Commonwealth Foundation

CPF 2013 Assessment

April 2014

Contents

List of acronyms and abbreviations

CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
CCEM	Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers
COW	Committee of the Whole
CPF	Commonwealth People's Forum
CPF Declaration	Civil Society Perspectives for a Commonwealth Post 2015 Development Agenda
CSAC	Civil Society Advisory Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
IIGs	Institutions in Governance
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
RBM	Results Based Management
UNMC	United Nations Millennium Campaign
WAMM	Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting

1. Executive summary

This report assesses the 2013 Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) against its three stated objectives, appraises the forum as a mechanism for achieving or making progress towards broader Commonwealth Foundation results as outlined in the Foundation's performance framework, charts unplanned results, and identifies key challenges and practices worth repeating that will improve the planning and implementation of similar interventions in the future. The assessment was conducted in keeping with the Foundation's new commitment to results based management (RBM). Results are drawn from three main sources of data: 1) an online survey of delegates who attended the forum; 2) follow-up telephone interviews with a random selection of different delegate sub-groups from across the Commonwealth regions; and 3) staff focus group discussions. Written reports from staff and other stakeholders (e.g. The Foundation's Civil Society Advisory Committee) were used as additional sources of data.

Highlights of findings

1. The evidence has broadly shown that CPF 2013 was successful in meeting its stated objectives:

> a) The first objective of the forum was to develop Commonwealth post 2015 development perspectives and a series of recommendations. This was primarily achieved through the CPF Declaration: *Civil Society Perspectives for a Commonwealth Post 2015 Development Agenda*. Results from the online survey and telephone interviews show that the CPF Declaration is regarded highly by the delegates and it is being used by civil society organisations (CSOs) as part of their engagement with institutions in governance (IIGs).

> b) The second objective of the forum was to facilitate the sharing of lessons learned and good and fit practices on development and governance. Against this objective, CPF 2013 was very successful: 39 of the 41 delegates the Foundation interviewed over the telephone reported that they *did* share lessons learned and discuss good and fit practices with other delegates at the forum.
> c) Lastly, the Foundation sought to increase delegates' understanding of participatory governance. Over three quarters of the delegates who took part in telephone interviews reported that their understanding of participatory governance was improved at the forum.

2. The efficacy of CPF 2013 as a mechanism for making progress towards the Foundation's short term outcomes is less clear.

> a) The creative expression workshop was delivered and well-received by delegates, and there is initial evidence that it has inspired action related to participatory governance.

> b) In regards to the Foundation's capacity development outcome area, progress was made in identifying partner CSO networks and building regional agendas.

> c) Related to the governance outcome area, results were mixed. N*one* of the 79 delegates who took the online survey selected 'an opportunity to interact with government' as their primary objective for attending CPF 2013. Moreover, delegates who took part in telephone interviews were split in their impressions of the value of CPF 2013 as a space for civil society to interact with government representatives.

> d) Despite some positive feedback related to interaction with government, delegates were far more satisfied with the forum as a space for learning, sharing good practices, and engaging with other CSOs than as an opportunity for constructive engagement with government. This is very much in keeping with one of the result areas of the Foundation on promoting knowledge sharing and learning in development and participatory governance.

3. Finally, the political context in Sri Lanka was identified by respondents as an additional challenge along with the quantity and quality of engagement between CSOs and government representatives. Stemming from that, forging partnership agreements with host governments prior to convening forums and better leveraging the Foundation's relationship with the Commonwealth Secretariat to provide additional space for CSOs to engage with representatives at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) were identified as key ways for work going forward.

Moving forward

4. As the Foundation moves forward into the planning process for enhancing select Commonwealth as well as other spaces wherein constructive engagement can effectively take place, several principles are mentioned as fundamental for designing future forums for learning and constructive engagement. These include: 1) the Commonwealth Charter (2012) Clause 16; 2) The Accra Agenda for Action (2008); 3) The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2011); and the Foundation's own key principles of engagement.

Guided by these principles, and the Foundation's core tenets, the Foundation has identified a set of requirements needed to promote genuine dialogue when convening civil society for constructive engagement with IIGs. These are:

Civil society should be in the lead role when developing the agenda and the design of the process and methodology for the dialogue/forum/space

A participatory process should be followed in the design, implementation and post processes of the dialogue/forum/space

The dialogue/forum/space should be owned by CSOs in the host country and broader partner CSO networks across the Commonwealth with support from the Foundation

Civil society should have access to relevant government ministries and decision-makers

A consultation process that is inclusive, allows time for feedback to participants and integrates monitoring and sharing of results should be central to the design, implementation / delivery and assessment of the dialogue/forum/space

All parties have timely access to relevant information

The host government needs to guarantee a safe and secure space for dialogue and engagement

The Foundation is committed to facilitating spaces that build on these requirements and will best facilitate the achievement of results. These requirements, and further discussions with civil society partners will inform how forums are designed and delivered in the future.

2. Background

The CPF is the single largest opportunity for Commonwealth civil society to engage with one another and with IIGs. The forum is held every two years in the wings of the CHOGM. CPF 2013, with the theme, 'equitable growth and inclusive development: beyond 2015', was held in Hikkaduwa, Sri Lanka, from 10-14 November, 2013. It was attended by 240 participants (38% female, 62% male). Thirty-eight per cent of participants were Sri Lankan. In all, 54 countries from across all regions were represented (including seven non-Commonwealth countries). At the forum, 131 of the 240 participants were funded by the Commonwealth Foundation.

In the CPF cycle, the Sri Lankan forum was preceded by CPF 2011, which was held in Perth, Australia. The next CHOGM will be held in Malta in 2015.

CPF 2013 cost £396,808[1] to deliver. In the Perth CPF, sponsorship, donations and registration fees totaled to £140,769.00 compared to registration fees at CPF 2013 amounting to £9,122.00, with no sponsorships or donations received.

Commonwealth People's Forum Statement of income and expenditure

	CPF 2011 Australia	CPF 2013 Sri Lanka
Income	**£**	**£**
CPF Designated Reserve Fund	316,640	473,420[2]
Sponsorships/Donations	80,480	
Note: CPF 2011 sponsorship received from Rio Tinto & AusAid		
Registration Fees:	60,289	9,122
Note: AUD 550 for 2011 CPF; USD 120 for 2013 CPF		
Total income	**457,409**	**482,542**
Expenditure		
Total cost for delivery of CPF	**332,405**	**396,808**
Expenditure figures for 2013 CPF include all payments made up to and including 19/03/14.		

Figure 1 – CPF: Statement of income and expenditure

The programme at CPF 2013 included 16 workshops, plenaries and breakout sessions, eight fringe sessions, two learning journeys and a cultural event. In addition, there were ceremonies held to open and close the forum. Founder and President of MERCY Malaysia, Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, delivered the forum's keynote address.

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[1] Figure includes payments made up to and including 19/03/14.
[2] The designated reserve fund for CPF 2013 was significantly higher than in 2011 because there was a saving of approx. £125,004 from CPF 2011, which was carried over. Therefore, the CPF designated reserve fund for 2013 was made up of £125,004 + £99,996 set aside in 2011/12 plus £248,420 from fiscal year 2012/13.

CPF 2013

The 2013 CPF was designed and implemented not as a stand-alone event as CPFs in the past were traditionally delivered, but as part of the Foundation's broader work. This is illustrated in Figure 2. The forum was designed in alignment with the new strategic direction of the Foundation, as outlined in the Foundation's core strategic documents. As such, the forum was intended to align with the Foundation's 2012-2016 core mission: to develop the capacity of civil society to act together and learn from each other to engage with the institutions that shape people's lives. This, in practice, meant that the forum was structured with a view to it becoming an integral building block in the Foundation's programmatic priority of contributing to sustainable development outcomes.

This informed the decision to thematically focus CPF 2013 on the post 2015 development agenda. The design of CPF 2013 built on the results of the Commonwealth Foundation - UN Millennium Campaign (UNMC) partnership which articulated civil society perspectives on the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and on the post 2015 development agenda. The Foundation-UNMC joint project included national level research and consultations with civil society in 14 countries and resulted in national reports and the publication of *Commonwealth Perspectives: Ideas for a new development agenda*. Following through from the national-level work, the Foundation embarked on regional consultations across the Commonwealth. Through this process, regional priorities were identified and validated through a technical working group in London before being presented to Ministers at the CHOGM Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting in London. This process ensured that the development priorities articulated from the national, regional and Commonwealth processes such as the 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) Stakeholders' Forum and the 10th Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministerial Meetings (WAMM) Partners' Forum were integrated into the planning for CPF 2013 and validated by a wide set of CSOs. Throughout these processes, the post 2015 development agenda remained a central focus of civil society. With that in mind, the first objective of the CPF that was identified was to 'develop Commonwealth post 2015 development perspectives and a set of recommendations.'

This assessment and the programmatic work the Foundation is currently embarking on, remains focused on amplifying the voices of Commonwealth civil society so that they can be heard in the pan-Commonwealth and global post 2015 development agenda conversations. The products of CPF 2013, especially the CPF Declaration, are being followed through in the programmatic work of the Commonwealth Foundation to promote greater synergy and cohesion in the post 2015 development architecture and collective action between CS and governments across the Commonwealth.

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┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ Foundation      │     │ National research│     │ Commonwealth    │
│ involvement in  │  ▶  │ and consultations│  ▶  │ regional        │
│ post 2015       │     │ undertaken       │     │ consultations   │
│ development     │     │                  │     │ take place      │
│ agenda begins:  │     │ Commonwealth     │     │                 │
│                 │     │ perspectives     │     │ Emerging        │
│ UNMC partnership│     │ report published │     │ regional        │
│ established     │     │                  │     │ priorities      │
│                 │     │                  │     │ identified      │
└─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘     └─────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐     ┌─────────────────┐
│ Current period: │     │ CPF 2013        │     │ Draft post 2015 │
│ Post-CPF CS     │  ◀  │ Declaration for │  ◀  │ recommendations │
│ engagement on   │     │ the post 2015   │     │ emerge          │
│ the Post 2015   │     │ development     │     │                 │
│ development     │     │ agenda released │     │ Regional        │
│ agenda          │     │                 │     │ priorities      │
│                 │     │ Commonwealth    │     │ built on        │
│                 │     │ CSOs dialogue   │     │                 │
│                 │     │ with foreign    │     │                 │
│                 │     │ ministers at    │     │                 │
│                 │     │ CHOGM           │     │                 │
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Figure 2 - The Foundation's process of support for civil society engagement with the post 2015 development agenda

3. Rationale for assessment

In keeping with the RBM approach of the Foundation, an assessment of CPF 2013 was planned. This forum represented the first time that CPF programming was deliberately situated within the Foundation's performance framework. This is the first CPF which has been subjected to a rigorous assessment process. The findings that result from the assessment are intended to help guide the Foundation's work going forward. In the near term, this report will inform and guide the Foundation's annual work planning scheduled for April 2014.

4. Objectives of the assessment

A) To assess the CPF against its three stated objectives, which were:

1. Develop Commonwealth post 2015 development perspectives and a set of recommendations.
2. Share lessons learned and good practices on development and governance.
3. Improve the understanding of participatory governance within the Commonwealth.

B) To appraise the CPF as a mechanism for achieving or making progress towards the Foundation's broader intended results, and to chart unintended or unplanned results.

C) To identify challenges and practices to replicate in order to better plan and implement future forums.

5. Methodology

To provide insight on the three stated objectives of this assessment, a multifaceted design and corresponding analysis was undertaken.

The three main data instruments were:

1. Online delegate survey (results captured November 2014)

2. Follow-up telephone interviews with:

    a) Delegates (conducted February 2014)

    b) The Foundation's Civil Society Advisory Committee (CSAC) (conducted February 2014)

    c) Sri-Lankan representatives of the CPF Content Design Committee (conducted February 2014)

3. Focus group discussions with Foundation staff (held February 2014)

Written reports from Foundation staff and other stakeholders (November 2013 – March 2014) were used as additional data sources.

To gauge performance against the CPF 2013's three stated objectives, specific quantitative and qualitative questions were posed to delegates, stakeholders and staff. This approach forms the basis of the reported findings related to each CPF objective.

With regard to the CPF assessment's second objective, namely appraising CPF 2013 as a mechanism for achieving the Foundation's results as outlined in the performance framework, specific questions were asked to CPF delegates, stakeholders and staff that provided evidence against specific indicators, outputs and milestones. Furthermore, select questions posed to delegates were designed to be broad enough to allow for a capturing of unintended and unplanned results from CPF 2013.

Another area of focus in discussions with CPF delegates, stakeholders and Foundation staff was on capturing views related to the planning and implementation of the forum, and identifying key challenges and practices worth replicating.

5.1. Sample and selection process

1. Online delegate survey

The survey was made up of 25 quantitative and qualitative questions sent to all delegates. Results of the survey are based on the 79 delegates who had completed the survey up to and including 6 January 2013. With 79 delegates responding out of a possible 240 (32%), results from the survey have a confidence level of 90% and a confidence interval of 7.6%.[3]

Profile of online survey respondents:
- Sex: female 35%, male 64%, other 1%
- Regional breakdown: Africa 15.1%, Asia 57.5%, Canada 2.7 %, Caribbean 9.6%, Europe 5.5%, Pacific 9.6%
- Sri Lankan 45.2%
- Attended a CPF before: 16%
- Delegate base: civil society 87%; private sector 10%; government 3%
- 64.6% sponsored to attend CPF

2. Follow-up telephone interviews

To best capture delegate experience in the time since the CPF, and to get a more complete picture of CPF 2013 following guidance from the Board of Governors in January 2014, follow up telephone interviews with a random selection of individuals from various sub-groups were carried out.[4] Interviews were conducted with: i) those involved in pre-CPF activities; ii) those who presented/ facilitated as part of the CPF programme; iii) government representatives; iv) CSAC members; and v) delegates who fit none of the above categories. After defining these groups, selection of delegates was randomised.

In all, 41 telephone interviews were conducted and gender balance and regional representation was sought throughout. The approach here was not to obtain a purely random sample, as that would result in a predominately Sri Lankan and male view, but to seek a broad base of opinions from across Commonwealth regions. Indeed, these telephone interviews were meant to prompt more detailed responses and to provide insight into how a cross-section of delegates have been influenced

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[3] Therefore, nine times out of 10, a survey with this level of representation would have a 7.6% margin of error. For example, if 50% of respondents reported a particular answer, one can be statistically sure that in nine of 10 surveys, if the entire population were surveyed (in this case, 240 CPF attendees) between 42.4% and 57.6% would have picked that answer.

[4] Procedurally, selection of the interviewees was done using Excel. First, relevant demographic data was entered into a master list of registered CPF delegates and validated. Using that list, a pivot table was created to filter results based on the above stated criteria. Once a list of attendees that fit the required criteria was generated, random numbers were assigned to each CPF participant using the formula [=RAND()], which randomly generates a number between zero and one. Following that, names were sorted from largest to smallest. After corrections for gender balance, the results provided the call list for interviews. When selected interviewees could not be reached, the pivot table was used to find a demographically similar candidate to interview.

by the CPF in the months since the forum. Much of the data collected in the survey was qualitative, generated by open-ended questions.

The telephone interviews consisted of between 40-45 questions, depending on the sub-group. Delegates who had attended or been involved in pre-CPF activities were asked some additional questions before embarking on the standard telephone interview.

Profile of telephone interviewees:
- Sex: female 49%, male 51%
- Regional breakdown: Africa 22%, Asia (Non-Sri Lanka) 15%, Caribbean and Americas 15%, Europe 15%, Pacific 15%, Sri Lanka 20%
- Type of delegate: CSAC 20%; delegates who presented as part of the official programme 20%; pre-CPF (not including CSAC) 10%; Sri Lankan members of Content Design Committee 5%; government delegates 5%; other random delegates 40%
- 75% of interviewees were sponsored to attend CPF 2013

3. Focus group discussions with staff

In the weeks following the CPF, Foundation staff met as a single group to reflect on what worked well and what did not work well in the delivery of CPF 2013. What resulted was a list of questions and priority areas which required further discussion. Leading from the identification of key focus areas and questions, smaller dedicated focus group sessions were designed.

In all, five focus group sessions were held with different groups of staff based on four different thematic areas: i) project management, ii) content development, iii) stakeholder relations, and iv) communications. The sessions had an assigned rapporteur and each was recorded. In addition, a one-on-one interview with the Foundation's project manager (based in New Zealand) was conducted via Skype. These discussions informed both this report and a CPF planning checklist.

4. Written reports from Foundation staff and other stakeholders

Reports from the Foundation communications team, notes from the technical working group and COW meetings, as well as a report from the Foundation project manager were used in the drafting of this report.

5.2. Limitations of assessment

Tracking results from the CPF 2013 would benefit from a longitudinal study which tracks progress over a longer period of time. Because of the time pressure to assess CPF 2013, the majority of data was captured in the three months following the forum. As such, certain longer-term results that might arise as a consequence of CPF 2013 are not captured here. Efforts will be made to capture those through the Foundation's regular results monitoring.

Moreover, the assessment is subject to certain methodological limitations. Data gathered from both the online delegate survey and the telephone interviews would be more reliable with larger sample sizes. However, due to the voluntary nature of the online delegate survey, increasing the sample size was notpossible. In regards to the telephone interviews, it was not financially feasible to conduct additional interviews and the absorptive capacity of the Foundation's staff. With the average length of interview being approximately 30 minutes, conducting and transcribing interviews took a minimum of 41 staff hours before factoring in the scheduling of calls.

Another methodological limitation of the assessment is the lack of prior comparable CPF assessments or evaluations. Indeed, future forum assessments will benefit from the baseline data, and survey and interview designs from this assessment.

Lastly, given that the principle base the findings were the online delegate surveys and telephone interviews, the data could be subject to respondent's biases. These might include a number of memory biases that are difficult to mitigate for. Moreover, a majority of respondents in both the online delegate survey and the telephone interviews were funded to attend CPF 2013, which could encourage those delegates to respond positively. To mitigate against this, the anonymity of respondents was stressed, interviewers encouraged both negative and positive feedback, and the random sample happened to include delegates who were not funded to attend the forum.

6. Findings

Findings are presented based on the three stated objectives of this assessment. However, where relevant, elements of the assessment's third objective (related to capturing challenges and practices worth repeating) are presented after findings which relate to the assessment's first and second objectives for ease of reference.

6.1. Assessment of CPF 2013 against its three stated objectives

6.1.1. CPF 2013 Objective #1: To develop Commonwealth post 2015 development perspectives and a set of recommendations

In the delegate survey conducted online after the forum, 35.7% ranked 'participating in defining the priorities for the post 2015 agenda in order to influence future policy' as their primary objective in attending the event. A further 27.1% ranked it their secondary objective. This shows that the objectives of delegates were broadly aligned with the Foundation's stated objectives. Moreover, of the 63 delegates who responded to the online question on the forum's main achievements, 25 highlighted the opportunity to contribute to the post 2015 discourse through CPF 2013.

At CPF 2013, the set of recommendations specific to the Commonwealth regions and small states which were built from the national and regional consultations supported by the Foundation were further refined into the CPF Declaration. In follow-up telephone

interviews with delegates, 92% of interviewees were either very satisfied (24%) or somewhat satisfied (68%) with the final Declaration. From discussions with delegates, one common theme that arose was that it is difficult to capture so many diverse voices in a Declaration. That was evident in the fact that some delegates suggested broadening the scope of the document while others recommended narrowing its focus. Delegates who were involved or close to the process of drafting the Declaration mentioned that there was considerable time pressure placed on the drafting committee. Moreover, some delegates and some Foundation staff called for future CPFs to employ a more transparent and inclusive process of drafting an outcome document such as the Declaration. In any case, both delegate and staff satisfaction with the Declaration is broadly positive.

Foundation staff, as well as members of CSAC and other delegates, asked if and how the Declaration is being carried forward by CPF 2013 delegates. Addressing this issue was one of the core reasons for the follow-up interviews, and so questions were designed to prompt discussion about how delegates are using the Declaration, if at all. From the telephone interviews, 51% of delegates interviewed said that the CPF Declaration had guided or influenced their work in the time between November 2013 and March 2014. In that same time period, 74% of those who were contacted had distributed the Declaration. Delegates mentioned sharing the Declaration with government representatives, networks of CSOs, and others through face-to-face meetings, social media and other means. Moreover, the CPF Declaration is now an official input into the UN Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) set to take place in Apia, Samoa in September 2014.

6.1.2. CPF Objective #2: To share lessons learned and good practices on development and governance

Evidence shows that this objective was clearly met. In the online delegate survey, the most common objective for delegates to attend CPF 2013 was to 'exchange knowledge, experience and ideas.' Of the delegates who took the online survey, 38% identified it as their primary objective for attending and 31% as their secondary objective. This provides further evidence that the objectives of CPF 2013 were closely aligned with the objectives of delegates.

Over 80% of online survey respondents reported that they felt the forum completely or partially met their primary and secondary objectives. As CPF objectives one and two coincided with most of respondents' primary and secondary objectives it can be concluded that there was a strong sense among respondents that these CPF objectives were met.

In the follow up telephone interviews with delegates, 39 out of 41 people (95%) the Foundation spoke to reported that they had shared lessons learned and discussed good practices with other delegates at CPF 2013. In addition, 76% rated the forum as a very valuable space for making new contacts and building professional networks. In fact, none of the delegates who were asked that question said that CPF 2013 was not a valuable networking space. In telephone interviews, 83% of delegates were satisfied (42% very, 41% somewhat) with the forum as an opportunity for civil society to engage with one another. Qualitative responses from delegates confirm the quantitative data, as several delegates expressed that they found the opportunity to meet civil society leaders from across the Commonwealth regions was tremendously valuable. Several delegates mentioned finding

common ground with delegates from other regions, particularly around Small States/SIDS issues. There were delegate suggestions that future CPF programming could include more activities which promote and foster inter-regional dialogue, and that a system should be devised to share contact details among delegates.

6.1.3. CPF Objective #3: To improve the understanding of participatory governance within the Commonwealth

Foundation staff asked delegates in telephone interviews a very specific question related to participatory governance learning: 'As a result of CPF 2013, did you improve your understanding of participatory governance?' Of the telephone interviewees, 76% said yes. There was a general recognition that delegates improved their understanding of participatory governance by engaging in it directly. One interviewee and several Foundation staff raised the question of whether a specific session designed to explain participatory governance might have been beneficial. However, evidence suggests that the CPF 2013 programme, as it was, was successful in improving the understanding of participatory governance among delegates. One delegate, when asked in the online survey to report on any unexpected benefits of CPF 2013 responded that the forum provided, 'a renewed insight into the human dimensions of participatory governance and the Commonwealth's potential to transform itself.'

6.2. Appraisal of CPF 2013 against the Commonwealth Foundation's performance framework

Commonwealth Foundation outcome area 1: Creative expression
Short term outcome: Strengthened ability of CSOs to use creative expression for participatory governance

Consistent with the Foundation's belief that cultural practitioners contribute to participatory governance and social change, CPF 2013 included a creative expression workshop on the programme. The design and implementation of the workshop was related to the Foundation's work on strengthening participants' ability to use creative expression, ideally with a view to inspiring action related to participatory governance. From the online delegate survey conducted after CPF 2013, 92% of respondents who attended the creative expression workshop were fairly or very satisfied. Moreover, each of the delegates involved in the telephone interviews that had attended the creative workshop confirmed this finding. In one particular telephone interview, a delegate provided evidence that the workshop had inspired action related to participatory governance: '...the [Country X] writer who moderated the panel will do some writing workshops with us in [Country Y]. I also reconnected with Country Y colleagues living in the diaspora, and talked about how to deepen and widen democracy in [Country Y].'

6.2.1. Commonwealth Foundation outcome area 2: Capacity development
Short term outcome: Enhanced capacity of regional CSOs and networks/alliances to engage in participatory governance

Many of the results and successes of CPF 2013 are in the spirit of promoting learning and

encouraging interactions among civil society. The programme of work designed for capacity development relates specifically to regional CSO networks / alliances / forums. Progress towards the Foundation's capacity development outcome area results emerging from CPF 2013 is limited, but present. The first output listed in the outcome area is: 'support delivered for enhanced cooperation between at least one regional inter-civil society platform and its constituents.' The CPF process has aided the Foundation in identifying at least two regional (Caribbean and West Africa) civil society networks to strengthen and partner with.

The second specified output in the Foundation's capacity development performance framework is focused on providing facilitation for the development of one targeted regional agenda and action plan. Regional agendas were built through a set of activities that led to CPF 2013. In addition, the programme of activities at CPF 2013 provided time and space for CSOs to further discuss possible regional agendas, and the CPF Declaration itself included regionally-focused recommendations. The aforementioned partnerships with CSO networks in the Caribbean and West Africa will seek to finalise these agendas and formulate action plans in the post CPF period. This process is illustrated in Figure 3.
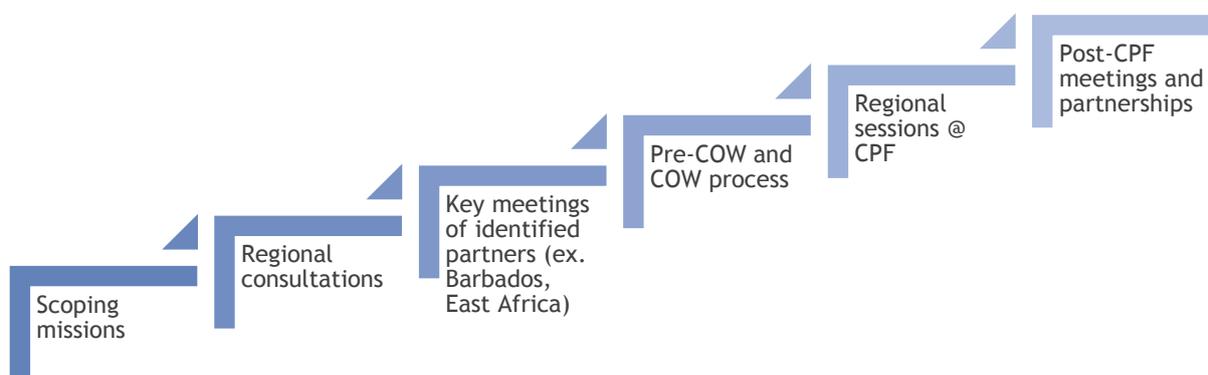

Figure 3 - Process of regional agenda setting

6.2.2. Commonwealth Foundation outcome area 3: Governance
Short term outcome: Enhanced capacity of regional CSOs and networks/alliances to engage in participatory governance

The CPF is intended to be a space for engagement between civil society and IIGs, and is therefore held in the wings of the CHOGM. Nevertheless, none of the 79 delegates who took the online survey selected 'an opportunity to interact with government' as their primary objective for attending CPF 2013. However, in follow up telephone interviews, it became clear that proximity to CHOGM remains important to delegates. 70% said it was very important to hold CPF near to CHOGM, and 95% said that the CPF should be held before CHOGM with a view to influencing the process. There was some debate among delegates and staff about how soon in advance of CHOGM the CPF should be held in order to have CS voices best heard in CHOGM.

CPF 2013 was situated in the governance outcome area budget, and there is a specific governance output focused on delivering Commonwealth civil society forums with improved interaction between CSOs and policy makers. As CPF 2013 was the first to be

held since the Foundation's strategic realignment and commitment to RBM, the data gathered in relation to CPF 2013 serves as a baseline to measure future forums against. There are also some specific results on which to report.

Related to the output, telephone interviewees were asked to assess their level of satisfaction with the CPF as an opportunity for civil society to engage with government representatives. Results show that delegates were clearly more satisfied with CPF 2013 as a space for engagement within civil society, which is linked to CPF 2013's second objective.

How satisfied were you with the CPF 2013 as an opportunity for civil society to engage with institutions in governance?
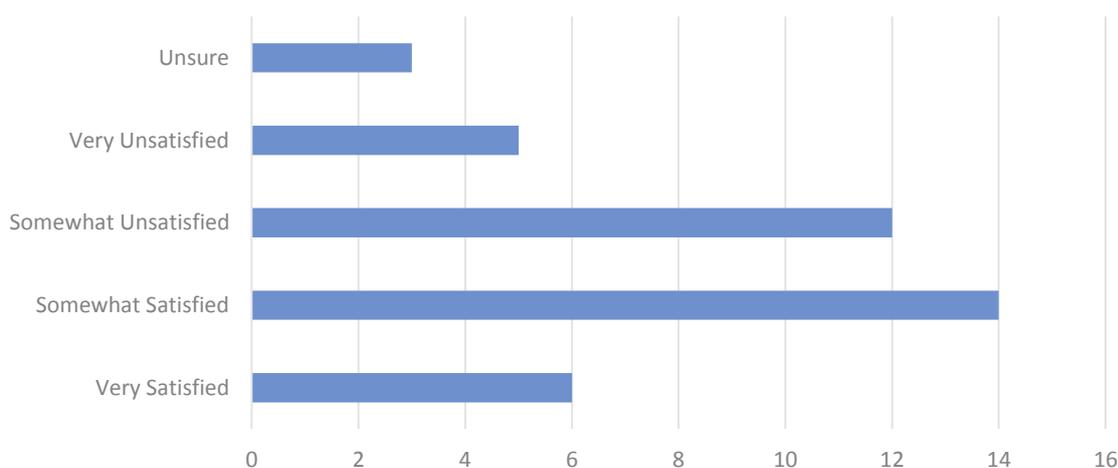
Figure 4 - Satisfaction with CPF 2013 as an opportunity for engagement

The delegates who attended the meeting with Foreign Ministers following CPF 2013 generally believed that the engagement was constructive and positive. The meeting lasted one hour, a metric that can be used as a baseline for which to measure time of interaction between civil society and IIGs in future CPFs and other forums.

Delegates generally called for increased access to government and access to relevant government officials, as the space provided at CPF 2013 was strictly with Foreign Ministers. One delegate who took part in the telephone interviews, remarked that they were, 'impressed with the attendance of Foreign Ministers, but not sure whether [their] issues were able to be given to the Heads of Government to be incorporated in the final outcome of CHOGM.'

One milestone in the outcome area on 'enhanced interaction between regional CSOs and networks / alliances and IIGs' is about improved access and opportunity for civil society to engage with policy makers. An indicator for that milestone is the percentage of key civil society recommendations that are included in Ministerial communiqué (vis-à-vis the CPF, that refers to the CHOGM communiqué).

The 2013 CHOGM commuinqué emphasized the role of civil society as a core value of the Commonwealth, acknowledged the input received from civil society, and shared several of the focus areas that were highlighted in the CPF Declaration. Indeed, both documents emphasized the unique position and development challenges of SIDS, and included special mention of migration, youth, gender, health, education and other core areas of importance. It is, however, impossible to attribute any thematic overlap in the 2013 CHOGM communiqué to the 2013 CPF Declaration or any other element of CPF 2013.

One of the indicators identified in relation to the outcome area related to enhanced interaction between CSOs and IIGs is the number of substantive meetings between CSOs and IIGs inspired by the CPF and other ministerial meetings. In the telephone interviews conducted with delegates, seven (18%) CSO representatives said that they had entered into new partnerships or collaborations with IIGs as a result of CPF 2013. One delegate mentioned using CPF materials as part of their participation in the UN 8th Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development. Others said the issues or materials from CPF influenced their meetings with government ministries in their home countries.

CPF 2013 and the Declaration that came out of it will continue to provide content and will be integrated in the Foundation's work in the months to come. For example, there is an opportunity which the Foundation will optimize for the CPF Declaration to be presented and discussed in the C20, which is the platform for dialogue between political leaders of G20 countries and representatives of CSOs. The Foundation is currently working with other partners to identify and map out other regional and global spaces where the Declaration can be used.

Case Study: Engagement on Small States Issues

Engagement on small states issues in the time leading to CPF 2013 and in the time since, offers a compelling example of how the CPF fits into the broader programmatic work of the Foundation. Moreover, it shows how CSOs have been given more opportunities to engage with IIGs as a result of the CPF.

There are 31 Small States in the Commonwealth, 25 of which are SIDS. This constituency is of particular importance to the Foundation. SIDS issues are in focus on the global agenda, with the UN declaring 2014 the International Year of SIDS, and the Third International Conference on SIDS is set to be held in Apia, Samoa in September 2014. The Foundation is committed to supporting civil society inputs to the Samoa conference and last year funded the participation of CSO networks and alliances at an inter-regional conference in Barbados in August 2013 that helped to start a global civic conversation on SIDS. This saw CSO representatives from the Pacific and the Indian Ocean join colleagues in the Caribbean to share perspectives and set an agenda.

The process continued at the CPF 2013 in November, where SIDS challenges were discussed and development priorities relevant to Small States were included in the CPF Declaration under the headings of: SIDS and Marine Environments; Sustainable Energy; Minority Rights; and Non Communicable Diseases. With specific regard to the post 2015 development agenda Commonwealth civil society called for 'a stand-alone goal for SIDS in view of their inherent, interlinked vulnerabilities and in pursuit of cross cutting resilience building.'

Since the CPF 2013, the Foundation has continued to support the participation of CSOs from SIDS in the preparations for the Samoa Conference, first in UN preparatory processes in New York in February 2014, then through a Commonwealth Small States meeting in St. Lucia in March 2014. Indeed, the Caribbean CSO network that the Foundation is partnering with, the Caribbean Policy Development Centre, and the CPF Declaration are now recognized inputs into the UN process leading to the Samoa meeting.

The Foundation is planning to foster both more engagement between CSOs from across the Commonwealth regions, and to support further CSO engagement with decision makers in the SIDS space. As CSO leaders from across the Commonwealth engage in these spaces, they are increasingly being called upon to enter into the discussion with and without the Foundation's facilitation. This is an area where the Foundation and its CSO partners are fully engaged, and where civil society has an opportunity to truly influence the discourse.

6.2.3. Unplanned results

In follow up interviews with delegates, several probing questions were asked in order to chart any unplanned results of CPF 2013. Specifically, delegates were asked if they had entered into any new partnerships with other CSOs as a consequence of CPF (47% said yes) and, if any element (separate from the Declaration) of CPF 2013 had guided or influenced any of their work since the forum.

Though establishing new working relationships between CS is very much in the spirit of the Foundation's broader work, it does represent an unplanned result. With almost half of the delegates interviewed reporting new partnerships, and many in the 'no' camp anticipating that new formal collaborations will soon arise with others they met at CPF 2013, this type of partnership fostering is a significant unplanned result. Delegates cited partnerships such as a joint evaluation of the way in which CS interacts with the UN, and the establishment of a CS-private sector forum in Uganda. In addition, one 2013 CPF delegate explained that side meetings at CPF 2013 has resulted in the planning of a new Commonwealth Food and Nutrition Institute:

> 'Side meetings we held [at CPF 2013] in the area of food and nutrition were used to launch… a project where we are looking to collaborate with the Commonwealth Foundation and other CSOs to adopt what's called the Commonwealth Food and Nutrition Institute. We have already got the commitment from the government of Trinidad [and Tobago] to help, so we will be writing a project plan/request for funding to the Foundation.'
>
> – 2013 CPF Delegate

6.3. Identification of challenges and practices to replicate

The third objective of this 2013 CPF assessment seeks to identify challenges in relation to the delivery of CPF 2013 and practices worth repeating for future CPFs. The only elements included here are those which were identified in several different data sources.

Impressions of the process leading up to CPF are generally mixed. All of the telephone interviewees who were involved in pre-CPF activities reported that *Commonwealth Perspectives: Ideas for a New Development Agenda* was a valuable document. Foundation staff, through the focus group discussion process, was unanimous in the belief that the document was instrumental in guiding the CPF process. Leading from that, the decision to focus CPF 2013 on the post 2015 development agenda was a sound one, with 98% of respondents to the online delegate survey reporting that they were very or fairly satisfied with the choice of theme. Moreover, 95% of telephone interviewees said that having a theme for future CPFs was very (78%) or somewhat (17%) important.

Staff singled out the COW process, including pre-COW meetings, as a process worth repeating, and one where the Foundation was able to foster strong partnerships with CS representatives who would prove instrumental throughout the delivery of CPF. Other major themes and suggestions raised in focus group discussions in relation to pre-CPF processes were the need to identify and work with key partners in the host country, the value of a comprehensive partnership agreement with the host country, and the need for better and earlier coordination with the Commonwealth Secretariat. In addition, several of the CSAC members who were interviewed over the telephone called for greater CSAC involvement in the planning of subsequent CPFs.

In regards to the delivery of CPF 2013, delegates were generally pleased. In the online delegate survey, 90% of respondents said they were very satisfied (48%) or fairly satisfied (42%) with the overall experience. In follow up telephone interviews, 71% of interviewees reported a positive change in their perception of the Foundation. As it regards the specific CPF programme, 81% of online survey respondents were very or fairly satisfied with the workshops. Four delegates made specific mention of Jemilah Mahmood's keynote address, which was published in its entirety in Sri Lankan media, and has been used widely by at least one delegate in subsequent meetings. That delegate said: 'The highlight for me was the keynote address. Her speech was very powerful. I actually use it and send it to my own networks and display it through my website. She really emphasised the role of CS.'

Foundation staff focus groups also identified the decision to increase the number of sponsored delegates, and the focus on attracting technical experts and content specialists as delegates as key practices to repeat. The learning journeys were well received by delegates, with 89% very (47%) or somewhat (42%) satisfied with the experience. Most criticisms of the learning journeys were related to the feeling that they were overly controlled. Several delegates mentioned that they were unhappy with the level of freedom provided to interact with CS on the ground in Sri Lanka.

Indeed, that political context is an issue that respondents raised in relation to many different areas of CPF 2013. One delegate found that the location of the forum resulted in certain issues not being discussed: 'It was tricky because we were in Sri Lanka. I thought that we weren't really talking about the hardcore issues that were really happening in Commonwealth Countries. There was not much time on issues like homosexuality and other human rights issues.' Other delegates suggested that the opportunity for engagement between civil society and IIGs was limited because of, 'the nature and the formal processes laid out by the Sri Lankan government.'

The focus group discussion session, found that planning and implementing large interventions such as a CPF inevitably present challenges and opportunities unique to the host country. As such, hosting CPF 2013 in Sri Lanka presented some challenges related to political realities. This proved to be a significant communications challenge for the Foundation. However, Sri Lanka's hosting of the forum also provided a real opportunity for the Foundation to identify and engage with CSO leaders in the country, and to expose those CSO leaders to their colleagues from across the Commonwealth. Some delegates who took part in the telephone interviews remarked on the value of hosting CPF 2013 in Sri Lanka: 'The forum was extremely important for the Sri Lankan people. It was the first time civil society in the country had the chance to talk about the recent war… By having a Commonwealth audience they were able to have a voice they had never had, so it was a very good opportunity for Sri Lanka.' The Foundation is committed to continuing to develop the capacity of CSOs in Sri Lanka, and is currently in discussions with the Sri Lankan and South Asian partners who helped to deliver the forum in the hopes of defining ways to engage further in Sri Lanka and the broader region.

7. Summary of findings

In summary, delegates who attended CPF 2013 found it to be a useful space, and one that helps build the reputation and credibility of the Foundation. It is reassuring to note that in the eyes of the delegates they see great value in what the CPF has to offer. From among the 41 delegates who took part in telephone interviews, 26 said that attending the next CPF was very important to them, and an additional 12 said it was somewhat important. Similarly, 35 delegates (85%) stressed that after the forum they would be more interested in attending the Foundation's events and working with the Foundation. Finally, 97% of telephone interviewees remarked that they benefitted from attending the forum.

In terms of reaching its three objectives the CPF has, to a great extent, accomplished what it set out to do. In real terms CPF 2013 succeed in bringing together a large and diverse cross section of civil society, who collectively developed a Commonwealth civil society post 2015 perspective document (objective one). In addition, not only was that Declaration presented to Foreign Ministers at CHOGM, but a truer testament to its quality and relevance is the extent to which participants have used it, and continue to use it, as a document for their own advocacy at national, regional and global spaces.

In terms of objective two, responses from the online survey and the telephone interview recognised that the CPF created an interactive space where CS leaders shared and learnt from one another. This is not to say that the programme and its delivery were without problems but despite these, CPF 2013 was a valuable space to foster interaction between CSOs.

The CPFs third objective, to 'improve the understanding of participatory governance within the Commonwealth' was met, albeit with less conclusive results. The Foundation undertook, in the design of CPF, to make the whole event a participatory experience. Responses from delegates indicate that to the most part many understood this and gained from the experience. However, the depth of increased understanding on participatory

governance is something that not only proved hard to measure but also hard to qualify. Delegate's phone interviews show a mixed but positive picture.

The extent to which CPF 2013 and similar interventions are successful mechanisms for leveraging outcomes in the Foundation's performance framework is less clear. There were instances where progress was made in the areas of knowledge sharing, learning and networking and understanding of the role of creative expression; but there is little evidence that CPF 2013, in the short run at least, succeeded in enhancing interaction between civil society and IIGs.

However, this assessment of CPF, in line with the Foundation's new results orientation, has provided an opportunity to rigorously analyse and discuss ways in which future interventions of this type can be planned and implemented to maximise their potential for leveraging outcomes in the Foundation's performance framework.

8. Moving forward – defining principles for engagement

The Foundation, in the last two years has set out a new strategic framework and logic model. CPF 2013, however, was not the first major stakeholder engagement undertaken by the Foundation during this time. The Foundation has delivered two stakeholder forums: the 18th CCEM and the 10th WAMM Partners' Forum, and supported two others: the 8th Commonwealth Youth Ministerial meeting and 2013 Commonwealth Health Ministers meeting. CPF 2013 was the most recent incarnation of the Foundation's thinking on how best to deliver stakeholder spaces to maximize their relevance and impact. In keeping with the Foundation's commitment to learning and improvement, many of the processes (such as the inclusion of forum design mechanisms like the Content Design Committees) have been tried, tested, reviewed and improved in these spaces prior to the CPF.

To support the way the Foundation works with CSOs to develop their capacity to engage with IIGs, a civil society engagement strategy was developed. It illustrates the constructive engagement between civil society and governance institutions that the Foundation supports to enhance the dialogue for transparent, accountable and responsive governance and sustainable development. CHOGM, the Foreign Ministers meeting at CPF, and Commonwealth ministerial meetings, offer important Commonwealth spaces within which civil society can engage with high level government officials.

Reflecting on the feedback received from this CPF assessment together with feedback gathered from forums at other key ministerial meetings, there are two main reasons for holding the CPF as well as forums organised around ministerial meetings and other regional and global spaces: 1) to facilitate networking, learning and knowledge exchange among CSOs; and 2) to facilitate constructive engagement between civil society and IIGs. As the Foundation moves forward into the planning process for enhancing select Commonwealth as well as other spaces wherein constructive engagement can effectively take place, there are several principles that should guide the design of future forums for effective learning and constructive engagement:

1. The Commonwealth Charter (2012) Clause 16 recognises 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.'

2. The Accra Agenda for Action (2008) recognises 'CSOs as development actors in their own right.'

3. The Busan Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (2011) strengthened the recognition from Accra, reinforced the Istanbul Principles and called for a 'particular focus on implementing an enabling environment for CSOs, consistent with agreed international rights', which maximises the contributions of CSOs to development.

The Foundation, while guided by these international principles for development co-operation, is founded on key principles of engagement which guide the organisation in its participation in, support for and convening of forums.

- The Foundation works through partnerships: The Foundation's mandate is to enhance the capacity of civil society in support of Commonwealth principles and priorities. To best perform this role, it must seek and nurture relationships that are mutually beneficial and based on trust, shared vision and commitment to common objectives. By working through partnerships, effectiveness and efficiency are enhanced, crucial and often limited resources are better used, expertise and relationships are accessed, risks and benefits are shared and new knowledge is produced.
- The Foundation is an independent inter-governmental organisation. The strategic role of the Foundation is as a development organisation and a convener of multiple stakeholders, both government and non-government across the Commonwealth.
- The Foundation is an advocate of civil society participation. The importance of CSOs in policy dialogue and change at different levels of decision-making. It understands the evolving nature and growing influence of civil society on the success and sustainability of development efforts and on how this impacts on the lives of citizens, particularly the poor and disadvantaged.

Guided by these principles, and the Foundation's core tenets, the Foundation has identified a set of requirements to promote genuine dialogue when convening civil society for constructive engagement with IIGs. These requirements are:

- Civil society should be in the lead role when developing the agenda and the design of the process and methodology for the dialogue/forum/space
- A participatory process should be followed in the design, implementation and post processes of the dialogue/forum/space
- The dialogue/forum/space should be owned by CSOs in the host country and broader partner CSO networks across the Commonwealth with support from the Foundation
- Civil society should have access to relevant government ministries and decision-makers
- A consultation process that is inclusive, allows time for feedback to participants and integrates monitoring and sharing of results should be central to the design, implementation / delivery and assessment of the dialogue/forum/space
- All parties have timely access to relevant information
- The host government needs to guarantee a safe and secure space for dialogue and engagement

The Foundation is committed to facilitating spaces that build on these requirements and will best facilitate the achievement of results. These requirements, and further discussions with civil society partners will inform how forums are designed and delivered in the future.