The Commonwealth Secretariat’s Strategic Plan 2008/09–2011/12

The Commonwealth Secretariat’s Strategic Plan sets out the overall strategic focus, objectives and expected results of the organisation for the four-year period 2008/09–2011/12. The Plan was approved by the Secretariat’s Board of Governors on 15 May 2008, and is the document against which the Board and the Secretariat will measure the progress and impact of its work.

The Plan sets out the Secretariat’s commitment to adopting a rights-based approach to development, and to mainstreaming gender, youth and human rights concerns throughout all levels of its work: strategic, programmatic, project and operational. These concerns therefore are reflected throughout the Plan.

The Plan sets out eight interlinked Programmes. Each Programme Statement will continue to have a defined objective, and results and indicators. These will reflect the organisation’s mainstreaming commitments. The statements will also articulate the Commonwealth’s comparative advantage or ‘added value’ in that Programme.

The Plan reaffirms the Secretariat’s focus on the important needs and concerns of small states, and maintains its support for them.

The Plan also addresses the important issue of how the Secretariat does its work. It sets out the organisation’s ways of working and modes of delivery, and the importance of strategic partnerships, which can enhance impact, extend its reach and resources, and help realise innovative ideas, is noted. It contains discussions on how the organisation will integrate capacity-building priorities with those of policy analysis and advice, to develop a comprehensive portfolio of assistance.

Each of the Programmes has a Programme Statement (see the following text). Each Statement specifies the Programme objective, results and indicators that guide the form and content of the portfolio and which will be used to measure the performance and progress towards the Plan’s goals.

The Plan establishes for the first time a package of corporate management and business functions that support the Programmes and will ensure the Secretariat operates in an efficient and effective manner.

Rationale for the Public Sector Development Programme

This Programme works to promote synergies between good governance and development. The core focus is on the overall institutional and capacity development dimensions of governments, with the aim of assisting countries to move to a stronger governance framework as a critical requirement for addressing poverty alleviation and sustainable development agendas. Special attention will be paid to mainstreaming gender in this Programme. Knowledge transfer, policy advice and technical assistance enable governments to:

- strengthen institutions that contribute to good governance in member countries
- respond to country needs in accordance with Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) mandates
- develop public sector capacity for effective delivery of public services
- develop and enhance the capacity of the public sector to incorporate a gender-responsive approach to policy formulation, planning and Programme implementation.

This Programme covers the full spectrum of capacity-building in public policy, management and administration, as well as addressing issues relating to civil society and private sector institutions with public responsibilities. It may be necessary to rationalise this over the course of the Plan period. There are a number of thematic priorities and initiatives in this Strategic Plan:

- building technical and managerial capacity to continuously improve the performance of public institutions
- developing a governance framework to guide improved and equitable service delivery by member governments
- strengthening public service training institutes in partnership with other Commonwealth associations to close public sector skill gaps
- developing the effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) strategies, e-governance and knowledge management.

Comparative advantage

The Secretariat is aware that there are many other actors in this area. Within the overall comparative advantage identified for the Development pillar, this Programme argues for the following limited comparative advantage:

- unique mix of in-house thematic and regional expertise at a single point of access
- responsive service delivered quickly, flexibly and sensitively to member countries
- assistance to member countries without the stringent conditions of some donors
- capacity-building that fills strategic gaps large donors tend to overlook.
Global context

The Programme responds to requests for assistance across a range of development issues to meet the specific needs of member countries in a diverse, complex and rapidly changing environment. It also responds to CHOGM mandates relating to anti-corruption, information and communication technologies (ICTs) for development, corporate governance, stronger local government and effective public financial management, among others. In addition, policy advocacy of other thematic priorities affecting Commonwealth governments is an essential element of support for public sector organisations.

Implementation approach

This Programme is managed by the Governance and Institutional Development Division (GiDD) in collaboration with other Secretariat divisions and internal stakeholders, principally the specialist technical divisions. The Programme has been structured around four main clusters that will enhance the focus and improve learning across the following thematic areas:

1. Advancing Good Governance
2. Improving Public Service Delivery
3. Promoting the Use of ICT

Programme objective

To advance good governance by assisting governments to build public service capacity, strengthen public institutions and improve service delivery.

Results

1. Coherent governance frameworks tailored to country circumstances and contributing to enabled, accountable, transparent and gender-sensitive public institutions and governing bodies.
2. Public services delivered collaboratively by enabled public, private and civil society organisations in the national interest according to international standards of performance and compliance.
3. National e-governance strategies, policy frameworks and smart practices implemented in support of selected countries’ development priorities.
4. Enabled public sector leaders and professional public services supported by informed HR policy and capable training institutes and networks.

Indicators

1. Increased citizen satisfaction with specific public services targeted for improvement.
2. Increased citizen awareness of, access to, and engagement with government.
3. Increased cost-effectiveness of government.
4. Increased administrative efficiencies and timeliness.
5. Increased private sector opportunities and civil society participation.
6. Increased extra-budgetary resources from donors and partners.
7. Increased levels of job satisfaction in public services.
8. Increased representation of gender, rights and youth issues.