



Foreign, Commonwealth  
& Development Office

# UK Commonwealth Chair-In-Office Report 2018-2020

Delivery of Commonwealth Summit commitments





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# Foreword by Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Affairs

**Two years ago, the UK hosted the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, bringing together Commonwealth leaders to agree action on a brighter common future.**

As an institution uniting 2.4 billion people across 54 sovereign states and spanning six continents, the Commonwealth is unique in the diversity of its partnerships.

And in past months, as we have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, those partnerships have underlined the importance of global collaboration and coordination across the Commonwealth.

The UK has been proud to be Commonwealth Chair-in-Office as we tackle some of the world's greatest challenges, including the pandemic.

We coordinated closely with South Africa to keep transport hubs running and key trade routes and supply chains open for food and medicines.

We worked with Canada to unblock the flow of ventilators and other vital medical supplies to those working on the frontline of our health services.

And we organized charter flights between the UK, Jamaica and the Eastern Caribbean, which helped hundreds of British travelers return home to their loved ones, and hundreds of Caribbean travelers to do the same.

The recent joint statement of Commonwealth Heads of Government on COVID-19 was clear: the Commonwealth family is committed to working together, and with our international partners, to address the impacts of the pandemic and build resilience for the future.

On our other Commonwealth commitments, we are delighted that programmes and projects funded by the UK are delivering real results.

As the host of COP26, the UK will work with Commonwealth partners to build momentum towards global agreement for urgent and ambitious action to tackle climate change. On sustainability, the UK has been leading and supporting Commonwealth efforts to protect the Ocean, from increasing the resilience of marine economies, to reducing plastics pollution.

To strengthen security, the UK has directly helped over 30 member states enhance their cyber security capacity, sharing the UK's world-beating expertise to train over 1,000 individuals across the Commonwealth, and fund seven national cyber security reviews.

On the economy, we have been energetic champions of free trade to boost small businesses, cut the cost of living and create the jobs of the future. We have helped nearly twenty countries streamline customs procedures, increased

the application of common standards by establishing the Commonwealth Standards Network, and encouraged the growth of more than 3,000 women-owned businesses through our SheTrades Commonwealth Programme.

We continue to champion human rights and rule of law. Through our Girls Education Challenge, now in action in 11 Commonwealth countries, we are working to ensure every girl in the world receives 12 years of quality education. And the UK-funded Equality and Justice Alliance has helped six Commonwealth countries to repeal or reform outdated legislation which discriminates against, or fails to protect, women, girls and LGBT communities.

The value of Commonwealth membership continues to grow, and we were delighted to welcome Maldives back into the Commonwealth family earlier this year. And as Commonwealth Chair-in-Office, we have worked with fellow members and the Secretariat to boost the voice of the Commonwealth as an advocate for international collaboration and rules-based multilateralism.

Like every institution, the Commonwealth requires regular reform and renewal. So last year, I joined my Commonwealth counterparts to agree reforms to the governance of the Secretariat. We look forward to endorsement of these reforms at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali next year, where we will also be honoured to pass the Chair-in-Office baton to Rwanda.

From responding to COVID-19 to combatting climate change, preventing cyber-crime, and creating a brighter future, the Commonwealth is working to address some of the greatest obstacles, and opportunities in a generation. The work included in this report speaks to the importance of the Commonwealth, a family like no other. It has been a privilege for the UK to serve the Commonwealth in our role as Chair-in-Chief—championing the interests of its many peoples as a global force for good.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dominic Raab". The signature is stylized and fluid, written in a cursive-like hand.

*The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP*

# Foreword by Minister for the Commonwealth

**The Commonwealth has always been an important organisation for me personally. I feel fortunate that my time as Minister for the Commonwealth has coincided with the UK's period as Chair-in-Office—a role we inherited in 2018 from Malta, the successful host of CHOGM 2015.**

Much positive collective action flowed from that CHOGM, including support for innovative initiatives such as the Commonwealth Small States Centre of Excellence in Malta itself. I was delighted to see CHOGM 2018 build on that foundation.

CHOGM 2018 was the largest summit of its kind in our country's history. Attended by 46 heads of government and 49 Foreign Ministers, it agreed a range of ambitious policy objectives to create a Commonwealth that is fairer, more sustainable, more prosperous, and more secure. In support of this work, the UK announced over £500 million of programmes and projects to help deliver on Leaders' commitments, which were aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Since taking up the mantle of Commonwealth Chair-in Office, as this report attests, the UK has worked energetically with our partners—within the Commonwealth and beyond—to make progress on delivering these aims. As I have travelled around the Commonwealth, I have been fortunate to witness first-hand the benefits of these UK-supported programmes in Commonwealth countries. Last year, on a visit to Pakistan, I saw how the Women Mediators Across The Commonwealth Network was helping to empower experienced women peacebuilders by bringing them together to join in collective support and advocacy, and to share lessons learned. In Sri Lanka, I heard accounts of how the Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy has promoted the strengthening of parliamentary oversight, public engagement of parliamentary committees, and civil society access—all supporting the enhancement and upholding of democratic culture.

I have also seen how the Commonwealth, in all its diversity, can play a vital role in driving action on shared priorities in other international fora. In New York, Commonwealth member states have worked collaboratively to build on the CHOGM 2018 Cyber Declaration and call for greater UN co-ordination on cyber security. In Geneva, the UK has sought to strengthen Commonwealth co-operation and ensure that the smallest and most vulnerable countries can meaningfully participate in the rules-based international system. Around the Commonwealth, we have worked with the World Customs Organisation and UN Conference on Trade and Development

to support member states to adopt faster and more efficient customs procedures that help reduce the cost of doing business and create a more enabling environment for intra-Commonwealth trade.

This long tradition of working alongside other international organisations became all the more important as the world adapted to the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic. The outbreak is without doubt the biggest public health emergency in a generation, and one that will have significant long-term socio-economic implications for all our member states and the wider world. As Chair-in-Office, the UK was honoured to co-ordinate the development of a comprehensive Commonwealth Leaders' statement that reiterated our commitment to work transparently and constructively to address COVID-19 and the full range of its impacts, and to ensure no one will be left behind.

Following the postponement of CHOGM 2020, we look forward to the gathering of the Commonwealth family in Kigali next year. I know that it will be another great opportunity to build on the progress we have been making and to strengthen further the resilience of the Commonwealth, including through our Leaders' endorsement of new measures agreed by our Foreign Ministers on the governance and operation of the Commonwealth Secretariat. In the meantime, the UK will continue to work as Chair-in-Office in the service of the Commonwealth family—its member states, its intergovernmental organisations, and its network of associated and accredited organisations—to deliver on our shared priorities as we strive together to realise both the aspirations of the Commonwealth Charter and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



*Tariq Ahmad*

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon

# Acronyms, abbreviations and glossary

Acronym	Meaning	Term explanation
<b>Commonwealth organisations, projects and meetings</b>		
CCOA	Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance	A Blue Charter action group which aims to reduce the amount of plastic in the Ocean. Co-led by the UK and Vanuatu. 34 Commonwealth countries are members and have made commitments accordingly.
CFNHRI	Commonwealth Forum for National Human Rights Institutions	Member-led network of Commonwealth human rights institutions, ombudsmen and public defenders.
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting	Leaders of Commonwealth countries meet every two years. The meeting is hosted by a different Commonwealth country each time. The last CHOGM was hosted by the UK in London in 2018.
CME	Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme	A UK programme which helps Commonwealth Small Island Developing States to create more sustainable marine economies.
CP4D	Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy	A collaboration of four organisations (Westminster Foundation for Democracy, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association UK, and the Commonwealth Local Government Forum) funded by the UK to promote inclusive and accountable democracy in the Commonwealth during the UK's period as Chair-in-Office.
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association	Accredited Commonwealth organisation building stronger parliaments and advancing democracy.
CSC	Commonwealth Scholarships Commission	An Arms-Length body that manages a UK government scholarship scheme led by international development objectives, funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, for Commonwealth citizens to undertake postgraduate study and professional development fellowships.
CSN	Commonwealth Standards Network	A network, set up by the UK, to foster consistent product standards and thereby facilitate trade. CSN currently includes the standards bodies of 50 Commonwealth members.
CSSO	Commonwealth Small States Office	A subsidised office space in Geneva for diplomatic missions of Commonwealth small states.
CTMM	Commonwealth Trade Ministers Meeting	Biennial meeting of Commonwealth Trade Ministers.
EJA	Equality and Justice Alliance	A coalition of organisations formed to assist the reform and repeal of discriminatory legislation affecting women, girls and LGBT communities in Commonwealth countries. Funded by the UK during its period as Chair-in-Office.
PCEP	Pacific and Commonwealth Equality Project	UK-funded project to support Pacific countries to protect and promote human rights.
QECS	Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships	Scheme providing awards for Commonwealth citizens to study for master's-level qualifications at universities in low- and middle-income Commonwealth countries, managed by the Association of Commonwealth Universities.
RCS	Royal Commonwealth Society	A network of individuals and organisations committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world. The Society champions the importance of literacy, equality and inclusion, the environment and connected communities across the Commonwealth's 54 member nations.
WMC	Women Mediators across the Commonwealth	Launched at CHOGM 2018 to help more women participate meaningfully in peace processes at all levels, through connecting women with experience of mediation to advocate and share learning.
<b>Other</b>		
AML	Anti-money laundering	
AU	African Union	
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women	Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, the Convention defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an agenda for national action to end such discrimination.
CFATF	Caribbean Financial Action Task Force	An organisation of Caribbean states and territories which have agreed to implement common counter-measures against money laundering and terrorist financing.
CFT	Countering the Financing of Terrorism	
CVE	Countering Violent Extremism	
EHRC	Equality and Human Rights Commission	Promotes and upholds equality and human rights ideals and laws across England, Scotland and Wales.
ESAAMLG	Eastern and Southern African Anti-Money Laundering Group	A regional body subscribing to global standards to combat money laundering, financing of terrorism and proliferation.

<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Term explanation</b>
<b>FGM</b>	Female genital mutilation	FGM involves the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.
<b>GRP</b>	Good regulatory practice	Internationally recognised processes, systems, tools and methods to improve the quality of regulations and ensure that regulatory outcomes are effective, transparent, inclusive and sustained.
<b>HLG</b>	High Level Group	
<b>HRC</b>	Human Rights Council	An inter-governmental body within the UN system, responsible for the international promotion and protection of human rights, comprising 47 states elected from within the UN membership.
<b>ITU</b>	International Telecommunications Union	A specialised agency of the United Nations whose purpose is to co-ordinate telecommunication operations and services throughout the world.
<b>nCSIRT</b>	National Cyber Security Incident Response Team	National representatives within an organisational entity assigned responsibility for co-ordinating and supporting the response to a computer security event or incident.
<b>NDCs</b>	Nationally determined contributions	Climate change commitments made by countries in response to the Paris Agreement within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organisation	A not-for-profit, voluntary citizens' group, which acts on a local, national or international level to address issues in support of the public good.
<b>NHRIs</b>	National Human Rights Institutions	State-mandated bodies, independent of government, with a broad constitutional or legal mandate to protect and promote human rights at the national level. NHRIs address the full range of human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.
<b>OCSE</b>	Online child sexual exploitation	The intentional misuse of the internet to exploit minors for sexual purposes.
<b>ODA</b>	Official development assistance	Government aid designed to promote the economic development and welfare of developing countries.
<b>PEaCE</b>	Protecting Environment and Children Everywhere	PEaCE is also known as ECPAT Sri Lanka. ECPAT is a global network to end the sexual exploitation of children. It has worked with several Sri Lankan agencies over many years.
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals	17 goals agreed under UN auspices as a blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all. They address global challenges including those related to poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace and justice.
<b>TFA</b>	Trade Facilitation Agreement	A World Trade Organisation agreement which: sets out measures for effective co-operation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues; has provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit; and, contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building in this area.
<b>TTC</b>	Time to Change	A growing social movement of champions, employers, schools and community members working to end mental health discrimination. This UK-based initiative is now expanding globally.
<b>UNCTAD</b>	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	The United Nations body responsible for dealing with economic and sustainable development issues with a focus on trade, finance, investment and technology.
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation	UNESCO seeks to build peace through international co-operation in education, the sciences and culture.
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime	A UN body focused on making the world safer from drugs, organised crime, corruption and terrorism.
<b>UPR</b>	Universal Periodic Review	Process involving the review of the human rights records of all UN member states. The UPR is a state-driven process, under the auspices of the Human Rights Council, which provides the opportunity for each state to declare what actions they have taken to improve the human rights situations in their country and fulfil their human rights obligations.
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organisation	The only global international organisation dealing with the rules of trade between nations. Its goal is to ensure that trade flows as smoothly, predictably and freely as possible.

# Infographic summary

## Strengthening the Commonwealth institutions



Commonwealth Foreign Ministers adopted decisions to reform and strengthen the governance of the Commonwealth Secretariat subject to endorsement by heads of government at CHOGM.



Numerous Commonwealth statements have been delivered on a diverse range of policy matters in international fora.



The UK has funded advisers to enable Commonwealth small states to engage more effectively with international human rights and trade mechanisms, fostering solidarity.

## Fairness



Election observation missions have been completed in eight Commonwealth countries, helping to promote inclusive and accountable democracy.



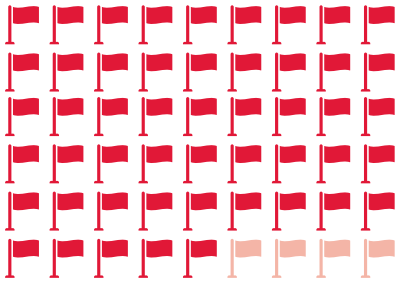
The UK provided support to six Commonwealth countries to repeal and reform outdated legislation that discriminates against, or fails to protect, women, girls and LGBT communities.



Forty-six women mediators are supported by the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth Network, promoting the role of women in peacebuilding.



## Prosperity



50 out of 54 Commonwealth countries are now members of the UK-supported Commonwealth Standards Network, promoting consistency and helping to facilitate trade.



UK-funded SheTrades Commonwealth has supported over 3,000 women-owned businesses, and already helped to create 3,000 jobs.



The UK has participated heavily in the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda, co-leading work on digital connectivity with South Africa and supporting regulatory connectivity.

## Sustainability



34 Commonwealth member states have joined the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance, committing to tackle the scourge of plastics in the Ocean.



UK support has helped to deliver improved financial resilience against natural disasters in the Caribbean.

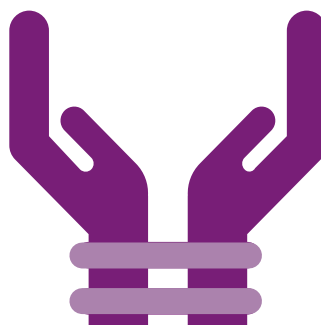


The UK has provided antibiotics to more than 9.1 million people across 10 Commonwealth countries to prevent them catching blinding trachoma.

## Security



Every Commonwealth country has benefited from the UK-funded cyber security capacity-building programme.



Numerous Commonwealth countries, including Nigeria, Uganda and Malawi, have strengthened their legislation concerning human trafficking and modern slavery.



The UK has supported the African Union to co-ordinate a pan-African response to OCSE, facilitating deeper understanding of OCSE.

# Executive summary

**In April 2018, the UK hosted the 25th Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in London—the largest summit of its kind in our country’s history, which brought together Commonwealth leaders to discuss pressing global issues. In response, leaders agreed a range of actions at CHOGM to build a Commonwealth that is fairer, more sustainable, more prosperous and more secure. To support this work, the UK announced over £500 million of programmes and projects under four themes.**

After hosting CHOGM 2018, the UK took up the role of Commonwealth Chair-in-Office (a position held by the Commonwealth country that has hosted the most recent CHOGM). The UK has been an active Chair-in-Office, committed to strengthening and renewing the Commonwealth through its three pillars—the Commonwealth Secretariat, the member states and the many Commonwealth organisations and networks.

Rwanda was due to assume the Commonwealth Chair-in-Office mantle, as host of the 26th CHOGM in Kigali in June 2020. In April, the Government of Rwanda took the difficult decision to postpone CHOGM because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The UK greatly looks forward to joining the Commonwealth family for the postponed CHOGM in Kigali when that is possible. In the interim, we are honoured to continue to work with our Commonwealth partners as Chair-in-Office.

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected us all. It is undoubtedly the biggest public health emergency in a generation, and will have significant long-term socio-economic implications for people and countries everywhere, within and outside the Commonwealth.

The pandemic demands global and co-ordinated action. As Chair-in-Office, the UK was honoured to co-ordinate the development of a comprehensive Commonwealth Leaders’ statement which set out our commitment to work collectively with international partners on the full range of responses required to mitigate the many adverse impacts of COVID-19.

This report was compiled to collate, record and share the work which the UK, in collaboration with other Commonwealth member states and Commonwealth institutions, has been conducting during its period as Commonwealth Chair-in-Office between 2018-2020. It also assesses how and the extent to which commitments made at CHOGM 2018—under the themes of fairness, prosperity, sustainability and security—have been delivered.



Heads of government sit for opening remarks at CHOGM 2018

As Chair-in-Office, the UK has supported and driven delivery of the commitments made at CHOGM 2018:

## Strengthening the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth has been strengthened through the efforts of the UK and fellow member states to reform the governance of the Commonwealth Secretariat, with Commonwealth Foreign Ministers adopting a set of reform recommendations in 2019—subject to endorsement of heads of government at the next CHOGM. Since 2018, the collective voice of the Commonwealth has been heard more loudly, with various Commonwealth statements delivered in international fora, such as at the UN, on a range of important policy issues. Equally as positive, UK support to the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva and sharing of information and assistance on international elections have enhanced solidarity among member states and enriched the value of membership.

## A fairer future

Our fairness programmes have worked to reduce the stigma faced by, and increase the opportunities available to, marginalised groups, including those suffering with mental illness, disabled people, women and girls, and LGBT people. The UK provided support to six Commonwealth countries to repeal and reform outdated legislation that discriminates against, or fails to protect, women, girls and LGBT communities. Forty-six women from 21 Commonwealth countries have been supported to engage meaningfully with peacebuilding activities through the Women Mediators across the Commonwealth initiative, and access to education has been enhanced through the Girls’ Education Challenge—active in 11 Commonwealth countries—ensuring that more marginalised girls can access quality education. The UK has also promoted inclusive and accountable democracy,



A panel at the CHOGM 2018 Youth Forum. The Youth Forum is one of four fora which take place during CHOGM week

supporting the completion of election observation missions in eight countries and the update of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures—a Commonwealth-wide standard for parliaments.

### A prosperous future

UK-funded prosperity programmes have further helped to increase opportunities for women and youth across the Commonwealth. SheTrades Commonwealth has supported over 3,000 women-owned businesses to become more competitive, promoting economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries. The Commonwealth Scholarship Commission granted 1,500 new awards between 2018 and 2020, enabling more Commonwealth citizens to enter postgraduate study. The UK has also worked with member states to facilitate greater intra-Commonwealth trade. The UK co-led with South Africa on digital connectivity and supported Barbados in their leadership of regulatory connectivity under the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda. Our Commonwealth Trade Facilitation Programme and Commonwealth Standards Network, which 50 Commonwealth countries are now members of, have helped promote greater and more effective cross-Commonwealth participation in international trading systems, creating a more enabling environment for intra-Commonwealth trade.

### A more sustainable future

The Commonwealth has also made significant progress in areas of sustainability, demonstrating that the organisation can play a leading role in driving the global agenda. Under the Commonwealth Blue Charter, 34 countries are now part of the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA) and have all committed to taking steps to reduce marine plastics. The UK has provided support specifically to Small Island Developing States (SIDS), recognising their particular vulnerability to climate change and dependence on the Ocean. The UK has supported 17 Commonwealth SIDS to develop sustainable and climate resilient marine economies,

and has helped to improve financial resilience against natural disasters in the Caribbean. In Jamaica, as a result of UK technical assistance, the national government is taking out US\$285 million of insurance cover which will fund recovery and rebuilding should a hurricane hit. The UK has also helped tackle global health challenges, specifically in regards to malaria and trachoma, providing for example, antibiotics to more than 9.1 million people across 10 countries, preventing them from catching trachoma.

### A more secure future

Finally, UK security programmes have seen notable progress in a diverse range of areas, including cyber security, modern slavery, online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) and countering violent extremism. The UK committed £5.5 million to fund a variety of cybersecurity capacity building projects and since CHOGM 2018, every Commonwealth member has taken steps to improve their cyber security competence and capability. With the support of UK funding, many Commonwealth countries, including Nigeria, Uganda and Malawi, have strengthened their legislation concerning human trafficking and modern slavery. Furthermore, the UK has also supported the African Union (AU) to co-ordinate a pan-African response to OCSE, with over 100 representatives from 37 AU member states, including all 19 Commonwealth AU members, gaining a deeper understanding of OCSE.

As these examples demonstrate, a wide range of concrete actions have been undertaken to deliver the commitments made at CHOGM 2018. They show the value of the Commonwealth as a vehicle through which global challenges can be addressed for the benefit of its own peoples and the wider international community. The report describes in more detail the full range of activities which the UK has been supporting to realise the aspirations of CHOGM 2018.

Thank you to our delivery partners, implementers and IPE Triple Line for the pictures shown in the report.

# Chapter 1: Strengthening the Commonwealth

**In 2018, Commonwealth heads of government recognised the importance of making sure that the Commonwealth is able to respond and act effectively in an ever-changing modern world. To ensure this, the heads committed to:**

- » Reform the Commonwealth for the 21st century. In accordance with an instruction given by heads at CHOGM 2015, the Secretary-General was asked to expedite the establishment of a High Level Group (HLG) to review the full governance arrangements of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and Foreign Ministers were tasked with making decisions in response to the HLG's recommendations. The strengthening of the Commonwealth Secretariat has been a key UK priority.

As Chair-in-Office, we set ourselves two further priorities for the strengthening of the Commonwealth:

- » To boost the voice of the Commonwealth as an advocate of the rules-based international system.
- » To increase the practical solidarity between member states.

During our tenure as Chair-in-Office, the UK placed these three priorities at the forefront of our work with the three pillars of the Commonwealth. This chapter outlines the range of UK activity in support of these aims.

## Highlights:

- » In 2019, Foreign Ministers agreed a set of recommendations to improve the governance of the Commonwealth Secretariat, subject to endorsement by heads at the next CHOGM.
- » Several Commonwealth statements have been delivered in a range of international fora, ensuring that the Commonwealth is heard on issues such as cyber security and international trade.
- » Member states have shared best practice and knowledge about each other's interests in international fora, increasing solidarity among them.
- » The UK has funded advisers to enable Commonwealth small states to engage more effectively with international human rights and trade mechanisms.

## Engagement with Commonwealth member states

Since CHOGM 2018, senior members of the Royal Family, ministers and the UK Commonwealth Envoy have conducted official visits to 32 Commonwealth countries, visiting programmes the UK has helped to fund, and helping to expand our diplomatic relations.

The UK has also welcomed representatives from several Commonwealth countries, including the heads of state of 10 African Commonwealth countries as part of the UK-Africa Investment Summit held in London in January 2020. See figure 1 for a full breakdown of Commonwealth bilateral visits.

The government has opened eight new diplomatic missions in Commonwealth countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Eswatini, The Bahamas, Grenada, Lesotho, Samoa, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Vanuatu. We are also in the process of opening a new mission in Tonga.

Opening missions in these countries has expanded the UK's diplomatic network from 38 to 47 Commonwealth members—a practical demonstration of our ambition and intent to increase the resources which the government is devoting to Commonwealth collaboration.

Our enhanced presence also reinforces our wider efforts to champion the voices of Commonwealth small states and work with them to address shared global challenges such as climate change and the Ocean.

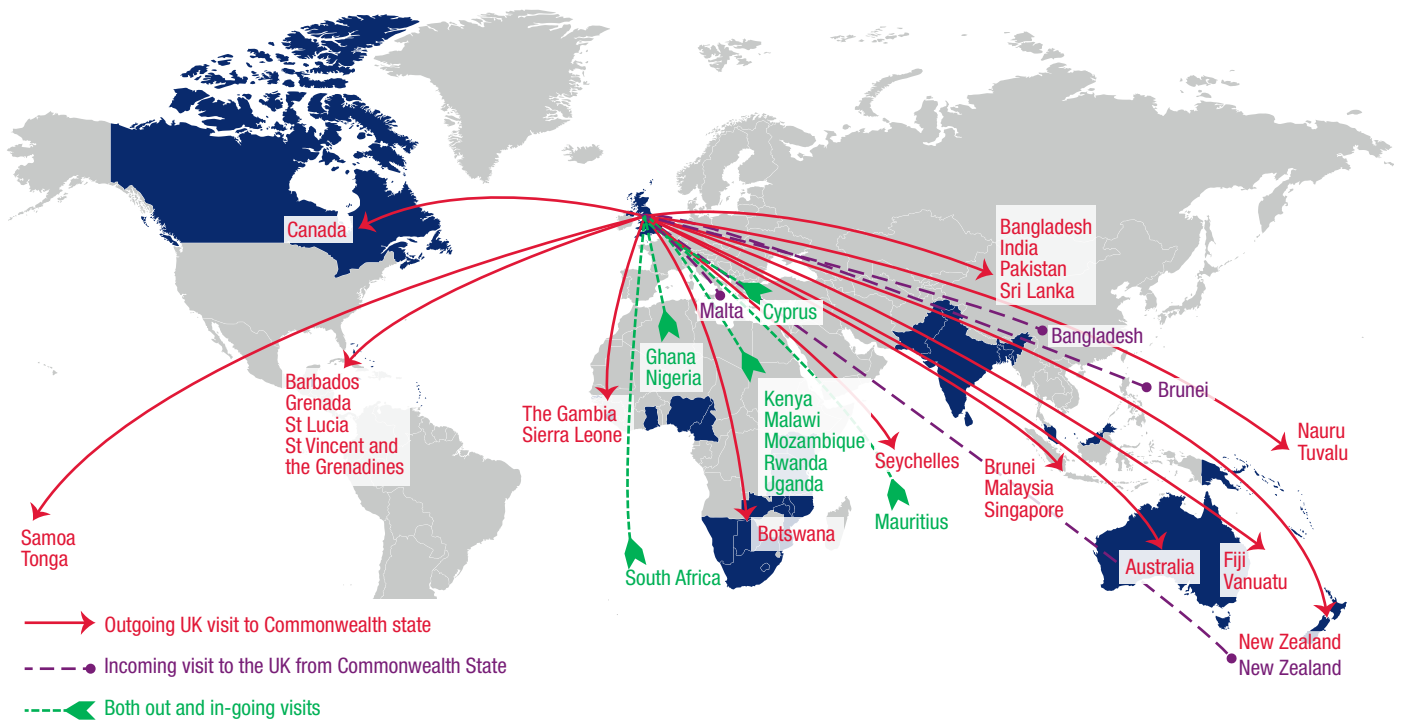
## Engagement with Commonwealth organisations and networks

The Commonwealth's organisations and networks provide people-to-people links and connect governments, professionals and civil society across all member states.

We have engaged with Commonwealth organisations across the Commonwealth; working with them as delivery partners, collaborating on events and ensuring that the voice of civil society is heard across the network.

We have ensured organisations are updated and included by attending and speaking at meetings of the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations and the Commonwealth Council of Societies. Both ministers and officials have met individually with many Commonwealth-accredited organisations, such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) and the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS), in many cases working in partnership with them in support of shared aims and objectives. We have played full parts on the boards of the

Figure 1: Commonwealth bilateral visits



three Commonwealth intergovernmental organisations: the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Foundation and the Commonwealth of Learning.

Recognising the important role of young people, who make up 60% of the Commonwealth's population, we continued our engagement with Commonwealth youth leaders. This included supporting a Commonwealth youth roundtable which took place in January 2019, co-hosted by the Duke of Sussex and Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for the Commonwealth, reflecting on commitments and ambitions from CHOGM 2018 and maintaining momentum following the Commonwealth Youth Forum.

## Boosting the voice of the Commonwealth

With the agreement of all Commonwealth members, the former Prime Minister Theresa May used her address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 2018 to speak as Chair-in-Office on behalf of the heads of government of all Commonwealth countries (representing over a quarter of the UN's membership), to reaffirm their support for the rules-based international system. This was the first time the Commonwealth's collective voice had been heard in this way in the United Nations General Assembly.

As Chair-in-Office, the UK has been committed to ensuring the Commonwealth is heard more often, more clearly, and more decisively in international fora, including:

- » When Commonwealth Trade Ministers met in London in October 2019, they declared their support for open and

inclusive free trade, and endorsed an action plan aimed to increase Commonwealth trade to US\$2 trillion by 2030.

- » In February 2020, the UK delivered a Commonwealth statement at a UN working group, calling for greater co-ordination on cyber security and continued action to build on the CHOGM 2018 Cyber Declaration.
- » At the World Health Assembly in 2019, a Commonwealth statement focused on the theme 'Universal Health Coverage: Reaching the unreached, ensuring no one is left behind'.
- » In November 2019, Commonwealth Law Ministers, at the biennial Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting in Sri Lanka, unanimously declared that they would remove barriers which hinder access to justice in their countries.
- » On 16 July 2020, Commonwealth Leaders issued a joint statement in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, setting out the Commonwealth's commitment to address the full range of challenges posed by COVID-19, and to ensure no one is left behind.

## Commonwealth Points of Light

Through the Commonwealth Points of Light scheme, the UK amplified inspiring examples set by individuals across the Commonwealth. As part of this scheme, running since CHOGM 2018, Her Majesty The Queen presents an award to one volunteer from a Commonwealth member state every week, to highlight gratefully the inspirational difference they are making in their communities. All awardees and

their stories can be found on the Points of Light website (<https://www.pointsoflight.gov.uk/>)

### Enhancing practical solidarity

At their meeting in London in July 2019, Commonwealth Foreign Ministers issued an Affirmation renewing their dedication to Commonwealth values and principles in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the signing of the London Declaration, which brought the modern Commonwealth into being. They also committed to working to deepen the impact of a connected Commonwealth.

The UK has continued to support efforts to strengthen co-operation and mutual support between Commonwealth member states in multilateral fora. Since CHOGM 2018, Commonwealth ministers and senior officials have participated in a range of significant meetings, providing member states with the opportunity to share best practice and knowledge, and information about each others' interests, thereby increasing solidarity among them. These include meetings in the margins of the following events:

- » World Health Organization, Geneva (May 2018, 2019)
- » UN General Assembly, New York (September 2018, 2019)
- » The Pacific Island Forum, Nauru (September 2018) and Tuvalu (August 2019)
- » World Trade Organisation (WTO), Geneva (September, December 2018)
- » Human Rights Council, Geneva (September, March, June 2018, 2019, March 2020)
- » World Bank Annual Meeting, Bali (October 2018), Washington (October 2019)
- » The ITU Plenipotentiary Conference, Dubai (November 2018)
- » African Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees, Addis Ababa (November 2018)
- » The Blue Economy Conference, Nairobi (November 2018)

In the UN and other multilateral fora, the UK has sought to facilitate the sharing of information and best practice within the Commonwealth. In New York, Commonwealth members of the UN Security Council have provided briefings on Council business for other Commonwealth member states. In Geneva, the UK has convened regular Commonwealth meetings ahead of sessions of the Human Rights Council. New Zealand has facilitated similar discussions on the WTO agenda.

More broadly, we have encouraged member states to do more to share and understand their priorities in the international arena, including information on candidacies in international elections. In 2018, for example, Ghana and the UK co-hosted a Commonwealth ministerial roundtable during the ITU Plenipotentiary Meeting in Dubai to discuss member states' candidates for various positions across the organisation. This was warmly welcomed by participants.

### Commonwealth Small States Office

During our period as Chair-in-Office, the UK has sought to strengthen solidarity and co-operation of Commonwealth member states in international organisations and institutions. The UK has provided over £1.7 million to support: the Commonwealth Small States Office (CSSO) in Geneva, so that Commonwealth small states can more effectively engage with international human rights and trade mechanisms; The Joint Office for Commonwealth Permanent Missions in New York, which provides office space for small states to conduct their business; and the deployment of resident trade and human rights advisers to the CSSO in Geneva.

#### *Human rights advisers*

The human rights advisers provided support to Commonwealth small states who often do not have the capacity to engage effectively with international human rights mechanisms based in Geneva. They were particularly valuable for visiting delegations from countries without a resident mission in Geneva, guiding them on process, providing analysis on the Human Rights Council (HRC) programme of work, and providing support to states undergoing treaty body reviews and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process.

The advisers provided tailored technical assistance to Malawi, Kiribati, Dominica and Grenada on their UPRs. Dominica and The Gambia were supported with training of officials in-country, and analysis of issues and advice on their National Reports and Statements for their successful UPRs in May and November 2019 respectively. Both countries were also provided with office space and technical expertise at the CSSO.

The advisers enabled an increased understanding of the importance of engagement with the human rights bodies in Geneva. A concrete example of this is the number of statements given by Commonwealth small states at the Human Rights Council. At the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council (HRC42), the states directly supported by the human rights advisers (Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Sierra Leone and Guyana) delivered 11 statements, compared to six statements at HRC40, and one statement at HRC41. Public statements are the means by which states put on record their views on specific human rights issues and participate in HRC sessions, debating and considering human rights issues before voting on resolutions. They are an essential way to ensure agenda items are robustly considered.

Universal participation and greater diversity of voices at the Human Rights Council strengthen multilateral promotion and protection of human rights. By providing support through the Commonwealth Small States Office and building awareness of the Human Rights Council, we have encouraged small states to increase their engagement with the Council and consider running for membership.



Trucks waiting in line at the entry gate in Chirundu, taken during a UK-funded Trade Facilitation Programme in Zambia.  
Photo Credit: Stephen Muller

### **Trade advisers**

The trade advisers sought to enhance and increase the effective and meaningful participation of Commonwealth small states in international trade policy, by providing technical advice to their World Trade Organisation (WTO) missions in Geneva. The advisers facilitated small states' fuller integration and participation in the multilateral trading system. This will contribute in the long run to boosting trade-related sustainable economic growth and development, and poverty reduction.

The advisers have helped Commonwealth small states to better monitor, interpret, implement and evaluate developments and proposals related to the multilateral trade rules which affect their national interests. They have provided support in new trade policy areas such as investment, labour relations, intellectual property, anti-dumping and countervailing measures, and trade and climate change, as well as in more traditional areas such as tariffs and agriculture.

The advisers also supported small states in their engagement with WTO negotiations on fisheries subsidies and e-commerce, and in discussions on WTO reform. They have supported Commonwealth Permanent Representatives' leadership roles on some WTO issues, for example the role played by the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Mission on the Appellate Body challenge.

The advisers have helped to arrange regional conferences to encourage sharing of expertise between Commonwealth small states. For example, a regional consultation for Asian-Pacific member countries was hosted in Singapore in May 2019, enabling policymakers from the Asia-Pacific region to assess the potential effects and policy implications

of emerging trade-related issues. A similar regional workshop was held in Guyana in November 2019.

### **Reform of the Commonwealth Secretariat**

The UK has played an active role as Chair-in-Office in implementing the mandate set at CHOGM 2018 for Foreign Ministers to decide what action should be taken in response to the conclusions of the HLG review of the full governance arrangements of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The HLG, chaired by former President of Kiribati H.E. Anote Tong, submitted two reports, the first in September 2018, and the second in December 2018. In response to each, the Commonwealth Secretariat Board of Governors—comprised of High Commissioners accredited to the UK and the UK Commonwealth Envoy—developed a set of recommendations for Foreign Ministers. Through a thorough, transparent and inclusive process, the Board worked to agree those recommendations by consensus.

The recommendations clarified roles, responsibilities and accountability, and covered themes including funding, collaboration with accredited Commonwealth organisations, and the processes for the selection, appointment and appraisal of Secretaries-General. They were later agreed by Foreign Ministers at their regular annual meeting in New York, chaired by the UK Commonwealth Minister, on 26 September 2019. Subject to endorsement by heads of government at the next CHOGM, the recommendations will take effect immediately after that CHOGM. They will make a significant difference to the effective operation of the Commonwealth

Secretariat and its collaboration with member states and Commonwealth organisations.

In December 2019, the Chair of the Board of Governors, the High Commissioner of Cyprus H.E. Andreas S. Kakouris, wrote to the Foreign Secretary in his capacity as Chair of the Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers' Meeting, to inform him that the Board had successfully concluded the process of agreeing revisions of the 2005 Revised Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat to incorporate the decisions made by Foreign Ministers. This ensures that recommendations can enter into force immediately after heads endorse them at the next CHOGM.

In 2019, the Board of Governors requested an internal audit of procurement-related matters, as a result of which a number of processes and practices have now been improved. In addition, other conditions set by the UK for its 2019/20 contribution to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (administered by the Commonwealth Secretariat) have led to improvements in other areas of management and administration.

## Conclusion

Throughout our Chair-in-Office period, the UK has been highly engaged with its Commonwealth partners, through international visits, collaboration on events and ministerial meetings, and through the delivery and support of bilateral and multilateral programmes. The sharing of knowledge and best practice, such as on international elections, and the supporting of Commonwealth small states to engage more with international organisations, have also increased solidarity between member states, and enriched the value of Commonwealth membership.

The Commonwealth's voice has been heard more loudly on the international stage, on matters as diverse as cyber security, trade and global health, and in fora such as the UN General Assembly and World Health Assembly. This has enabled the Commonwealth to express its collective views and influence global agendas. Among other things, this activity amplifies the voices of the Commonwealth's 32 small states.

The UK will continue to support the Commonwealth Secretariat to strengthen its governance, enhance its collaboration with other Commonwealth organisations and deliver effectively for all member states. The Secretariat will continue to have a central role in ensuring that the Commonwealth is an increasing force for global good.





## Chapter 2: A fairer future

Since the creation of the modern Commonwealth in 1949, the promotion of peace, democracy and human rights has been central to members' shared purpose. These values are enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter, to which all member states are committed.

When leaders met in 2018, they agreed that full social, economic and political participation and equality of all is essential to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and ensure no-one is left behind.

Leaders therefore agreed to act in three diverse areas:

- » They committed to protect and promote human rights—among other things, by supporting National Human Rights Institutions, addressing the stigma of disability, and ratifying and implementing the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.
- » They recognised that building effective, accountable and inclusive national institutions at all levels is essential for development to flourish, and agreed a refreshed approach to election observation, by adopting the Revised Commonwealth Guidelines on Election Observation in Member Countries.
- » They encouraged specific actions to provide the opportunity for at least 12 years of quality education for all by 2030.

During the UK's period as Chair-in-Office, we have used our international influence and supported a range of activities to meet these commitments, some examples of which are outlined in this chapter.

### Highlights:

- » At CHOGM 2018, the UK announced it would contribute an additional £212 million to the Girls' Education Challenge to ensure that up to 837,000 marginalised girls will have access to 12 years of quality education by 2025. The project runs across 17 countries—11 of which are Commonwealth members.
- » The UK promoted inclusive and accountable democracy, supporting the completion of election observation missions in eight countries and the update of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures—a Commonwealth-wide standard for parliaments.

- » The UK provided support to six Commonwealth countries to repeal and reform outdated legislation which discriminates against, or fails to protect, women, girls and LGBT communities.

### Inclusive and accountable democracy

#### *Election observation*

At CHOGM 2018, heads recognised the valuable role of Commonwealth Election Observation in supporting member states to improve democratic processes and institutions. During the UK's period as Chair-in-Office, the Commonwealth Secretariat provided election observation missions to eight countries with the support of UK funding. A number of these countries have since undertaken reforms addressing recommendations contained in the Commonwealth Observer Group reports. Malawi has made improvements to voter registration, its Media Code of Conduct, and women's political participation; Nigeria has improved regulations and guidelines for the conduct of elections; and Solomon Islands has enhanced electoral management bodies' capacity and voting procedures. These reforms demonstrate the value to member states of observations conducted through the Commonwealth.

UK funding has also supported the Commonwealth Secretariat to create knowledge products to entrench and advance good electoral practice. They have created a handbook for observers, setting out the Commonwealth's observation methodology to support the smooth running of election observations. Guides have also been produced to promote best practice approaches taken by different Commonwealth countries, many of whom are facing a similar set of challenges, such as limited institutional capacity and resource constraints.

#### *Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy*

During the UK's period as Chair-in-Office, the UK-funded Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy (CP4D) has operated in 15 Commonwealth countries, as well as at regional and international levels. Its work has delivered on CHOGM 2018 commitments and the Commonwealth Charter, and has advanced progress towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, in particular, SDGs 5 (gender equality) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions). It has worked with parliaments and civil society to uphold and promote democratic culture, particularly to improve the representation of marginalised groups such as women, young people,

people with disabilities and the LGBT community, to enable them to monitor their governments more effectively.

At an international level, CP4D supported the update of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures (known as the Benchmarks) aligned with SDG 16, and supported 12 parliaments<sup>1</sup> to assess themselves against the Benchmarks. CP4D hosted a panel session at the UN High Level Political Forum in July 2019 to promote the Benchmarks (an example of Commonwealth member states intervening collaboratively in international fora), sharing a Commonwealth best practice tool which will help parliaments better measure performance against SDG indicators.

At a regional level, the CP4D convened an Asia Regional Women's Political Leadership Conference, hosted by the Parliament of Malaysia, to focus on policies and initiatives which mainstream gender equality across the Asia region. The conference helped identify that women in different parts of Malaysia have different access challenges, and catalysed work with women in the Sabah region to enable them to become stronger advocates for policy and legislative change on child marriage, FGM and gender equality.

At a country level, CP4D supported the enactment of legislation to include persons with disabilities in three Kenyan counties, the training of new MPs in Sierra Leone on disability inclusion, and the training of 3,000 student leaders in Ghana on parliamentary ethics and practices.

## Human rights

### *The Equality and Justice Alliance*

At CHOGM 2018, the former Prime Minister Theresa May expressed her regret at the legacy of discriminatory legislation in the Commonwealth, and committed to support countries who wish to update their laws. The UK-funded 'Building Fairer, More Equal and More Inclusive Commonwealth Societies' project was created to deliver on this commitment, as well as to promote the full social, economic and political participation of all. The project was implemented by the Equality and Justice Alliance (EJA)—a consortium of NGOs—and aimed to advance equality and equal protection before the law for women, girls and LGBT people across the Commonwealth.

The project delivered this commitment through three work streams:

1. It supported the creation and strengthening of five intersectional movements for change, comprising women's rights and LGBT organisations (including through offering resources such as network and capacity building), enabling them to advocate for legal and policy change in their countries and regions.

2. It delivered a series of dialogues and knowledge exchanges to build the case for reform among high-level stakeholders, successfully engaging champions in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific and Asia.
3. It delivered technical assistance programmes in six countries, supporting the review and drafting of legislation covering issues such as domestic violence, hate crimes, discrimination, sexual offences and online abuse.

The EJA's publicly available online database now comprises over 700 reports, policy papers and briefing notes relating to legal reform, women's rights, LGBT rights, gender-based violence and related issues across the Commonwealth. The project has produced 15 original research papers, generating bespoke Commonwealth analysis and recommendations to support reform on a wide range of issues.

## National Human Rights Institutions

At CHOGM 2018, heads encouraged the strengthening of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in line with the Paris Principles, and reiterated the importance of sharing human rights best practice and expertise across the Commonwealth. Heads agreed to support NHRIs and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process, as well as to strengthen the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva.

During the UK's period as Chair-in-Office, the UK's Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) chaired the Commonwealth Forum for National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI). With UK funding, the Forum aimed to build a more effective network of NHRIs across the Commonwealth, and strengthen and develop NHRIs through the sharing of expertise.

The Forum has delivered on this aim by facilitating peer-to-peer learning across the Commonwealth.

The CFNHRI supported a study tour to the UK of 12 Pacific Island country representatives scoping or developing their own NHRIs, to share experiences with the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission and EHRC. The Forum also drew from the experiences of six member countries to create an online learning product on LGBT rights, supported by the UN Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Rights.

The UK also supported the Pacific Commonwealth Equality Project (PCEP), helping Pacific countries establish or strengthen Paris Principles-compliant NHRIs. Upon request of the Vanuatu and Kiribati governments, PCEP conducted NHRI scoping missions working with government representatives to increase their understanding of the role of NHRIs, and their capacity for establishing independent NHRIs.

The PCEP has also explored innovative ways to encourage Pacific Island countries to engage with international human rights mechanisms. It facilitated the first ever video statement

<sup>1</sup> The 12 parliaments are: South Africa, Malaysia, Belize, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, St Lucia, Pakistan, Grenada, The Gambia, Ghana and Sierra Leone.



Representatives of the Saint Lucia CEDAW State Report National Drafting Team and Sisters For Change in a post-workshop feedback session, October 2019

### Case study: EJA in Saint Lucia

The EJA, which is funded by the UK, has supported the government of Saint Lucia to address three priority areas:

- » Saint Lucia has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), but has struggled to meet its State Party obligations
- » the current Domestic Violence Act has limited protections for victims, which does not comply with international standards
- » the authority of Parliament, as the primary legislature, is being compromised by its limited scrutiny of proposed legislation

The EJA partnered with key stakeholders in-country to offer targeted support. This led to three key achievements:

- » Saint Lucia will soon be up to date with its CEDAW State Party reporting obligations

- » it will soon enact some of the most progressive domestic violence legislation in the Caribbean
- » its legislative process has been reformed to facilitate greater engagement of both Parliament and the public

These results represent significant steps forward in the protections of the rights of women and girls and LGBT people. The approach of the programme, building in-country expertise rather than direct provisions of services, has offered a unique opportunity for development, moving government stakeholders away from future dependence on external consultants. The focus on capacity building has ensured that the work to introduce new legislation and maintain compliance with international treaties will continue even after the end of the programme. This is of key importance



as legislative change and its impact is a long-term process. Though this work is still in progress, there is likely to be significant impact on the people of Saint Lucia through a combination of the introduction of comprehensive domestic violence legislation, stronger and more consultative legislative processes, and increased capacity and will to maintain compliance with international obligations. One stakeholder reported that the eventual impact of the intervention would be “a transformation of our society”.

by Samoa on the findings of their National Inquiry into Family Violence using only a mobile phone, which was screened during the 42nd session of the Human Rights Council. The process they underwent to make the video statement has been filmed and documented and will be turned into a resource for use by other Pacific NHRIs.

With UK support, the Geneva-based UN Committee on the Rights of the Child held an extraordinary outreach event in Samoa in March 2020. This was an unprecedented opportunity for the Committee to gain first hand insight into the practical challenges faced by children in the Pacific. During the event, the Committee heard directly from over 100 children—a pioneering and powerful dialogue, in which future leaders debated what human rights mean to them and how they are applied within the Pacific context. The event helped generate much greater public awareness and understanding of child rights.

### Disability and mental health

At CHOGM 2018, heads agreed to address the stigma around disability in all its forms and manifestations, including mental health. The UK has delivered on this commitment through the CP4D programme (see page 17) and through the Time to Change (TTC) project. TTC ran mental health campaigns to tackle the stigma and discrimination associated with mental health conditions in India, Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria and Uganda. This was a pilot project, operating in environments where mental health had not necessarily been discussed in the past. The programme aimed to increase awareness and understanding of the experiences of people with mental health problems by training local people with lived experience of mental health conditions to carry out social contact activities in each of the five countries, developing grassroots community approaches to addressing mental health stigma.



Mobilisation meeting on land issues and how to settle land disputes in Garissa township. In attendance are the National Government and women representatives

### Case study: Women peacebuilders in Kenya

Kenya's Garissa county borders Somalia. It endures complex and multifaceted conflicts. With water and grazing land in short supply, there are frequent clashes between pastoralists and settled farmers.

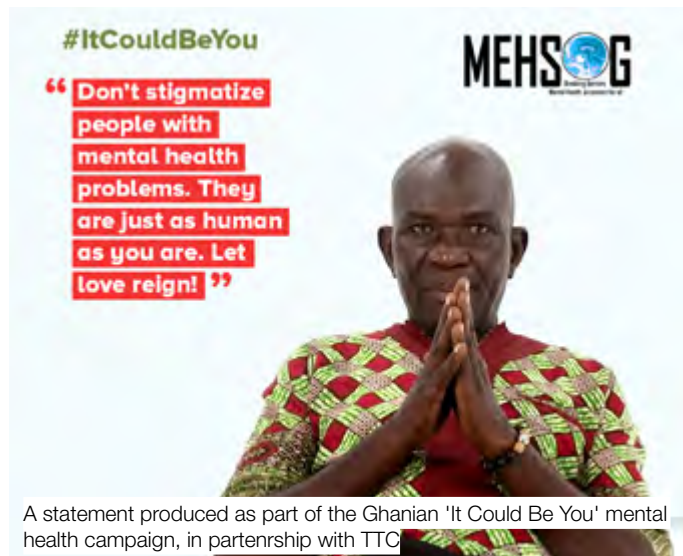
The UK has supported Conciliation Resources and WomanKind Kenya to deliver confidence building and skills training for mediation, conflict resolution and negotiation to 21 women who work in Local Peace Committees in Garissa.

One of them, Rukia Affey, explained that "women were feeling suppressed and their voices were not heard." But, thanks to this project, the 21 women mediators have used innovative approaches to foster collaboration between warring communities. These include songs, poems, coffee ceremonies and community visits.

Recently they visited a Pokomo<sup>1</sup> community of settled farmers along the Tana River and listened to men and women describe how pastoralists were destroying crops. The Pokomo men were surprised by the trouble the women mediators had taken and agreed voluntarily to allow pastoralists to water their herds. "[The women mediators] opened a corridor of water; men [mediators] could not open this, but the women could," said Rukia.

Abdullahi Abdi, of WomanKind Kenya, has observed that women mediators are more inclusive in their approaches to peacebuilding than men. "Men tend to be in more of a hurry. The women's approach makes conflict mediation more successful in the long run as they take more time to create trust and to negotiate."

<sup>1</sup> The Pokomo people are a Bantu ethnic group



A statement produced as part of the Ghanaian 'It Could Be You' mental health campaign, in partnership with TTC

### Women, peace and security

At CHOGM 2018, heads committed to ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) through legislation, policies and programmes which mainstream and promote gender equality, and the empowerment of all women and girls in social, economic and political life.

The UK-funded Women Mediators across the Commonwealth (WMC) project aimed to build the right conditions for more women to lead, influence or otherwise be meaningfully involved in peace processes, from grassroots peacebuilding initiatives to regional and international processes. In particular, the project was designed to support women mediators in advocating for genuine inclusion, and encourage international and national policymakers to make commitments to support the inclusion of women mediators in peace processes. A key output was the development of a network of women mediators from across the Commonwealth. The network now has 46 members from 21 Commonwealth countries, with 80% of members currently participating in national or local dialogues. The network has enabled members to participate effectively in a number of mediation dialogues, from grassroots to international.

### Girls' education

At CHOGM 2018, heads encouraged specific action to provide the opportunity for at least 12 years of quality education and learning for all girls and boys by 2030. Over the past two years, the UK has funded and undertaken a range of activity to meet this commitment.

The UK-funded Girls' Education Challenge, for which £212 million of funding was announced at CHOGM 2018, is supporting up to 1.5 million marginalised girls across 17 countries. 11 of these countries are members of the Commonwealth: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The projects aim to ensure that, by 2025, up



Girls in Ghana attending school

to 837,000 marginalised girls continue to access 12 years of quality education, and that a further 116,000 highly marginalised girls who have dropped out of school or have never had the opportunity to learn are offered a second chance at education.

To share the UK's education expertise and establish wider partnerships with Commonwealth countries, the UK co-funded the launch of the Gender at the Centre Initiative under the French G7 presidency. The centre will look to work with three Commonwealth countries—Mozambique, Nigeria and Sierra Leone—to ensure their education systems support the most marginalised girls.

The Platform for Girls' Education comprises 12 influential global figures who have championed the girls' education agenda during the UK's term as Chair-in-Office. The Platform, co-chaired by the UK and Kenya, held its first meeting at the UN General Assembly in September 2018. Platform Members actively built support for girls' education in their spheres of influence: Platform Member Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO, hosted an international conference on girls' education on 5 July 2019; Platform Member Baela Raza Jamil, a prominent civil society activist from Pakistan, effectively lobbied the national and provincial governments to step up efforts to ensure that no girl is left behind.

The Platform has also funded research to frame the challenge of meeting girls' education commitments in the Commonwealth, with recommendations for action. An initial framing report assessing the state of girls' education in the Commonwealth was published on 21 January 2019 to coincide with the Education World Forum. The report frames the challenge to ensure 12 years of quality education for all and sets out priorities for further action. To further examine specific issues related to supporting girls into education, a paper on Gender Responsive Education Sector Planning was launched in September 2019. The Platform's flagship paper on the importance of political leadership was launched by Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon, Minister for the Commonwealth, at the 43rd Human Rights Council Session, with recommendations for consideration by heads of government at the next CHOGM, to continue momentum during Rwanda's term as Chair-in-Office.

## Conclusion

As Chair-in-Office, the UK had a special responsibility to protect and promote Commonwealth values. The global landscape is changing dramatically, with traditional democratic structures and alliances being challenged in new ways. The Commonwealth, as a voluntary association

founded on shared values and aspirations, has a unique role to play in bringing democracies together to champion human rights and good governance on the world stage. Over the past two years, the UK has worked with all three pillars of the Commonwealth—member states, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth organisations—to tackle these global challenges, including by:

- » enhancing access to education and creating meaningful opportunities for Commonwealth young people
- » working with grassroots organisations and individuals with lived experience to reduce stigma faced by marginalised groups including those suffering with mental illness, disabled people, women and girls, and LGBT people
- » supporting the meaningful inclusion of women in peacebuilding activities from the grassroots to the international level
- » supporting 12 Commonwealth parliaments to self-assess against the updated Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures



## Chapter 3: A prosperous future

### Trade and investment

At CHOGM 2018 heads of government recognised the role the Commonwealth can play in supporting global growth, creating employment and sharing best practices to promote development among its members. Underlining the importance of resisting all forms of protectionism and reaffirming their commitment to free trade in a transparent, inclusive, fair, open and rules-based multilateral trading system, leaders agreed to:

- » launch the Connectivity Agenda for Trade and Investment as a platform for countries to exchange best practice, experience and undertake domestic reform
- » promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, resolving to address systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in the global economy and emphasising the importance of creating meaningful employment opportunities for the Commonwealth's youth
- » support small and vulnerable states to fully participate in and contribute to a more prosperous future, tackling challenges to accessing global financial markets and regulated financial services

This chapter sets out a range of activity undertaken by the UK to deliver against these commitments since CHOGM 2018. More details of the programmes can be found at Annex A.

#### Highlights:

- » The UK (through the British Standards Institution) now supports 50 of the Commonwealth's 54 members to tackle non-tariff trade barriers by increasing awareness and adoption of international standards.
- » The UK announced a £3.5 million extension to the SheTrades Commonwealth programme which has supported over 3,000 women-owned businesses and helped create over 3,000 jobs.
- » Since 2018, 47 scholars have started their Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships at 26 different institutions in 17 Commonwealth countries.

#### Connectivity agenda for trade and investment

With the goal of expanding investment and boosting intra-Commonwealth trade to US\$2 trillion per annum by 2030, leaders adopted a declaration on the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda. Six member states now lead

co-operation on five clusters of connectivity, all with the goal of increasing the inclusivity and sustainability of trade:

1. physical connectivity (The Gambia)
2. digital connectivity (UK and South Africa)
3. regulatory connectivity (Barbados)
4. business-to-business connectivity (Bangladesh)
5. supply-side connectivity (Vanuatu)

The clusters support engagement across institutions, regulators, policy makers and businesses in the Commonwealth to facilitate exchange of experiences, knowledge, best practices and ideas to help achieve the goals of increased intra-Commonwealth trade and investment.

Following the launch of the Connectivity Agenda, the UK volunteered to co-lead the digital cluster with South Africa. The digital cluster is focused on supporting inclusive digital transformation: highlighting how digital value chains can facilitate trade; enhancing digital connectivity to promote inclusive growth; and sharing experience to enhance understanding and capacity in digital industrial policy.

At the first digital cluster meeting, representatives from 18 Commonwealth countries exchanged experiences, views and best practice on:

- » the opportunities and challenges of digital transformation
- » domestic digital policy
- » digital inclusion, particularly the participation of women in the digital economy
- » regulatory frameworks
- » barriers to e-commerce

In August 2019, the UK chaired a second meeting of the cluster, where members discussed the high-level principles which should underpin digital connectivity. The meeting of the digital cluster in February 2020 focused on the readiness of countries to engage in e-commerce and digital trade. UNCTAD and the International Chamber of Commerce were invited to present to the cluster informing the discussions on the role of public policy in digital trade. The Commonwealth Secretariat presented on the Commonwealth FinTech Toolkit and the Commonwealth Repository of Digital Policies. The high-level principles discussed in August were also revisited and it was agreed these will continue to be revisited in future meetings.

During its time as Chair-in-Office, the UK has also supported Barbados in their leadership of the Regulatory Connectivity Cluster. The cluster works to enhance international regulatory

co-operation, establish a common understanding of regulatory practices across the Commonwealth, develop good regulatory practice (GRP), and build capacity for Commonwealth members to design and implement GRP principles.

The UK Better Regulation Executive and UK government co-hosted the best-attended individual meeting of any of the clusters in London in May 2019, with 54 attendees meeting under the Regulatory Connectivity Cluster. At this meeting, members agreed to recognise the 2012 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development GRP Recommendations as best practice, and encouraged Commonwealth countries to adopt and embed these to the extent possible into their national strategies. Botswana, Mauritius, New Zealand and Jamaica highlighted the benefits of incorporating GRP into government processes by sharing case studies of sectoral best practice. These case studies are now included in a growing database of shared learning accessible to all Commonwealth member states.

During the first Connectivity Cluster Week in August 2019, Regulatory Connectivity Cluster members committed to developing a common understanding of the process needed to produce Commonwealth GRPs. As a starting point, they will formally agree a set of principles before embedding them throughout the Commonwealth. The principles will build on existing international best practice while being respectful of and benefiting from the unique composition of the Commonwealth. At the most recent meeting of the cluster in February 2020, interactive discussions on the principles concluded that the Commonwealth Secretariat would collate member states' feedback to support the future drafting of Commonwealth GRP Principles including a matrix to collect information on members' capacity-building needs to support implementation of GRP.

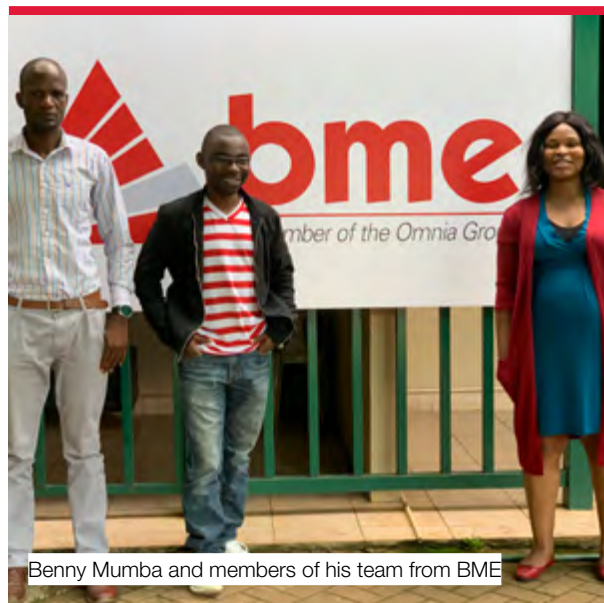
### **Trade facilitation**

The UK-funded Commonwealth Trade Facilitation Programme helps member states implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

Alongside the World Customs Organisation and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the UK has been working with 18 priority countries<sup>1</sup> to help them adopt faster and more efficient customs procedures which help reduce the cost of doing business and create a more enabling environment for intra-Commonwealth trade.

We continue to provide tailored support to countries on the programme, targeting technical assistance towards implementing individual provisions of the TFA, with an overall aim of reducing the time, cost and delay of customs procedures at the border.

As well as technical support, UNCTAD has assisted recipients to establish and maintain National Trade Facilitation Committees—a key component in driving forward TFA reform and ensuring ownership across government and within industry. For example, in 2018, the UK funded the first African Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees, which included all Africa representatives



Benny Mumba and members of his team from BME

### **Case study: Trade facilitation in Zambia**

Between Zambia and Zimbabwe is the Chirundu 'One Stop Border Post' where two bridges link the border facilities across the Zambezi River. It is the preferred entry point for commercial traffic into Zambia from South Africa, Central and Eastern Africa. Until 2019, the queues of congested traffic often stretched up to 10 kilometres and the average clearing time for trucks was over five days. There was limited co-ordination among 14 government agencies who had to individually enforce different pieces of legislation. To improve cross-border trade facilitation, the UK has partnered with the World Customs Organisation. They have provided capacity-building support to the Zambian Revenue Authority for carrying out a Time Release Study in Chirundu.

A Zambian Revenue Authority customs official said that, "The Time Release Study was a good learning curve ... there were some administrative changes that already have taken place and have improved time clearance." Importers and clearing agents are also seeing change: Benny Mumba of BME, one of the largest suppliers to Zambia's natural resources industry, said that "Trucks using the Chirundu post take one to two days to clear, instead of the four to five days it used to take." Although there is still more work to be done, Stephen Muller, from the World Customs Organisation, pointed out that "Co-ordinated border management is starting to come up which is a good by-product of the Time Release Study". These learning points can be replicated in other posts, ultimately decreasing the cost of conducting trade in Zambia as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Belize, Botswana, Dominica, Eswatini, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, and Zambia.



from the TFA programme. This work helped identify key issues and challenges in TFA implementation, including donor support and co-ordination, better enforcement of TFA commitments to support its timely implementation, and improved evaluation of outcomes.

Targeted country support has been complemented by organisational development modules, including human resources, leadership and programme management. These modules provide the underpinning institutional framework to sustain the reform efforts and have had clear positive effects on regulatory performance. For example, the World Bank Doing Business ranking for 'trading across borders', which measures the level of regulatory performance over time, has improved in 10 Commonwealth countries participating in the programme years. In-country benefits also include:

- » improved compliance trends
- » private sector staff feeling an increase in their knowledge, skills and understanding
- » an increase in women participating in local and online training through the World Customs Organisation

### **International standards**

The UK has partnered with the British Standards Institution to develop and launch the Commonwealth Standards Network (CSN), which aims to increase awareness and use of international standards across the Commonwealth to promote intra-Commonwealth trade. The network creates a platform for cross-Commonwealth knowledge-sharing among national standards bodies to support members in using international standards. Direct training and technical assistance has been offered to institutions and businesses in developing countries to enable them to use the standards and to actively participate in international standards development. This, in turn, facilitates economic growth and development.

Thanks to this work, the CSN has made significant progress towards tackling non-tariff barriers and supporting increased intra-Commonwealth trade. The programme has secured widespread engagement from Commonwealth members, with the national standards bodies of 50 of the 54 Commonwealth countries joining as participating CSN members. An online platform supporting peer-to-peer learning among members was launched in June 2019 to enable members to access and share information on how to use standards in support of their trade objectives.

The UK is committed to ensuring the benefits of international standards are felt by Commonwealth partners at all levels of development. Over 600 technical staff and over 1,200 businesses across 20 ODA-eligible Commonwealth countries have received direct support and training to use standards, creating new opportunities for trade and investment. For example, small enterprises in the fruit and vegetable, bakery, and milling sectors were trained on key quality control requirements including good hygiene practices, inspection of raw materials and proper packaging. The training of 20 Uganda Small Scale Industries Association members resulted

in 60 certification applications, a first step towards allowing them to obtain higher prices and expand into local markets, as well as driving increases in product quality. Working in close partnership with local institutions, the CSN has supported the development of National Quality Policies in St Lucia, Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu. These strategies will underpin the use of international standards in driving up quality and facilitating trade in these countries for years to come.

At the Commonwealth Trade Ministers' Meeting in October 2019, the UK announced an additional £2.5 million of funding for the CSN. This will help the CSN continue to break down non-tariff barriers to trade and support institutions and exporters in developing countries to use standards to access new markets and attract investment.

By promoting the use of voluntary international standards by its members, the Commonwealth Standards Network complements the Commonwealth Regulatory Connectivity Agenda and helps to break down the barriers which prevent businesses—especially micro, small and medium-sized enterprises—from reaching their full potential.

### **Inclusive and sustainable growth**

At CHOGM, leaders resolved to address systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economy by taking a gender-responsive approach to the development of trade policy and to promote women's economic empowerment. Heads also stressed the importance of creating meaningful employment opportunities for the Commonwealth's growing youth populations.

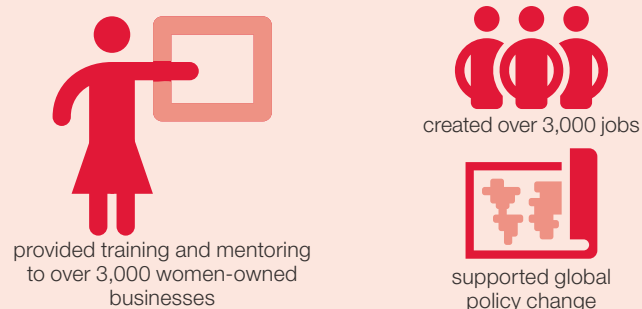
#### **Women's economic empowerment**

Trade is a key driver of growth, prosperity and development, and a crucial enabler for women's economic empowerment. Supporting women-owned businesses to participate in global trade can help to drive broader economic transformation and poverty reduction.

To support this, the UK partnered with the International Trade Centre to deliver SheTrades Commonwealth. This programme promotes economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries by enabling the increased participation of women-owned business in international

#### **Figure 2: Women's economic empowerment**

**SheTrades Commonwealth has:**



Chado Habibat Tswanle holding her signature Black African Soap



Her Excellency's Black African Soap in the old packaging (left), and new packaging adopted after the SheTrades training on packaging



### Case study: Her Excellency

SheTrades is making women-owned businesses more competitive in Nigeria: they say they now have more customers and better products. Habibat Tswanle, CEO of a shea butter beauty business called 'Her Excellency', says: "SheTrades changed my business 100% – I would even say 1,000%". Habibat runs the company in Abuja, Nigeria, where she is also a practicing nurse. Since December 2019, the business has seen a monthly sales increase of over NGN 100,000 (around £214) thanks to SheTrades support.

World Bank research shows that women-led businesses in Nigeria have significantly lower profits on average than those run by men. This is because women lack access to knowledge, skills and resources, including networking opportunities.<sup>1</sup> SheTrades addresses these underlying constraints by helping women become more competitive to increase their participation in trade. The project has

provided webinars, face-to-face training and coaching on a range of business management and technical topics.

Influenced by SheTrades, Habibat completely redesigned the presentation of her products and introduced new production techniques. Using her new knowledge, she has created a nourishing cream which is now her best-selling product; "Because of the [SheTrades] coaching, I have more customers than before and a more unique product." Improved packaging and production techniques have also enabled Habibat to double the selling price of her signature African Black Soap.

Habibat is working towards certification from the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control, after which she will sell her product abroad. When asked about the future she says: "My dream is big. I want my product to be high quality and well recognised [around the world]."

1 Campos et al. 2019. *Profiting from Parity: Unlocking the Potential of Women's Businesses in Africa: Main Report (English)*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/501971553025918098/Main-Report>

trade. Through a range of training and capacity-building opportunities, SheTrades Commonwealth has been helping women-owned businesses build stronger brands, develop export strategies and grow their client base.

The programme has made significant progress supporting inclusive and sustainable development. It has connected women entrepreneurs to international markets and investment opportunities, helping enhance the competitiveness of entrepreneurs across Bangladesh, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana (see figure 2 for latest project outcomes).

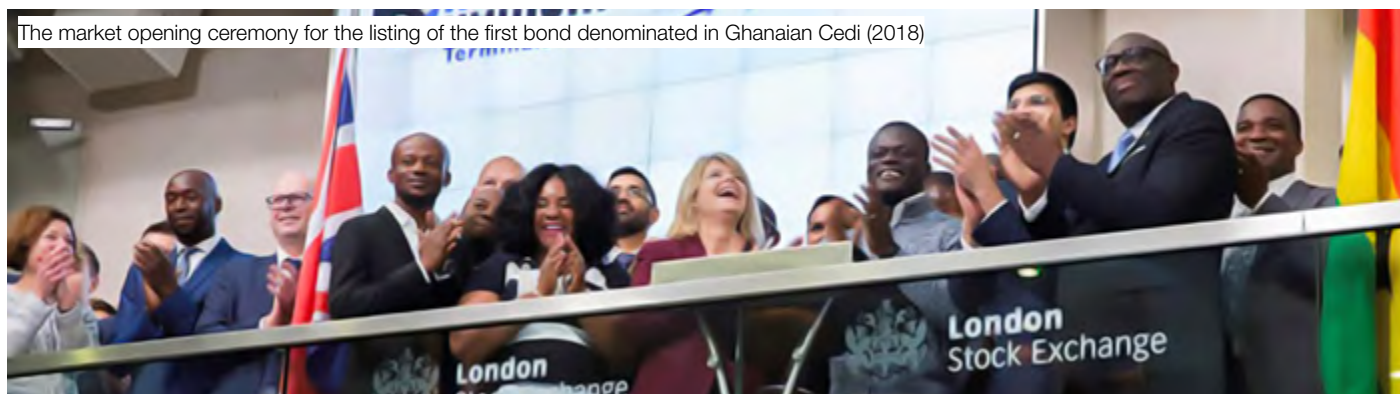
SheTrades Commonwealth has developed SheTrades Outlook: an innovative policy tool on trade and women's economic empowerment. It provides quantifiable and comparable indicators related to trade and gender. To date, 86 indicators have been developed, over 50 good practices on data collection and entrepreneurial support have been identified, and over 400 institutions mapped. 25 countries have completed the pilot, including Australia, Malaysia, Sierra Leone and Trinidad and Tobago.

The UK announced an additional £3.5 million of funding for the SheTrades Commonwealth programme at the UK-Africa Investment Summit in January 2020, extending it to 2021. This additional funding will build on the existing programme aims, roll out the SheTrades Outlook tool to six more countries, and work with an additional five countries on gender-responsive trade policy reform. The extension aims to create up to 3,000 more jobs which last beyond the lifespan of the



Dr Funke Bolujoko, director of the company Ruchim, which produces 'Master Tea' – a collection of herbal teas. Since joining SheTrades, the business has received several large orders from supermarkets and hotels in Nigeria and she credits this success to SheTrades.

The market opening ceremony for the listing of the first bond denominated in Ghanaian Cedi (2018)



programme and to secure a further £10 million in sales while embedding a self-sustaining business environment for the women-owned businesses it supports.

## Access to finance

### *Financial regulation*

In April 2018, the UK launched a new £2 million partnership with the Bank of England to provide training and share expertise on effective bank supervision, crisis communication and market monitoring to the central banks of Ghana, Sierra Leone and South Africa. The aim was to improve regulation and reduce the risk of bank failures.

More than 500 central bank staff in partner countries have taken part in workshops delivered by the Bank of England, helping participants deepen their understanding of effective central banking methods by learning from case studies. In Ghana, work by the Bank of England helped to update analytical models and risk management processes. In South Africa, the programme delivered training for central banks in the Southern African Development Community on managing bank failures across borders. Following the positive feedback from partner institutions, we are expanding the total programme to allow assistance to continue to Ghana, Sierra Leone and South Africa, as well as other developing countries, until 2022. In 2020, the Bank of England will host workshops on central bank governance and culture, fintech and emerging challenges for developing countries to exchange best practices and build a community of practice.

### *Local currency financing*

In partnership with the London Stock Exchange, the UK has helped developing countries to raise finance in local currencies on international markets. This enables them to invest in growth without creating vulnerability to exchange rate fluctuation.

In March 2019, the UK announced £5 million for this purpose. Working in collaboration with UK-funded GuarantCo (part of the Private Infrastructure Development Group), we supported the first local currency bond from Ghana and West Africa to launch on the London Stock Exchange in November 2018. The bond, from Quantum Terminals Group, raised 45 million Ghanaian cedi to support its liquid petroleum gas storage

business. In March 2019, we complemented our work on local currency bonds with a £31 million investment in the Currency Exchange Fund, which provides financial solutions protecting investors and borrowers from excessive currency movements. The Currency Exchange Fund has supported deals in Indian Rupee, Rwandan Franc, Sri Lankan Rupee and Ugandan Shilling, among many other currencies.

### *Financial risk*

The UK continues to provide technical assistance, expertise and resources to many Commonwealth countries to support efforts to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing. This work enables Commonwealth countries to more effectively prevent financial crimes which damage economic prospects and restrict development in emerging markets.

The UK, with the Canadian government and the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF), is supporting more effective regulation in the Caribbean of anti-money laundering (AML) and counter-terrorist financing (CTF) measures taken by financial and non-financial businesses. By working together to reduce financial crime risk in the Caribbean, we are addressing the root cause of de-risking, which remains an issue of major concern for many Caribbean member states.

The UK government, with the International Monetary Fund and the US, has supported Botswana to undertake, draft and implement its first national AML/CTF strategy. This included a one-week visit in January 2019 to meet with relevant Botswanan agencies, followed by desk-based support to draft and finalise the strategy. The UK has continued to support Botswana to make vital reforms to its legal and regulatory framework for AML and CTF, strengthening the integrity of its financial system and improving outcomes for Botswanan people and businesses.

The UK is providing considerable financial support to the Eastern and Southern African Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG), which counts Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Seychelles, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia among its members. The UK's support ensures that ESAAMLG is able to apply international AML/CTF standards to these members in a robust, timely way. This means ESAAMLG is better able to support these countries to make reforms which will improve

their economic prospects and business environments as a result of a better regulated, cleaner financial system.

### **Digital finance**

The UK and Ghana jointly launched the Digital Finance Champions Group during CHOGM 2018 as a platform for countries demonstrating leadership and aspiration for inclusive digital finance for all. Designed to tap into knowledge and experience within the Commonwealth community, the group is an effective forum for sharing lessons quickly and inclusively, which speeds up the implementation of secure and inclusive digital finance strategies.

In partnership with the Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI), a network of 107 policy makers and regulators in 92 developing countries, the member-led group started in July 2019. With a budget of £4 million, it has five priorities:

- » support for peer learning on innovation
- » technical assistance on risks of digital credit
- » local peer-to-peer learning
- » regional and multi-country solutions
- » support to encourage co-ordinated, inter-agency approaches to regulation

### **Youth employment**

In partnership with the British Council, the UK is helping to create meaningful employment opportunities for the Commonwealth's growing youth population.

The UK-funded I-Work project was designed to improve the employment prospects of young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by piloting and introducing new approaches to employer-led skills development. Operating in four countries (Ghana, India, Malaysia and South Africa) it focused on three areas to integrate work at system, institution and individual levels:

- » new policies and approaches to enhance apprenticeships and work-related learning
- » skills training centres implementing employer-led and inclusive approaches
- » dissemination of practice, innovations and learning across the Commonwealth

Technical assistance projects were implemented in all four countries, supported at the highest levels of local and national government, and engaging hundreds of stakeholders, employers and practitioners. In Ghana, the project focused on developing a revised and updated apprenticeship policy and accompanying implementation support. In South Africa, the project created online digital guidelines for the delivery of apprenticeships. In Malaysia, intelligence gathered from the manufacturing sector shaped new guidance for employers and training institutions. In India, the project focused on training those in advisory roles in the apprenticeship system.



Cameroon Scholars Ntani Nsutebu and Sharon Engonwie, who were hosted at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana under the QECS scheme

Technical and Vocational Education and Training colleges in all four countries have built on their new knowledge to pilot teaching, learning and systemic initiatives which will address quality of education and access to employment opportunities.

### **Scholarships**

The Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP) was launched by Commonwealth Education Ministers in 1959. It is the overarching agreement under which Commonwealth governments offer scholarship opportunities to citizens of other Commonwealth members. The UK government contributes to the CSFP in two ways.

#### **Commonwealth Scholarship Commission**

First, the UK government funds the Commonwealth Scholarships Commission (CSC) to award scholarships and fellowships which enable Commonwealth citizens to take up postgraduate study and professional development in the UK. The areas of study are selected with a view to poverty reduction and economic development.

Through its programmes, the CSC promotes equity and inclusion, rewards merit, and delivers widespread access to postgraduate study, especially to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. With DFID funding, the CSC is on track to deliver over 2,200 new awards over the three-year period starting from April 2018, predominantly for citizens of low- and lower-middle income Commonwealth countries (see figure 3 for the number of awards so far delivered since 2018).

At the 2018 Global Disability Summit, the CSC signed the Charter for Change. As part of this commitment, the CSC has supported outreach activities and a separate scholarship programme in 2019 for people with disabilities and in subject areas related to the rights of people with disabilities.

#### **Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships**

Second, at CHOGM 2018, the UK made a £5 million contribution to an endowment fund to support the expansion of the Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships scheme.

### Figure 3: CSC scholarships

**1,500** new awards for study in the UK granted between 2018 and 2020.

Awards cover **six** themes:



science and technology for development



strengthening health systems and capacity



promoting global prosperity



strengthening global peace, security and governance



strengthening resilience and response to crisis



access, inclusion and opportunity

The scheme supports Commonwealth citizens to study for master's degrees in low- and middle-income Commonwealth countries. We have encouraged other Commonwealth members to participate in the scheme and support it financially.

Since April 2018, 47 scholars have started their Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships at 26 different institutions in 17 Commonwealth countries. Five new universities have agreed to host scholars (in Tanzania, Kenya, Nigeria and Malaysia). Discounted tuition for the scheme has been offered by 84% of the host universities, compared to 31% before 2018.

## Conclusion

As Chair-in-Office the UK has delivered work across the Commonwealth which reflects our commitment under the Charter to promote prosperity to improve the lives of all people of the Commonwealth. Over the past two years the UK has provided support to:

- » fund trade advisers and work on international standards and trade facilitation which drives the integration of small, vulnerable and least developed countries into the world economy, promoting greater and more effective participation in the international trade system
- » include the Commonwealth's growing youth population in creating a more prosperous future by giving young people life-changing opportunities to study at universities across the Commonwealth and helping to create meaningful employment opportunities for them
- » use the growing collective voice of the Commonwealth to recognise the increasing threat to the rules-based

multilateral trading system, reaffirming our shared support for the system and commitment to deepening trade and investment ties across the Commonwealth

- » advocate for intra-Commonwealth trade and facilitate the delivery of the Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda, co-leading with South Africa work on digital connectivity, and supporting Barbados as the lead of the regulatory connectivity strand



## Chapter 4: A more sustainable future

In 2018, the Commonwealth recognised the unprecedented natural challenges facing the world. Natural and man-made disasters affect 28 million people and cause economic loss of US\$8 billion each year. Without action, the impacts of climate change could push 100 million people into poverty by 2030. The spread of infectious and preventable disease exacerbates the strain on health systems (as we are seeing with COVID-19), with women particularly vulnerable owing to barriers to accessing information and participating in the formal economy. Therefore, at CHOGM 2018, leaders committed to act in three broad areas:

- » protecting the Ocean, launching a Blue Charter which addresses challenges to Ocean health (warming, acidification, deoxygenation, pollution and others)
- » reaffirming climate change commitments under the Paris Agreement, recognising the need to increase resilience and reduce the exposure of the most vulnerable
- » improving the inclusion of vulnerable populations, including through tackling endemic health challenges and supporting their integration into the formal economy

This chapter sets out some of the activity undertaken by the UK to deliver against these commitments since CHOGM 2018. More detail can be found at Annex A.

### Highlights:

- » UK support has helped to deliver improved financial resilience against natural disasters in the Caribbean. Thanks to this support in Jamaica, the national government is taking out US\$285 million of insurance cover which will fund recovery and rebuilding should a hurricane hit.
- » The UK has provided antibiotics to more than 9.1 million people, across 10 Commonwealth countries, preventing them from catching blinding trachoma, an eye disease which was recognised as a public health problem in 21 Commonwealth countries in 2018.
- » The UK (with Vanuatu) has created an alliance of 34 Commonwealth member states who have each committed to taking steps to reduce the volume of plastic in our Ocean.

### Sustainable development and protection of the Ocean

At CHOGM 2018, heads of government expressed alarm at the existential threat posed by the deteriorating health of the Ocean and called for co-ordinated global action. They identified climate change (including sea level rise and acidification), loss of biodiversity, overfishing and plastic pollution as some of the most significant pressures which need to be addressed.

#### Blue Charter

The Commonwealth Blue Charter was launched at CHOGM to respond to these challenges. It sets out the principles by which Commonwealth member countries will lead international efforts by sustainably developing and protecting the Ocean. Action groups (see figure 4) were established to collaborate with partners at national, regional and international levels, each addressing a different key challenge facing the Ocean and supporting delivery of SDG 14: life below water.

**Figure 4: Action on Ocean issues**

13 Commonwealth countries across the globe are now leading 10 action groups on priority Ocean issues:





Returned bottles at Bowen and Bowen Limited are being cut, packaged and sent to a recycling company



Henry Sanchez with Environmental Technician Christie Vernon and Edgar Ek, Deputy Chief Environmental Officer

### Case study: Commonwealth Litter Programme in Belize

In January 2020, Belize passed legislation to prohibit the use of a range of single use plastics and Styrofoam. Up to 98% of the litter on Belize's 200 miles of beaches is plastic. Single-use plastics are not biodegradable, and can ensnare and strangle wildlife, including turtles. Animals can mistake macroplastic litter for food which can fill their stomachs up so they starve, or cause them to become ill from diseases that plastic can carry.

This legislation will have a visual impact as well as a positive impact on people, marine life and the economy. Belize depends extensively on tourism, fish and other agricultural products—so preventing plastic pollution makes economic sense and enhances the nation's attractiveness to tourists and Belizeans alike.

The government had announced its intention to introduce legislation in March 2018 but lacked the scientific evidence to justify their decision to the business community and the public in general.

Data collected under the Commonwealth Litter Programme (CLiP) was instrumental in turning this problem around. Edgar Eck, Deputy Chief Environmental Officer at the Belize Department of Environment, said that "CLiP was the catalyst that pushed forward this important legislation in the fight against marine litter".

Arlene Young, Director of the Belize Coastal Zone Management Authority and Institute, agreed: "The legislation was definitely something that has been in the works for some time prior to CLiP. But CLiP provided that extra push to fast track it."

Thirteen countries are now leading 10 action groups on priority Ocean issues: aquaculture (Cyprus), blue economy (Kenya), coral reefs (Australia, Belize and Mauritius), mangroves (Sri Lanka), marine plastic pollution (UK and Vanuatu), marine protected areas (Seychelles), Ocean acidification (New Zealand), Ocean and climate change (Fiji), Ocean observation (Canada) and sustainable coastal fisheries (Kiribati). These thematic groups demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the implementation of the Blue Charter by Commonwealth countries and reflect the diversity of priority Ocean issues. Action through these groups is helping to support implementation of many of the SDG 14 targets.

The UK is a member of five groups and co-leads the action group on marine plastic pollution, the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance. Thirty-eight Commonwealth countries are now a member of at least one group.

#### **Marine plastic pollution (CCOA)**

The pioneering Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA) was launched at CHOGM 2018 with the co-chairs Vanuatu and the UK, and three other members. UK-led diplomacy has seen it grow to 34 members, each of whom has agreed to commit to one or more of the following ambitions:

- » Take steps to eliminate all avoidable single-use plastic waste.

- » Ban the sale and manufacture of microbeads in rinse-off personal care products by 2021.
- » Significantly reduce single-use plastic carrier bags by 2021.

The CCOA brings together member states, businesses and NGOs from across the Commonwealth to tackle plastic pollution in the Ocean, share best practice, leverage funding and push for global action. The UK has committed up to £70 million to tackle plastic pollution entering our Ocean and to deliver SDG 14.1: "By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution". This includes boosting global research, providing expertise and technical assistance to developing countries, and testing alternative ways to reduce, reuse or recycle plastics. The UK continues to show global leadership and is at the forefront of tackling plastic pollution.

#### **Commonwealth Litter Programme**

Drawing on world-leading UK scientific expertise, three National Marine Litter Action Plans have been launched in Belize, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. These plans have input into South Africa's own Marine Litter Action Plan and evidence collection. UK support focused on identifying the wide range of sources of marine litter and leakage points, and the collection of robust data to inform policy.

### CCOA Technical Assistance Facility

Up to £10 million has been made available to CCOA members eligible for official development assistance (ODA), to support the implementation of CCOA commitments. Bespoke technical assistance packages are currently in design. Scoping is under way with 23 of CCOA's developing country members, more than 15 of which will be completed by the next CHOGM. Working in close partnership with governments and in-country experts, these scoping assignments aim to identify precise and targeted interventions that avoid duplication and are co-ordinated with other international development activities.

For example, we have been working with incoming Chair-in-Office, Rwanda, to assess the feasibility of a Deposit Return Scheme. The scheme would provide a small sum when individuals return plastic containers. In Ghana, our technical assistance aims to increase the recognition and empowerment of informal waste workers to expand recycling capacity (including for single-use plastics). And, in St Lucia,

we have identified requirements for the delivery of a long-term solid waste management strategy.

### Plastics Research and Innovation Framework

The UK has worked with Commonwealth partners to develop a Marine Plastics Research and Innovation Framework. This is a long-term endeavour, bringing together governments, industry, researchers and practitioners to tackle the issue of marine plastics.

A £20.8 million Global Challenges Research Fund programme on reducing the impacts of plastic waste in developing countries is under development. A £6 million programme match-funded with Singapore and focused on understanding the impact of plastic pollution on marine ecosystems in south-east Asia was launched in January 2020. Twenty researchers have been placed at Commonwealth universities to support research into marine plastics through the Blue Charter Fellowship Programme.

The MSC Certification ensures continued access to US and European markets for the Guyanese shrimp industry



### Case study: Guyana's shrimp industry

In 2017, Guyana's shrimp industry was struggling to retain important international buyers due to concerns over potentially unsustainable fishing practices. Guyana's shrimp industry is the country's most significant fishing sector and fourth largest export. By early 2018, one of the shrimp processors considered the effort to obtain Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) certification too difficult and costly and decided to close down—with a loss of 340 jobs.

In 2018, the Commonwealth Marine Economies Programme launched an initiative to help Guyana obtain Marine Stewardship Council certification for its shrimp industry. They knew this accreditation would send a message of sustainability to buyers. Prior to this support, Guyana had limited capacity to monitor the sustainability of fish stocks or the wider impact of fishing on marine habitats. Working with the UK's Centre for Environment, Fisheries, and Aquaculture Science (CEFAS), representatives from Guyana's fishing industry attended training sessions in Lowestoft, UK and CEFAS experts visited Guyana. Accreditation was achieved in 2019, and Dawn Maison from the Guyana Association of Trawler Owners and Seafood Processors said: "The help was tremendous".

The results are notable. Guyana now conducts comprehensive stock and habitat assessments, resulting in changes to fishing techniques. Closed seasons have allowed shrimp stocks to recover and fishermen now work to regulated depth standards for setting nets. Since accreditation, standards have been rigorously enforced using equipment provided by the project. Fishermen are now more aware of their impact on fish stocks, particularly protected species such as turtles and rays. The Fisheries Department would have noted that the Captains and crew are now demonstrating more stewardship over resources; they are becoming more involved and are volunteering information on environmentally protected species. Guyana's Fisheries Department has secured further specialist training in marine conservation through the United Nations University. Guyana is committed to improving the sustainability of its fish stocks further with clear marine environmental benefits which in turn will lead to increased fish stocks.





A plastic home for a crab—taken during the CiIP programme

### **The Blue Economy**

At CHOGM 2018, heads noted the opportunities for sustainable economic development offered by the Ocean and coasts. To support these opportunities, the UK announced a continuation of the Commonwealth Marine Economies programme. The programme is supporting 17 Commonwealth Small Island Developing States to develop sustainable and diverse marine economies that are climate resilient. They are based on sound scientific data to promote growth, innovation, jobs and investment while safeguarding the Ocean and its fragile ecosystems.

Since 2018, the programme has continued to assist Pacific and Caribbean countries to better understand their existing maritime economies and the impacts of climate change, and to build their adaptive capacities. Through the provision of key equipment and capacity-building programmes, 13 nations now have the ability to undertake seabed mapping, monitor Ocean acidification and sea level rise, or collect tidal data. For example, in Kiribati, the mapping of 32 islands and atolls has not only enabled safe navigation for maritime trade, but has catalysed a £30 million World Bank and Asian Development Bank infrastructure project. In St Lucia, work on aquaculture has stimulated the creation of an industry to sustainably farm spiny lobsters.

Through strong partnerships with Pacific and Caribbean governments, work is also under way to develop bespoke national Maritime Economy Plans for Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Tuvalu. These will assess existing maritime economies, identify opportunities, and pinpoint obstacles to development.

Those countries can use this knowledge to drive economic growth and alleviate poverty. The plans are expected to ensure the programme leaves a lasting legacy by helping nations to chart a sustainable course towards prosperity for their people and protection of their Ocean.

### **Climate change**

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing the modern world. This was recognised at CHOGM 2018 when heads reaffirmed their commitments under the Paris Agreement to pursue efforts to limit temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

#### ***Nationally determined contributions***

In February 2020, a nationally determined contributions (NDC) hub was launched in Suva, Fiji. Established in partnership with the UK, Australia, Germany and New Zealand, this centre of excellence is working with 10 Commonwealth countries to revise and enhance their NDCs, which set out their plans to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

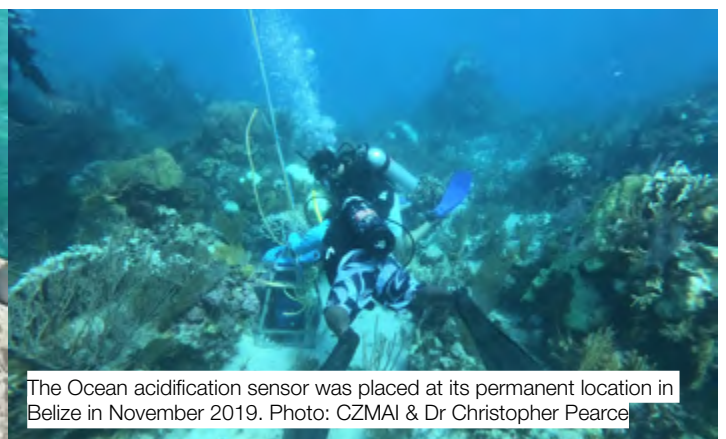
This includes work to quantify some of the adaptation targets in NDCs (in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea and Tonga), to develop investment and financing plans to support NDC implementation (in Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Samoa), and to integrate NDCs into national and regional plans (in Nauru and the Solomon Islands). This work will make important contributions to the preparation for the Conference of the Parties (COP26) meeting to be hosted by the UK in 2021.

#### ***Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub***

The UK and Australia have co-funded the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub in Mauritius. This centre of expertise helps developing states procure finance for mitigation and adaptation. The hub has so far mobilised US\$27.2 million for climatically vulnerable countries such as Jamaica and Antigua and Barbuda.



The Ocean acidification sensor measures every two hours the pH (acidity), temperature, salinity and oxygen of sea water



The Ocean acidification sensor was placed at its permanent location in Belize in November 2019. Photo: CZMAI & Dr Christopher Pearce

### **Disaster recovery**

In 2018, heads recognised the devastating impact of natural disasters and the importance of being prepared to mitigate the risks. Through the World Bank, the UK has provided technical assistance to strengthen the financial preparedness of Small Island Developing States in the Caribbean.

As a result, four countries now have disaster risk financing strategies, with another five under development. Jamaica has committed to investing in a financial instrument which will pay out if a natural disaster hits, providing quick cash for response and rebuilding. UK support helped Jamaica to identify the role that such a financial instrument can play and secured US\$14.85 million to finance premium payments.

## **Economic inclusion and sustainable development**

### **Digital identity**

Creating official digital identities can help to address some of the systemic barriers to women's full and equal participation in the economy, an ambition stated by Commonwealth heads at CHOGM 2018. To this end, the UK has supported research on how to address the gender identity gap in seven Commonwealth countries (Bangladesh, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Zambia).

In Zambia, the government has since stated their intention to partner with mobile operators to digitise their civil registration system, while in Nigeria small businesses have developed an economic ID product which verifies their identity and increases trust with customers, suppliers and service providers.

### **Global health**

At CHOGM 2018, leaders reiterated their commitment to achieve SDG 3 (good health and wellbeing) and to support efforts to tackle a wide range of serious health challenges across the Commonwealth.

### **Malaria**

As part of this commitment, leaders pledged to halve malaria across the Commonwealth by 2023. Nineteen countries (including the UK) and 22 other organisations made specific commitments ranging from universal access to mosquito nets (Tanzania) to a US\$1 billion commitment to fight malaria (Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation). While the global burden of malaria has remained fairly steady since CHOGM 2018, cases have declined in India and Uganda, and Sierra Leone has become the first African country to roll out antimalarial drugs to infants during their first year of life.

The UK has continued to lead in tackling malaria—we are the second highest country donor in the world. In June 2019, the UK announced that it would commit up to £1.4 billion to the Global Fund (a partnership to accelerate the end of AIDS,

tuberculosis and malaria as epidemics) between 2020 and 2023. The UK's three-year funding pledge will support the Global Fund's life-saving work over this period, which includes distributing 92 million mosquito nets to protect children and families from malaria. Twenty-two Commonwealth countries received money for malaria from the Global Fund in 2017-19.

As part of its Global Fund commitment, the UK has already matched £100 million of funding provided by the private sector at a rate of £2 for every £1 contributed. These contributions are directed towards interventions such as:

- » testing with rapid diagnostic tools
- » providing antimalarial treatment
- » indoor residual spraying programmes

Since CHOGM 2018, the UK has also invested £9.2 million of research funding into developing two safe and effective malaria treatments for use in Africa and Asia. Successes include stepping up the UK's programme in Nigeria, providing antimalarial medicines to 1.2 million children in 2019.

### **Quality eye care and trachoma**

Leaders also committed to achieving access to quality eye care for all by 2020, with a particular focus on eliminating trachoma, a disease of the eye caused by bacterial infection that can lead to a condition called trichiasis. If left untreated, this often results in visual impairment and blindness. The UK has supported this commitment through a programme operating in 10 Commonwealth countries.

The UK supported countries to tackle trachoma through the SAFE strategy:

- » surgery to deal with advanced physical impact of disease
- » antibiotics to clear the infection from at risk populations
- » facial cleanliness
- » environmental improvement

See figure 5 for further details of the strategy.

Vanuatu has submitted a dossier to the World Health Organisation to demonstrate that it is free from trachoma as a public health risk. Malawi is currently under surveillance for trachoma, and it is hoped that it will also submit its dossier in 2020. UK support for this work will continue as part of a new £220 million UK programme to treat neglected tropical diseases, which was launched in September 2019.

## **Conclusion**

The global extent and diversity of the Commonwealth means member collaboration can make significant contributions to addressing global sustainability challenges. Over the past two years, the UK has made progress in supporting and delivering such collaboration:

- » Across the Commonwealth, climate change is recognised as the pre-eminent challenge of our time. Small Island

States remain vulnerable and continue to focus on adaptation and resilience. Significant progress has been made in ensuring that disaster financing is considered as a way to increase that resilience, while support has been provided to ensure that vulnerable states develop economies that are more diversified and sustainable.

- » Momentum has continued to build around global efforts to protect the Ocean. CCOA has demonstrated that the Commonwealth can play a leading role in driving the global agenda.
- » In some Commonwealth countries, UK funding has been able to support significant progress in treating preventable diseases such as trachoma and malaria. However, the scale of the problem remains large and continued commitment is required from all Commonwealth member states.

### Figure 5: Eye care and trachoma

UK support across **10** Commonwealth countries has...



screened and managed trichiasis for over **28,000** people

provided eye surgery for over **24,000** people



distributed antibiotics to over **9.1 million** people

trained over **15,000** community drug distributors





## Chapter 5: A more secure future

At CHOGM 2018, the Commonwealth pledged to build a more secure future for all its citizens. Heads agreed to take actions towards securing our future against cyberattack, modern day slavery (60% of whose 40 million victims are Commonwealth citizens), and online child sexual exploitation. The Commonwealth also remains united in its commitment to counter violent extremism.

Commitments made at CHOGM 2018 centred around:

- » implementation of the 2018 Commonwealth Cyber Declaration, which was agreed by all member states and sets out a common commitment to a free, open, inclusive and secure internet, respecting human rights and freedom of expression
- » working together to tackle the issues of modern slavery and human trafficking
- » protecting children from OCSE
- » condemning violent extremism in all its forms, and collaborating to tackle it

### Highlights:

- » Every Commonwealth country has benefited from our cyber security capacity-building programme, which has supported implementation of the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration. The programme has also demonstrated key Commonwealth partnerships: for example, the UK worked with Singapore to establish National Cyber Security Incident Response Teams.
- » Strengthened legislation concerning human trafficking across the Commonwealth, but particularly in Malawi.
- » An increased awareness of techniques to counter violent extremism (CVE) among Commonwealth member states and institutions, including in Cameroon, Bangladesh, Tanzania and Trinidad and Tobago.

### Cyber security

The UK made up to £15 million available to support implementation of the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration. This included the Commonwealth Cyber Programme, which invested £5.5 million specifically to help build capacity in low- and middle-income countries. By the time of its completion, the programme had made a major contribution to Commonwealth cyber security by delivering almost



The UK's Commonwealth Envoy, Philip Parham, addresses delegates in the Guildhall, London, at a Commonwealth event on cybersecurity and the resilience of the financial sector hosted by the Bank of England, 23 October 2019

100 capacity-building events in over 30 countries. All Commonwealth countries have benefited from UK-funded cyber security capacity-building support, which has improved capabilities and trained over 1,000 individuals across the Commonwealth. Private sector partners Microsoft, Citi and Templar Executives have also provided valuable benefit-in-kind support to Commonwealth member states, including training and information gathering.

Commonwealth members committed to support each other in undertaking national cyber security capacity reviews. This was the cornerstone commitment of the Declaration's Implementation Plan. These reviews, using a comprehensive model developed by the University of Oxford, help countries establish a baseline for current capacity and identify priority areas for development. Since CHOGM 2018, 13 reviews have been completed, 7 of which were funded by the UK. A total of 38 out of 54 Commonwealth countries have now completed reviews.

To strengthen an inclusive and rights-based cyberspace that supports economic and social development, we have promoted a multi-stakeholder approach to cyber security strategy development and policymaking in the Commonwealth. This has helped civil society to be a key part of the process. Examples of this are in Belize, Kenya, Sierra Leone and Ghana, where UK-financed support has enabled civil society groups to engage with their national governments and contribute toward national cyber security strategies, helping to ensure they will meet citizens' needs.

In partnership with Singapore, the UK delivered on the commitment to strengthen the capabilities of national Cyber Security Incident Response Teams (nCSIRT) across Commonwealth member states. They are now able to develop their ability to detect and mitigate cyber-attacks. At a London workshop in December 2019, the UK shared expertise and threat intelligence and strengthened links to improve co-operation. Feedback since then has indicated that at least 17 Commonwealth nations are planning to establish their own nCSIRT by the end of 2020.

The UK has funded the development of a Commonwealth electronic evidence-sharing network, which now comprises 47 of 54 Commonwealth member states. The Commonwealth Network of Contact Points aims to enable faster and more efficient mutual legal assistance between states for crimes involving electronic evidence. This delivers on the agreement of member states to promote stability in cyberspace through international co-operation. The network has been tested through a series of exercises, which demonstrated improved cross-border communication—not just between Commonwealth member states, but with third countries and international organisations, such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Cross-border communication is an effective way to tackle a cross-border issue, so Commonwealth solidarity is essential in the face of cyber threats.

Cyber security is vital to financial stability: if a central bank is attacked, it can impact other financial institutions as well as the wider economy and society. In October 2019, the Bank of England hosted a three-day seminar in London entitled ‘Beyond Prevention: cybersecurity and the resilience of the financial sector’. Our Commonwealth Cyber Programme hosted senior banking officials from the central banks of 23 Commonwealth states and held an industry networking event, involving fintech organisations. Seminar participants subsequently made changes such as reorganising governance and improving understanding of supervised entities.

## Modern slavery

At CHOGM 2018, leaders called for effective measures to end modern slavery and human trafficking. The UK has funded initiatives which actively work towards this goal, tackling an issue that exists throughout the Commonwealth. Through UK funding and collaborating with the UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA UK) and UNODC, modern slavery-related legislation has been strengthened in numerous Commonwealth countries. Parliamentary scrutiny of these issues in the Commonwealth is also being increased.

A UK-funded initiative is developing a network of Parliamentary Champions around the Commonwealth. The network is dedicated to combating modern slavery, human trafficking and forced labour and was implemented by the CPA UK. There are now over 90 parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in 15 different Commonwealth parliaments who are championing these security issues at both the national and constituency level. Through UK support, CPA UK also provided advice on legal issues to five parliaments in the Commonwealth. From this, Nigeria and Uganda have amended and strengthened their existing legislation on modern slavery.

Over 30 national and international subject experts have contributed to a handbook produced by CPA UK on legislating against modern slavery, human trafficking and forced labour. The handbook will strengthen the skills of



Delegates from Commonwealth countries attending the nCSIRT Conference in London, December 2019

## Case study: Building cyber capacity in Tonga

Tonga is a Polynesian archipelago in the southern Pacific Ocean with 36 inhabited islands. While Tonga’s population is just 100,000 people, the country is not immune to cyber security threats. Siosaia Vaipuna, Director Tonga’s National Computer Security Incident Response Team (nCSIRT), explained: “Recently we received a ‘business email compromise’ where a small business in Tonga was instructed to redirect a payment—at the last minute—to a different bank account during an overseas transaction.” Other threats faced by Tonga include botnet attacks and, most recently, cyber criminals using COVID-19 as a pretext to manipulate their victims.

The UK has supported Tonga and 40 other Commonwealth nations to develop their nCSIRTs. As Mr Vaipuna says, “Networking has been a very important part of this initiative for smaller Commonwealth nations like Tonga in the Pacific, and Antigua and St. Kitts in the Caribbean [...] To address all these big issues [is challenging as] we have limited resources.”

During one capacity-building workshop, Mr Vaipuna was approached by Gordina Hector-Murrell, Director of Cyber Security for the Antigua and Barbuda Ministry of Information, Broadcasting, Telecommunications and Information Technology. Ms Hector-Murrell asked if Tonga would share their draft cybercrime legislation. As Mr Vaipuna summarises, “Today we are happy to help Antigua in the knowledge that at some time down the line, Antigua and Barbuda will help Tonga.”

As well as lending a helping hand to Antigua and Barbuda, Tonga has looked to Brunei for assistance. Mr Vaipuna has been talking to the Director of Brunei’s nCSIRT about developing a centralised system for government and the private sector.

parliamentarians and officials on effective parliamentary committees, leading to better oversight and scrutiny of legislation on these issues, and its implementation.

UK funding to the UNODC has strengthened the National Anti-Human Trafficking Platform in India. This platform is a multi-stakeholder mechanism for the identification, referral and assistance of victims of trafficking. Since the inception of this funding, over 349 trafficking cases were investigated in India, and over 97 victims of trafficking in persons were recovered.

With UK funding, UNODC supported four landmark regulations in Malawi which were developed under the

project.<sup>1</sup> They were launched by Malawi's Minister of Homeland Security at an event commemorating the World Day against Trafficking in Persons on 30 July 2019. Since applying the support received through the UNODC, there has been an increase of 85% in the number of victims rescued by the Mchinji District Co-ordination Committee against Trafficking in Persons. Further to this, the funding from the UK to the UNODC also supported Zambia on developing a National Action Plan to prevent and address trafficking in persons. The plan was successfully adopted by parliament in June 2019. Through funding granted by the UK, Zambia now has strengthened legislation for both preventing and prosecuting human traffickers. This UK funding has also contributed to cross-border co-operation between Malawi and Zambia, which was facilitated to address common trafficking threats.

## Prevention of online child sexual exploitation

Leaders agreed to take action to tackle online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) and explore co-ordinating with international bodies and initiatives working on this issue. To deliver on this commitment, the UK has funded various projects, primarily focused in South Asia and Africa, to build the capacity of Commonwealth governments to tackle OCSE.

As a result of UK funding, Sri Lanka has aimed to set up a community support mechanism in 25 districts to prevent and address OCSE with designated and trained child protection officers in the police, childcare services and schools. This initiative was delivered by PEaCE (Protecting Environment and Children Everywhere) Sri Lanka in collaboration with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Youth Affairs.

The UK has supported the African Union (AU) to strengthen regional and national capacity for action against OCSE among the 55 AU states, 19 of which are Commonwealth members. This has facilitated the co-ordination of regional capacity building to deliver on tackling this crime.

Over two years, the UK supported the AU to co-ordinate a pan-African response to OCSE. Over 100 representatives from 37 AU member states, including all 19 Commonwealth and AU members, have gained a deeper understanding of OCSE. All 19 of these Commonwealth countries have now strengthened national action plans and capacity against OCSE. Dedicated focal points have been nominated by these countries to ensure strategies, policies and infrastructure are in place to tackle OCSE more effectively.

20 Commonwealth member states are among the 94 countries committed to the WeProtect Global Alliance, an initiative originally established by the UK. This group is committed to eradicating OCSE. During the UK's period as Chair-in-Office, five African Commonwealth members have joined the WeProtect Global Alliance: Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Sierra Leone. As more African Commonwealth countries commit to tackling and eradicating

OCSE, additional members may be encouraged to do the same.

In September 2019, the International Telecommunication Union expressed a strong desire to implement the recommendations and findings from this AU OCSE project, citing the value of this initiative in developing a strategy for the region to work together in tackling OCSE.

## Countering violent extremism

The Commonwealth has remained committed to countering violent extremism (CVE) in all forms. Recent attacks in Sri Lanka and New Zealand demonstrate the global nature of extremist violence. As part of the UK's commitment to address the challenges, the UK—with Australia—has funded the Commonwealth Secretariat's CVE Unit. The UK has committed more than £3 million since 2016, including during its period as Chair-in-Office, to support this unit. In 2018/19, the unit delivered 27 substantive capacity-building projects (workshops, dialogues, training) and trained 776 direct beneficiaries, thereby reaching thousands of community members. In Tanzania, the CVE Unit worked with 80 police academy trainers to roll out community-orientated policing across the country. The work of the CVE Unit has also specifically supported Cameroon, Bangladesh and Trinidad and Tobago, where the prison service has adopted a 12-month programme to embed CVE expertise across the national system.

## Conclusion

With UK-funded support, the Commonwealth has taken collaborative action to deliver on commitments to create a safer physical and online environment for its people and member states.

- » Capacity-building work on cyber security shows enhanced solidarity across the Commonwealth, with each signatory of the 2018 Cyber Declaration deriving clear benefits.
- » Strengthened and applied legislation on modern slavery has actively identified both perpetrators and victims of human trafficking, notably in Malawi and India, introducing long-term change to these countries and regions.
- » More African and Commonwealth countries have joined the UK-led WeProtect Global Alliance, and can work collaboratively through this mechanism to tackle and eradicate OCSE, and encourage others also to join.
- » Hundreds of officials have been trained in awareness of violent extremism and how to tackle it, helping to address factors which contribute to it, and guiding the use of proactive solutions.

<sup>1</sup> The Prevention of Exploitative Labour Recruitment Regulations; Standard Operating Procedures and National Referral Mechanism to the Trafficking in Persons Act; the Trafficking in Persons Fund Disbursement Regulations and the Witness Protection Regulation.

# Conclusion

## **The UK and Commonwealth member states have taken practical action to achieve the objectives set out at CHOGM 2018 and to make significant progress around the globe.**

The UK has focused its Chair-in-Office term on delivery of four key objectives:

1. Reform the governance of the Commonwealth Secretariat to enhance effectiveness and accountability.
2. Increase solidarity between the 54 member states.
3. Boost the voice of the Commonwealth in international fora.
4. Deliver on the CHOGM 2018 commitments to make the future more secure, prosperous and sustainable and fair for the Commonwealth and its peoples.

Foreign Ministers have adopted reform recommendations to strengthen the Commonwealth Secretariat. Member states have continued to share best practice and information through international meetings and briefings and bilateral visits, increasing solidarity among them. The Commonwealth has spoken collectively on many global policy issues.

The UK has collaborated with fellow Commonwealth members and the Secretariat to fulfil CHOGM 2018 commitments under the four headings of fairness, sustainability, security and prosperity. UK-funded projects and programmes have delivered a wide range of real and valuable outcomes which will persist beyond its time as Chair-in-Office. These range from protecting the rights of minorities to preserving the Ocean to securing cyberspace to stimulating trade. They demonstrate the importance of the Commonwealth as an empowering values-based network of equal sovereign states.

The UK looks forward to Rwanda hosting the next CHOGM in Kigali and taking the Commonwealth onward from strength to strength.

# Annex A: Commonwealth project activity

Project name	Period	Aims and key activity
<b>A fairer future</b>		
<b>Commonwealth Secretariat election observation</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	The UK contributed funding to the Commonwealth Secretariat to enhance election observation in Commonwealth states, focusing on the whole electoral cycle and engaging election bodies in pre- and post-election strategies. The Secretariat completed eight election observation missions, created knowledge products to support good electoral practice, and provided bespoke technical assistance to countries on their electoral and constitutional reform process.
<b>Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy (CP4D)</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	The CP4D worked in 15 Commonwealth countries to improve the inclusion and representation of women, young people, people with disabilities and the LGBT community in democratic processes and increase political accountability through more effective and transparent parliaments. Activity included strengthening the Commonwealth Association of Public Accounts Committees to share experiences across the Commonwealth among committee chairs, members and clerks on how best to exercise their oversight function.
<b>Building fairer, more equal and more inclusive Commonwealth societies</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	The project, delivered by the Equality & Justice Alliance (EJA), aimed to advance equality and equal protection before the law to secure the rights of all Commonwealth citizens regardless of gender, sex, sexual orientation, and gender identity or expression. It has supported the creation and strengthening of five intersectional movements, delivered a series of dialogues to build the case for reform with high-level stakeholders, and provided technical assistance to six countries.
<b>Pacific Commonwealth Equality Project (PCEP)</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	The project aimed to support Pacific countries to establish or strengthen Paris Principles-compliant National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). Following engagement with PCEP, Solomon Islands and Kiribati are looking to establish new bodies within government to focus on human rights. Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Kiribati received bespoke advice and guidance while going through the Universal Periodic Review Process. PCEP has designed a tool to codify the shared experiences of Pacific countries into a regional framework for national mechanisms for implementation, reporting and follow-up.
<b>Women Mediators across the Commonwealth</b>	April 2018 – March 2021	The project aimed to build the right conditions for more women to lead, influence or otherwise be meaningfully involved in peace processes, from grassroots peacebuilding initiatives to regional and international levels. It has created a network of 46 women mediators from across 21 Commonwealth countries and supports the professional development of these women to allow them to participate in an increasing number of mediation and peace processes.
<b>Commonwealth Forum for National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI)</b>	April 2018 – June 2020	This project aimed to support the protection and promotion of human rights across the Commonwealth through the strengthening of the CFNHRI. Under the chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the CFNHRI has increased engagement from NHRIs and strengthened and developed NHRIs through the sharing of learning and expertise.
<b>Eliminating the stigma and discrimination of disability and mental health</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	This project aimed to support member states to reduce stigma and discrimination faced by people with mental health problems by expanding the UK's Time to Change campaign to Commonwealth countries. By the end of 2019, 111 Champions had been trained and, between July and September alone, 3,422 social contact conversations were recorded. In Nigeria, nine Champions received spokesperson training to support them in sharing their stories via external media platforms. In Ghana, project co-ordinators worked in partnership with their local NGO partner the Mental Health Society of Ghana and the Mental Health Authority of Ghana to launch the 'It Could Be You' social marketing campaign.
<b>Girls' Education Challenge</b>	2018 - 2025	The UK-funded Girls' Education Challenge, for which £212 million of funding was announced at CHOGM 2018, is supporting up to 1.5 million marginalised girls across 17 countries. Eleven of these countries are members of the Commonwealth: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. The projects aim to ensure that, by 2025, up to 837,000 marginalised girls continue to access 12 years of quality education, and that a further 116,000 highly marginalised girls who have dropped out of school or have never had the opportunity to learn are offered a new chance at education.
<b>Supporting Commonwealth small states in Geneva-based international institutions on human rights</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	This project aimed to make technical human rights expertise available to Commonwealth small states to facilitate their effective participation in the work of the Geneva-based international human rights mechanisms. The UK funded two resident human rights advisers in the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva. The advisers provided tailored technical assistance on UPRs to three countries, trained in-country officials in two countries, and provided support at Human Rights Council sessions to four countries.
<b>A prosperous future</b>		
<b>Mitigation against de-risking in the Caribbean</b>	April 2018 – June 2021	A joint UK–Canada effort, this project aims to raise the standard of supervision of the financial and non-financial sectors in the Caribbean in relation to anti-money laundering / counter-terrorism financing regulation. This activity is designed to reduce financial crime risk in the Caribbean and so address de-risking.
<b>Bank of England partnership</b>	April 2018 – March 2022	A project to enhance Commonwealth central bank capacity to regulate and supervise financial systems in developing countries. Establishing technical assistance partnerships with Commonwealth central banks, they share expertise across a range of central bank functions and mitigate the risk and severity of financial crises. Work has primarily focused on the central banks of Ghana, Sierra Leone and South Africa and the project is expanding to include other developing countries until 2022.



Project name	Period	Aims and key activity
<b>Local currency bond markets</b>	April 2018 – March 2022	A project to improve access to international finance for Commonwealth governments and business, supporting developing countries' ability to raise international finance from the city of London and elsewhere in their own currencies, enabling them to invest in growth without creating vulnerability to exchange rate swings. This includes technical assistance to address regulatory and political barriers, identifying and building commitment of key public authorities, and providing advice on regulatory reform.
<b>Commonwealth Standards Network</b>	Ongoing	The Commonwealth Standards Network is promoting the use and awareness of international standards, and increasing its members' technical and institutional capacity to use and participate in the development of international standards via existing organisations. The national standards bodies of 50 Commonwealth countries have now joined the network
<b>Trade facilitation</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	A World Customs Organisation, WTO and HMRC project aimed at creating more efficient customs procedures, enabling the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement in line with international standards to facilitate intra-Commonwealth Trade.
<b>Commonwealth Enterprise and Investment Council (CWEIC) support</b>	September 2019 – Ongoing	The UK has been supporting the CWEIC's preparations for the postponed Commonwealth Business Forum in Kigali. The Forum will show continuity with announcements made at CHOGM 2018 and ensure strong representation from women and under-represented groups.
<b>Commonwealth Small States Office</b>	April 2019 – March 2020	This projects supports Commonwealth small states in Geneva-based international institutions on trade. The UK funded two resident trade advisors in the Commonwealth Small States Office in Geneva to provide support in trade negotiations, emerging trade issues and trade facilitation.
<b>SheTrades Commonwealth</b>	Ongoing	UK-funded project, in partnership with the WTO's International Trade Centre, to increase economic growth and job creation in Commonwealth countries by increasing the participation of women-owned businesses in international trade.
<b>Improving work opportunities for young people in the Commonwealth (I-Work)</b>	December 2018 – March 2020	This project works to improve the employment prospects of young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, by piloting and introducing new approaches to employer-led skills development. The project operates in Ghana, India, Malaysia and South Africa, as well as sharing lessons learned and practice innovation across the Commonwealth.
<b>Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships</b>	Ongoing	This scheme supports Commonwealth citizens to study for master's degrees in other low- and middle-income Commonwealth countries. We have been encouraging other Commonwealth members to participate in the QECS scheme and support it financially. Since April 2018, 47 scholars have started their Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships at 26 different institutions in 17 Commonwealth countries.
<b>A more sustainable future</b>		
<b>Support for the Blue Charter</b>	April 2018 – June 2020	The UK provided £200,000 of direct funding to the Commonwealth Secretariat to facilitate the work of Blue Charter action groups in their first two years of existence. The Secretariat provided advice and guidance to the action groups, including convening action group champions to discuss five-year plans and launching an online collaborative platform.
<b>Commonwealth Litter Programme (CLiP)</b>	April 2018 – March 2021	UK technical and scientific expertise has been provided to identify sources of marine litter in five Commonwealth countries and solutions to tackle them. Key activity includes: adoption of marine litter action plans in Belize, Solomon Islands, South Africa and Vanuatu; creation of four microplastic laboratories to establish an evidence base on the sources of marine litter; and community outreach to raise awareness of the problem and potential solutions.
<b>Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (CCOA) Technical Assistance Facility</b>	April 2018 – March 2021	Bespoke technical assistance packages are being designed to help countries reduce marine litter. Scoping is under way in 22 CCOA members to identify targeted interventions and has been completed in The Gambia, Ghana, St Lucia and Rwanda.
<b>Global Plastics Action Partnership (GPAP)</b>	Ongoing	With £2.4 million funding from the UK, the GPAP aims to create a collaboration platform to help leading businesses across the plastics supply chain co-operate with NGOs and governments. The first National Plastic Action Partnership in Africa was launched by the President of Ghana in October 2019.
<b>Tide Turners Plastic Challenge Badge</b>	Ongoing	This youth engagement project encourages young people to take action to reduce plastic waste in their own lives, and supports them to inspire others to tackle single-use plastics. So far, 165,000 young people have completed training under the project and 54,483 have been designated youth leaders in India.
<b>Marine Plastics Challenge Fund: research and innovation</b>	April 2018 – March 2022	The UK has worked with Commonwealth partners to develop a Marine Plastics Research and Innovation framework. This brings together governments, industry, researchers and practitioners to tackle the issue of marine plastics. A £6 million, match-funded programme with Singapore, focused on understanding the impact of plastic pollution on marine ecosystems in south-east Asia, was launched in January 2020.
<b>Commonwealth Marine Economies</b>	2016 – March 2021	UK agencies are supporting 17 Commonwealth Small Island Developing States to develop sustainable and diverse marine economies which are climate resilient, based on sound scientific data to promote growth, innovation, jobs and investment, while safeguarding the Ocean and its fragile ecosystems.
<b>Climate Finance Access Hub</b>	April 2018 – June 2020	The UK provided £200,000 of direct funding to the Commonwealth Secretariat to set up the Climate Finance Access Hub. The primary focus is to assist developing states to access climate financing in their efforts to meet SDGs. To date it has mobilised US\$27.2 million of climate finance in the form of readiness support and climate change projects for some of the climatically vulnerable countries such as Jamaica, and Antigua and Barbuda.

Project name	Period	Aims and key activity
<b>Pacific Facility for Resilient Low Carbon Transitions</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	The UK has helped fund the creation of a hub of technical excellence in Fiji, which was launched officially in February 2020. The hub will help Pacific Island countries enhance their NDCs, which set out their plans to reduce emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Work is under way across ten different Commonwealth states.
<b>Enhancing the financial resilience of the Caribbean</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	With UK funding, technical assistance has been provided through the World Bank to identify how Caribbean countries can increase their financial preparedness for when natural disasters hit. Four countries now have disaster risk financing strategies, with Jamaica taking out financial instruments to insure themselves against natural disasters.
<b>Developing energy and emissions calculators</b>	January 2019 – December 2021	A £3.5 million extension to the 2050 calculator programme was announced at CHOGM 2018, supporting developing countries to create easy-to-use energy models to support climate planning. Malaysia has been confirmed as the first country to begin developing a new calculator under this extension, and Nigeria is receiving support to update its calculator model.
<b>Malaria</b>	Ongoing	The Commonwealth forms a part of wider UK efforts to tackle malaria, helping to meet the Commonwealth's commitment to halve malaria cases and deaths across the Commonwealth by 2023. In June 2019, the UK announced that it would commit up to £1.4 billion to the Global Fund between 2020 and 2023, and it has already matched £100 million of funding for malaria provided by the private sector. This has funded a range of interventions. For example, antimalarial medicines protected 1.2 million children in Jigawa State in northern Nigeria in 2019.
<b>Quality eye care for all</b>	Ongoing	UK-funded interventions in Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and the Pacific Islands have delivered surgeries, antibiotic distribution and behaviour change intervention to help tackle trachoma, a disease of the eye that can lead to blindness.
<b>Universal Health Coverage (UHC)</b>	Ongoing	The UK is working with 14 Commonwealth countries on compliance with International Health Regulations and accelerating Universal Health Coverage.
<b>Anti-microbial resistance (AMR)</b>	Ongoing	The Fleming Fund helps low- and middle-income Commonwealth countries to tackle the growing challenge that AMR presents (Bangladesh, Eswatini, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia).
<b>A more secure future</b>		
<b>Commonwealth Cyber Security Programme</b>	April 2018 - March 2021	<p>This £5.5 million project has helped low- and middle-income Commonwealth countries meet their commitments in the Commonwealth Cyber Declaration. The UK funded a variety of cyber security capacity building projects to support economic and social development and rights online, build incident response capacity and promote international stability through co-operation, in line with the Declaration's Implementation Plan.</p> <p>Since CHOGM 2018, every Commonwealth member has taken steps to improve their cyber security competence and capability, and build capacity. A range of pan-Commonwealth, regional and national-level activities have resulted in stronger networks to exchange knowledge and expertise, enhanced sharing of threat intelligence and understanding of risks, and a more informed and engaged civil society.</p>
<b>Human trafficking UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	Through £2 million UK funding to the UNODC, criminal justice capacity building has been completed in four Commonwealth countries. Specifically in India, the National Anti-Human Trafficking Platform has been strengthened, rescuing victims of the crime. Further support in Malawi and Zambia has allowed landmark regulations and a National Action Plan to be implemented, again supporting efforts to tackle this crime.
<b>Developing capacity to tackle modern slavery and human trafficking</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	Through the UK branch of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, this £2 million project has implemented the Call to Action in the Commonwealth to end forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and the worst forms of child labour. The UK has supported Commonwealth countries (e.g Nigeria and Uganda) to develop national strategies on modern slavery through legislative reform providing the framework to tackle these issues, and technical assistance on criminal justice. This project has produced an online handbook, which will be of use to future parliaments seeking further legal advice and scrutiny on their legislation on modern slavery.
<b>Tackling online child sexual exploitation</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	Partnering with the African Union, this £1.3 million project has built national and regional capacity in African countries (including all 19 African Commonwealth members) to tackle online child sexual exploitation. Formally, five African Commonwealth countries have joined the UK-led WeProtect Global Alliance, meaning that they are more enabled to work collaboratively on tackling this issue.
<b>ECPAT Sri Lanka, (online child sexual exploitation)</b>	April 2018 – March 2020	The UK has funded support for victims of online child sexual exploitation, and the enhancement of partners' capacity to tackle this crime. This project has engaged over 14,000 children and over 2,000 parents in Sri Lanka to raise awareness of risks on the internet.
<b>Cadre of experts on Countering Violent Extremism</b>	April 2016 - March 2020	The UK has provided funding to the Commonwealth Secretariat's CVE Unit, which has continued to build member states' capacity through in-depth technical assistance, training, awareness raising, research, communication and information campaigns, and advocacy for small states.



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