore the latest techniques in online promotion, have helped us reach new audiences. For example, an episode from our podcast series, Commonwealth Voices, was rebroadcast by the New Statesman in the UK in January 2020.

Learning together: sharing knowledge and ideas



The Foundation recognises that the partners it supports can learn a great deal from each other. Learning exchanges facilitated by the Foundation have proved to be a valuable opportunity for practitioners to interact directly with others working in a similar field, to share experiences and to build relationships for future collaboration.

A learning exchange on health rights and accountable governance was convened by the Foundation and Commonwealth partners in Geneva in May 2019. In February 2020, The Foundation brought together representatives from six of its grant partners for a learning exchange on disability rights and accountable governance. Fourteen participants from Bangladesh, Ghana, Guyana, India, Jamaica and Kenya attended the exchange in India, which was designed to provide a learning space for sharing lessons, peer-to-peer learning, teamwork and capacity building training.

‘The workshop has provided me with new strategies from partners in India and other countries on how to improve our relationships with government, international bodies and the media towards improving disability rights. I will be returning to Kenya with new knowledge and advocacy techniques that will benefit ongoing projects and the disability movement.’

Florence Kibruthu, Action Network for the Disabled (ANDY)

‘The DPO [Disabled People’s Organisations] sector is gaining momentum and strength in India. There is huge recognition from the government of the need to get the voices of DPOs heard to help determine the kind of change the government needs to make in its approach. It was a pleasure to share India’s experience with civil society organisations in the Commonwealth.’

V.S. Basavaraju, State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities in Karnataka

Tabitha Griffith represented The Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues Network at the Foundation’s learning exchange on health rights in Geneva, Switzerland, May 2018
© Helen Putsman

Outreach and visibility

A sharp focus on outreach and visibility over the past year has yielded strong dividends. We have ensured that our investments in communications build internal infrastructure and capacity.

All targets across social media were exceeded and the Foundation secured media coverage featuring its work and achievements in all the Commonwealth regions. Improved implementation of Facebook advertising enabled us to increase the downloads of our grants call guidelines by 500 per cent as compared to the previous year.

Efforts to secure longer form, comment pieces included an article in The News Minute from

Ambika Raja, one of the participants at the Foundation’s learning exchange on disability rights, held in India, on her experiences of the exchange and thoughts on the treatment of persons with disabilities in India and worldwide.

The Malay Mail and Penang Monthly published a news report and feature on the Foundation’s ‘Women, Peace, and Security’ roundtable in Penang, Malaysia. The Foundation also assisted a participant in drafting an article that covered concerns around the international framework governing women, peace, and security, which was accepted by two Sri Lankan outlets: Groundviews and the Daily Mirror.

Commonwealth People’s Forum

The Foundation is responsible for convening the biannual Commonwealth People’s Forum (CPF), immediately before the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). As the largest Commonwealth civil society gathering, CPF brings together hundreds of community leaders, writers, activists and advocates from all regions of the Commonwealth who are committed to improving the world.

The Forum was scheduled to be held over three days (22-24 June), immediately before this year’s CHOGM. That schedule has now been put on hold in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Foundation is standing by to learn the new dates and recalibrate its plans accordingly. Happily, much work has already been done in relation to conceptualising CPF 2020, as well as in identifying and confirming key participants. Programme development is also well advanced and has been highly participatory: involving Government of the Republic of Rwanda counterparts; an informal committee of civil society practitioners from all regions of the Commonwealth; and

Commonwealth Accredited Organisations. The draft programme’s major themes revolve strongly around justice, inclusion and accountability. It is hoped that the structure of CPF will encourage a brave interrogation of 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? And how do we work together to build – or refashion – our institutions so that they support a world that leaves no one behind?

The Foundation expects to further refine the programme over the coming months as part of a broader reorientation of CPF to reflect the new world within which it will take place. This relates to both substance (what are we going to focus on?) and delivery (how can we adapt to meet the new constraints?). While work has only just begun on this reorientation, it is clear that the current situation provides an important opportunity to make CPF even more inclusive and bring it even closer to the people of the Commonwealth.

Diplomats Induction programme

Each year, the Foundation jointly hosts the Diplomats Induction programme alongside the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth of Learning. This event provides an opportunity to build vital relationships with new appointees at London-based High Commissions and raise awareness of the mission of the Commonwealth and our work.

In November 2019, the Foundation fielded a larger than usual delegation to present on our programming, including representatives from the Office of the Directorate, the Grants programme, and Knowledge, Learning, and Communications. This enabled us to provide a more holistic picture of the Foundation’s work and respond comprehensively to questions raised by the 24 diplomats in attendance.

Her Excellency, Winnie Kiap of Papua New Guinea delivered a presentation to delegates on the Foundation’s governance structure and functioning. This was a clear demonstration of the constructive relationship that exists between the Foundation and its government partners. Her Excellency affirmed Member



States’ strong support for the work of the Foundation, and appreciation for its commitment to accountability and transparency.

Foundation staff joined 24 diplomats for the Diplomats Induction Programme, November 2019
© Commonwealth Secretariat

Our support services

The Foundation's support services team delivers critical functions relating to finance, operations and human resources. Over the past 12 months, the team has been strengthened to ensure that it is able to fully deliver on its contribution to ensuring a 'Foundation fit for purpose'.

This strengthening was the result of an in-depth internal evaluation of support services that was conducted in the last quarter of 2019. While the process is well advanced, some aspects, for example relating to travel and security, require further consideration and that will continue into the coming year.

The COVID-19 emergency created some significant challenges for the Foundation's team, with staff working at home from mid-March and Marlborough House remaining closed at the time of writing. Working closely with the Directorate, the Support Services team has helped to ensure the ongoing wellbeing and productivity of staff under these challenging conditions. This included the upgrading of our online conferencing facilities as well as hardware and software adjustments.

A strengthened system of regular meetings across the Foundation, which was rolled out in late 2019, has proved to be invaluable in nurturing a strong and unified team environment.

Staff learning and development

During the reporting period, the Foundation reviewed both its Learning and Development Policy and its performance appraisal system to ensure that staff continue to have the capacity to deliver against the strategic plan. New initiatives including interim appraisals and competency identification are ensuring that all staff are reaching their full potential and can perform at the optimum level.

The commitment to mainstreaming gender equality continues in all aspects of the Foundation's work. A scoping review was undertaken during the reporting period and the results are informing the production of practical guidance aimed at programmes, policies and procedures.

The annual staff survey was conducted with a new format of online questions and focus groups. This created a rich source of information and, in relation to learning and development, showed that 83 per cent of staff felt that the Foundation provided a learning environment where both knowledge and skills have grown through their work. Staff felt they had excellent opportunities for learning, both internally and externally, and gender mainstreaming knowledge is improving year on year.

Internship programme

The internship programme offers placements of up to 12 months for recent graduates in each of the Foundation's programme areas. Responsibilities involve project work, research, preparation of briefing papers, logistics, and administration.

This year, for the first time, an internship opportunity was created in the Directorate to prepare briefing notes and presentations; develop and maintain a database to support outreach; and liaise with the Executive Officer to ensure smooth running of the Directorate and Support Services team.

The Foundation prioritises professional development of its interns: encouraging them to participate in both internal and external learning opportunities and to rotate between teams to broaden their knowledge and skills. Before they move on from the Foundation, our interns are provided with support in interview skills and CV development, as well as networking contacts.

'Interning at the Foundation provided me with a solid base to kickstart my career in international affairs. I gained hands-on experience working with partners across the Commonwealth and knowledge of international development processes. I was treated like a valuable and equal member of the workforce and was given responsibilities that contributed towards the enhancement of my skills and competencies.'
Bryanne Hackman, Intern 2018
Now: Development Partnerships Officer, Ghana Commodity Exchange

Our finances

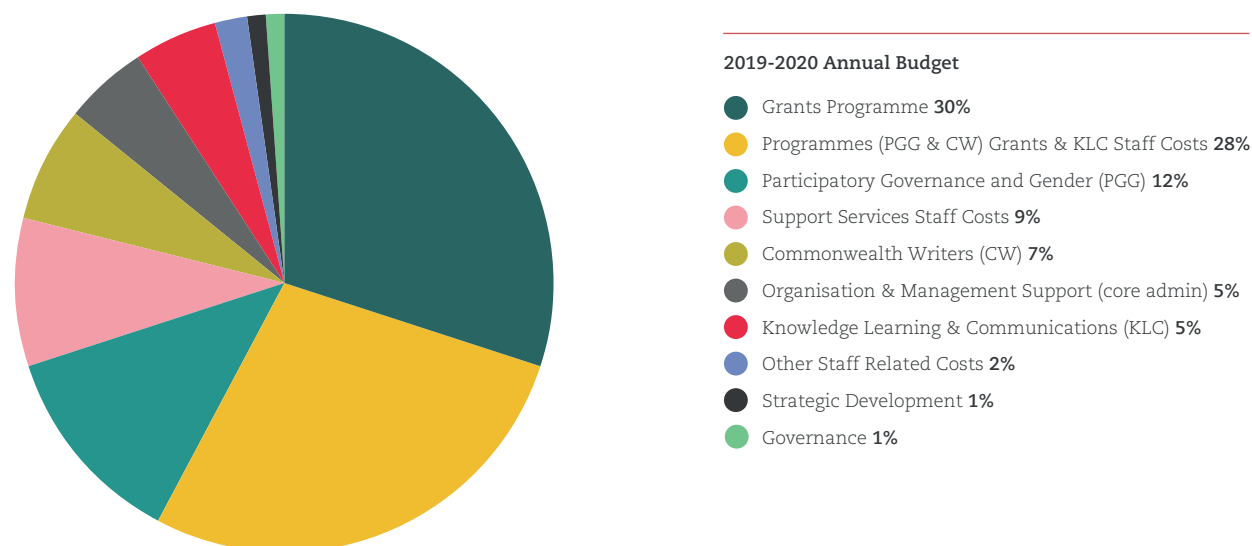
The Commonwealth Foundation is principally funded by assessed contributions from Member States. As custodian of public funds, the Foundation prioritises fiscal accountability and transparency. Expenditure is guided by the Foundation's robust results-based management approach. The Foundation's financial management continues to be highly assessed by its governing bodies.

This year the Foundation will once again meet our target of completing our external audit process within four months of the end of the financial year. As in previous years, the audit report will be published on the Foundation's website.

Summary of financial performance for financial year 2019-2020

Of the total approved budget of £3,300,042 for the financial year 2019-2020, the Commonwealth Foundation allocated the highest share of the budget expenditure to its programmes (including staff costs for the programmes) amounting to £2,748,901 (83.30%) and the remainder of the budget expenditure of £551,141 was allocated to the organisational core administration and staff costs (16.70%). Following the Board of Governors directive in 2013-2014, we continue to observe the 80:20 ratio of programme to overhead expenditure.

We do not expect that budget funds allocated to the programmes will be fully spent by the end of the financial year. This is mainly due to the cancellation of project activities scheduled from March 2020 as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic. While some funds will be carried over for activities that have been postponed, unspent funds from the programmes will largely be reallocated for a Post COVID-19 Special Grants Call. These grants will focus on support to civil society to engage with government on COVID-19 responses and post-pandemic recovery and rebuilding.



Arrears recovery project

The Foundation invoices its Member States for annual assessed contributions at regular intervals throughout the year. In practice there is a delay between invoicing and the receipt of funds and, on average, the Foundation will receive 90% of its invoiced contributions from Member States in any given year. As of end of April 2020, £2,921,355 (89.09%) had been received for financial year 2019-2020.

The Foundation has continued its efforts to recover long term arrears: accumulated monies owed in unpaid subscriptions from Member States. As of April 2020, the figure stood at £1,233,248 with £78,470 collected in the current financial year. Recovery of current and accumulated arrears will continue to be a high priority. To that end, the Directorate has commenced a programme of outreach to relevant Member States.

Extra-budgetary resources

Additional funds for discrete projects within the workplan are sought from external sources with consideration for guidelines set by the Board of Governors. This year £16,000 was secured from KfW Stiftung to augment financial resources for the Commonwealth Writers translation project. The Foundation is currently in discussion with several Member States on potential extra-budgetary contributions to special projects including the proposed 2020-2021 COVID-19 Special Grants Call.



Delegates at the Commonwealth People's
Forum 2018 © Vicki Couchman

