

Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Development Programme 2013/14 – 2016/17

Final Report
September 2020



The Commonwealth

EVALUATION SERIES 117

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Published by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Acknowledgements

This report has been produced by the team of International Economics Consulting Ltd: Mr Paul Baker, Team Leader and Senior Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Expert; Mr Neetish Hurry, Data Analyst; Mr Werner Riecke, Senior Public Debt Management Expert; Dr Steve Roccliffe, Senior Maritime and Natural Resources Expert; and Mr Pablo Quiles, M&E Expert.

The team is grateful to all the officers at the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategy, Portfolio, Partnership and Digital Division, particularly Ms Evelyn A Pedersen and Ms Katherine Marshall Kissoon. Special thanks to Ms Purvi Kanzaria, Evaluation and Learning Officer, for her excellent support and help across the full implementation of the project.

The evaluation benefited from inputs by numerous institutions across multiple countries. The team wishes to thank all individuals that accepted the team's request to be interviewed and all those that responded to the survey questionnaires.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACP	African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States
CFMM	Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting
CFTC	Commodity Futures Trading Commission
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
CS-DRMS	Commonwealth Secretariat's Debt Recording and Management System
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DMFAS	Debt Management and Financial Analysis System
EDP	Economic Development Programme
EPA	economic partnership agreement
EU	European Union
EYSD	Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development (Directorate)
H&S	Hub & Spokes Programme
IEC	International Economics Consulting Ltd.
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	information technology
LDC	least developed country
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MRA	mutual recognition agreement
MTDS	Medium Term Debt Management Strategies
MTR	Mid-Term Review
ODA	overseas development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONR	oceans and natural resources
PACER	Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations
PDD	Project Design Document
RBM	results-based management
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

SIDS	small island developing states
SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (indicators)
SME	small or medium-sized enterprise
SPPDD	Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategy, Portfolio, Partnerships and Digital Division
TAU	Technical Assistance Unit
TiSA	Trade in Services Agreement
TONR	Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources
ToR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	UN Conference on Trade and Development
WTO	World Trade Organisation

Executive Summary

This evaluation was commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategy, Portfolio, Partnerships and Digital Division (SPPDD) following the completion of the Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17. The main objectives of the evaluation are to provide an independent opinion on the performance and results of the programme; assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the support provided by the Secretariat; and make recommendations from both the strategic and operational perspectives to optimise the utilisation of resources in achieving sustainable impact.

The Evaluation Team assessed the implementation of the Economic Development Programme (EDP) against the six Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact. The team reviewed qualitative data collected to identify common content and emerging themes. This included project design documents, annual and quarterly reports, interviews and other related documents and literature. The main findings of the evaluation are showcased below.

Overall, the Secretariat's interventions under the EDP were relevant to the member states' development priorities. The relevance of the Secretariat's input was demonstrated by the fact that the Secretariat largely works on a request-basis, ensuring that its interventions are targeted, highly relevant and flexible enough to respond to countries' needs, and in the preparatory work done to prepare the project documents and refine the country's request. However, that was not always the case. The work done by the International Trade Policy Team or the Global Development and Financing Team was scheduled through annual work plans and from outcomes of ministerial CHOGMs (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings), and it was not as dependent on individual country requests as other teams might be. In such cases, the relevance of the work was checked against the timeliness and applicability of that work against the topics that emerged in the regional and international spheres.

Additionally, where applicable, scoping missions played a particular role in ensuring the relevance of the interventions, particularly as these related to the private sector, where the Secretariat has been active in undertaking in-depth stakeholder consultations through the scoping missions. While there was no notable change in the stakeholder engagements, priorities or delivery methods, during the lifetime of the project, the activities of the project were broadly coherent with many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), formally adopted by countries in 2016.

It is recommended that the Secretariat's programme-level teams define objective prioritisation criteria for setting the scope of interventions due to the limited funding flows. The Office of the Secretary-General should also define key strategic priorities and better align resources to attain those targets, rather than seeking to meet funding gaps and ad hoc requests with its limited funding.

This finding was consistent across the four areas under evaluation: trade, global development and financing, debt management, and oceans and natural resources.

In terms of external coherence, the **involvement of the Secretariat with other international and regional organisations varied depending on the specific team.** Some teams had had a strong collaboration with United Nations organisations and the World Bank or the secretariats of regional economic communities, for example. However, at the project-specific level, communication between international organisations and the Secretariat occurred mainly on a case-by-case basis and through informal channels. Specifically, it appeared that the collaboration between the Oceans and Natural Resources (ONR) Team and other providers of technical support like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank during the period under review was limited. However, according to one of the members of the ONR Team:

It's important to collaborate with other providers but you don't tend to know if they're in the area. That information comes from the government. We would ask them to lead in that process.

It is recommended that the Secretariat's Partnerships Team identify a wide range of fundraising measures, including stronger joint programming with partners, such as was the case with the Hub & Spokes Programme. It is also suggested that the Secretariat's programme-level teams enhance their collaboration with other development partners, by engaging them in a formal and systematic way during the Project Design Documents (PDDs) or implementation of country projects, if countries allow.

In terms of internal coherence, **the evaluators found mixed evidence of coherence and co-ordination among the different teams of the EDP.** The programme sat across two different directorates of the Secretariat, with no overarching outcome indicators tracked. Examples of weak collaboration and overlapping could be found in the Trade Team; here, following the UK's decision on Brexit, the Trade Competitiveness Team examined the implications for the current trade regime of a series of countries, while the International Trade Policy Team was also undertaking research on Brexit. Another example of lack of collaboration among teams was the weak inclusion of gender equality and of the overall social development area, in the work done by the EDP teams, with no evident collaboration between such teams. However, some examples of successful collaboration among the different teams and programmes existed, with the Trade Competitiveness Team collaborating with the Youth Division in the development of a Trade-Oriented Youth Employment Strategy and Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy (TOYE) for Solomon Islands. It is recommended that **inter-team co-operation, collaboration and pooling of resources is promoted in going forward.**

The evaluation found that the EDP had been moderately effective, as not all objectives were met. This was partly due to a weak choice of indicators, as not all were SMART – specific, measurable, relevant, achievable and time-bound. Nevertheless, the Secretariat's work added value to the work of the regional secretariats, such as the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), etc. For example, under the Hub & Spokes Programme, the advisers provided technical support for international and regional trade agreements in Africa, including the

economic partnership agreements (EPAs) with the EU. The project, 'Advancing Commonwealth Principles and Values in Global Development and Financing Decisions', was effective in advancing Commonwealth principles and values in global development and financing forums. Similarly, member states continued to recognise the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System (CS-DRMS) as the main tool to record, track and manage their debt. Most, if not all, CS-DRMS-using member states were recording external loans (and sovereign bonds) taken or issued by the central government. Finally, the Secretariat's work had been instrumental in ensuring effective, equitable, transparent and sustainable management of marine and other natural resources by its member states, having supported 11 countries towards establishing a modern, effective and sustainable policy to govern their mining, oil and gas activities at the national and sectoral levels.

In terms of efficiency, the evaluation found that the trade work absorbed the majority of the funds available (45.8% of the total programme resources), followed by debt management and ONR. In terms of expenditure, the Secretariat's spending structure was heavily tilted towards staff costs, which might be considered efficient, as programme advisers were always involved, either from a project management perspective or from a technical perspective, in the implementation of the projects.

Regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the Secretariat's programme advisers, most stakeholders agreed with the fact that the versatility of their roles was the Secretariat's main strength. With the ability to implement a project from a project management perspective and a technical perspective, the project advisers brought a unique set of qualities that benefitted the member states. Nevertheless, maintenance of records was poor, which weakened project management and lowered the opportunities to improve institutional memory and learning side, all of which would have been valuable for monitoring evaluation and learning (MEL) purposes.

Additionally, many Commonwealth Secretariat staff members considered that the organisation was much more cost-efficient than other international organisations. Staff and consultancy costs were in general somewhat lower than other

international organisations, even if overall costs were quite aligned to other organisations, such as the United Nations for example.

Generally, and according to stakeholders, the restructuring experienced in 2015 did not appear to have improved the effectiveness and efficiency of the teams. Opinions from staff across programme areas on the extent to which the organisational reforms during the evaluation period improved efficiency in project delivery was united in believing the impact to have been hugely negative, with respect to the additional administrative burden, as well as staff morale.

Impact for any project is difficult to measure and hard to attribute. This was especially the case for a programme like the EDP. The indicators used in the results framework were not focused on impact, and therefore impact was not tracked across the years. Outcome indicators were also perceived by the Evaluation Team as failing to meet the standards of being specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). The nature of the interventions implemented, such as strategy and policy advice, long-term regulatory reform and capacity-building development, made it extremely challenging to assess the impact, especially in a short- to medium-term timeframe. Additionally, it is worth highlighting that the funds invested by the Secretariat in the four different areas across the whole membership were negligible in comparison to the aid-for-trade or overseas development assistance (ODA) flows received by each individual country. Therefore, finding any trace of direct impact on jobs, trade flows, macroeconomic fundamentals or environmental sustainability would be surprising at best, and indeed there was no clear evidence of impact, other than some recommendations being taken forward (which is more of an outcome), or other donors following up with more funds on the outputs from the Secretariat's work (which is again, an outcome).

The Evaluation Team suggests that the Secretariat adopt formal strategies to tackle political economy challenges that affect the implementation of different projects. While some of these activities are being implemented on an ad-hoc basis at the initiative of the Secretariat, all divisions should adopt a process of follow-up or an implementation strategy to enhance the sustainability and impact of this work.

The Evaluation Team also recommends broadening the nature of support beyond bilateral technical assistance. The Secretariat should consider engaging in multicountry projects like the New Petroleum Producers Group and the Blue Charter, or the Hub & Spokes Programme, which appear to have had a more concrete and substantial outcome than the bilateral technical assistance implemented by the Secretariat. These projects could lead to members sharing experiences, and best practice builds something far greater than the sum of its parts and can help build capacity among member states through peer-to-peer learning, alleviating pressure on the Secretariat.

Generally, a common view in-country was that the sustainability of activities did not appear to be a strong focus for the Secretariat, although this varied according to the teams. For the trade work, for example, the fact that most of the team's work adopted a single-phase, short-term approach to projects limited the ability of the project to have a sustainable outcome. A similar situation occurred in longer-term programmes, such as Hub & Spokes, which instead of promoting or tackling sustainability, often resulted in filling in resource gaps, rather than addressing capacity building of existing resources.

From a general perspective, capacity building attempts, while undoubtedly valuable, could be made more coherent and efficient. Attempts to either transition to a lighter-touch approach once objectives have been achieved or find in-country partners willing to continue support once the Secretariat moves on seemed to be few and far between.

Debt management and ONR appeared to be isolated areas with their own sustainability niche. This was particularly with regards to the CS-DRMS, where users had to be trained by the Secretariat in its use. All stakeholders consulted indicated that they were able to use the system independently, relying on the Secretariat only for technical upgrades. Similarly, assistance provided to member states through the ONR Team did not commence at the start of the Strategic Plan period and conclude at the end. The area theoretically continued until reforms were established or capacity built, and the member state receiving support stated that it was no longer required, thereby ensuring a higher degree of sustainability.

The Evaluation Team proposes the implementation of a set of recommendations tackling the key shortcomings identified.

These address the need to, in light of the limited budget, improve the prioritisation of work, define key targets and identify alternative ways of raising funds. The Secretariat should also further rely on the technical expertise of the programme advisers and promote inter-team co-operation and collaboration across the Secretariat.

When implementing long-term projects, the Secretariat should have a more stable budgeting mechanism, enabling sustainability to be more adequately considered early on in the planning process. Similarly, there is a need for the Secretariat to adopt formal strategies to tackle political economy challenges that affect the implementation of different projects.

Overall, the team found the Secretariat needed to adopt digital solutions to enhance the effectiveness

and sustainability of its work: an internal centralised platform for knowledge exchange and training should be developed, ensuring that the right processes are in place to avoid the loss of institutional memory. Similarly, research should be undertaken to better understand the relative effectiveness of online support via a platform versus in-country support, and on the basis of that research, an e-learning platform should be implemented, building capacity of new member country staff to get up to speed quickly on areas such as ONR or debt management, leading to a reduction in the cost and time associated with training.

From a monitoring and evaluation perspective, the Secretariat should consider improving the collection of project-level data for monitoring, evaluation and learning, improving the definition of indicators for outcomes and impact, and ensure that project budgets are properly tracked.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the evaluation

This evaluation was commissioned by the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategy, Portfolio, Partnerships and Digital Division (SPPDD) following the completion of the Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17. The main objectives of the exercise, as outlined in the Terms of Reference (ToR, see Annex 1), were to provide an independent opinion on the performance and results of the programme; assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the support provided by the Secretariat; and to make recommendations from both the strategic and operational perspectives to optimise the utilisation of resources in achieving sustainable impact. Specifically, it was intended for the evaluation to:

- review the extent to which the Secretariat's support to Economic Development was relevant to the needs of member countries and consistent with the intermediate outcomes of the Strategic Plan;
- assess the extent to which Commonwealth member states may have benefited from the Secretariat's work and tangible outcomes realised;
- assess the design and strategies used in the delivery of the programme, including rights-based perspectives, and suggest improvements, if necessary;
- assess the extent of gender mainstreaming enabled and realised in Economic Development work;
- review the operational aspects of the programme delivery from economic, efficiency, effectiveness and equity perspectives to provide recommendations for improvement; and
- identify issues, challenges and lessons learned, and make recommendations, both strategic and operational.

1.2 The Secretariat's Economic Development Programme 2013/14–2016/17

The Commonwealth Secretariat is an intergovernmental organisation established in 1965, comprising 54 member countries. Guided by its Strategic Plan and the Commonwealth Charter, the Secretariat promotes democracy, the rule of law, human rights, good governance, and social and economic development, and provides a voice for small states and youth empowerment.

The Strategic Plan for the period 2013/14–2016/17, later revised in December 2015, was developed after extensive consultation with member governments. More than 200 small projects were consolidated and reduced to 46 project areas to improve coherence, optimise limited resources and achieve more significant impact. The plan reflects the shared priorities of member governments, comprising three long-term goals and six Strategic Outcomes (Table 1).

With regards to the Strategic Outcome 5, Development: Pan-Commonwealth, the target of this evaluation, it aimed to achieve more inclusive economic growth and sustainable development. Strategic Outcome 5 was underpinned by four intermediate outcomes:

- 5.1 Effective policy mechanisms for integration and participation in the global trading system
- 5.2 Commonwealth principles and values advanced in global development and financing decisions (e.g. G20 and post-2015 MDGs framework)
- 5.3 National frameworks facilitate effective debt management
- 5.4 Effective, equitable, transparent and sustainable management of marine and other natural resources

At the start of the period under evaluation, there were 54 members of the Commonwealth, although this dropped to 53 when Maldives temporarily left in October 2016, before re-joining in February 2020. Annex 2 provides the list of the actions and results in member countries during the period under evaluation.

Table 1. Commonwealth Secretariat's Goals and Strategic Outcomes, 2013/14–2016/17

Goals	
1.	Strong democracy, the rule of law, promotion and protection of human rights and respect for diversity
2.	Inclusive growth and sustainable development
3.	A well-connected and networked Commonwealth
Strategic Outcomes	
1.	Democracy – greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles
2.	Public Institutions – more effective, efficient and equitable public governance
3.	Social Development – enhance the positive impact of social development
4.	Youth – youth more integrated and valued in political and development processes
5.	Development: Pan-Commonwealth – more effective frameworks for inclusive economic growth and social and sustainable development
6.	Development: small states and vulnerable states – strengthening the resilience of small states and vulnerable states

2. Methodology

Overall, the evaluation was undertaken on the basis of the evaluation framework contained in the Inception Report.

2.1 Target audience

The primary users of the evaluation will be the Board of Governors and the programme and project directors and advisers within the Directorate of Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development (EYSD), and the Directorate of Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources (TONR). Other key audiences will include the development partners of the Commonwealth Secretariat and its member states.

This report provides independent insights into the performance and results of the Secretariat in the areas covered by the Economic Development Programme 2013/14–2016/17. It makes this assessment on the programme's performance based on the six OECD DAC Criteria and identifies the challenges encountered; provides a set of lessons learned; and makes recommendations aimed at strengthening the Secretariat's ongoing operations.

This evaluation report is particularly timely due to the convergence of the submission of the final report with the Secretariat's formulation of the upcoming Strategic Plan. Specifically, it is expected that the Secretariat will continue experiencing similar funding constraints, such that future implementation modalities will need to focus on delivering greater effectiveness and efficiency.

2.2 Evaluation framework

The Evaluation Team assessed the implementation of the Economic Development Programme (EDP) against the six OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact, covering all of the questions outlined in the ToR (see Annex 1). The final questions were agreed in the inception report and are outlined below, clustered according to the OECD-DAC criteria, together with our approach and sources of data. Particular emphasis was also paid to identify (1) the value added by the Secretariat as a provider of technical assistance, and (2) any lessons learnt.

A questionnaire was administered online and across the Commonwealth member states. This questionnaire's characteristics and questions are presented in Annex 3 and 4, respectively. The results of the questions are presented throughout the body of the report (Chapter 3).

Approach to data analysis and synthesis

The team reviewed qualitative data collected to identify common content and emerging themes. This included project design documents (PDDs), annual and quarterly reports, interviews with the Secretariat's staff and government officials, and other related documents and literature. Where appropriate, qualitative data was triangulated with quantitative data, e.g. from the logical framework. For each question, the team weighed these different types of evidence based on reliability and validity.

Additionally, the team also explored the extent to which gender and human rights considerations were taken into account in designing and implementing the different projects. It analysed whether a gender analysis was conducted, the extent to which the project took into account the needs of the wider community, whether it was implemented in a manner that ensured gender equitable participation and benefits, and whether gender disaggregated data were gathered and reported on beneficiaries.

2.3 Implementing the evaluation

Overall, all categories of interviewee were discussed and agreed with the Secretariat and outlined in the inception report. The selection was based on advice from the Secretariat and their relevance and/or involvement with the different projects.

As outlined in the inception report, interview guidelines were drafted for various categories of interviewees, whether these were Secretariat staff or external stakeholders, such as national government officials or staff of regional organisations. These guidelines proved useful in reminding interviewers of issues to be covered but were used with flexibility, given the diverse range

of respondents covered and the different content focus, particularly between the four areas covered by the EDP.

The team received the consent of the different respondents to make public their views in any publicly available report or research product, maintaining, in any case, full anonymity.

2.4 Challenges and limitations

In general, the methodology proposed for the evaluation was appropriate and effective for assembling the data required to answer the evaluation questions. However, the emergence of COVID-19 as a global pandemic around February 2020 led to significant challenges and limitations. These were:

- As stated in the ToR, the team planned to visit eight member countries, which would be the focus of in-depth case studies: The Bahamas, Botswana, Fiji Islands, Kiribati, Mauritius, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago. However, soon after the submission of the inception report, it became apparent that COVID-19 would not allow the team to undertake the missions without high risk. Therefore, the Secretariat, in consultation with the team, decided to cancel the field missions.
- The cancellation of the field missions, while duly justified, meant that the team was unable to reach as many stakeholders as initially envisaged. COVID-19 also led a high number of the target countries to implement strict lockdown, confinement and work-from-home measures, which severely limited the availability of the different stakeholders, particularly national officials. Additionally, COVID-19 also meant that the attention of most stakeholders was diverted to devise and implement COVID-19 mitigation strategies. Overall, of the 64 external stakeholders – i.e. not Secretariat staff – only 24 accepted to be interviewed remotely by the team (37.5% acceptance rate). There was no clear bias in those accepting to be interviewed, with a spectrum of positive and negative views expressed.
- The cancellation of the field missions, linked with the limited engagement from external stakeholders, meant that the team was not able to access the necessary information to

develop the expected case studies. Such case studies have been replaced by 'impact stories' in the report.

- The cancellation of the field trips also led to a significant delay in the implementation of the project, due to the low response rate and the need to undertake multiple follow-ups in order to achieve a response. Overall, the evaluation experienced a one-month delay with respect to what was originally foreseen.

Additional challenges and limitations faced by the team during the implementation of the evaluation were as follows:

- From a data and information availability perspective, the team faced limitations with regards to the level of detail available of the different activities undertaken across the projects. The level of comprehensiveness varied depending on the area analysed: trade and debt management kept the most comprehensive sets of documents, while those on global development and financing and ONR were not as comprehensive.
- During the implementation of EDP, the Secretariat lacked a comprehensive monitoring and reporting system tracking the implementation of the different activities across departments. This was common across all teams. There was a lack of tracking of project details, with no clear monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) exercise undertaken to review whether the recommendations had been implemented or if these had had the expected impact. As an officer of the Secretariat reported, *'the teams will not always report everything, and most of the information will be revealed through conversations'*. This meant that, on some occasions, the team had to rely on the subjective opinion of team members to build the Secretariat's analysis. In this case, such views were further tested by various officials.
- The timing of the evaluation – three years after the completion of the EDP – meant that, in some instances, project details were vague or could not be referred to. In some cases, it also meant that some key staff that had been intimately involved in the implementation of the different programmes had moved on or were no longer dealing directly with

Table 2. Evaluation questions

OECD-DAC criteria	Evaluation questions	Approach	Source of data
Relevance	<p>How relevant were the programme interventions to member states' development priorities in addressing key issues in the fields of the EDP?</p> <p>What contributions has the Secretariat's research at the pan-Commonwealth level made to thought leadership and advocacy at the international and member state level in the areas of the EDP?</p>	Qualitative document review, quantitative data (usage of the CS-DRMS) and interviews	<p>PDDs Government and donor policy documents</p> <p>Key interviews with Secretariat's staff, partner government agencies, private sector representatives</p>
Coherence	<p><i>Internal to the organisation</i></p> <p>Are CFTC [Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation] programme activities aligned to the memorandum of understanding on the utilisation of CFTC funds?</p> <p>Are activities aligned with the Strategic Plan?</p> <p><i>External to the organisation</i></p> <p>Is the Secretariat's work in the EDP aligned to other donors, especially the World Bank Group, UN, bilateral donors and other active partners?</p> <p>Is the support provided by the Secretariat aligned to the priority agendas of regional secretariats and countries?</p> <p>Is the Secretariat's support aligned to the SDGs?</p>	Qualitative document review, quantitative data (usage of the CS-DRMS) and interviews	<p>PDDs</p> <p>Government and donor policy documents</p> <p>Key interviews with Secretariat's staff, partner government agencies, private sector representatives</p>
Efficiency	<p>To what extent have programme interventions delivered cost-effective outputs and reflect an efficient allocation of resources?</p> <p>How efficient is the channel of delivery of activities?</p> <p>Did the organisational reforms improve the efficiency of programme delivery?</p> <p>What is the Secretariat's comparative advantage in delivering support in the four areas of the EDP?</p>	<p>Costing by other service providers (consultants/World Bank/IMF reports)</p> <p>Governance and management review</p> <p>Value for money analysis (to the extent possible)</p> <p>Country case studies</p>	<p>Financial reports</p> <p>Key interviews with Secretariat's staff and partner government agencies</p>

(Continued)

Table 2. Evaluation questions (*Continued*)

OECD-DAC criteria	Evaluation questions	Approach	Source of data
Effectiveness	<p>To what extent have the interventions achieved or are expected to achieve their planned results?</p> <p>To what extent have interventions added value to what member countries are doing collectively, regionally or with other partners?</p> <p>Did the organisational reforms improve effectiveness in programme delivery?</p> <p>To what extent did the Secretariat contribute to the relevant development objectives of member countries?</p>	<p>Verification of log frame indicators</p> <p>Intervention case studies</p> <p>Interviews (member country views and third parties)</p>	<p>Annual and six-month reports, internal team project documentation and M&E data</p> <p>Literature review (political economy)</p> <p>Key interviews with Secretariat's staff and partner government agencies</p>
Sustainability	<p>Which of the programmes' achievements, results and benefits has been sustained?</p> <p>How resilient are the outcomes and impact to risks?</p>	<p>Intervention case studies</p> <p>DeMPAs [Debt Management Performance Assessments], where available</p>	<p>Annual and six-month reports, internal team project documentation and M&E data</p> <p>Key interviews with Secretariat's staff and partner government agencies</p>
Impact	<p>How have the Secretariat's interventions contributed to long-term changes in development and growth in institutional capacity in its member countries?</p> <p>What is the broader impact resulting from the EDP?</p>	<p>Literature review</p> <p>Intervention case studies</p> <p>Medium Term Debt Strategies, where available</p>	<p>Project outputs (research documents)</p>

the areas covered by the evaluation. This included Secretariat staff who had finished their contract with the organisation and national government representatives who were no longer staff of the different institutions consulted.

2.5 Departures from the original ToR and adjustments

As mentioned above, COVID-19 had a significant impact on the implementation of the evaluation, requiring the team and the Secretariat to depart from the original methodology as set out in the ToR. They implemented the following adjustments:

- Cancellation of field trips and limited availability of stakeholders. A major departure from the ToR was the cancellation of the field trips, which were meant to serve as the basis for the eight case studies. A trip to Seychelles was undertaken before lockdown measures were implemented, plus a series of meetings were undertaken in Mauritius, the home country of the consultants. However, the bulk of the field trips could not take place. This, linked to the fact that the pandemic absorbed most of the attention, focus and energy of the key stakeholders, meant that they were simply not available to talk to the team.

- Case studies. In light of the aforementioned situation, the team indicated to the Secretariat that it would not be able to collect enough information from key stakeholders to produce the expected case studies. An alternative approach was agreed on, comprising the introduction of key impact stories of specific projects or interventions that had been collected through the interviews.

2.6 Risk of conflicts of interests – independence

The evaluation was conducted, to the extent of the team members' knowledge, without any conflicts of interest arising.

The evaluation was conducted in an independent manner, with the Secretariat facilitating the meetings requested by the team, but without any interference.

During the only field mission that could be undertaken – to Seychelles – in order to promote learning, capacity building and give depth and context to the interviews and the activities,

an official from the Secretariat's Evaluation Department joined the team leader. This could have introduced some bias during the interviews, particularly when respondents were asked to share qualitative information and/or their opinion on the quality of support provided by the Secretariat. However, the team did not identify any signal of interference or bias in the respondent's feedback.

In all cases, the interviewee was informed of the presence of the evaluation officer from the Secretariat and that all the information reported would be treated in the strictest confidence. All interviewees were also informed of the possibility to exclude the Secretariat's official from the meeting, but no one requested this option.

With regards to the survey, a potential bias could lie in the results, because while the survey questionnaire was developed by the Evaluation Team, it was the Secretariat that was in charge of distributing the survey to its stakeholders. The list of stakeholders receiving the questionnaire was therefore done by the Secretariat. While confidentiality was ensured, and some negative comments were received, a potential bias could still lie in the choice of respondents.

3. Findings

3.1 Relevance

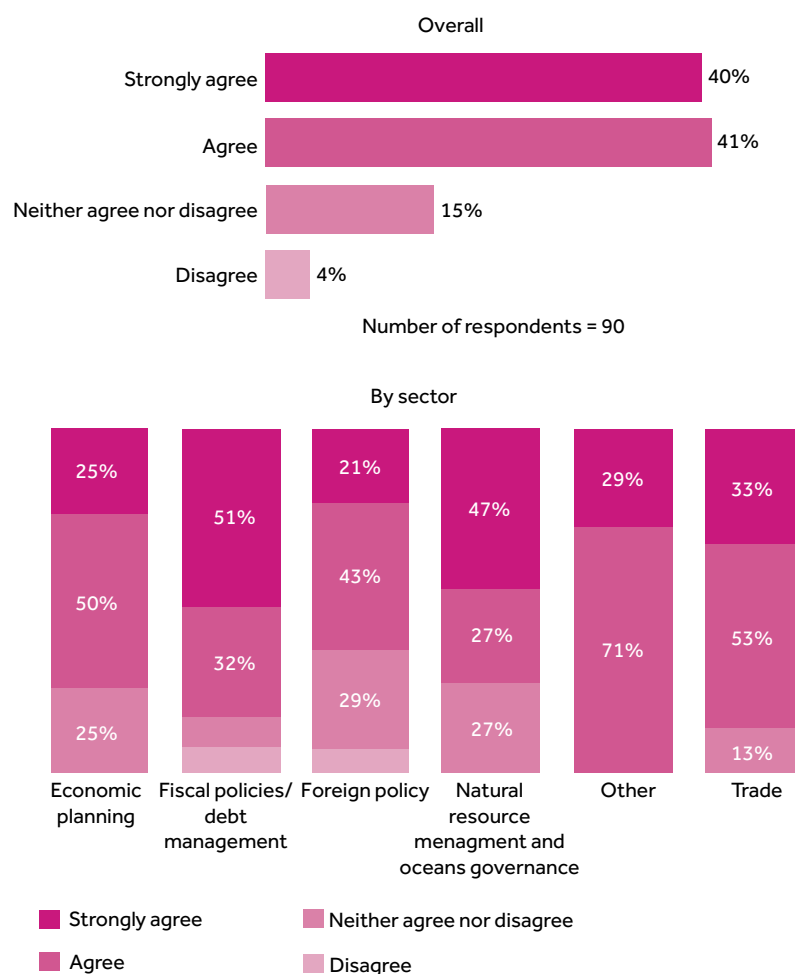
Under the area of relevance, the evaluation addressed two main questions:

1. How relevant were the programme interventions to member states' development priorities in addressing key issues in the fields of the EDP?
2. What contributions has the Secretariat's research at the pan-Commonwealth level made to thought leadership and advocacy at the international and member state level in the areas of the EDP?

Overall, the Secretariat's interventions under the EDP were relevant to the member states' development priorities. The relevance of the Secretariat's input was ensured through three channels:

1. **The Secretariat largely worked on a request-basis**, i.e. being demand-driven such that it was the member states asking the Secretariat for intervention in a particular area.
2. Once the request was received, the suitability of the request was analysed and checked against the Secretariat's scope of work, as defined in the different Project Design

Figure 1. Relevance of the work in line with the needs of countries



Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Secretariat's technical support has been consistent with the needs of my country.

Source: Survey Results

Documents (PDDs). If it was deemed acceptable and within the scope of action of the Secretariat, a **scoping mission was undertaken to prepare the project documents and refine the country's request**, ensuring that it was aligned to the needs and challenges of the country, had country ownership and incorporated stakeholder views.

3. By only providing support that was directly requested by member countries, the Secretariat was able to ensure that its interventions were targeted, highly relevant and flexible enough to respond to partner needs, should circumstances change.

However, this did not apply to all the teams evaluated. The work done by the International Trade Policy Team or the Global Development and Financing Team was scheduled through the annual work plans, and it was not as dependent to individual country requests but could appear through outcome statements from ministerial and CHOGM engagements. The activities undertaken by the teams responded to the timely needs of the countries in regional or global fora. For example, in preparation for a World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference, the International Trade Policy Team would schedule a regional workshop to help the countries to prepare for the negotiations. The relevance of their work was checked against the topics that emerged in the regional and international spheres. Such topics were highlighted, among others, in the outcome documents of the Commonwealth Trade Expert Group Meeting, which provided guidance to the International Trade Policy Team.

The Secretariat's relevance was further confirmed by the survey results, with 81 per cent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that the Secretariat's technical support had been consistent with the needs of their country. However, agreement on the relevance of the support provided was not universal, with a small number of respondents complaining about not feeling sufficiently included in the project creation process, particularly on oceans and natural resources (ONR). However, these sentiments were likely to have resulted from the budgetary constraints that severely limited the ONR Team's capacity and limited in-country presence during the period under evaluation (2013/14–2016/17).

The aforementioned scoping missions played a particular role in ensuring the relevance of the interventions, particularly as these related

to the private sector. While governments are in charge of driving the country's sustainable development efforts, it is crucial to ensure that the private sector and the wider communities are aware and support such efforts. In this context, the Secretariat was active in undertaking in-depth stakeholder consultations through the scoping missions. Although the direct engagement and invitation of the private sector and other stakeholders was left to the initiative of the member states, business associations were usually present to represent the views of the private sector. Additionally, stakeholder consultations extended beyond the scoping mission throughout the whole project cycle. In Sierra Leone, for example, the Trade Competitiveness Team held a three-day experiential learning session with 23 small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) representatives in agro-processing and light manufacturing, who had contributed to the development and validation of the packaging Strategic Action Plan.

Nevertheless, the evaluators did not find any evidence that the Commonwealth Secretariat addressed cross-cutting issues, such as those impacting SMEs, youth and gender, during the scoping missions, unless that was the specific mandate of the project – such as in Solomon Islands, where the Secretariat provided a youth-specific Trade Strategy. Additionally, it appeared that the EDP's activities, during the implementation stage, were not sensitive in terms of recognising their impact on people and wider communities. As a minimum, the impact of a given project on the aforementioned collectives should be analysed and reported in the back-to-office report.

Trade

The Secretariat's work in the area of trade was relevant in addressing members' trade challenges at the national, regional and multilateral spheres. Trade can be a powerful engine of economic growth and poverty reduction in developing countries, which represent over two-thirds of the Commonwealth membership. International trade can be instrumental in achieving sustainable economic growth and improved standards of living for developing country populations. However, developing countries usually face multiple challenges to effectively participate in and benefit from international trade. Additionally, developing countries are usually the most affected when the world experiences a rise in protectionism,

Box 1. Context: trade negotiations

In the multilateral negotiations' arena, the Commonwealth's developing countries also experienced a number of key impasses. Since the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO), its members, despite different initiatives, have been unsuccessful in agreeing on new commitments to liberalise market access at the multilateral level – for both goods and services – let alone to address 'new' policy issues on the negative effects of domestic regulation on international trade and investment,¹ as shown by the deadlock of the current Doha Development Agenda (DDA). Rather than addressing these differences at the multilateral level, members have resorted to plurilateral and regional initiatives to address such spill-overs:

- On the plurilateral front, the failure of the DDA has led to various members initiating negotiations on the plurilateral Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) and E-Commerce Agreement. Such initiatives are driven by large, developed countries and have limited participation by developing countries. Mauritius was the only developing country member of the Commonwealth to take part in the negotiations of the TiSA.
- On the regional front, the world continued to see an increase in regional trade agreements (RTAs). Between 2013 and 2017, the number of active RTAs increased from 252 to 293, most of them involving developing countries.

1 Hoekman, B and PC Mavroidis (2015), 'Regulatory Spillovers and the Trading System: From Coherence to Cooperation', E15 Initiative, ICTSD-WEF, April, p. 1.

as they rely on factors such as unrestricted market access to ensure the survival of their domestic industries.

In order to tackle such challenges and ensure the effective participation of Commonwealth member states in the global trading system, during the period under evaluation the Secretariat implemented three key projects: 'The Hub & Spokes Programme II' (H&S Programme; this was a joint aid-for-trade initiative funded by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the European Union), 'International Trade Policy', and 'Supporting Trade and Competitiveness in the Commonwealth'.

- Under the H&S Programme, country-level trade advisers – the 'spokes' – aimed to strengthen and enhance the capacity of government ministries, while regional trade advisers – the 'hub' – provided trade policy assistance to major regional organisations in the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) countries.
- The International Trade Policy Programme intended to put in place '*effective policy mechanisms for their integration and participation in the global trading system*'.²

2 Commonwealth Secretariat (2019d), Project Design Document: International Trade Policy, ID: NBCWG0923, the Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

- Through the Trade Competitiveness project, the Secretariat aimed to: (i) improve the market access capabilities of its member states, (ii) improve the enabling environment for export development, (iii) reduce transaction costs and streamline procedures to facilitate trade, and (iv) enhance the development of services across its membership.³

The small states agenda was welcomed by small states stakeholders and was considered to be highly relevant and effective in promoting the interests of these countries. An example of this was provided by Seychelles, where a long-term expert worked for 18 months in the Intellectual Property Office. The expert worked on legislative drafting, but also on the implementing regulations to ensure adopted legislation was relevant and effective for Seychelles. The work could not have been done without Commonwealth Secretariat support and was considered an important achievement by the Attorney General's Office.

Most stakeholders consulted confirmed that the Secretariat's work on trade had been relevant to their development priorities. The support

3 Commonwealth Secretariat (2019e), Project Design Document: Supporting Trade and Competitiveness in the Commonwealth, ID: NXCWG0898, the Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Box 2. Context: international trade

The period under review was a turbulent one for international trade. The world saw a generalised increase in trade protectionism, hampering trade flows and the potential for achieving trade-led sustainable development. As highlighted in the *Commonwealth Trade Review 2018*, '[following] the steady increase in trade-restrictive measures by G20 economies since the 2008 crisis, most of these countries are now demonstrating greater restraint, despite continuing economic uncertainties'. The Commonwealth's member states were not untouched by the global trade slowdown experienced in 2016. Such a situation, linked to a depreciation of the US dollar, led to a decrease in Commonwealth exports from US\$2.64 trillion to US\$2.32 trillion between 2013 and 2017.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat (2019a), *Commonwealth Trade Review 2018: Strengthening the Commonwealth Advantage*, The Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Box 3. Impact story: the Secretariat's interventions in Jamaica

Jamaica was one of the countries that benefited the most from the Secretariat's trade support. From a national perspective, the National Development Plan (NDP) – Vision 2030 recognises the important role of trade to ensure the country's growth and development. Therefore, the finalisation and implementation of the Jamaica Foreign Trade Policy was vital and supported the goals of the NDP as it sought to create an enabling trade environment that would help the country reap maximum benefits from integrating into global markets.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat (2014), *Hub & Spokes: Progress Report*. Period: July–December.

contributed to ensuring that member states had effective policy mechanisms for integration and participation in the global trading system.

Global development and financing

The Secretariat's research was relevant to address, through thought leadership and advocacy, the challenges that member states faced in economic policy. Achieving consensus between Commonwealth G20 and developing countries on challenging and important economic issues allowed the Commonwealth to contribute materially to international financing for the development agenda, which underpins the success of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This consensus was directed through the project, 'Advancing Commonwealth Principles and Values in Global Development and Financing Decisions'. The Secretariat aimed to raise the level of participation and inclusivity of Commonwealth developing country members in global financial discussions and decisions, through Commonwealth penetration and a greater voice in key forums (G20, Post-2015, Small Island Developing States [SIDS] 2014, World Bank/IMF meetings, for example). This was made via:

1. producing cutting-edge research on pressing Commonwealth developing country issues on the global agenda;
2. raising attention for the need to place other pressing issues under the global microscope;
3. the convening power of the Commonwealth to forge consensus among developing country members on their key concerns, so that they speak with one voice, and
4. strengthening the relationship between developing and developed country members, with an aim to encourage broad-based consensus on key issues and strong lobbying in exclusive fora (G20, G8) for Commonwealth positions.

Debt management

In general, effective public debt management is a crucial ingredient for any country's economic development programme. Even before the 2008 financial crisis, during decades of remarkable debt crises in developing countries (Argentina, Mexico, Turkey, Russia, South Asia) and the implementation of the Heavily-Indebted Poor Country (HIPC)

initiative and the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative (MDRI), developing countries were urged to focus on debt sustainability and to develop their domestic bond markets to mitigate risks arising from reliance on external, foreign currency-denominated debt. The focus did not change after the crisis. In fact, after 2008, a new surge in government debt – both external and domestic – re-emerged across developing countries. Additionally, multilateral development finance institutions and the G20 voiced the need for more transparency and improvements in reporting and debt statistics, after cases of fraudulent misreporting were revealed.

Therefore, the requirement to improve debt management is a valid challenge for Commonwealth member states, not limited to a certain group, but practically relevant for all of them – obviously with the exemption of the most advanced member states. In line with this, the Secretariat's potential support may cover a wide range of topics.

The Strategic Plan's intermediate outcome of **national frameworks to facilitate effective debt management** consists of two components:

1. member states that reform their management of public debt; and
2. member states that effectively utilise the Secretariat debt management systems to proactively manage their debt.

The first component covers the support for all crucial ingredients of public debt management, including the legal and institutional framework, the development of debt management strategies and the development of domestic government debt securities markets. The latter has been, and it still is, the core of the Secretariat's debt management advisory services. Through the second component, the Secretariat has supported member states with debt management-related policy advice and support services, including the development, implementation and technical assistance for its debt management systems, the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System (CS-DRMS), Horizon and the Commonwealth Secretariat's Securities Auction System (CS-SAS).

In the area of debt management, the Secretariat's demand-driven approach has been a warrant of the relevance of the assistance provided. With all activities usually starting with

a request from the authorities of the member state, it was presumed that activities delivered met the most urgent needs. Free text answers of respondents to the survey suggested that the most relevant activities were those around the implementation and usage guidance of the CS-DRMS. This did not mean that other activities, notably policy advice on public debt management, legal and institutional arrangements and on domestic government debt securities market were less relevant, but it may signal that the more gradual and sequential introduction of market development measures might not have been as visible or as yielding of immediate results.

Specifically, the CS-DRMS was designed as an all-in-one solution, meaning that it is capable of tracking central government debt (both external and domestic), contingent liabilities, on-lending and also private non-guaranteed debt. It has also been used in a few countries at the subnational level. The CS-DRMS was installed and at the time of writing was in use in 44 member states. **It is highly relevant for tracking central government external borrowing and domestic government debt securities issuance.** While dealing with the latter has proved to be challenging for most member states, due to the particularities of traded securities, there is much less complete coverage for the use of CS-DRMS for other types of debt (on-lending, contingent liabilities, private non-guaranteed debt). Similarly, **Horizon**, a medium-term debt strategy development tool, was launched and implemented in three member states during the evaluation period. However, there was not enough experience available on how this performed.

Oceans and natural resources

In the area of ONR, there was reasonable consensus among current and former staff and survey respondents that the activities were aligned to the country priority needs. As highlighted by members of the ONR Team:

We're consultative and request-driven. We always engage the sector ministry and have a whole of government approach. We meet with representatives from different ministries to ensure strategic alignment.

We start with a diagnostic in-country and scope out the TA [technical assistance] needed. [Such as questioning] What's the existing situation? How

does it benchmark, what are the gaps in the legal and regulatory frameworks? What can we do to add value and achieve objectives for the sector? Then we work with the assistance of the sector ministry and deliver against a workplan.

We also do a lot of background research, so where we have work that leads to looking at the development of a sector, one of the key things we do is look at national development plans and strategies. This is for both general edification but also to see if there's alignment with the sector and the broader strategy.

This relevance was exemplified by the work on the Blue Economy and Oceans Governance, an area which attracted considerable traction during the lifetime of the EDP. Two main projects were implemented during the period under review:

- **The Maritime Boundaries and Ocean Governance Assistance**, which aimed to improve the capacity of member countries to effectively and sustainably define, determine and manage their ocean space and resources. This project focused on three key areas of activity:
 - *Defining maritime limits and securing access to marine resources*: supporting member states to overcome financial and capacity constraints to establish the legal limits of their maritime jurisdiction and secure rights to marine resource exploitation.
 - *Realising the value of the ocean economy*: enabling member states to realise the economic potential of their ocean and marine resources through a holistic evaluation that accounts for all marine resources and services.
 - *Integrated ocean governance for sustainable marine economic development*. Supporting member states to develop comprehensive, integrated and equitable national governance frameworks to ensure the long-term sustainability of their ocean and marine resources.
- **Natural Resources Advisory Assistance**, which aimed to support member countries to establish contemporary legal, regulatory, fiscal, contractual and institutional arrangements to govern mining, oil and gas activities, and thereby secure foreign investment and adequate economic value of these resources for member countries. The project focused on three major areas of activity:

- *Establishing effective policy, legal and regulatory frameworks for natural resources management*: delivering draft policies, laws, regulations and contracts for effective natural resources management to member countries to assure investors about the commercial attractiveness of jurisdictions and building confidence.

- *Delivering an equitable and transparent fiscal regime for natural resources exploration and development*: assisting member countries to develop tailored, transparent, flexible, progressive and effective fiscal regimes for natural resource exploration and development.

- *Strengthening institutions for effective natural resources management*: supporting member countries to strengthen institutions with a role in natural resources management through a programme of training workshops and recommendations for reform.

Overall, the coverage provided by the two projects was comprehensive, with more than 60 per cent of eligible countries receiving support.⁴ The Maritime Boundaries and Ocean Governance work was naturally concentrated around small island developing states (SIDS), where dependence on the ocean for lives and livelihoods is high, and the ocean economy forms an increasingly important component of national development plans. Natural Resources work, by contrast, focused on natural resource-rich countries in Commonwealth Africa, where financial and capacity constraints can be severe, and the need for legal, regulatory and institutional reform is greatest.

All of the current and former ONR staff members interviewed for this evaluation shared the same opinion regarding the relevance of the team's work, but there was also a widespread understanding that a short-term demand-driven way of working was not enough in itself to deliver relevant, aligned and sustainable outcomes. In particular, it did not enable the team to ensure better planning of projects, find coherence, and leverage resources across projects and work towards impact-level results.

4 For maritime boundaries/ocean governance, member countries without a coastline (eSwatini, Lesotho, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda) were excluded. For both, wealthier member countries towards whom support is not generally targeted (Canada, UK, Cyprus, NZ, Australia, Singapore) were also excluded.

3.2 Coherence

The main questions addressed in this area were:

- Are CFTC programme activities aligned to the memorandum of understanding on the utilisation of CFTC funds?
- Is the Secretariat's work in the EDP aligned to other donors, especially the World Bank Group, the UN, bilateral donors and other active partners?
- Is the support provided by the Secretariat aligned to the priority agendas of regional secretariats and countries?
- Is the Secretariat's support aligned to the ambitions in the SDGs?

Most of the CFTC funds appeared to have been dedicated to the areas established in the memorandum of understanding, namely:

1. *Special programmes of assistance focusing on (a) good governance, (b) global issues, (c) support for negotiations with international organisations and multinational companies, and (d) democracy, rule of law and human rights;*
2. *Programmes which provide technical support for policy development and advocacy of Commonwealth interests at the regional/global level; and*
3. *Programmes which seek to meet strategic gaps in skills and assist capacity building through the provision of experts, training and professional advisory services on a demand-led basis, in the Secretariat's areas of focus and expertise.⁵*

However, there were instances in which, despite the member state not meeting the eligibility criteria to be a beneficiary of CFTC funds,⁶ a special authorisation was sought and granted. It is worth noting that, after the period under evaluation, the Commonwealth Secretariat established a

dedicated committee analysing the requests made by member states to benefit from the CFTC funds, therefore ensuring that the Abuja Guidelines are enforced consistently across all requests.

Regarding the EDP's external coherence, the involvement of the Secretariat with other international organisations varied depending of the specific team.

The Trade Team, for example, was active in conducting activities with other international organisations, having organised the Global Commodities Forum (GCF) in July 2016 together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Another example of collaboration with external partners was the co-organisation, with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), of the 10th Annual Forum of Developing Country Investment Negotiators in Sri Lanka in 2016. At the pan-Commonwealth level, the Trade Competitiveness Team also held two workshops in partnership with the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on youth entrepreneurship and developing trade-oriented youth entrepreneurship strategies. Similarly, the International Trade Policy Team collaborated with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) to organise the 2016 Consultative Meeting of Commonwealth Expert Group on Trade, held on 30 and 31 March 2016 in New Delhi, India. The Hub & Spokes Programme was also an example of collaboration (1) between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the EU to co-fund a technical assistance programme, and (2) between national 'spokes' and regional 'hubs' creating substantial information sharing, pooling of resources, and collaboration between countries and regional secretariats. The Global Development and Financing Team also had a long-standing relationship with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM) being regularly held on the margins of the IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings of Finance Ministers at the headquarters of the International Monetary Fund in Washington, DC. Under debt management, the CS-DRMS was able to provide reports in formats required by World Bank and IMF, notably reporting for the following standards: (i) World Bank Debt Recording System (DRS); (ii) Quarterly Public Sector Debt (QPSD); and (iii) Quarterly External Debt Statistics (QEDS).

⁵ Paragraph 6 of the Memorandum of Understanding on The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-Operation.

⁶ As stated in Paragraph 7 of the Memorandum of Understanding on The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-Operation, '[any] developing member of the Commonwealth, any state associated with a member of the Commonwealth, any dependent territory of any member of the Commonwealth, and any Commonwealth inter-governmental organisation or agency will be eligible for assistance from the Fund subject to any specific decisions by Heads of Government. In the case of governments, **they are eligible for CFTC assistance by virtue of their contributions to the CFTC**'.

The wide range of memorandums of understanding that existed between international organisations and the Secretariat articulated a clear-cut distribution and share of responsibilities for assistance on paper, which was not borne out in reality. The Secretariat's interventions tended to cover a particular niche, with interventions tending to address 'high-level' areas, i.e. focused on policy and/or strategy issues, such as export strategies, and tended to be of a small budget, around £50,000. Such areas of work were of limited interest for other development partners.

For example, public debt management has many stakeholders, beside member states and the Secretariat. The World Bank's Debt Management Facility plays a decisive role in promoting the improvement of debt management through Debt Management Performance Assessments (DeMPA), development of Medium-Term Debt Management Strategies (MTDS, MTDS tool) and development of Debt Management Reform Plans. The Secretariat also works closely with a number of international (IMF, OECD, the Asian Development Bank [ADB], the Inter-American Development Bank [IADB], the African Development Bank [AfDB]) and regional agencies (the Macroeconomic and Financial Management Institute [MEFMI], Eastern Caribbean Central Bank [ECCB], West African Institute for Financial and Economic Management [WAIFEM]) in debt management. Additional examples of memorandums of understanding include those with the UN, the UN Institute for Training and Research, the World Leadership Alliance Club de Madrid, the Global Innovation and Technology Alliance, the International Solar Alliance, etc.

However, some regional organisations called for enhanced partnership with the Secretariat.

Better co-ordination with local and regional partners would ensure that the Secretariat addresses the specific development needs of the members in each region. As highlighted by a consulted stakeholder, '*such partnerships would not only improve the visibility of the Commonwealth Secretariat but will also [be instrumental] in unpacking the core development issues of [the region], so that the policy support and solutions provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat hit at the heart of development problems*'.

Similarly, at the project-specific level, communication between international organisations and the Secretariat occurred

mainly on a case-by-case basis and through informal channels. While communication did occur between the Secretariat and other international organisations whenever the Secretariat was requested to work in a particular country, this communication was mainly done to avoid project duplication, i.e. to know whether the country's request was already being addressed by another development partner, rather than to build a stronger partnership. For example, the collaboration between the ONR Team and other providers of technical support like the IMF and World Bank during the period under review was limited. However, according to one of the members of the ONR Team:

It's important to collaborate with other providers but you don't tend to know if they're in the area. That information comes from the government. We would ask them to lead in that process. We'd always look for a go-ahead from the government.

Similarly, there might be situations or topics in which the Secretariat has divergent views from those upheld by other international organisations. For example, while the Secretariat might argue for the forgiveness of debt to small states, other organisations might argue in favour of a different approach. In such situation, there is less manoeuvre for partnerships.

In terms of internal coherence, this evaluation found mixed evidence of coherence and co-ordination among the different teams of the EDP.

Examples of weak collaboration and overlapping were found in the Trade Team: following the UK's decision on Brexit, the Trade Competitiveness Team examined the implications for the trade regimes of India, Jamaica, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa with the UK, and the opportunities provided and challenges they might face in the UK post-Brexit. At the same time, the International Trade Policy Team was undertaking research on Brexit.⁷ Another example of lack of collaboration among teams was the weak inclusion of gender equality, and the overall social development area, in the work done by the EDP teams (see section on Sustainability), with no evident collaboration between such teams. Specifically, intermediate outcome 3.3 calls for

⁷ See, for example, Commonwealth Secretariat (2016a), 'Brexit and Commonwealth Trade. Commonwealth Trade Policy Briefing', available at: <https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/news-items/documents/BrexitandCommonwealthTrade.pdf>.

'Gender equality and the empowerment of women effectively mainstreamed into member state policies, frameworks and programmes and Secretariat's projects', and it was surprising that the Trade and Gender Teams did not collaborate to ensure that all trade policies and programmes included a gender equality and empowerment section.

However, examples of successful collaboration among the different teams and programmes existed. The Trade Competitiveness Team, for example, collaborated with the Youth Division in the development of a Trade-Oriented Youth Employment Strategy and Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy (TOYE) for Solomon Islands. Additionally, restructuring in 2015 led to the merging of the programmes on Economic Policy and Small States, a merge that, due to the convergence in those two areas, was seen as promoting internal coherence across two different programmes.

Additionally, questions could be raised regarding the coherence of the overall configuration of the EDP. The mix of teams covered a heterogeneous set of topics that, in principle, had little or no relationship between them. The areas of coverage were far apart, without any visible inter-linkage. Although the EDP under evaluation was not built on the basis of a Theory of Change (TOC), the evaluators could only see a convergence in the higher levels of the TOC, particularly with regard to impact. This situation did not favour the creation of economies of scale nor co-operation among the different teams.

The Secretariat's work under the EDP is aligned to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The indicators, activities, outputs and outcomes for the EDP were designed prior to the launch of the SDGs, which occurred midway through the period. They were formulated at the time of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the precursors to the SDGs. Despite this, they could be mapped out to SDGs. As highlighted in the Evaluation of the Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2013/2014–2016/17, trade and debt management work contributed to certain SDGs. Specifically:

SDG #8 aims to 'promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'. With aid for trade assistance being a large component of this goal, the Secretariat's project supporting trade and competitiveness in the Commonwealth is of notable importance. Debt management work (under IO #5.3)

*is also highly relevant to this SDG, as well as to SDG #17 – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.*⁸

The ONR work contributed to SDG #8, #9, #14 and #15:

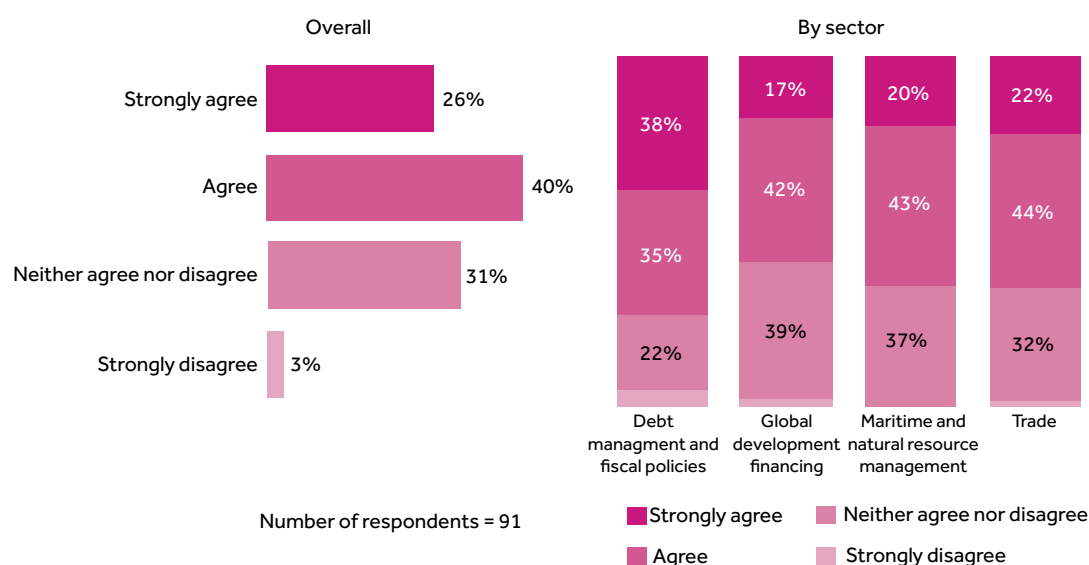
- **Maritime boundaries and ocean governance.** SDG #14 'Life below water', tackles the oceans, calling on the international community to end overfishing, restore fish stocks, and sustainably manage and protect marine and coastal ecosystems. While it was therefore of particular relevance to the ONR Team's work on maritime boundaries, ocean governance and the blue economy, it's worth noting here that for all their importance to sustainable development, the oceans are often 'out of sight and out of mind', and don't feature prominently on the planetary priority list. A recent survey of 3,500 leaders in the Global South revealed that SDG #14 was almost universally considered the least important of the Goals, with just 5 per cent of those asked including it in their top six.⁹ A second study of more than 500 sustainability experts by research consultancy GlobeScan¹⁰ came to a similar conclusion: SDG #14 was ranked last for importance, and second last for attention paid so far.
- **Natural resources.** SDG #8, which aims to 'Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'; SDG #9, to 'Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation'; SDG #15, 'Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems'; SDG# 12, 'Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns'; and SDG #14 were all at the core of the work

8 Centre for International Development and Training (2017), *Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan (2013/14–2016/17): Final Report*, the Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

9 AIDDATA (2018), *Listening to Leaders 2018. Is Development cooperation tuned-in or tone-deaf?*, available at: http://docs.aiddata.org/ad4/pdfs/Listening_To_Leaders_2018_Executive_Summary.pdf.

10 Globescan (2017), *Evaluating progress towards the sustainable development goals*, available at <https://globescan.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/GlobeScan-SustainAbility-Survey-Evaluating-Progress-Towards-the-Sustainable-Development-Goals-March2017.pdf>.

Figure 2. Ability of the work to address the upcoming needs and challenges of countries



Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The Secretariat's technical support has kept up with the needs and challenges of my country.

Source: Survey results

done by the team in natural resources. The work in this area and in ocean governance also contributed to the bigger goals of 'no poverty' (SDG #1) and 'zero hunger' (SDG #2), among others.

Overall, the Secretariat's activities were found to be aligned to the needs of member states. With regards to the Secretariat's trade work, a recent evaluation concluded that '100% of stakeholders interviewed indicated that the support received contributed to the achievement of national, regional and international trade priorities. There was also seen to be alignment with the [Commonwealth Secretariat's] Trade Programme work'.¹¹ Similarly, the same evaluation found that the Hub & Spokes Programme 'was relevant to the priorities of ACP member countries, particularly Commonwealth member states'.¹²

Such views were further confirmed by the survey results, with 66 per cent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the fact that the Secretariat's technical support had kept up with the needs and challenges of the different countries.

Stakeholders also agreed that the Secretariat's interventions were aligned to the needs and priority agenda of member states.

Seventy-two (72) per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Secretariat provided support that was aligned to the priorities of their country.

The area of global development and financing was the one showing a stronger sense of neutrality – neither agree nor disagree – which could mainly be attributed to the fact that this area of work was focused on providing advocacy support towards higher levels of government, such as towards ministers of finance. Therefore, the visibility of this area's activities was rather limited.

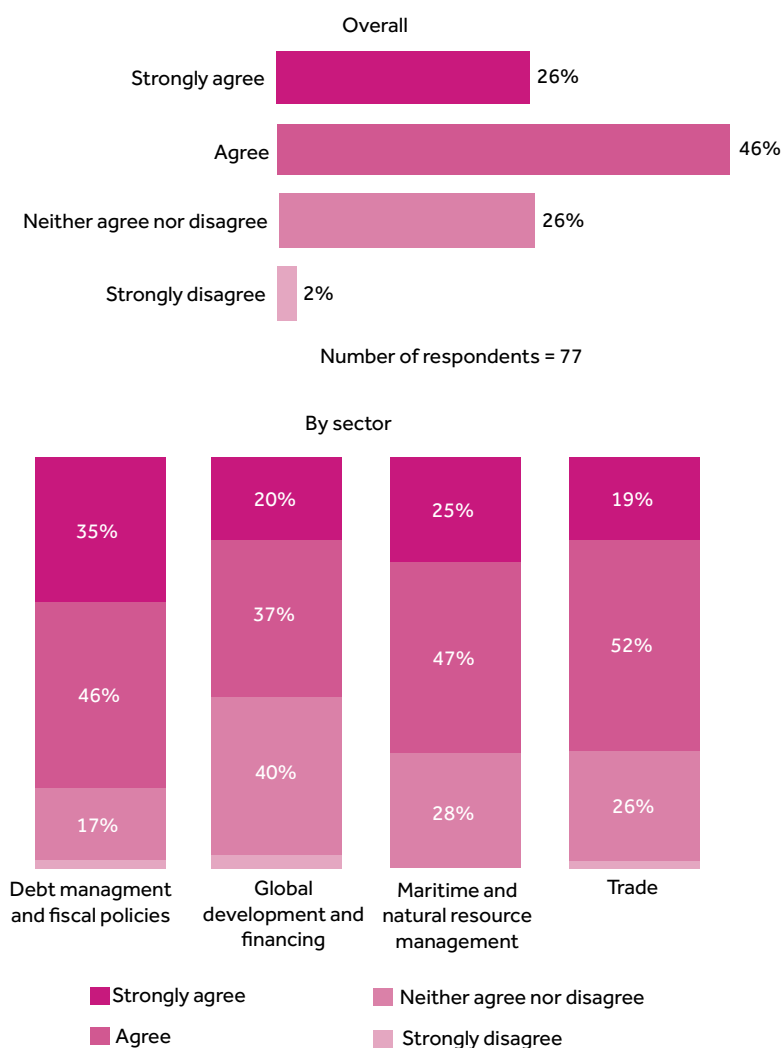
3.3 Effectiveness

This section addresses the following questions:

- To what extent have the interventions achieved or are expected to achieve their planned results?
- To what extent have interventions added value to what member countries are doing collectively, regionally or with other partners?
- Did the organisational reforms improve effectiveness in programme delivery?

11 Commonwealth Secretariat (2020), *Final Evaluation of the Hub and Spokes Programme: Draft Report*, the Commonwealth Secretariat, April, London.

12 *Ibid.*

Figure 3. Coherence of the work with the country priorities

Question: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The support provided by the Secretariat in the areas below is aligned to the needs and priority agenda of my country.

Source: Survey results

- To what extent did the Secretariat contribute to the relevant development objectives of member countries?

Overall, the different projects implemented during the EDP appeared to have not reached the expected outcomes, with several targets not meeting the objectives planned. Staff interviews, questionnaire results and the literature review indicated that the different interventions undertaken under the EDP made moderate progress towards achieving their objectives in the period under review. The performance was measured through an assessment of four primary indicators and associated targets.

Trade

The different projects under the trade work stream – Output 5.1 – achieved their objectives, except one, on the enhanced ability of member states to formulate trade policy, negotiate and implement international trade agreements. As noted in the logical framework, this indicator had as an objective to engage all Commonwealth member states (53 at the time), an objective that was unrealistic. On the other hand, it is worth highlighting that the number achieved (50) was established according to the engagement that the countries had, and not directly by the measurement of enhanced trade policy/trade negotiations/trade implementation capacity. Therefore, this indicator might be overstated.

Table 3. Logical framework: trade

Indicator	Baseline	MTR	June 2017	Strategic Plan target	Target status	Performance rating	Evaluator performance rating
# of member states with enhanced ability to formulate trade policy, negotiate and implement international trade agreements as indicated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trade policy review mechanisms and legislations • New/emerging issues addressed by member states • Agreements/outcome documents reflecting member states' concerns/interests • Trade advisers/experts' engagements/ involvement in trade policy, negotiations and implementations of trade agreement 	0	-	50	53	Target not met	Highly satisfactory	Not measurable
# of targeted international and regional forums that acknowledge trade-related emerging issues and global trade support architecture of the Commonwealth as indicated by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of times outcome documents reflect Commonwealth trade issues • Importance given to the issue (agenda) • Commitment to respond • Citation of Commonwealth input in the outcome documents 	0	0	5	5	Target met	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory
# of trade competitiveness strategies and action plans developed and implemented by member states	0	2	14	8	Target surpassed	Highly satisfactory	Not measurable
# of new elements introduced into member states' trade strategies in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional integration • Export diversification • Gender sensitivity in trade policies 	0	0	5	4	Target surpassed	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory

Note: MTR=Medium Term Review. Source: Annual Report 2016/17

Overall, the indicators selected to measure the progress of this particular work stream appeared not to capture the complexities of the trade work. The first indicator, ' # of member states with enhanced ability to formulate trade policy, negotiate and implement international trade agreements ...', might be difficult – if not impossible – to measure. 'Enhanced ability' can be interpreted as a subjective term that refers to the ability of a person or team to do something better than before. The indicator provided a series of examples that could indicate enhanced ability or capacity, but these are not able to confirm clearly enhanced ability – not because the Secretariat's trade advisers had been engaged in trade policy, negotiations and implementation of trade agreements, that a given country would necessarily be better prepared than before. In this particular case, it is well known that developing countries have challenges in absorbing the technical assistance provided. The third indicator needed better definition, as the indicator referred to strategies both '*developed and implemented*', which is two different strategies of the project cycle – although a strategy is developed or drafted, it is not automatically implemented. Also, member states might be able to only partly implement the strategy drafted. Such elements were not taken into consideration by the indicators. Additionally, no evidence was found of the inclusion of gender sensitivity in trade policies.

Overall, the work done through the trade programme was effective. Through the Hub & Spokes Programme, the Secretariat's interventions also added value to the work of regional secretariats and national governments in negotiating and ratifying trade agreements.¹³

Specifically, trade advisers played an active role in supporting regional and international trade agreements, such as through the development of briefs to guide trade negotiations and to inform the implementation of existing bilateral, regional and international trade agreements. In the **Pacific region**, trade advisers helped Pacific member states – such as Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu and

the Federated States of Micronesia – to negotiate the PACER (Pacific Agreement on Closer Economic Relations)-Plus agreement. In **Samoa**, the trade adviser contributed to the development of Samoa's market access offer for the EPA negotiations. In the **Caribbean**, the trade adviser contributed to the establishment of a customs union and the Free Circulation of Goods regime in the OECS Economic Union and supported the negotiations of the EU–CARIFORUM (Caribbean Forum) EPA. In **Jamaica**, the trade adviser helped the country to not be left behind due to Brexit and supported the negotiations of the CARIFORUM–UK EPA.

The programme's support also extended beyond the support to trade negotiations, covering areas such as: (1) capacity building to public officials, for example, in **Saint Lucia**; **(2) the drafting of trade policies and export strategies**, for example in **Kenya, Kiribati and Malawi**; and **(3) the establishment and support of effective consultative trade networks**. In this last area, the programme supported **Kenya's** National Trade Negotiation Council, **Malawi's** National African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) Committee and National Trade Facilitation Committee; **Jamaica's** Trade Adjustment Team; and **Guyana's** Coalition of Service Providers, among others.¹⁴

The work of the Secretariat enabled the countries to secure better market access. Through the International Trade Policy project, the team supported the operationalisation of the ACP Group Fisheries Mechanism in Brussels through the provision of a fisheries adviser; supported Seychelles in market access issues and bilateral trade negotiations and agreements; and held multiple regional consultations to build regional consensus for the WTO's 10th and 11th Ministerial Conferences. Feedback from some stakeholders, but certainly not all, indicated that large conferences and meetings were counterproductive in many cases and yielded few results. While the results of WTO negotiations may not be attributed to the activities in the EDP, in any way, this did raise questions as to whether staff may have reconsidered the value of efforts in one area as opposed to in another. As one stakeholder put it:

13 The following regional economic communities were provided with a trade adviser: the PIF Secretariat, EAC Secretariat, the COMESA Secretariat, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Secretariat, the CARICOM Secretariat, the OECS Commission, and the African Union Commission (AUC). See Commonwealth Secretariat (2020), *Final Evaluation of the Hub and Spokes Programme: Draft Report*, the Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

14 Further information on the Hub & Spokes Programme in the project's specific evaluation. See Commonwealth Secretariat (2020), *Final Evaluation of the Hub and Spokes Programme*, the Commonwealth Secretariat, April, available at: <https://thecommonwealth.org/sites/default/files/inline/115%20-%20Final%20Evaluation%20of%20the%20Hubs%20and%20Spokes%20Programme.pdf>.

Ministerial Conference support is a waste of time as there are so many initiatives. Meetings are not always attended by experts. I don't personally see any value addition. More so because nothing happens at the WTO. I would rather money be used for other things.

Additionally, the International Trade Policy Team was tasked with assisting member states to develop effective policy mechanisms for integration and participation in the global trading regime. In this context, the team held regular meetings and workshops with national governments and regional economic communities (RECs) to contribute to the development of their perspectives in key international trade areas. One such event was the Commonwealth African Consultation on Multilateral, Regional and Emerging Trade Issues that was held in Mauritius in May 2017 and brought together 42 participants, including trade policy-makers from national capitals, Geneva-based trade negotiators, eminent policy experts and representatives from the RECs. Over 90 per cent of the participants rated the overall consultation to be excellent or good. A similar event was held in Saint Lucia in June 2017, covering 'Emerging Global and Regional Trade Issues for the Caribbean', in which 93 per cent of the participants rated the overall consultation to be excellent or good.

The International Trade Policy Team also organised, on an annual basis, the Consultative Meeting of the Commonwealth Expert Group on Trade (CEGT), which brought together a group of policy experts and practitioners from across the Commonwealth to review key emerging developments in international trade and their significance for member states; highlight the trade challenges of Commonwealth developing countries, especially small states, least developed countries (LDCs) and sub-Saharan Africa; and consider issues that the international community, including development partners, should prioritise to promote the role of trade in economic development. The aim of such CEGTs was to provide recommendations for the global community to consider, to help revitalise global trade and multilateralism with enhanced participation of capacity-constrained countries.

One of the flagship publications produced by the International Trade Policy Team was the *Commonwealth Trade Review 2015* report, which helped revitalise policy discourse on trade potential in the Commonwealth and was cited by member countries, as well as independent think tanks.

The International Trade Policy Team also worked to enhance the capacity of member states to better negotiate multilateral trade agreements.

In **Mauritius**, for example, the team convened 30 participants at a regional capacity-building event that aimed to enable their effective participation in the 11th Ministerial Conference of the WTO.

The event was a platform to exchange views and perspectives on key trade-related issues affecting Africa, discuss and identify regional and multilateral policy priorities, and propose recommendations. A list of all the events organised and co-organised by the International Trade Policy Team is provided in Annex 5.

Through the Trade Competitiveness project, the Secretariat supported the export diversification efforts of 25 member states.

Grenada launched its National Export Strategy; the Secretariat developed Services Export Strategies for **Kenya** and **Nigeria**, and for **Pakistan**. The Secretariat also supported the implementation of **Anguilla's** Sustainable Tourism Master Plan and assisted **India** in its efforts to integrate into global value chains. In **COMESA**, the Secretariat established a regional design studio. In **Mauritius**, the project provided technical assistance to Mauritius to draft the 'Look Africa' Policy and Strategy. In **Sierra Leone**, the team reworked the Action Plan of the National Export Strategy (NES) 2010–2015, identifying a pathway for the creation of a professional packaging industry. In **Grenada** and **Mozambique**, the team prepared the countries' National Export Strategies (2017–2021). In **Barbados**, the team supported the design of a five-year National Services Sector Development Plan (NSSD), to achieve a high-quality, high-grade and high-value services sector. In **Jamaica**, technical assistance was provided to establish ship repair/ dry docking facilities. In **Botswana**, the Secretariat drafted the country's National Strategy on Aid for Trade (AfT) and developed a National Export Strategy 2017–2021. In **India**, the Secretariat supported the country to design and launch a project that aimed to form its own global value chains and link suppliers from least developed countries (LDCs) into these global value chains. In **Kenya**, the team designed a strategy to develop and promote the country's professional services and developed an action plan to institutionalise the International *Transports Internationaux Routiers* (TIR) Carnet System. In **Lesotho**, the Secretariat developed a national branding programme. In **Sri Lanka**, the Secretariat's

intervention was focused in the identification of 'new products and new markets', which ultimately aimed to enhance the effectiveness of export credit insurance in export development.

However, there was a series of challenges – such as lack of ownership and involvement by stakeholders – hampering the effectiveness and impact of the interventions. A change in minister in a given country can lead to a change in interest and project relevance. Therefore, working with permanent secretaries and high-level senior officials will contribute to ensuring the project's relevance across time. Similarly, a recent evaluation found: (1) limited absorption capacity by the beneficiaries of training programmes, due to the under-resourced nature of trade institutions; and (2) an inability to move forward with the recommendations put forward.

Additionally, some projects implemented by the Trade Team suffered from weak engagement by the counterparts, thereby leading to questionable project ownership. Ownership could be enhanced by requesting the partner country to cover some of the costs associated with the implementation of a particular activity. Finally, ensuring that a second phase or formal follow-up is implemented in the context of a particular project or strategy will contribute to its further implementation, and therefore impact.

Global development and financing

The project, 'Advancing Commonwealth Principles and Values in Global Development and Financing Decisions', was effective in advancing Commonwealth principles and values in global development and financing forums.

As highlighted in Table 4, the project surpassed its objectives, with multiple Commonwealth position papers being recognised by key international forums.

Some of the key achievements were:

- prepared a publication titled: The Accountability of the G20's Development Agenda: Perspectives and Suggestions from Developing Countries of the Commonwealth and Francophonie;
- held the 4th Annual Commonwealth–Francophonie–G20 Dialogue and outreach;
- prepared a research paper highlighting concerns on the automatic exchange of information with G20 members and selected non-G20 Commonwealth countries;
- provided support to the OECD-DAC on its reform programme;
- prepared a unified Commonwealth perspective on emerging and key post-2015 issues, mainly: OECD-DAC statistical reform; domestic resource mobilisation for

Box 4. Trade support to Seychelles

The Secretariat supported Seychelles with technical support in legal drafting for the preparation for copyright and intellectual property (IP) laws. This led to the implementation of the Industrial Property Rights Act 2014, in compliance with WTO TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement and ensured full implementation of the Intellectual Property legislations and compliance with the standards of the TRIPS Agreement. The assistance provided by the Secretariat extended to strengthening the skills of the Registrar's Division to implement the new legislation and develop a comprehensive policy for the development of an Intellectual Property Industry.

A series of training workshops was delivered on various themes, such as Confusing Mark,; Registrable Marks, Concepts of Trademarks and Intellectual Property. Furthermore, a *Trademark Registry Operational Manual* was developed; and an annual workplan was developed that covered the work delivery agenda and timelines. Staff in the Attorney General's (AG) Office commented on the capacity that was built through improved skills and knowledge. The ability to transfer skills from the Commonwealth advisers, who had a legal background that was common to Seychelles' common law system, was invaluable according to the AG's Office. The response rate from the Secretariat was considered to be very high. The AG's Office noted that support from the Secretariat was a good 'stepping stone' to get help from other donors, such as the EU, which was what happened in the case of Seychelles.

Table 4. Logical framework: global development and financing

Indicator	Baseline	MTR	June 2017	Strategic Plan Target	Target Status	Performance Rating	Evaluator Performance Rating
# of Commonwealth position papers on global development and financing decisions formally recognised at G20 and post-2015 development agenda and other key international forums	-	10	23	22	Target surpassed	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory

Source: Annual Report 2016/17

small capacity-constrained states; and debt sustainability; and

- held the 5th Commonwealth Francophonie–G20 Dialogue.

One of the flagships events of this project was the Commonwealth Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM). The CFMM tabled challenging issues and gained member country consensus, a feat often not achievable in other fora. The role of the CFMM had also evolved over time: in the 1990s, the priority was to make globalisation work for all countries and improve the international financial architecture, ensuring that developing countries could access funds from the IMF, promoting the growth of production and employment on a sustainable basis.¹⁵ Meanwhile, following the 2008 financial crisis, the CFMM was used to highlight the potential impact that global financial turmoil could have on developing states. In the 2010s, the CFMM included a focus on climate change and, in particular, the impact on small states. Without partnership assistance, capacity building, technology transfer and financial support, such states would fail to succeed in their climate adaptation efforts.¹⁶

15 Elson, D (2002), 'International Financial Architecture: A view from the kitchen', *Politica Feminina*, Spring. See also: Park, YC and Y Wang (2001), *Reform of the International Financial System and Institutions in Light of the Asian Financial Crisis*, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Center for International Development, Harvard University.

16 UN (2019), 'Unprecedented Impacts of Climate Change Disproportionately Burdening Developing Countries, Delegate Stresses, as Second Committee Concludes General Debate', GA/EF/3516, 8 October, Available at: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/gaef3516.doc.htm>

Over the course of its history, the CFMM had demonstrated its usefulness as a forum to discuss issues of global importance.¹⁷

This particular intermediate output faced difficulty disentangling the work programme of the small states with that of the EDP, as there was only one team implementing both outcomes. There was an intangible important achievement, which related to the achievement of raising the challenges and needs of developing countries and small states to platforms such as the G20. Due to this explicit mention of such challenges, other organisations might focus their work on these, therefore leading to a higher effectiveness and indirect impact.

Debt management

Member states continued to recognise the Secretariat's CS-DRMS as the main tool to record, track and manage their debt.

As highlighted by the Evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17, the programme was used by 100+ government agencies in 60 countries.

The CS-DRMS was designed as an all-in-one solution for recording debt, meaning that it was capable of tracking central government debt (both external and domestic), contingent liabilities, on-lending and also private non-guaranteed debt. Furthermore, CS-DRMS could also be and was used in a few countries at the subnational level.

17 Commonwealth Secretariat (2018c), *Commonwealth Secretariat: Monitoring Report. Evaluation of the Commonwealth Consensus Building – Finance Ministers Meeting (CFMM)*, the Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Table 5. Logical framework: debt management

Indicator	Baseline	MTR	June 2017	Strategic Plan Target	Target Status	Performance Rating	Evaluator Performance Rating
# member states that are implementing Secretariat recommended reform actions to improve their management of public debt	-	3	7	8	Target not met	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory
% of member states effectively utilising the Secretariat's debt management systems to proactively manage their debt portfolio	-	60%	86%	80%	Target surpassed	Highly satisfactory	Highly satisfactory

Source: Annual Report 2016/17

A schema of the CS-DRMS database(s) is shown in Table 6.

Most, if not all, CS-DRMS-using member states were recording external loans (and sovereign bonds) taken or issued by the central government. Many of them were already recording domestic debt issuance or were in the process of including

domestic issuance into CS-DRMS. All other items were optional in terms of whether they were tracked in CS-DRMS. Although the Secretariat would support member states in achieving full coverage, a policy aimed at this did not seem to exist. Among the reason for the absence of a full coverage policy were:

Table 6. CS-DRMS schema

CS-DRMS database scheme	Source of information (agencies)	Data source
Loans (external and domestic)	Ministry of Finance	Loan agreements, bills, creditor statements
Debt securities (treasury, bonds, including sovereign bonds)	Central banks	Auction results
Contingent liabilities	State-owned enterprises / parastatals	Loan agreements, bills, creditor statements
Private non-guarantee external debt	Private sector	Survey, mandatory reports to Central banks
Lending / on-lending	Ministry of Finance and other line ministries	Loan agreements, bills, creditor statements

Source: Authors

- some of the sub-databases maintained in CS-DRMS were neither functionally, nor technically, related to each other (e.g. government debt vs non-guaranteed private external debt);
- human capacity for recording, as well as for analysis, would be spread across several organisations; and
- for some aspects of debt recording, legacy systems might have been already in place and were not intended to be given up to CS-DRMS.

As an example, while central government debt recording and analysis should be the responsibility of a Debt Management Unit within a Ministry of Finance, the recording of private non-guaranteed external debt is usually the responsibility of the Central Bank's Statistical Department's Balance

of Payments Division. In the latter case, reports derived from CS-DRMS supported the compilation of balance of payments but not necessarily debt statistics.

It was up to CS-DRMS-using member states to opt to use the different modules of CS-DRMS. Basically, all member states were recording government debt (external and domestic), many of them were recording contingent liabilities and on-lending, and a few were recording non-guaranteed external private debt. In this respect, the Secretariat did not have any policy or recommendation for coverage, although it might be useful to setup a map showing which CS-DRMS-using member states have opted for which modules.

During the evaluation period, 21 activities were reported, among them, four (launch of e-learning) were at the regional level, with the remainder delivered to 11 member states.

Table 7. List of the actions and results in debt management in member countries during the evaluation period

Country	Year	Description	Category
Swaziland	2013/14	Adoption of guidelines and regulations for public debt management	PDM
Sri Lanka	2013/14	Policy advisory mission on the domestic debt market	DDM
Bahamas, The	2013/14	Detailed reform plan on public debt management drawn up	PDM
Barbados	2013/14	Strengthening policy framework and institutional arrangements	PDM
Malta	2013/14	Assistance to formulate the Public Debt Act and detailed reform plan on public debt management drawn up	PDM
Bahamas, The	2014/15	Central Bank in the process of implementing recommendation to facilitate improved access to funds	DDM
Barbados	2014/15	Government receiving assistance on CS-DRMS	CS-DRMS
Africa region	2015/16	E-learning course on external debt piloted	E-learning
Mauritius	2015/16	Adopted Horizon public debt analytical tool	Horizon
Asia region	2015/16	E-learning course on external debt piloted	E-learning
Sri Lanka	2015/16	Accepted and began implementation of recommendations relating to bond market development	DDM
Caribbean and the Americas	2015/16	E-learning course on external debt piloted	E-learning
Bahamas, The	2015/16	Accepted and began implementation of recommendations relating to bond market development	DDM

(Continued)

Table 7. List of the actions and results in debt management in member countries during the evaluation period (*Continued*)

Country	Year	Description	Category
Jamaica	2015/16	Adopted Horizon public debt analytical tool	Horizon
Trinidad and Tobago	2015/16	Implemented recommended reforms to reorganise the debt office with improvements to risk management	PDM
Tonga	2014/15	Bond market development	DDM
Malta	2015/16	Accepted recommendations to strengthen policy frameworks to provide legal frameworks for debt management	PDM
Pacific region	2015/16	E-learning course on external debt piloted	E-learning
Fiji	2015/16	Accepted and began implementation of recommendations relating to bond market development	DDM
Fiji	2015/16	Adopted Horizon public debt analytical tool	Horizon
Guyana	2016/17	Development of a Public Debt Management Act	PDM
Cyprus	2016/17	Adopted CS-DRMS	CS-DRMS

Note: Category abbreviations are CS-DRMS – CS-DRMS software implementation/upgrade/maintenance; e-learning – launch of e-learning courses; Horizon – implementation of Horizon; PDM – development of the institutional and legal framework for public debt management; DDM – domestic bond market development.

Box 5. Lessons learned: Horizon

Publicly launched in March 2013 in Cape Town, South Africa, Horizon was an innovative public debt analytical tool designed to help sovereign countries to better plan and manage their public debt based on cost and risk analysis.

Horizon was a tool highly relevant to public debt management, as it went beyond recording outstanding debt. The tool looked forward to supporting the operationalisation of the future issuance of debt instruments, both domestic and external. This would help achieve the main goal of debt management to fund the government's cash needs at the lowest possible medium-to-long term cost and at an acceptable level of risk. This was, by no means, an easy task, as the number of options to choose between external and domestic finance, fixed and variable interest, and different maturities is practically infinite. Public debt managers were challenged to construct an efficient debt portfolio and, according to their cost and risk assessment, to devise an optimal debt strategy.

Before the launch of Horizon, the only available tool available to assist in the quantification of

debt management strategies was the World Bank's MTDS tool, which was basically a macro-enhanced Excel workbook used to derive generic, rather illustrative debt management scenarios. Horizon was developed with a link to CS-DRMS to download the actual debt portfolio (not a stylised one, as used by the MTDS tool). It was equipped to undertake extensive analyses and risk assessment capabilities, backed by the MathLab financial functions libraries. Horizon was supposed to be a high-end debt planning tool.¹⁸

However, after the launch and enthusiastic reception from participants, Horizon's implementation in member states proved to be difficult and slow. During the evaluation period, there were only three member states – South Africa, Fiji and Jamaica – implementing Horizon, and there was little evidence that the tool had become operational.

18 See Commonwealth Secretariat (2012), 'Commonwealth launches new tool to help countries manage debt', Commonwealth Secretariat, available at: <https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/commonwealth-launches-new-tool-help-countries-manage-debt>.

Finally, the Evaluation Team was informed that the implementation of Horizon in other member states had been discontinued. Reasons for the halt, according to the implementation reports, were assumed to be:

- a premature launch of the product, ahead of a thorough testing in a real life environment;
- the large number of bugs required system design changes and enhancement requests that came up during the implementation missions;
- extensive training needs required to use the tool efficiently; and
- a difficult-to-use user interface and complicated workflow to arrive at various debt management scenarios.

Given that substantial resources were used in the development of Horizon and given that

the intended functionality of the tool was still highly relevant for public debt management, the Evaluation Team would recommend a thorough review of Horizon that reassesses its usability and training needs, with the aim to have a relaunch. However, this also depends on the human capacity development needs of beneficiary member states, as well as whether the Commonwealth Secretariat's Debt Management Unit (DMU) staff has sufficient financial and human resources available for this challenge. Otherwise, member states have only two options: (i) revert to the World Bank's MTDS tool, which is widely used, although the results produced are illustrative and provide less detailed quantified debt management strategies; or (ii) develop and stay with their in-house ad-hoc approaches.

The launch of the e-learning courses was at the regional level, while 11 countries received support in one or another of the remaining categories. Furthermore, 12 activities targeted legal and institutional arrangements for public debt management and domestic bond market development, while only two activities dealt with CS-DRMS and three with the launch of the Horizon tool.

Additionally, reform actions to improve member states' management of public debt and utilisation of the Secretariat's debt management systems to proactively manage their debt portfolio was a crucial part of the Secretariat's EDP 2013/14–2016/17. These activities could be meaningfully split into four groups:

- a. Providing support for the development of the legal and institutional arrangements for debt management was a highly relevant activity during the evaluation period. There were seven interventions supporting the development of public debt management in six countries. Activities were co-ordinated with main development partners, notably with the World Bank's Debt Management Facility. The Secretariat, where appropriate, relied on Debt Management Performance Assessment (DeMPA) findings to identify shortcomings to be addressed. It aimed at complementing

actions taken by other development partners and utilising its expertise regarding small states. However, the development of the legal and institutional framework needed time and did not necessarily yield immediate and tangible results. It is therefore recommended to take a long-term view of such activities, including review missions and some monitoring. At the time of this evaluation, annual results reported by the Secretariat for such activities stated that member state's authorities accepted recommendations, but this might not be a guarantee.

- b. Regarding the support of the development of domestic debt securities markets, there were five interventions in member states during the evaluation period. Although this might have been one of the Secretariat's most results-yielding activities, it received less attention in the Survey. It was, however, well documented. Interventions covered primary issuance techniques, the choice of instruments, settlement and depository arrangements, and measures promoting secondary market liquidity. Due to the nature of this topic, efficiency could be further improved if interventions were not kept within the narrow interpretation of the member state's request. However, developing the domestic government debt

securities market was challenging the local staff's knowledge in an area that is broadly called financial, or fixed income, analysis. Therefore, it is recommended to develop an agenda for a course that covers valuation and analysis of government debt securities, to be offered as a field training, as well as an e-learning, facility. The e-learning course offered at the time of writing was a first step, but had quite a lot room for further extension in terms of depth and topics covered. The enlarged depth and coverage were also needed to achieve a better understanding of the practice (and related e-learning courses) on domestic debt management and the use of Horizon.

- c. CS-DRMS was a kind of flagship product of the Secretariat's debt management advisory services. It was used in 44 member states. CS-DRMS provided users with a facility to capture loan instrument transactions at each stage of the loan cycle, thereby giving users:

- a comprehensive external debt recording module for private and public debt;

- an enhanced domestic debt module to record and maintain a diversified range of domestic debt instruments;
- on-lending capabilities to assist governments in their lending and to manage on-lending loans to public corporations and the private sector;
- a debt analytical package called Management Tools;
- a short-term debt module to capture various types of short-term debt, including contingent liabilities and other short-term domestic debt and arrears;
- an integrated debt-reporting facility flexible enough to satisfy a variety of users of debt information, including compilers of balance of payments and government finance statistics; and
- flexible links to other systems to allow export and import of debt data.

CS-DRMS was being replaced by Meridian at the time of writing, for which development had been started during the evaluation period.

Box 6. E-learning solutions: debt management

E-learning courses, as developed by the Secretariat, literally covered all aspects of public debt management, including external and domestic debt management concepts, user guidance for CS-DRMS debt recording and reporting, medium-term debt management strategy development, and financial analysis covering bond valuation, yield and yield curve calculations, and risk management.

Each of the blocks covered by the courses contained a range of subjects, e.g. the medium-term debt management strategy course covered how to formulate a medium-term debt management strategy, with help from the Commonwealth Secretariat's decision support system, Horizon. This involved an analysis of the existing portfolio, developing baselines and stressed scenarios of market variables, development of alternative debt strategies, analysis of cost and risk measures, and the use of liability management operations. Topics:

1. Public debt management and debt crises
2. Introduction to Medium-Term Debt Management Strategy
3. Formulating your MTDS
4. Introduction to Horizon
5. Portfolio analysis cost indicators
6. Risk analysis using Horizon
7. Portfolio analysis risk indicators
8. Strategy implementation
9. Developing scenarios
10. Liability management operations
11. Developing debt strategies
12. Yield curves and bond pricing
13. Final assessment

Considering the possibility of using the e-learning platform as a self-learning tool, while a mentored

delivery was also possible, this development – which started during the evaluation period – became one of the most efficient tools to create and develop human capacity for public debt management in member states.

As a complement to and replacement for in-country and regional trainings, it should be considered as an extremely cost-efficient solution for capacity-building needs.

Stakeholders were particularly vocal on the work by the Secretariat in facilitating the drafting of debt management strategies and domestic debt market development.

For example, in The Bahamas, the Secretariat delivered technical assistance on development of the government bond market, while in Botswana Debt Management Unit delivered technical assistance on formulation of a debt management strategy.

Oceans and natural resources

The Secretariat's work was instrumental in ensuring effective, equitable, transparent and sustainable management of marine and other natural resources among its member states.

However, the ONR Team did not meet any of the targets designated for the period under review.

In its own evaluation of performance over the Strategic Plan period, the Secretariat graded the Natural Resources Advisory Assistance Project as 'highly satisfactory'. However, this evaluation found that was no longer warranted and that 'satisfactory' would more accurately reflect progress. Additionally, one of the indicators tackled through the Natural Resources Advisory Assistance Project was found to be unachievable, while the other indicator missed its targets.

The first (unachievable) indicator did not adhere well to the common concept that effective indicators should be SMART – specific, measurable, relevant, achievable and time-bound. It was both relevant and time-bound, but arguably none of the others. Also, a review of the annual and six-monthly reports during the evaluation period revealed that despite the acknowledgement of its unsuitability, progress towards this indicator was assessed until the penultimate report for the Strategic Plan period (July–December 2016 Six-Monthly Progress Report), arguably giving a misleading impression of effectiveness.

In terms of the number of reformed/established governance framework indicators, the Secretariat's final results report (for the strategic period under review) made clear that the target of 16 was

missed, with only 11 countries undertaking the necessary actions during the period – 69 per cent of the total. There was a recognition that the target would not be achieved in the July–December 2016 Six-Monthly Progress Report, and the performance rating was downgraded to amber as a result. Nonetheless, despite not adding to the target in the final six months of the Strategic Plan period, the final performance assessment was graded as green/highly satisfactory.

The justification given at the time for this apparent discrepancy was that a further five countries had accepted Secretariat recommendations to reform/establish their frameworks, suggesting that the target would likely be met after the conclusion of the Strategic Plan period. Unfortunately, this did not appear to have been the case, with all five countries yet to move to adoption and implementation (at the time of writing). As such, it was felt that the overall assessment of 'highly satisfactory' was no longer warranted and that 'satisfactory' would more accurately reflect progress during the Strategic Plan period.

It was worthy of note that it was arguably better to set an ambitious target of 16 outputs and achieve 11 than it was to set a conservative target of 8 and achieve 9. Given the complexity involved in the work of the ONR Team, it did appear that the targets set for this period were on the ambitious side – even more so, given the suite of budgetary, headcount and reform pressures experienced during the Strategic Plan period, after the targets had been set.

Through the Natural Resources Advisory Assistance Project, the Secretariat supported 11 countries towards establishing a modern, effective and sustainable policy to govern their mining, oil and gas activities at the national and sectoral levels. Significant progress was evidenced in six countries, in particular, chief among them **Guyana**, where the Secretariat supported, among others, the development of a Petrol Commission Bill. This brought about institutional reform through the establishment of a Department for Energy to

Table 8. Logical Framework: oceans and natural resources

Indicator	Baseline	MTR	June 2017	Strategic Plan target	Target status	Commonwealth Secretariat performance rating	Evaluator performance rating
Natural Resources Advisory Assistance							
The degree of integration between policies and legislation in member states for the management and governance of natural resources	Low	Low	NA	Moderate	Not measurable	Not measurable	Not measurable or achievable
Number of reformed/established governance frameworks and institutional arrangements in member states that promote and support the sustainable management of natural resources	-	9	11	16	Not met	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory
Maritime Boundaries And Ocean Governance Assistance							
Number of maritime boundaries delimited by Commonwealth member states, in accordance with international law, including through joint development agreements and other provisional arrangements	-	3	8	11	Not met	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory
Number of broad-based mechanisms for effective, transparent and integrated management of marine resources implemented by member states	-	4	6	8	Not met	Highly satisfactory	Satisfactory

Source: Annual Report 2016/17

Box 7. Charting a course for a Blue Economy in Seychelles

Seychelles, a small island state in the Western Indian Ocean, has depended on the ocean for more than two centuries. In recent years, the archipelago has become a champion of the Blue Economy (BE) concept, an integrated approach to ocean-based sustainable development which brings together economy, environment and society.

The Secretariat began supporting Seychelles to develop its Blue Economy in 2012 and continued to do so throughout the Strategic Plan period and beyond, leading to several big wins in sustainable ocean management and institutional reform. Although these achievements largely happened after the Strategic Plan period, they undoubtedly built on the foundations laid by the ONR Team during the period.

- The Secretariat supported Seychelles to develop its maritime boundaries through a submission to the UN for joint management with Mauritius of an area of the extended continental shelf. It was the only example of joint maritime management beyond 200 nautical miles by mid-ocean small island developing states in the world, and stakeholders described the Secretariat's work as 'instrumental'.
- In 2018, the government of Seychelles in collaboration with the Commonwealth approved the 'Blue Economy Strategic Framework and Roadmap' to sustainably develop the island nation's vast Exclusive Economic Zone of 1.4 million square kilometres and build its ocean-based economy. A key milestone in the ongoing

partnership between the Secretariat and Seychelles, the roadmap brings national and global together, linking with the Convention on Biological Diversity's Aichi Target 1, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and SDG 14, 'Life Below Water'.

- The Secretariat's assistance also helped to drive positive institutional change, most notably through the establishment of a dedicated Blue Economy Department, formerly the Ministry of Finance, Trade and the Blue Economy. Although the Blue Economy Department now falls under the vice president's portfolio, this had the effect of recognising both in name and in practice the direct linkage between the blue economy sectors and national revenue.

The Secretariat and Seychelles continue to work closely together, with Seychelles leading the Commonwealth Blue Charter's Marine Protected Areas Action Group (see Box 11).

Sources: Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2013/14 – 2016/17 Report; The Commonwealth (2018), 'Roadmap to boost Seychelles' blue ocean economy', available at: <https://thecommonwealth.org/Roadmap%20to%20boost%20Seychelles%20blue%20ocean%20economy>; Devex (2019), 'How small islands can harness the ocean economy', available at: <https://www.devex.com/news/how-small-islands-can-harness-the-ocean-economy-95290>; Seychelles News Agency (2019), 'VP of Seychelles, in Britain, told that Commonwealth is committed to Blue Economy', available at: <http://www.seychellesnewsagency.com/articles/10729/VP+of+Seychelles%2C+in+Britain%2C+told+that+Commonwealth+is+committed+to+Blue+Economy>

promote and support the sustainable management of natural resources. This was a key achievement, in which the Secretariat supported institutional reform, petroleum taxation reform, regulatory reform and the establishment of a sovereign wealth fund.

A further five countries accepted Secretariat recommendations to reform or establish their frameworks. In **Botswana**, the Secretariat drafted a Mineral Policy. In **Jamaica**, the Secretariat helped develop a new Model Petroleum Agreement,

provided complementary training to officials on offshore petroleum management, and reviewed the country's gas regulations and petroleum sector legislative reform. In **Namibia**, assistance was provided on a new draft policy for renewable energy, a local content policy for the petrol sector and reform of upstream petrol operations (see Box 9).

Recommendations for the minerals sector and a new upstream Petroleum Bill were delivered to **eSwatini**, complemented by sector-specific training. Government officials appreciated the

Box 8. The Bahamas Petroleum Law

In February 2016, The Bahamas took a significant step towards an economically and environmentally sustainable petroleum industry, with the passing of a new Petroleum Bill and Regulations. The Secretariat's ONR Team was instrumental in this achievement, providing three years of technical support, reviewing the country's outdated petroleum laws and proposing amendments to the legal, fiscal and environmental framework.

The new legislation was complemented by policies to govern the exploration and production of oil, health and safety practices, environmental protection and pollution control, as well as regulations to manage profit-sharing between investors. It was designed to align with best practice and international standards, encouraging exploration to create economic

opportunities and support the diversification of the Bahamian economy.

Minister of Environment and Housing, Kenred Dorsett, had high praise for the ONR Team's work, commenting:

On behalf of the Government of The Bahamas, I express our thanks for the services provided by the Commonwealth Secretariat and for its guidance in the delivery of modern legislation that is crafted to protect the environment, provide safe conditions for those working in the upstream industry, and allow a fair and economic return for both investors and the people of The Bahamas.

Source: Adapted from Annual Results Report 2015/16

Secretariat's support, commenting that '[the] Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy would like to send its sincere gratitude and appreciation for the support offered by the Commonwealth Secretariat in the development of the Country's Petroleum Bill [...] Furthermore, the Ministry would like to appreciate in particular the workshop course entitled "Fundamentals of the Oil and Gas Industry" offered to Government stakeholders engaged in the oil and gas sector in Swaziland. The workshop played a major role in raising awareness, building and broadening technical capacity of all Government stakeholders engaged in the reform and development of the Oil Industry in the country'. In **The Bahamas**, the Petroleum Bill and Sovereign Wealth Fund Bill, developed with Secretariat support, went through two readings in parliament. The government also adopted an upstream petroleum fiscal regime (see Box 8).

Good progress was also seen in **Mauritius**, where a new seabed minerals law and draft legislation concerning the management were developed with Secretariat support, and in **Cook Islands**, where assistance to the Ministry of Mineral and Natural Resources led to improved sustainable management and development of seabed mineral resources through the institutionalisation and establishment of the Seabed Minerals Authority and the development of an appropriately functioning regulatory framework. This resulted in the first

national tender for seabed minerals in national waters and approval to explore 75,000km² of seabed minerals, with an estimated ground value of US\$227 billion. Finally, the New Petroleum Producers Discussion Group was established to allow for mentorship and peer learning for government officials of petroleum ministries, reducing dependence on ONR advisers for related technical support.

Through the Maritime Boundaries and Ocean Governance Assistance Project, the Secretariat supported 11 countries towards delimiting and resolving maritime boundaries in accordance with international law.

In total, formal delimitation was achieved in eight member countries:

- **Antigua and Barbuda** agreed boundaries with France;
- **Barbados** and **Saint Lucia** agreed boundaries with each other, and **with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**;
- **Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** also agreed on their maritime boundary with each other; and
- **Vanuatu** and **Solomon Islands** signed an agreement on their respective boundaries.

Box 9. Mining and energy reforms in Namibia

Economic development in Namibia is driven by a strong natural resource base. Namibia's abundant minerals have made the mining sector a major source of foreign direct investment. As of 2017, mining contributed 12 per cent to gross domestic product (GDP) and provided critical upstream, downstream and side-stream linkages for the Namibian economy.

Ensuring the government had effective regulatory frameworks to support the implementation of the National Development Plan in the area of natural resources was important. To this end, The Secretariat's direct support to Namibia was anchored on strengthened frameworks for inclusive growth and economic development, which included legal and environmental frameworks, as well as fiscal regimes.

Natural resource management support to Namibia during the Strategic Plan period comprised:

- a review and recommendation for changes to the overall existing legislative, fiscal and regulatory arrangements for petroleum sector administration;
- the development of local content policy and an implementation strategy for the petroleum sector;

- restructuring of the Energy Control Board;
- drafting of the Energy Control Board Bill;
- drafting of the Electricity Amendment Bill;
- drafting of the National Petroleum Corporation of Namibia (NAMCOR) Bill;
- advisory support on gas legislation and pipeline regulations; and
- development of a Renewable Energy Policy and Strategy.

Significant progress was evidenced throughout the period, with five of the eight pieces of work submitted for approval and drafting nearing completion for three more. Two pieces of legislation/policy were approved just after the conclusion of the period: the National Renewable Energy Policy, which was approved and published in September 2017, and the draft Energy Control Board Bill, which received approval from the by the minister of mines and energy a month later.

Source: Adapted from Commonwealth Secretariat (2018e), *Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Support to Namibia 2013/14–2016/17 Report*.

A further five countries were supported in agreements relating to their extended continental shelves (ECS). **Ghana's** submission was approved by the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (CLCS). This secured more than 20,000 square kilometres of Ghana's continental shelf with the potential for petroleum and mineral resources. With the Secretariat's assistance, **Papua New Guinea** and **The Bahamas** finalised and presented their respective submissions to the commission. Advice was also provided to **Seychelles** and **Mauritius** to implement a Joint Management Agreement on an area of extended continental shelf. The agreement, the first of its kind beyond 200 nautical miles by mid-ocean small island developing states anywhere in the world, enabled the countries to finalise rules concerning the development of natural resources and the protection of the marine environment in the agreement area.

The Maritime Boundaries and Ocean Governance Assistance project also supported nine member states towards broad-based mechanisms for effective, transparent and integrated management of marine resources.

Implementation was successfully achieved in six countries, chief among them **Seychelles**, where the Secretariat's technical assistance on the Blue Economy led to the implementation of a new National Blue Economy Strategy (a key milestone for the country), as well as significant institutional changes, notably the establishment of a dedicated Blue Economy Department within the Ministry of Finance, Trade and the Blue Economy.

The Secretariat's support contributed to institutional development in **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, through the development of the National Maritime Administration; in **Papua New Guinea**, through work to prepare the Oceans

Office for the transition to a permanent body; and in **Mauritius**, via clarification of roles within the new National Oceans Council.

In addition, with the Secretariat's assistance, new National Oceans Policies were adopted by **The Bahamas** and **Vanuatu** and completed but not implemented for **Papua New Guinea**, **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines** and **Antigua and Barbuda**. In **Saint Vincent and the Grenadines**, the cabinet adopted the National Ocean Policy and Strategic Action Plan on 18 June 2018. In **Saint Lucia**, a short-term expert was embedded to support the Department of Economic Development, Transport and Civil Aviation, Ministry of Economic Planning and National Development, to develop institutional strengthening for an improved maritime sector in **Saint Lucia**. Finally, towards the end of the Strategic Plan period, the Secretariat's work on the Blue Economy started to gain significant traction, with the World Bank announcing the launch of a US\$6.5million project to support the implementation of the Blue Economy in the Caribbean as the result of work undertaken on the development of the Eastern Caribbean Regional Ocean Policy (ECROP) and ocean policies in five member states by the Secretariat.

In its own evaluation of performance over the Strategic Plan period, the Secretariat graded the Maritime Boundaries and Ocean Governance Assistance as 'highly satisfactory'. However, this evaluation found that this was no longer warranted and that 'satisfactory' would more accurately reflect progress.

Both indicators assessed by the Secretariat for this project missed their targets, with 72 per cent of maritime boundaries delimited (8 out of 11) and 75 per cent (6 out of 8) of integrated marine resource management mechanisms implemented. As with the Natural Resources Assistance Project, there was a recognition that the targets might not be met at an earlier stage in the period, with performance ratings downgraded to amber in the 2015/2016 Annual Results Report, before being raised again to green/highly satisfactory once more in the final assessment.

In both cases, the rating was justified by the Secretariat because the targets were only 'narrowly missed', and the delays were due to factors outside the team's control, namely funding constraints within the Secretariat and political challenges within member states.

However, while both factors unquestionably impacted effectiveness, it was perhaps a stretch to suggest the targets were narrowly missed, when more than a quarter of targeted boundary delimitations and management mechanisms did not occur during the Strategic Plan period, or immediately afterwards. As such, here too, it was felt that 'satisfactory' would more accurately reflect progress.

Additionally, the ONR Team faced a series of particular constraints during the evaluation period:

- an immediate freeze of the entire travel budget in December 2016, which led to missions being cancelled at short notice and long-term damage to ongoing projects;
- uncertainty arising from the sub-annual budget process, which led to insecurity, particularly for the complex long-term reforms programmes carried out by ONR;
- staffing constraints; and
- a reduction in ONR's spending during the evaluation period.

According to stakeholders, lack of resources from the Secretariat, weak co-ordination and delayed responses to requests by the Secretariat were the top-three reasons constraining the effectiveness of the Secretariat's work.

3.4 Efficiency

The main questions addressed in this area were:

- To what extent have programme interventions delivered cost-effective outputs and reflect an efficient allocation of resources?
- How efficient is the mode of delivery of activities?
- Did the organisational reforms improve the efficiency of programme delivery?

The Evaluation Team created a series of interactive dashboards for the monitoring and evaluation team (SPPDD) in the Secretariat, in order to be able to visualise spending and provide insights for monitoring purposes (Annex 6).

Overall, most of the funding granted under the EDP was absorbed by the trade area. Of the £32.1 million that funded the EDP, trade received by far the most funds, representing 45.8 per cent

Figure 4. Stakeholder feedback on the Secretariat's effectiveness

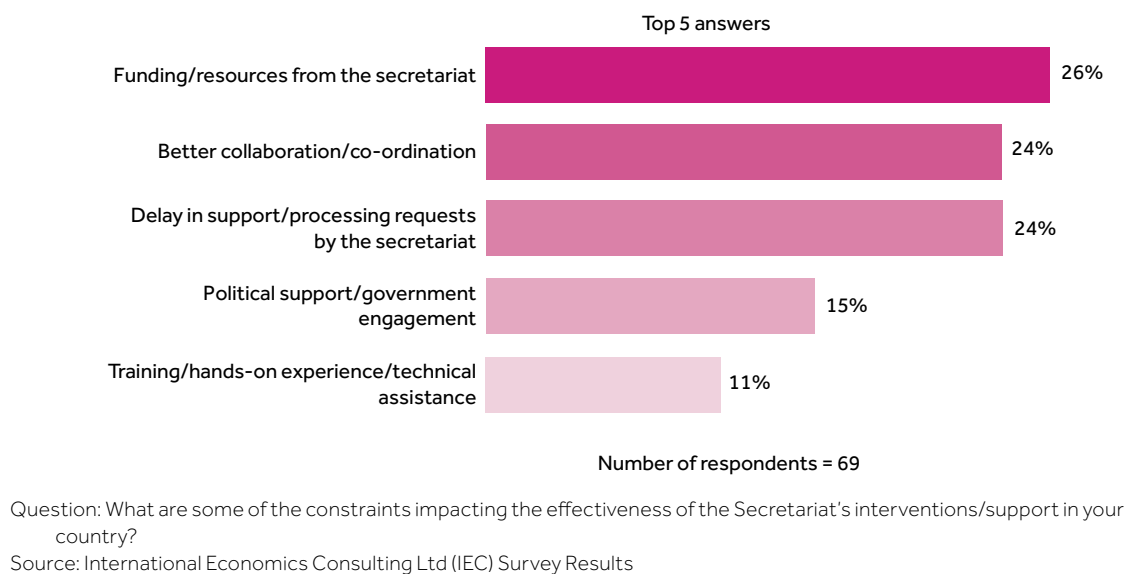
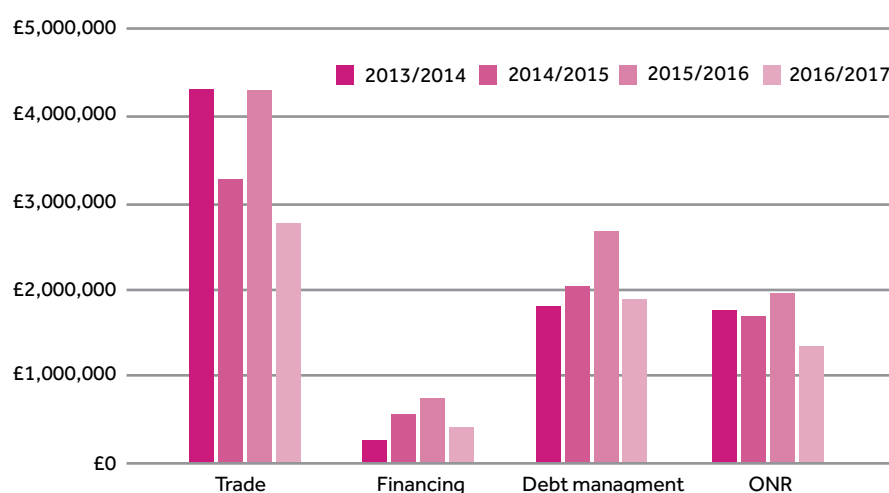


Figure 5. Programme costs by component area and year



Sources: Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Reports and Project Reports

Note: 'Financing' refers to Output 5.2, global development and financing.

of total programme resources, followed by debt management, which accounted for 26.5 per cent of disbursements, and ONR (21.2 per cent). Global development and financing represented just 6.5 per cent of project disbursements, the activities for which were carried out solely at a pan-Commonwealth level.¹⁹

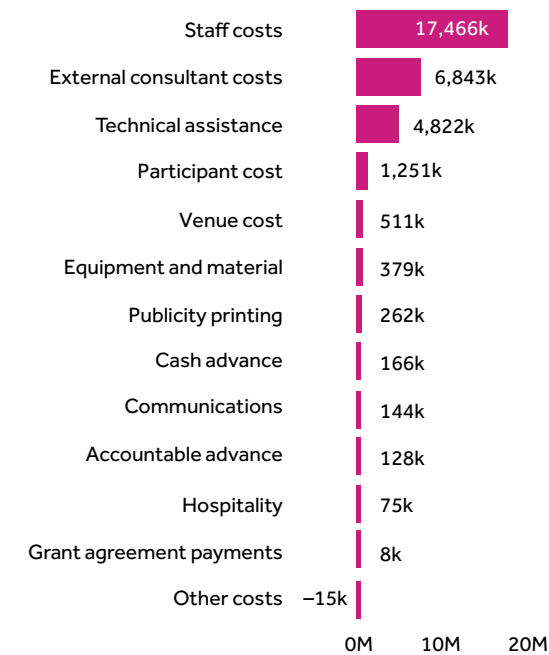
The distribution of expenditure by year fluctuated quite significantly across the programme areas.

For example, global development and financing doubled in value in the second year (compared to the first year), grew by another third in the third year and then fell by two fifths in the last year. Trade disbursements fell by 23 per cent in the second year, increased by 30 per cent in the third year, and fell by 35 per cent in the final year. Such fluctuations did not appear to correspond to any specific event, but rather reflect programmatic challenges.

The level of details of the expenditures made under the EDP was very limited. As such, some expenses, such as staff costs, include staff-related travel expenses, while technical assistance might cover not only the fee but also the mobilisation

¹⁹ A fifth component was included at the inception, (5) Knowledge Management, worth GBP 0.67 million, which was moved out of the programme in December 2015, as part of a revised Strategic Plan of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Figure 6. Overall financial spending categories of the EDP, 2013–17



Source: Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Reports and Project Reports

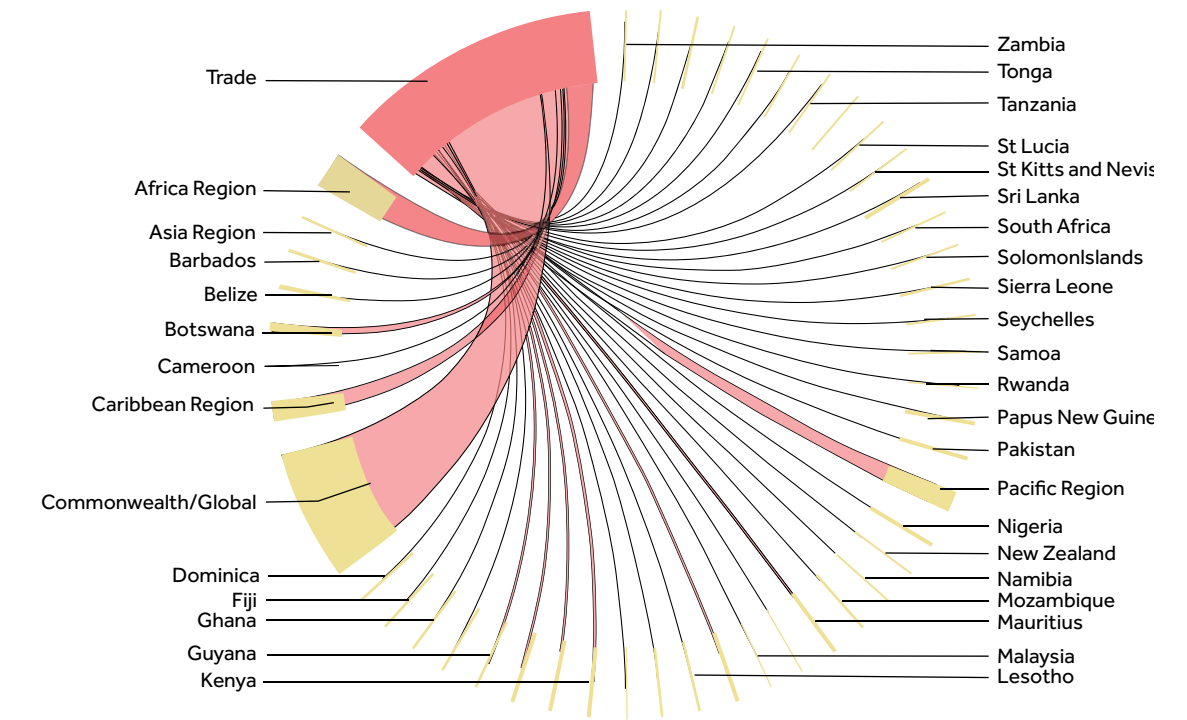
expenses of long-term advisers. It was observed by the Evaluation Team that there was only a weak mapping between what was reported in the budget

(via the PMIS system) and the Secretariat's financial system (CODA). Some categories were mapped, but not all.

Despite these limitations, it was possible to make some general conclusions from the data received. As could be expected, over half of the budget was spent on staff costs (£17 million), with external consultants accounting for £7 million. Technical assistance (which included per diems, flights and so on) was the third biggest budget item, accounting for £5 million.

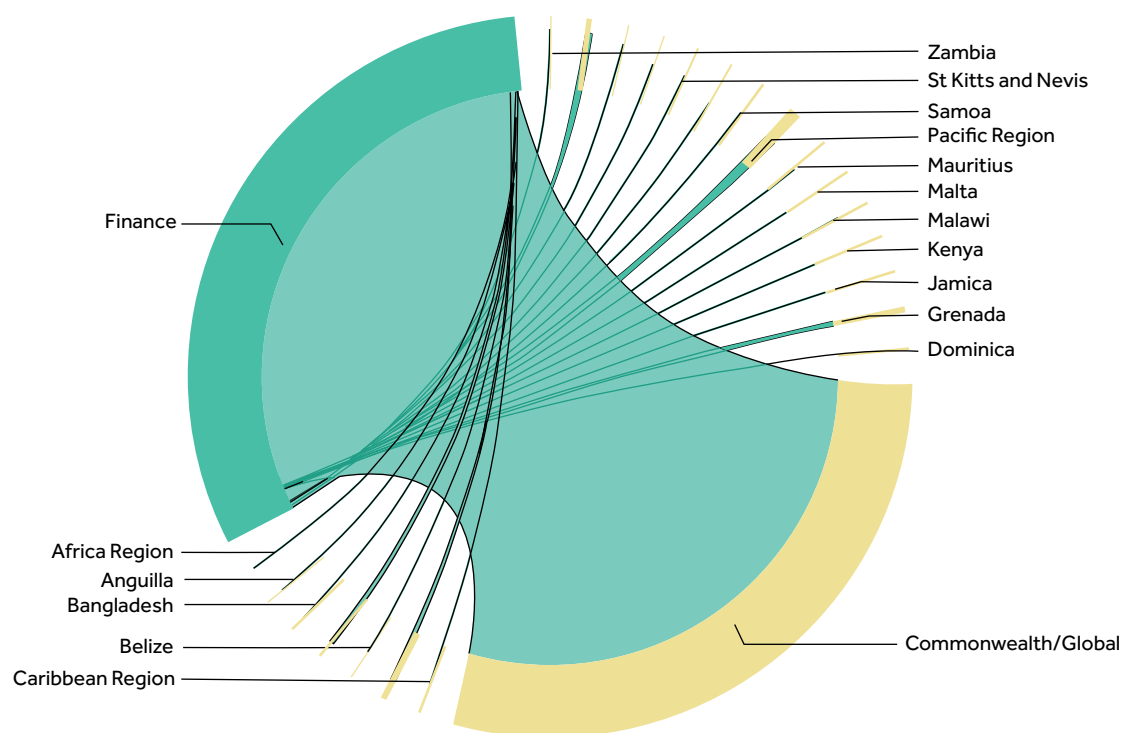
While this spending structure was heavily tilted towards staff costs, it is noteworthy to highlight, to the Secretariat's benefit, that the programme advisers were always involved, either from a project management perspective or from a technical perspective, in the implementation of the projects. Advisers were often directly engaged in events, communications and managing the technical work. Given the cost of consultants in comparison to staff costs, it would be efficient to evaluate the engagement of staff in projects when often consultants could be left to manage some of the technical outputs independently, as a lower cost, and just be guided and have higher-level oversight from staff. Unfortunately, the Evaluation Team did not have that level of detailed information to be able

Figure 7. Spending on country, regional or global activities in trade, 2013–17



Source: Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Reports and Project Reports

Figure 8. Spending on country, regional or global activities in global development and financing, 2013–17



Source: Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Reports and Project Reports

to determine which percentage of all the projects implemented under the EDP were implemented through external consultants and which were implemented directly by the programme advisers.

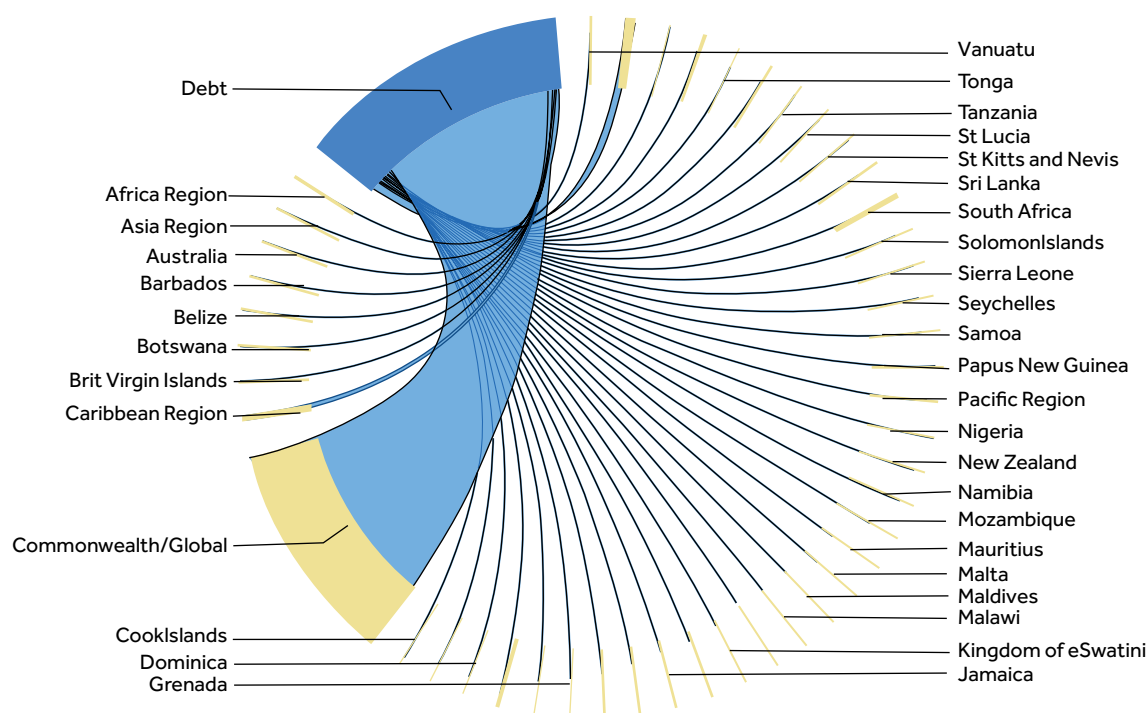
In terms of regions, most funds were absorbed by activities at the global and pan-Commonwealth levels. While this would make sense, due to the nature of the activities implemented, in areas such as global development and financing (94%) and debt management (81%), particularly through the implementation of the CS-DRMS and the online courses, the high percentage of global and pan-Commonwealth wide activities in trade and ONR was surprising. This was especially so, taking into consideration the fact that most of the Secretariat's activities in this area tended to be of a bilateral nature (and partially regional in the case of trade, with the implementation of the Hub & Spokes Programme). This could have also been, on the other hand, caused by a misclassification of expenses, as officers recorded the expenses and assigned them to a particular code in a manual way.

Similarly, Figure 11 indicates that only 11 countries across the Commonwealth (21% of countries) absorbed more than half of the EDP's country

budget, while the remaining 42 (79% of countries) received the other half. This might have been due to the fact that those countries were the most active ones, with multiple requests submitted to the Secretariat. In most cases, the countries that appeared to have a better capacity for project design accessed funds more easily. However, this raises the question of whether the Secretariat should devote more effort to reaching out to those countries which appeared under-represented. It is also worth highlighting that the UK was the second country that absorbed most of the budget, mainly due to the fact that (1) all of the Secretariat's costs were assigned to the UK; and (2) because of expenditures on events held in the UK by debt management. While those expenses were assigned to (and spent in) the UK, it was the wider Commonwealth membership that benefited from the outputs generated by such expenses.

Overall, over 96.5 per cent of the total budget of the EDP – nearly £31 million – was financed through the CFTC. The EU funding of the Hub & Spokes component of trade, was also collected through the CFTC, and led to the EDP having a larger focus on trade as a result. The most relevant category of

Figure 9. Spending on country, regional or global activities in debt management, 2013–17



Source: Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Reports and Project Reports

spending over the whole period was non-project related staff costs, which amounted to £13.5 million, or 43.6 per cent of the total. These non-earmarked costs appeared relatively high in comparison to those specifically designed for activities, and could possibly have been the result of the poor recording of costs by input categories. The second most important category under the CFTC was external consultant costs, with £6.7 million – 21 per cent of the total.

Finally, the technical assistance provided under the Hub & Spokes Programme, which accounted for £4.8 million – 15.6 per cent of the total – was one of the most prominent. Other categories of expenditure under CFTC funds included accountable advance, cash advance, communications, equipment and material, hospitality, participant costs, printing, venue costs and 'other costs'.

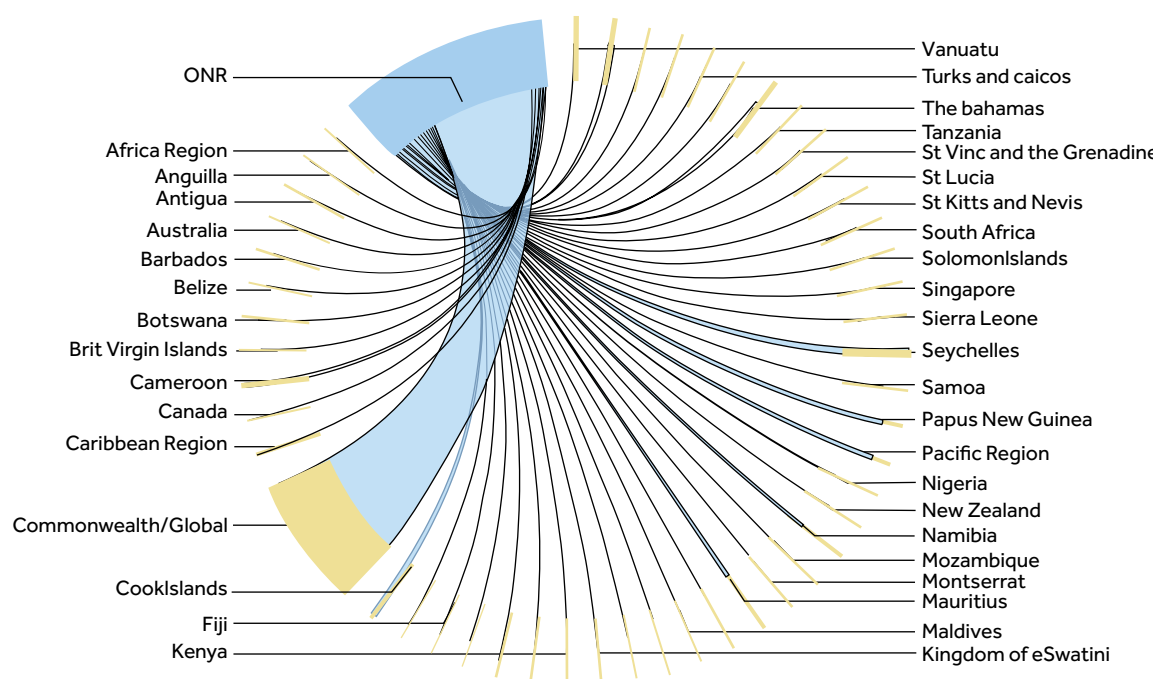
Regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the Secretariat's programme advisers, most stakeholders agreed with the fact that the versatility of their roles was the Secretariat's main strength. With the ability to implement a project from a project management perspective and a technical perspective, the project advisers

brought a unique set of qualities that benefitted the member states.

Additionally, the benefit of the project adviser lay in the fact that it was not always necessary to hire an external consultant to implement a particular project, as the project adviser was supposed to have the knowledge to implement that project. However, it occurred that, due to the increasing administrative burden that required project advisers to devote more time to reporting, these individuals had less time available to devote to technical tasks, and therefore were relegated to more project management positions, not obtaining the full benefit of the role.

Additionally, many Commonwealth Secretariat staff members considered that the organisation was much more cost efficient than other international organisations. Staff and consultancy costs were in general below the rates paid to other international organisations. However, due to a lack of specialisation and scale economies, it was not easy to measure the returns (outcomes and impacts) to investment (expenditures), which were by default much greater than those of other international organisations. Other international organisations have budgets which are much larger,

Figure 10. Spending on country, regional or global activities in oceans and natural resources, 2013–17

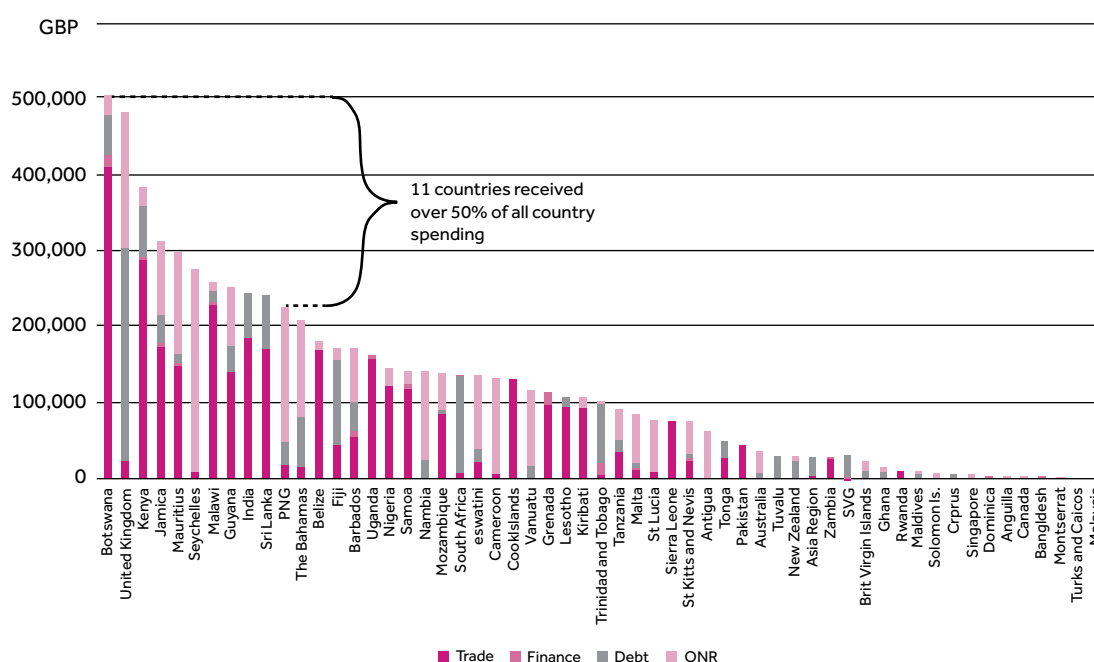


Source: Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Reports and Project Reports

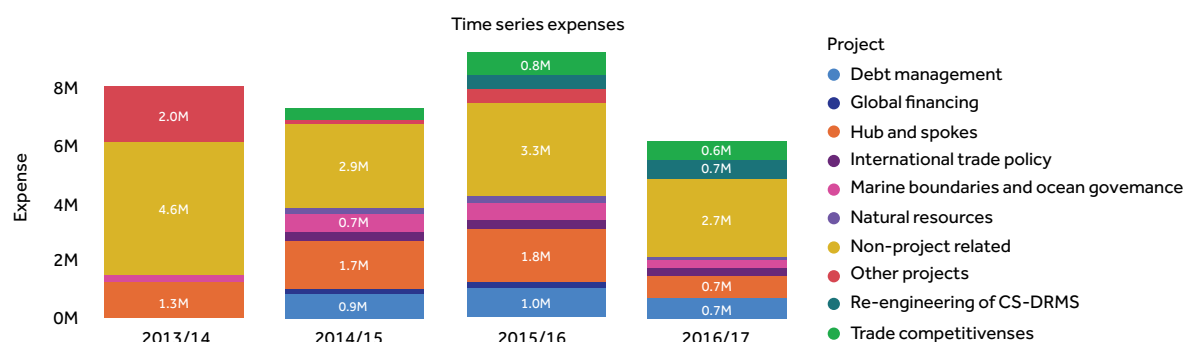
such that the impact can be more readily measured, even if it is still hard to measure impact of the kind of technical assistance outcomes of the nature of the EDP. Be that as it may, it appeared that the resources dedicated to activities were low.

Generally, and according to stakeholders, the restructuring experienced in 2015 did not appear to have improved the effectiveness and efficiency of the teams. As identified by the

Figure 11. Spending per country by EDP area, 2013–17



Source: Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Reports and Project Reports

Figure 12. CFTC financial spending categories of the EDP, 2013–17

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat Annual Reports and Project Reports

evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17, the organisation reform and restructuring consisted of:

- the elimination or collapse of various units into single teams, reflecting the Strategic Plan commitment to consolidate;
- expansion of some units, reflecting new priorities of the Strategic Plan;
- large cuts across the board to support functions, i.e. finance, human resources (HR), information technology (IT), event management, travel, administration, etc.;
- placement of the Gender Section in the Office of the Secretary-General; and
- implementation, between 2013 and 2014, of a voluntary exit scheme (VES), leading to the redeployment of 32 staff members and subsequent departures of 56 support grade staff over a three-month period.²⁰

The aforementioned evaluation found that the restructuring achieved a cost-effective structure, with streamlined administrative support functions and reduced overhead costs. Nevertheless, the evaluation also found that the restructure failed to adopt automation to replace functions lost through redundancies of support staff and some of the more experienced staff, who left as downsizing was based on voluntary redundancy.²¹

Questions probing the role of the organisational reforms in improving effectiveness yielded passionate responses from all staff interviewed.

Responses were strongly negative, as the examples below attest:

The reforms were a miserable failure. They achieved the opposite of what they were supposed to, increasing bureaucracy and uncertainty. Nothing has changed for the better.

The cuts were opportunistic, not strategic. So when it came to budget cuts, every department was cut by the same percentage. Some units [...] were in the top tier of effectiveness, but we faced the same cuts as far less efficient units [...] And when [staff] contracts came due they wouldn't be renewed, regardless of record. Many of the best people jumped ship.

Admin support was cut substantially, but the systems weren't improved at all [...] we found ourselves with significantly more admin, but less support. It's so bad that we often can't find the time to do the [technical] work we're being paid for.

Opinions in general from staff across programme areas on the extent to which the organisational reforms during the evaluation period improved efficiency in project delivery were united in believing the impact to have been hugely negative. Interviewees did not hold back in voicing their displeasure about the reforms, with sentiments such as 'a miserable failure', 'wildly unsuccessful', 'complete nonsense' and 'a disaster' commonplace. Singled out for particular criticism was the dissolution of the Technical Assistance Unit (TAU), the opportunistic nature of headcount cuts and the blanket nature of the funding cuts, which saw all divisions cut by the same percentage, irrespective of efficiency and effectiveness. The fluctuation in staff levels, with a significant number of vacant posts, and new strategic direction adopted by the

20 Commonwealth Secretariat (2017a), *Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17*, the Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

21 *Ibid.*

organisation, appeared to have a major impact on the ability to plan, as well as affecting productivity and results.

Nonetheless, one or two interviewees did concede that a few positive outcomes did emerge from the process. For example, budgetary pressures forced the team to be more careful about technical assistance results and to invest more effectively in areas that could have a bigger impact. One example in ONR concerned an internal team audit of expensive licenses for specialist technical software provided to member countries. The audit revealed that in some cases, member states did not share the dongle required to access the software among local agencies or used the software for land-based purposes instead. As a result, the Secretariat discontinued the licensing of software, realising cost savings in the process.

It was a very dark period. There were no clear objectives, we didn't know what was happening with the programmes. Very core members of the team just left. But it did force us to innovate. For example, we asked some of the member states if they would co-fund some aspects

of the technical assistance we provide. One stepped forward and did so.

While it is impossible to say for certain whether all the objectives and targets would have been achieved in the absence of funding cuts and organisational reforms, it is highly likely that substantially more progress would have been made. The work of all teams was broadly effective during the Strategic Plan, not because of the reforms, but in spite of them.

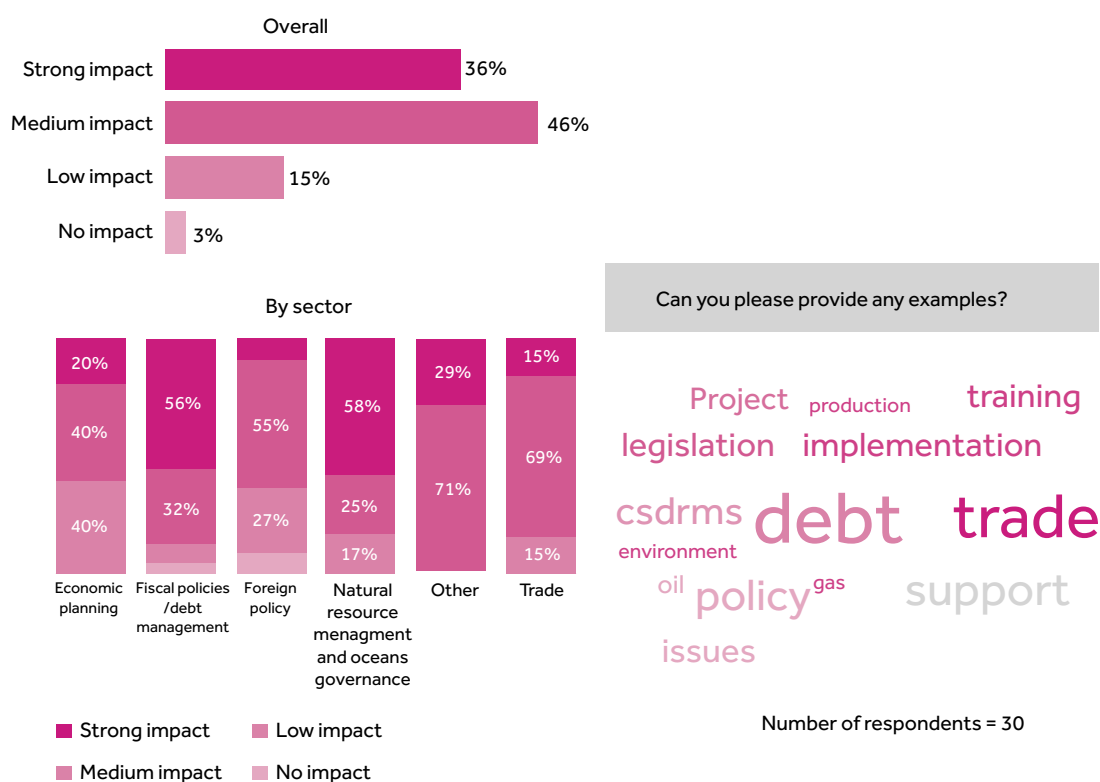
3.5 Impact

The main questions addressed in this area are:

- How have the Secretariat's interventions contributed to long-term changes in development and growth in institutional capacity in its member countries?
- What is the broader impact resulting from the EDP?

Overall, the EDP appeared to have contributed to enhancing countries' economic development, contributing to the beneficiaries' overall development. Over one-third of the survey

Figure 13. Stakeholder feedback on the Secretariat's impact



Question: In your opinion, what is the level of impact achieved by the Secretariat's interventions?
 Source: IEC Survey Results

respondents indicated that the Secretariat, through its interventions, had had a 'strong impact', with nearly half of the total respondents granting the Secretariat a 'medium impact'. Only 3 per cent did not see any impact at all through the Secretariat's interventions.

Particularly interesting were the results on ONR, with 78 per cent of respondents indicating that the Secretariat's work in this area had had a 'strong impact'. A similar success was shared by debt management, with 54 per cent of respondents indicating that the Secretariat had had a 'strong impact' on this area.

The majority of respondents to this question almost exclusively mentioned the role CS-DRMS played in improving debt management in general and particularly achievements in introducing new instruments, generating information on the relevant country's debt portfolio and contributing to debt sustainability. Training courses and e-learning were appreciated as having a serious impact on the proper handling of the software and the quality of the database. On ONR, respondents recognised that the team's support through training and legislative drafting had built capacity and proved to be valuable and important.

Nevertheless, it is worth stating that impact, particularly in regard to strategy and policy advice, long-term regulatory reform, and capacity-building development esd extremely challenging to assess accurately. Impact can be considered as the difference between what happened, with a specific intervention having been implemented, and what would have happened had that intervention or programme not been implemented, i.e. the counterfactual. Given the nature and scale of the EDP's interventions, it was almost impossible to disentangle the impacts of the work completed from broader political economic and social factors, such as government change, international commitment changes, priority changes, personnel changes or the actions of other development partners.

There are two further areas to take into consideration:

- First, interventions in some areas, such as trade, debt management and ONR, were enormously complex, multiyear endeavours. The impacts of acting to reform an entire

natural resources sector, for example, can take a decade or more to become apparent. In the field of trade, it usually takes more than five years to implement a national export strategy and to start noticing some of the effects. It has taken nearly two decades of negotiating a new multilateral trade agreement (the Doha Round), and nothing has yet been concluded. Since the conclusion of the EDP was less than three years ago, it may simply be too soon to see an impact in many cases.

- Second, the Secretariat was not involved in all the downstream areas of its work. As mentioned above, it might have designed a particular e-commerce strategy, contributed to the negotiations of a particular trade agreement and begun the work for a blue economy/ ocean strategy. However, it was ultimately up to the member states and beneficiaries to implement the recommendations highlighted in the strategy or to sign the free trade agreement and gazette it. Member states were the ones that had to pass any proposed reforms into law and implement them equitably and effectively. The Secretariat would also often require other donors and international organisations to provide technical support to continue the work and reach an impact. An example of this was with Commonwealth assistance to achieve mutual recognition agreement (MRA) of qualifications across a group of African countries. It was through World Bank and EU support that the MRA actually came into force, while the Commonwealth did a significant share of the groundwork.

Notwithstanding the above, it is worth highlighting that the funds invested by the Secretariat in the four different areas across the whole membership were negligible in comparison to the aid-for-trade or overseas development assistance (ODA) flows received by each individual country. Therefore, finding any trace of direct impact on jobs, trade flows, macroeconomic fundamentals or environmental sustainability would be surprising. The Secretariat might have contributed to a much larger pool of change and reforms, in parallel to other large-scale programmes, although, again, the overall contribution would have been small. For example, Mauritius, in 2015, received US\$120 million of ODA and US\$68 million of aid-for-trade in that same year. By comparison, the EDP spent

Box 10. The Secretariat's support to Mauritius

Secretariat support in the area of trade to Mauritius was quite extensive, when compared with its support to other countries. Over a period of two to three years, the Secretariat supported Mauritius's participation in the WTO negotiations for a Trade in Services Agreement, by providing specialised expertise to elaborate the country's position on the TiSA Framework Text, and drew up Mauritius' initial schedule of commitments. While feedback was mixed, a complaint was the lack of focus in general of the Commonwealth Secretariat's work in trade. There was a feeling that there was no clear agenda/result against which to assess performance. Generally, it was felt by one stakeholder that the support given to member states on WTO negotiations led to

few results, owing to the nature and outcomes of WTO negotiations. It was suggested that a greater focus should have been given to more relevant areas of trade, especially connectivity, digital trade and e-commerce. A successful result was assistance provided in the area of developing mutual recognition agreement (MRA) of accountant qualifications among member states of the Accelerated Programme of Economic Integration (APEI) in 2016–17. The outputs from that activity led to further funding from the World Bank, which led to all member states supporting the adoption of the MRA for auditors and accountants in 2017–18. The EU further funded a similar activity covering the MRA of architecture services in 2018–19.

Box 11. The Commonwealth Blue Charter

In April 2018, the Commonwealth Heads of Government came together to unanimously adopt the Commonwealth Blue Charter. This landmark decision commits all 54 member countries to work together on solving crucial ocean-related challenges in a fair, inclusive, sustainable way, and will positively impact more than a third of the world's national coastal waters.

The co-ordination of the Blue Charter and its plan of action is led by the ONR Team, building on its long record of country technical assistance in maritime delimitation, ocean policy and blue economy development.

Although the Blue Charter was launched in 2018, it has its roots firmly in the Strategic Plan period. Reforms and budgetary pressures had paused much of the ONR Team's field operations and bilateral support activities, forcing them to find cost-effective and innovative new ways to provide support, while also building the Secretariat's reputation for thought leadership and impactful practice.

The Blue Charter is implemented through a series of Action Groups on priority ocean issues led by Commonwealth member countries. The groups provide a forum for countries to share experiences and best practice, enabling them

to address common challenges together in an empowering and highly cost-effective way.

At the time of writing, 13 'champion' countries had stepped forward to lead ten groups on priority areas of ocean action under the Blue Charter. The champions and groups were:

- **Australia, Belize and Mauritius** for the protection and restoration of coral reefs group.
- **Fiji** for the climate change and ocean group, which included blue carbon sequestration by coastal vegetation and the development of resilient, low-carbon coastal cities.
- The **UK** and **Vanuatu** for the ocean plastic pollution group. Known as the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance, the group was supported by a £61 million commitment to tackling marine litter from the UK.
- **Sri Lanka** for the mangrove ecosystems and livelihoods group.
- **Cyprus** for the sustainable aquaculture group.
- **Kenya** for the blue economy group.

- **New Zealand** for the ocean acidification group.
- **Canada** for the ocean observations group.
- **Seychelles** for the marine protected areas group.
- **Kiribati** for the sustainable coastal fisheries group.

While the Blue Charter had so far proved to be highly successful and impactful, its future success

would undoubtedly hinge upon sustainable financing being secured.

Sources: UN, The Ocean Conference | Supporting a Blue Commonwealth', available at: <https://oceanconference.un.org/commitments/?id=15910>; The Commonwealth (2019), 'Commonwealth Blue Charter champions to convene in London', available at: <https://thecommonwealth.org/media/news/commonwealth-blue-charter-champions-convene-london>; The Commonwealth, 'Commonwealth Blue Charter', available at: <https://bluecharter.thecommonwealth.org/>

around US\$0.05 million in 2015, which represented 0.04 per cent of total ODA received.

3.6 Sustainability

The main questions addressed in this area are:

- Which of the programme's achievements, results and benefits has been sustained?
- How resilient are the outcomes and impact to risks?

Overall, and as recognised by other evaluations of the Secretariat's work, the sustainability of its interventions did not appear to be a high priority for the Secretariat. This was recognised by most of the stakeholders interviewed. With the exception of a couple of cases, and as recognised by the Evaluation of the Strategic Programme 2013/14–2016/17, the fact that most of the Secretariat's work adopted a single-phase, short-term approach to projects limited the ability of the project to have a sustainable outcome.²² Similarly, with interventions designed around immediate country needs, the ability for longer-term partnerships and impactful work was often missed. For example, the fact that the Trade Section was not involved in the implementation of the national export strategies led, on most occasions, to work being 'shelved'.

Even in longer-term programmes, sustainability appeared to be somehow neglected. As recognised by the final evaluation of the Hub & Spokes Programme, ensuring sustainability was only implemented towards the end of the programme, through a dedicated Consolidation

Phase (2017–19).²³ In the case of Hub & Spokes, some of the beneficiary countries decided to engage the trade advisers separately, with their own funding. In others, though, it was clear that the adviser was 'filling a gap', rather than building the country's capacity to tackle the different challenges and situations on its own. In those cases, the sustainability of the interventions was minimal. The trade pillar was heavily dependent on CFTC, which was consistent with the EDP's memorandum of understanding. However, this was an area that saw declining financing over the period. Moreover, a major component of the trade programme, namely Hub & Spokes, was donor financed (by the EU), which had come to an end. This hampered the Secretariat's ability to maintain support longer term.

From a general perspective, capacity-building attempts, while undoubtedly valuable, could have been made more coherent and efficient.

Attempts to either transition to a lighter-touch approach once objectives had been achieved or find in-country partners willing to continue support once the Secretariat moved on seemed to be few and far between.

Debt management and ONR appeared to be isolated areas with their own sustainability niche. This was particularly with regards to the CS-DRMS, upon which users had to be trained by the Secretariat. All the stakeholders consulted indicated that they were able to use the system independently, relying on the Secretariat only for technical upgrades. Similarly, achievements in domestic debt market development were likely

²² Commonwealth Secretariat (2017a), *Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17*, the Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

²³ Commonwealth Secretariat (2020), *Final Evaluation of the Hub & Spokes Programme: Draft Report*, April, Commonwealth Secretariat, London

to be sustained. During the evaluation period, this was important for The Bahamas, Fiji and Sri Lanka. The Secretariat's interventions usually aimed at improving primary issuance techniques (auctions), settlement and depository arrangements, and measures to promote secondary market liquidity. Due to these efforts, the investor base broadened, and it was not only authorities but the emerging debt market itself that developed a self-interest to keep the market alive and expand it further.

However, some stakeholders highlighted the need to hold more regular training to ensure that new staff could be trained to use the system effectively.

Similarly, assistance provided to member states through the ONR Team did not commence at the start of the Strategic Plan period and conclude at the end. It theoretically continued until reforms were established or capacity built, and the member state receiving support stated that it was no longer required, thereby ensuring a higher degree of sustainability. **Mitigation of external risks was appropriately considered by ONR, though**

enactment appeared to have been limited as at the time of the evaluation. The two PDDs for the ONR-driven projects both devoted significant room to sustainability. Three primary mitigation measures were:

1. Assist countries to secure sustainable funding to ensure the implementation of the defined governance arrangements in a sustainable manner without the need for further Secretariat support.
2. Once outputs had been delivered, transition to a lighter touch monitoring role, providing support and assistance as needed.
3. Periodically review the policies delivered, bringing laws and regulations in line with fundamental changes in policies, as needed.

However, the extent to which these measures had been enacted appeared to be limited. Overall however, ONR designed for sustainability, embedding it at the core of much of the work it did.

Box 12. Sustainable outcomes from the New Petroleum Producers Discussion Group

The New Petroleum Producers Discussion Group (NPPG) is a knowledge and experience-sharing platform designed for new and emerging producers to discuss challenges, strategies and governance frameworks for sustainable development of their oil and gas resources. It is a network and community of practice bringing together more than 35 countries – half of which are Commonwealth states.

The group creates a safe space for information sharing and an honest appraisal of governance challenges among new producers, with an overall aim of lasting and inclusive development outcomes in emerging oil and gas producer countries.

The NPPG, a collaboration between the Secretariat, Chatham House and the Natural Resources Governance Institute, was formed prior to the Strategic Plan period, but gathered momentum and built traction throughout it. Against a backdrop of ongoing institutional reforms and budgetary constraints at the

Secretariat, the NPPG provided an attractive alternative to the traditional *modus operandi* of one-to-one technical support.

By bringing together a large group of partners, and facilitating the sharing of experiences and best practice, the Secretariat can provide useful, targeted and highly cost-effective assistance. Moreover, such a setting offers the opportunity for more experienced nations to provide informal training to newer producers, thereby potentially reducing the Secretariat's training load and sustaining benefits long into the future.

A 2019 evaluation found the group to be a 'very efficient mechanism for delivering and sharing pitfalls and best practices in the petroleum sector with respect to policy formulation, fiscal regime issues, and operational aspects of effectively governing petroleum activities', and noted that 'a phenomenal amount [had] been delivered with very limited resources [resulting in] 'significant and sustainable impacts and outcomes for member states'.

In terms of social issues, such as youth and gender, the Secretariat's staff recognised that while these were important areas, they did not pay enough attention to them and they were not usually covered by the different projects. **However, there were some exceptions.** In **Sierra Leone**, an updated Action Plan to develop the country's export value chain prepared by the Secretariat covered gender as a key consideration, due to the representation of women in the agro-products and agro-processing subsectors. In **India**, the Secretariat held the First India–Commonwealth SME Trade Summit, which aimed at promoting trade and investment among Commonwealth small and medium enterprises (SMEs). In the **East African Community**, the Secretariat partnered with GIZ to provide legal advice to the negotiations on trade in services and Mutual Recognition Agreements on veterinary services, land surveying, the legal and pharmacist professions, most of which were undertaken by individual persons or SMEs. In **COMESA**, the Secretariat established the COMESA/LLPI Regional Design Studio, which aimed to strengthen SMEs' design capacity in the region and generate new employment opportunities, especially for women and young people. In **Solomon Islands**, the Secretariat drafted a Trade-Oriented Youth Employment Strategy and Youth Entrepreneurship Strategy, thereby increasing the opportunities that existed for young entrepreneurs.

As highlighted by a member of the ONR Team:

[we] use gender-neutral language in our [legislative/policy] drafting. It's a crosscutting theme. It's mandatory that we incorporate it and we recognise that it's important. We encourage

a fair representation in the government teams. We encourage affirmative action.

Another stakeholder highlighted:

[as] part of project design, we look at it. Introducing new laws and policies, depends on the intervention. In some cases, how can the government prepare an implementation plan to implement the policy. In all of those, and the action plans, there's always a gender dimension. In the type of sector policy, there's always a chapter dealing with gender issues. As long as it's reflected in the policy, we'll often have gender provisions in the act and regulations, also a gender dimension in the action plans.

Overall, the most repeated issues affecting sustainability were lack of local ownership, changes to political motivation and the political landscape, and high staff turnover. Linked to the fact that impact already takes a substantial amount of time to materialise, sustainability is an area where it is difficult to plan ahead and measure, due to the presence of confounding factors – outside the Secretariat's control – that affect the project's sustainability. For example, the emergence of a worldwide pandemic, an economic crisis or a trade war.

Similarly, the survey results identified two additional risks to sustainability: lack of capacity and cross-departmental communication in member countries. These risks were widely regarded as typical in the evaluation literature and appeared from the project documentation and interviews with the different teams. The aforementioned lack of coherence with in-country development partners also impacted the sustainability of the Secretariat's interventions.

Table 9. Potential project risks to sustainability

Risk	Likelihood	Impact
Lack of political support to implement recommendations	Low	High
Lack of technical capacity and resources to undertake work at the national level	High	High
Change in political landscape during the process	Medium	High
Interventions afforded a low priority by senior ministers	Low	High
Poor co-ordination and leadership at the national level	Medium	Medium
Lack of buy-in from different government agencies	High	Medium
Lack of available scientific information and data to support new management approaches	Medium	Medium
Lack of financial resources	High	Medium

Coherence is necessary if the Secretariat's outputs – mainly policies and strategies – are to bridge the implementation divide. Additional risks were identified in some PDDs.

3.7 Added value of the Commonwealth Secretariat

Overall, the respondents to the survey showed a reasonable or average level of understanding and awareness of the Secretariat's work, with 58 per cent indicating that they were aware or highly aware of the Secretariat's work.²⁴

Twenty-two (22) per cent indicated they were slightly aware, which might reflect the Secretariat's specialised area of work. Twenty (20) per cent of respondents indicated no awareness at all of the Secretariat's work. Such results could represent an overestimation, as the survey respondents were stakeholders and contact points from the Secretariat. Despite this, in the case of ONR, 29 per cent of the respondents were not aware of the Secretariat's efforts in this area.

Stakeholders consulted physically or remotely through interviews, both internal and

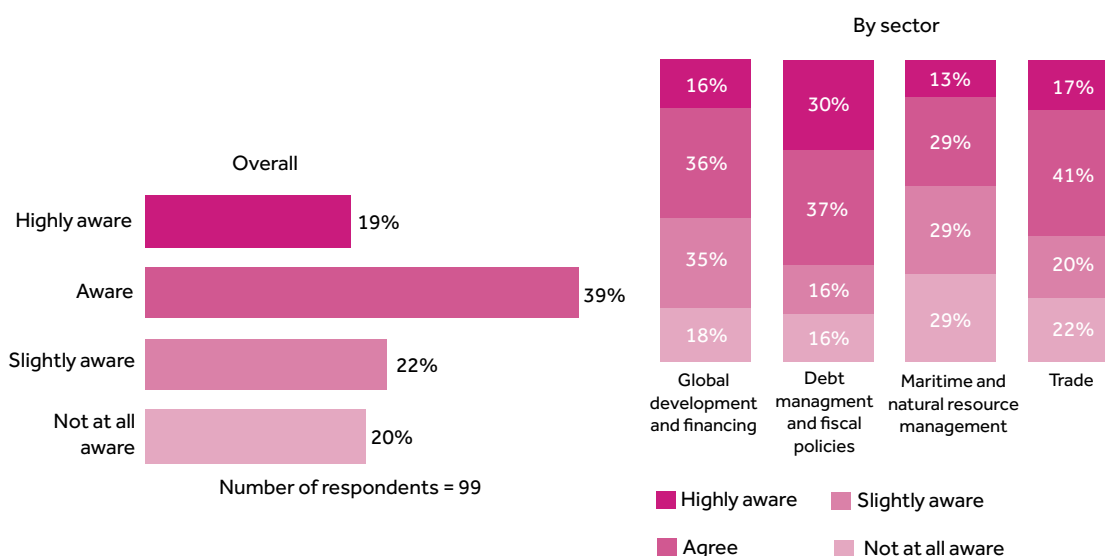
external, recognised the added value that the Commonwealth Secretariat, as a provider of development assistance, brought to the table.

As recognised by the Multilateral Development Review 2016, '[the] Commonwealth Secretariat fills an important niche role [...] in supporting small states' development and building their economic and environmental resilience and in promoting cooperation on human rights and combatting extremism'.²⁵

The value addition of the Commonwealth Secretariat was further emphasised in the example in Box 13, provided for debt management, but many of the reasons are cross-cutting across other areas of the EDP.

With the creation of the debt management e-learning platform, the Secretariat had succeeded in establishing an unprecedented and unique human capacity building tool for which – in terms of coverage and detail – and according to the team's knowledge – no comparable alternative exists. The debt management e-learning platform was launched during the evaluation period, but was then further developed in terms of coverage of topics. It supported capacity

Figure 14. Awareness of the Commonwealth Secretariat's work



Question: How aware are you of the Commonwealth Secretariat's work?

Source: IEC based on survey results

²⁴ It should be noted that the survey was sent out to persons already interacting with the Commonwealth Secretariat and that were reached out to by the Secretariat. As such, awareness is expected to be far lower in reality among policy-makers in Commonwealth countries.

²⁵ Department for International Development (DfID) (2016), *Raising the standard: the Multilateral Development Review 2016*, the Commonwealth Secretariat, Department for International Development, UK Government, December.

Box 13. Value addition of the Secretariat in debt management

According to the project design document, '[the] need for continued Secretariat assistance to member countries on policy advisory support can be justified for three main reasons. First, other providers of policy advisory support to member countries usually take place from the IMF and the World Bank. However, given their dual role of being a creditor and surveillance agency with conditionalities attached as part of their financial support programme, many member countries prefer to receive assistance from the Secretariat on core policy areas related to debt management as a provider of independent policy advice emanating from a trusted partner. Second, the World Bank has been providing policy advisory support to Low Income Countries for the last four years under the Debt Management Facility [DMF] Initiative'.

This points clearly to the fact that the Commonwealth Secretariat as a non-financial institution's advice was not perceived by member states as biased toward its lending policy, but rather neutral.

However, as part of this assistance, many of our member countries which are predominantly middle-income countries are not eligible to receive assistance under the DMF and have to therefore depend on assistance from the Secretariat to a large extent. Third, many of the policy advisory support provided under the DMF initiative relates to upstream activities like the formulation of a debt management strategy and reforms programme. However, much of the policy advisory support provided by the Secretariat is based on downstream activities which support the actual reform process relating to institutional arrangements, legal framework, debt market development and implementation of a debt management strategy. Hence through a coordinated framework of assistance between the various agencies, the Secretariat avoids any overlap of assistance and also delivers on niche areas where assistance from other providers like the IMF and World Bank are not expected. The rationale for the Secretariat to provide assistance on supporting the use of debt management systems can be understood with the Secretariat servicing almost half of the world's developing countries on the use of debt management systems.

It turns out that avoidance of overlapping of activities was warranted, while the Secretariat's delivery of debt management software was actually complementing the IMF's and World Bank's activities.

Currently, the Secretariat is an implementing partner of the World Bank's Debt Management Facility and is also a member of the Task Force on Finance Statistics [TFFS] under the aegis of IMF. There is also an active coordinated framework for provision of assistance to member countries between the various international agencies.

The Secretariat's participation in the TFFS was an example of co-operation. Another one was the co-operation with UNCTAD's Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS) on the Data Quality Assessment Tool. This was initiated during the evaluation period.

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat (2019), 'Global Project – Strengthening Debt Management Capacity in Member States', Project Design Document, ID NXCWG0927

Box 14. The efficiency of the CS-DRMS

The CS-DRMS had a proven track record of relatively easy installation and could use MS SQL Server or Oracle as database backend. While easy installation did not imply a short track implementation, for which technical and user training was necessary, the survey and back-to-office (BTO) communications revealed that the bulk of maintenance could be managed remotely. Respondents to the survey praised the Secretariat for its fast responses and streamlined approach to approvals, in this respect.

CS-DRMS was an efficient tool for the preparation of external and public debt reports (DRS, QEDS, QPSD) and debt bulletins. The former could theoretically be generated with a push on the button, the later needed to be designed according to user needs. However, in both cases the content of reports could not exceed scope within debt data as recorded and their quality highly depended on the timeliness, accuracy and consistency of the debt data in the underlying database.

building in generic public debt management topics and debt strategy development, as well as training in the use of the Secretariat's debt management systems.

The internal staff of the Secretariat across the different teams also highlighted the importance of the Secretariat as a trusted development partner for most of its member states:

One of the things we treasure is that we're a trusted partner. We don't come with an agenda. No ulterior motives. We're providing the advice in the best interests of the country. No loans or subsidies.

This aspect was already confirmed by the evaluation of the Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17, when stating that the Secretariat's funds and assistance came without any strings attached, 'unlike other agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund'.²⁶ As mentioned by a stakeholder during the aforementioned evaluation:

*The Secretariat has an extremely strong reputation, despite their limited funds. They are particular on which projects they will support. They are the agency for support on specific niche activities. They require a well-crafted proposal, which is a good thing. With the Secretariat, we get to work much closer with technical people on the ground; they are very responsive, and approval timelines are much shorter. [...] They are also proactive. They don't just rely on the beneficiaries to provide the information – they come to the table with recommendations to consider. They are collaborative, and this translates into a strong partnership based on what [member states] ask for. [...] The UN dictates more, while [the Commonwealth] listens. We liked that.*²⁷

This view was confirmed by another stakeholder, which stated that:

Personally, I find the Secretariat's officers to be very personable. I enjoy their interactions, and they listen carefully. Other development partners seem foreign and not as relatable and make it difficult to seek clarity on simple matters. In [all the] years we have worked with the Commonwealth Secretariat I have never met an officer I don't remember fondly. Their value-added is incomparable.

Another point highlighted by the stakeholders was the value the Secretariat delivered through its technical knowledge and capacity by being able to **(1) respond quickly to the countries' needs and requests, and (2) ensure that the work/advice provided really reflected the characteristics of the member state at hand.** As highlighted by a member of the Secretariat's staff:

One of the unique selling points that we've always had [...] is that ability to respond [to technical assistance requests] in a much more nuanced and quick way. [Another area where] I think we have an advantage is also the fact that some other international organizations have generic models. [...] However, what may be true for Sri Lanka might not be true for Cameroon.

An important reason for the Commonwealth Secretariat's value-added was its ability to resource experts that could share their own experience across countries with similar legal, regulatory and economic systems.

This was further confirmed by the survey results. When asked about the Secretariat's value-added, the survey respondents identified: (1) the ability to provide and maintain the CS-DRMS, (2) the Secretariat's experience in implementing technical assistance, and (3) the hands-on approach. These were the top three elements that made the Secretariat a valued partner in international development.

26 Centre for International Development and Training (2017), *ibid.*

27 Centre for International Development and Training (2017), *ibid.*, page 62

Box 15. The Secretariat's value added: debt management

The rationale for the Secretariat to provide assistance on supporting the use of debt management systems can be understood with the Secretariat servicing almost half of the world's developing countries on the use of debt management systems. The other half is serviced by UNCTAD which develops and maintains a competing software product. Given its leadership position, the Secretariat has the necessary expertise and comparative advantage to undertake the maintenance of the current vintage of CS-DRMS and the recently launched Horizon software products and provide in-country support on the use of the systems and the production of a high quality debt database by member countries and analytical capabilities related to risk management and debt management strategy implementation.²⁸

CS-DRMS had developed over time from a data management system capable of recording external loans to its current version, covering a wide range of instruments and various

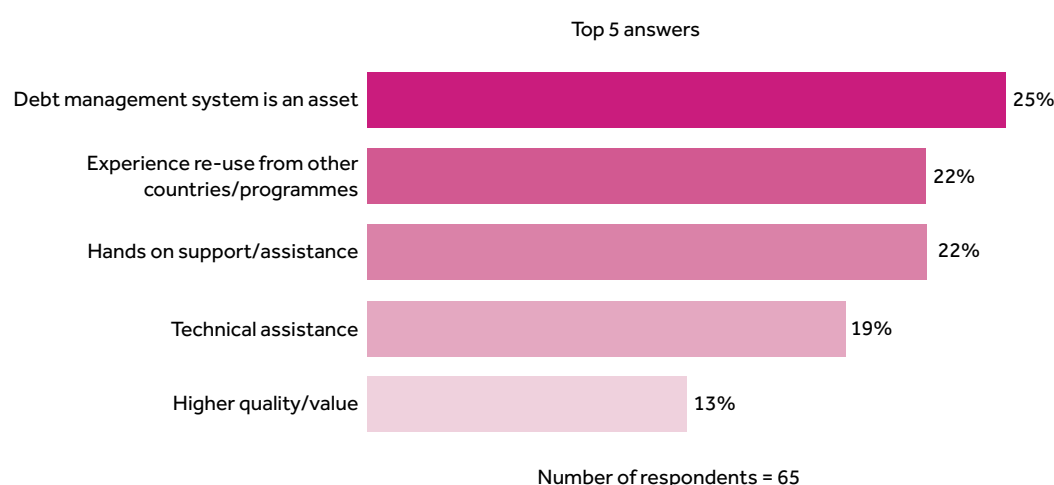
creditor-debtor relations. There was no market and no commercial off-the-shelf software that could offer the functionality required for comprehensive debt management of low- and middle-income countries. The only comparable system was UNCTAD's Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS). CS-DRMS was used by most Commonwealth member states under favourable financial conditions. A few non-member states had acquired the CS-DRMS through CrownAgents. UNCTAD's DMFAS was mainly used in non-member state developing countries, although there were a few examples of Commonwealth member states using DMFAS.

Practically, there was little – rather symbolic – competition. Both development partners co-operated on this area, as illustrated by the joint creation of a debt data quality assessment tool.

For several reasons, countries with advanced financial markets and excellent human capacity for debt management did not consider adopting of CS-DRMS (or Horizon). The efficiency of CS-DRMS resulted from its tailor-made development, which was developed to answer the debt management needs of developing economies.

28 Commonwealth Secretariat (2019), 'Global Project – Strengthening Debt Management Capacity in Member States', Project Design Document, ID NXCWG0927, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Figure 15. Secretariat's value-added



Question: What is the Secretariat's value-added compared to other development partners working in your country?

Source: IEC Survey Results

4. Conclusions

The EDP results by indicator, output and expenses per geography are presented in the dedicated on-line dashboard provided in Annex 6.

Overall, the evaluation demonstrated that the Secretariat's Economic Development Programme 2013/14—2016/17 effectively contributed to member states' socioeconomic development through the different areas covered by the evaluated programme.

The fact that most of the Secretariat's work was based on country demands ensured the relevance of its assignments. Relevance was further secured through the scoping measures, which ensured that the interventions were consistent with the needs of the countries. In those areas where work was not directed by member states, the relevance of that work was checked against its timeliness and applicability against the topics that emerged in the regional and international spheres.

In terms of external coherence, the **involvement of the Secretariat with other international organisations varied depending of the specific team**, with the Trade, Debt Management and Global Development and Financing Teams having had a strong collaboration with other international organisations. However, at the project-specific level, communication between international organisations and the Secretariat occurred mainly on a case-by-case basis and through informal channels. In terms of internal coherence, **the evaluators found mixed evidence on coherence and co-ordination among the different teams of the EDP**, with some examples of projects where inter-team collaboration existed, but also examples where there should have been collaboration and this did not happen.

In terms of effectiveness, the evaluation found that the EDP was moderately effective, as not all objectives were met at the end of the EDP.

This was partly due to a weak choice of indicators, as not all were SMART – specific, measurable, relevant, achievable and time-bound. Similarly, the Secretariat faced a number of challenges in ensuring the full effectiveness of its projects, such as lack of ownership, limited involvement by stakeholders and limited absorption capacity by beneficiaries.

The stakeholders interviewed were critical of the institutional reform undertaken in 2015. Respondents indicated an increase in bureaucracy and uncertainty, with budget cuts applied without taking into consideration the characteristics or needs of the team. **Overall, this evaluation could not attribute any improvement in effectiveness arising from the 2015 reform.**

Regarding the effectiveness of the project advisers, most stakeholders agreed with the fact that the versatility of this role was the Secretariat's main strength. With the ability to implement a project from a project management perspective and a technical perspective, project advisers brought a unique set of qualities that benefitted member states.

In terms of efficiency, trade was the section that absorbed most resources, followed by debt management and ONR. In terms of expenditure, the Secretariat's spending structure was heavily tilted towards staff costs, which might be considered efficient, as programme advisers were always involved, either from a project management or from a technical perspective, in the implementation of the projects.

Generally, the restructuring experienced in 2015 did not appear to have improved the effectiveness or efficiency of the teams. Opinions from staff across programme areas on the extent to which the organisational reforms improved efficiency in project delivery during the evaluation period was united in believing the impact to have been hugely negative.

Measuring impact was one of the pending tasks of the Secretariat. The indicators lacked an impact focus, and therefore were not tracked across the years. Additionally, it is worth highlighting that it is extremely challenging to assess the impact of interventions related to strategy and policy advice, long-term regulatory reform and capacity-building development.

Measuring impact was also challenging due to three factors: funds invested by the Secretariat in the four different areas across the whole membership were negligible in comparison to the aid-for-trade or overseas development assistance (ODA) flows received by each individual country. Additionally,

most cases were complex, multiyear endeavours. Furthermore, the Secretariat was not involved in all the areas of its work. It was ultimately up to the member states and beneficiaries to implement the recommendations highlighted in a strategy or to sign a free trade agreement and gazette it.

In terms of sustainability, a common perception from stakeholders was that the sustainability of the Secretariat's interventions did not appear to be a high priority. The fact that most of the Secretariat's work adopted a single-phase, short-term approach limited the ability of the project to

have a sustainable outcome. A similar situation occurred in longer-term programmes, which rather than promoting or tackle their sustainability, just filled capacity gaps rather than addressing them.

From a general perspective, capacity-building attempts, while undoubtedly valuable, could be made more coherent and efficient. Attempts to either transition to a lighter-touch approach once objectives had been achieved or to find in-country partners willing to continue support once the Secretariat moved on seemed to be few and far between.

5. Lessons Learned

Overall, it appeared that the Commonwealth Secretariat was 'punching above its weight'. While this was appreciated by member states, it might have also led to an overstretch of its internal capacity, ultimately affecting the work's sustainability. The reduction in funding became the norm in recent years, with some internal sections having less than £300,000 to respond to an increasing number of technical assistance requests. For example, ONR projects sometimes took years to be implemented, with an annual budget that was agreed midway through the year after activities were already underway. The budget mismatch was a key impediment to ensuring the project's sustainability.

During the period under review, the Secretariat's teams worked in silos, with limited examples of inter-team collaborations, thereby not tapping into the full potential of economies of scale. An example of this was the parallel work done by the Trade Competitiveness and International Trade Policy Teams, or the lack of co-operation between the teams at the EDP and the Gender Team.

The coherence of the existing Economic Development Programme configuration was questioned, as there was no apparent linkage between the four different intermediate outcomes nor how these contributed to the overall Strategic Outcome. There was a need to adopt a better set of indicators to track the progress of the different intermediate outcomes, ensuring that these were specific, measurable, relevant, achievable and time-bound (SMART).

Despite the Secretariat's best efforts, political economy challenges hampered the effectiveness and sustainability of its interventions. Problems such as lack of ownership, lack of involvement and lack of follow-up, limited the potential of the Secretariat's interventions.

The efficiency of the EDP was largely linked to the ability of the programme advisers to combine their

programme management and technical expertise to deliver well-rounded support. However, from an efficiency perspective, it was most efficient for the programme adviser to employ his/her technical skills in a particular project, therefore avoiding the need for a consultant to carry out some of the technical work. A more cost-effective project manager could then take care of the administrative tasks of their work.

The programme advisers were versatile professionals with the ability to implement a project from a project management perspective and a technical perspective. However, it appeared that an overload of administrative documents, linked to the restructuring experienced in 2015, might have been stopping them from conducting technical work, relegating them to a more administrative function.

The Secretariat's search for impact might be overambitious. Due to its small budget, the high-level type of interventions it implements, and the lack of control over the recommendations it provides to its member states, the direct impact of the Secretariat's interventions was too diluted to be measurable. Instead, the Secretariat should focus on monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of its interventions (i.e. until outcome level).

For the EDP's trade and global financing and development, ensuring sustainability appears to be a key challenge that must be tackled. This problem appears in the case of long-term programmes, such as Hub & Spokes.

Cross-cutting issues, such as SMEs, youth and gender issues, should be better covered by the Secretariat's work, ensuring that such topics are covered. As a minimum, the impact of a given project on the aforementioned collectives should be analysed during the scoping mission and reported in the back-to-office report.

6. Recommendations

Improving planning and budgeting

It is clear that the Secretariat's teams must strive to prioritise more effectively. With limited funds, rather than continuing to consider every request for assistance, the Secretariat should consider improving its key targets and become better aligned to deploy resources to attain those targets, rather than simply filling in gaps or responding to ad hoc requests from member states. This should lead to the limited funds having more impact.

As part of this process, there is a need for an organisational policy for how to reach out to disengaged countries. Staff interviews revealed a willingness to consider diverting programme resources from activities in member states where progress is slow or delayed, towards more enthusiastic and engaged countries that have requested support after budgets were allocated. However, such an approach is not currently favoured at the Secretariat.

Recommendation 1. The Secretariat's programme-level teams must define objective prioritisation criteria for setting the scope of interventions due to limited funding flows.

Recommendation 2. The Office of the Secretary General should define key strategic priorities and better align resources to attain those targets, rather than seeking to meet funding gaps and ad hoc requests with limited funding.

Recommendation 3. The Secretariat's Partnership Team should identify a wide range of fundraising measures, including stronger joint programming with partners, such as was the case with the Hub & Spokes Programme.

Although the work done in the EDP pillar may take decades to come to fruition, budgets are agreed annually. Moreover, many of the senior staff members interviewed expressed frustration that budgets were reduced each year from those requested, with these often imposed when project activities were already underway.

This mismatch between sub-annual budget horizons and multiyear project timeframes is a key impediment to sustainability.

Recommendation 4. Secretariat senior management should adopt longer-term planning, matching budget horizons with project horizons. Also, rather than take a 'blanket' (one-size-fits-all) approach to budgets (as it appears to do now), the Secretariat should seek to recognise that some programmes of work have far longer timeframes and require a greater level of assurance on multiyear funding. This would enable increased opportunities for building sustainability into the planning, design and implementation of these programmes.

Improving coherence

An increase in genuine and durable co-operation and collaboration with locally based development partners and regional economic communities is expected to strengthen the coherence, effectiveness and ultimate impact of the Secretariat's interventions. While the Secretariat does consult development partners when addressing a country's request, this process is at present largely ad hoc. The current practice of contacting development partners on a case-by-case basis hampers country efforts to lead on development partner co-ordination and maximise the effective use of the range of development partner resources that may be available – thereby helping avoid duplication and a waste of limited resources.

Recommendation 5. The Secretariat's programme-level teams must enhance collaboration with other development partners by engaging them in a formal and systematic way during the PDDs or implementation of country projects, if countries allow.

Also, it has been noted that teams within the same section do not collaborate and are not aware of each other's roles and projects (see Section 3.2). This can lead to inefficient use of resources, which should be tackled.

Recommendation 6. Inter-team co-operation, collaboration and pooling of resources should be promoted. For example, the International Trade Policy Team could provide research capacity to the Trade Competitiveness Team.

Tackling political economy challenges

Recommendation 7. Formal strategies should be adopted to tackle political economy challenges that affect the implementation of different projects. While some of these activities are being implemented on an ad-hoc basis at the initiative of the Secretariat, all divisions should adopt a process of follow-up or an implementation strategy to enhance the sustainability and impact of this work.

Improving effectiveness and impact

The cornerstone of the Secretariat's work is bilateral technical assistance. While the findings of this evaluation indicate that such assistance is rare and highly valued in the development world, its very nature means that it is not always a driver of impact at scale. As such, although bilateral assistance should continue to be work that the Secretariat does, it is sensible to supplement it with other approaches.

Recommendation 8. The nature of support should be broadened beyond bilateral technical assistance. The Secretariat should consider engaging in multicountry projects like the New Petroleum Producers Group and the Blue Charter, or the Hub & Spokes Programme, which appear to have had more concrete and substantial outcomes than the bilateral technical assistance implemented by the Secretariat. These projects could lead members to share experiences, while best practice builds something far greater than the sum of its parts and can help build capacity among member states through peer-to-peer learning, alleviating pressure on the Secretariat.

Improving efficiency and communications with member states

Some external stakeholders consulted identified a worsening in the response rate of the Secretariat, which they attributed mainly to lack of funding and the large number of requests received. Similarly, it was clear from the evaluation that: i) member country representatives wanted Secretariat staff to spend more time in-country and more time building relationships; ii) budgets no longer permit Secretariat staff to spend much time in-country; and iii) adviser staff at the Secretariat spend significant and growing amounts of time on burdensome administration tasks that are arguably not part of their role, reducing their capacity to advise.

Recommendation 9. Constant and timely communication must be ensured with beneficiaries and member states. A Customer Relationship Manager System could be implemented across the whole organisation to ensure that there is systematic control and reminders of the need to engage with member states, replying to their requests in a timely manner.

Similarly, some member states highlighted their lack of awareness regarding the Secretariat's services and the process to request assistance. This might have been due to the fact that such knowledge tends to be embodied within a particular individual at a given ministry or agency. Once that individual moves on to another position or role, such institutional knowledge is often lost.

Recommendation 10. Awareness and capacity must be raised among member states about the Secretariat's services, breaking down the process through which member states can request its support.

Making the best use of programme advisers

Recommendation 11. Greater use of the knowledge and technical expertise of the programme advisers should be encouraged by reducing their responsibilities for day-to-day project management and promoting inter-team co-operation and collaboration. This could be done by making sure that a certain percentage of their time is spent on technical work or assigning a series of technical key performance indicators in their performance reviews.

Improving the Secretariat's reach through online tools

A clear finding from the evaluation was that the Secretariat reforms caused a spike in employee turnover and that staff leaving from member states working with the Secretariat all-too-often risked objectives not being met.

The experience gathered by the EDP in conducting e-learning courses should be replicated to other areas. During the implementation of the EDP under review, the Secretariat launched a newly introduced e-learning courses in four regions and conducted courses on external debt management for 164 participants. The number of available courses has been largely expanded since then.

In the field of debt management, there is also room for more depth and detail to be included in the training, such as guidance in the use of the debt management system tools, debt management practice and techniques, medium-term debt strategy development, and cost and risk analysis of debt portfolios. The inclusion of topics on financial analysis, like bond valuation and yield curve estimation, add to the efficiency of public debt management, because this is an area where debt managers often have less knowledge.

Recommendation 12. An internal centralised platform for knowledge exchange and training should be developed, ensuring that the right processes are in place to avoid the loss of institutional memory. This could be done by improving record-keeping processes and/or adopting appropriate knowledge-management systems.

Recommendation 13. Research should be undertaken to better understand the relative effectiveness of online support versus in-country support. The COVID-19 crisis, which has drastically limited international travel, may prove to be an ideal opportunity to test this.

Recommendation 14. Earlier investments in e-learning at the Secretariat should be built on and an e-learning platform developed that would help new member country staff get quickly 'up to speed' on areas such as ONR or debt management, leading to a reduction in the cost and time associated with training.

Improving the Secretariat's monitoring & evaluation

The results framework and the indicators contained in the Strategic Plan under the period of evaluation were considered inadequate and often unattainable in the time allocated. The results framework lacked a clear theory of change to understand the linkage between the activities and their expected outcomes. One reason for this was that the activities were quite randomly chosen, rather than carefully designed. A notable exception was the Hub & Spokes Programme, inherited from EU-funded TradeCom, which conceptualised and designed it.

Recommendation 15. The definition of indicators for measuring outcomes and impact should be improved and a theory of change approach adopted for project design. The lack of a theory of change for each specific project, and the EDP in general, makes it difficult to unify staff towards a common goal, but also to reject or promote the selection of certain projects.

Linked to the above, the collection of project-level information was not systematic and was without clear reporting guidelines. A computerised system (PMIS), with a monitoring and reporting function, was introduced only during the lifetime of the EDP, such that records and trackers of progress were very rudimentary. The quality of the data was therefore questionable. Given the difficulties of attributing through narrative alone changes in the policies, laws, regulations and capacity in member countries to the efforts of the Secretariat, it is sensible to briefly consider more quantifiable approaches for measuring outcomes and impact.

The 'gold standard' for assessing impact is the randomised controlled trial (RCT), which has its origins in health sciences as a means for determining the effectiveness of an intervention over placebo. This is increasingly used in international development to establish impact. However, RCTs are hugely expensive, the work that the Secretariat does is too varied and large scale, and the sample size of potential countries is too small for an RCT to conclusively demonstrate impact.

Recommendation 16. The collection of project-level data should be improved for monitoring, evaluation and learning. One possible solution to explore is the practice of matched controls. This involves identifying countries, broadly similar in context to the ones where interventions are planned, to act as controls. By comparing the impact in the countries where the team works to the ones acting as controls, it would be possible for the Secretariat to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of its efforts. Properly implemented, this could be an improvement over current, narrative-driven approaches to impact assessment. Contribution analysis could also be explored to provide a better understanding of the Secretariat's actual role in achieving the impact of its interventions.

Recommendation 17. A detailed review of the Secretariat's financial management system should be undertaken, along with associated training, to ensure that staff fully understand the coding and classification system. As a result, the Secretariat could collect the itemisation of expenses and overall expenditure categories, including staff cost, as well as the allocation of costs between technical work, project management, administration, etc. Training would help ensure increased accuracy in reporting and the consistency and relevance of the financial data for future evaluations.

Recommendation 18. It should be ensured that project budgets are properly tracked. In this evaluation, the team did not have access to activity-level budgets and expenditure, which made the efficiency analysis weak. Detailed planning and breakdown would be beneficial for future analysis and cost-benefit analysis.

Specific programme recommendations

Recommendation 19. In terms of the Secretariat's debt management work, the

development of a course should be considered, for field training and e-learning, that covers valuation and analysis of government debt securities. The e-learning course currently offered is a first step, but it has room for further extension to cover topics in more depth. An increase in depth and coverage is also needed to achieve a better understanding of the practice (and related e-learning courses) on domestic debt management and the use of Horizon. Other areas of the EDP would also benefit from a similar concept, which wouldn't need to be started from scratch. For example, in the trade area, the Secretariat could partner with the WTO's e-learning campus, or the ITC SME Academy, to promote access to such resources by its membership.

Recommendation 20. Horizon should be revitalised by undertaking a thorough re-assessment of its usability and training needs because, despite the substantial resources already provided for its development, it has yet to reach its full potential as a tool that is highly relevant for public debt management.

Annex 1: Terms of Reference

Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Development Programme 2013/14–2016/17

1. Introduction and context

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent and equal sovereign states. Its special strength lies in the combination of its diversity and shared inheritance. Its members are bound together by respect for all states and peoples; by shared values and principles; and by concern for the vulnerable. The Commonwealth Secretariat in London is the backbone of the Commonwealth. It convenes summits and high-level meetings; executes plans agreed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government; promotes Commonwealth values and principles; and facilitates the work of the Commonwealth organisations.

The Commonwealth values and principles are inscribed in the Commonwealth Charter and include a commitment to sustainable development, as follows:

We recognise that sustainable development can help to eradicate poverty by pursuing inclusive growth while preserving and conserving natural ecosystems and promoting social equity.

We stress the importance of sustainable economic and social transformation to eliminate poverty and meet the basic needs of the vast majority of the people of the world and reiterate that economic and social progress enhances the sustainability of democracy.

We are committed to removing wide disparities and unequal living standards as guided by internationally agreed development goals. We are also committed to building economic resilience and promoting social equity, and we reiterate the value in technical assistance, capacity building and practical cooperation in promoting development. We are committed to an effective, equitable, rules-based multilateral trading system, the freest possible flow of multilateral trade on terms fair and equitable to all, while taking into account the special requirements of small states and developing countries.

We also recognise the importance of information and communication technologies as powerful instruments of development; delivering savings, efficiencies and growth in

our economies, as well as promoting education, learning and the sharing of culture. We are committed to strengthening its use while enhancing its security, for the purpose of advancing our societies.

The Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17 (hereafter 'the Plan') marked the beginning of a new chapter for the Secretariat. The Plan was prepared in light of the guidance from the Heads of Government, EPG recommendations, as well as the Secretary-General's consultations with the Board of Governors, senior management and staff of the Secretariat, and input from other Commonwealth organisations.

The Plan had six core areas of strategic focus that included: 1. *Democracy* – greater adherence to Commonwealth political values and principles; 2. *Public institutions* – more effective, efficient and equitable public governance; 3. *Social Development* – enhanced positive impact of social development; 4. *Youth* – youth more integrated and valued in political and development processes; 5. *Development: pan-Commonwealth* – more inclusive economic growth and social and sustainable development; and 6. *Development: small states and vulnerable states* – strengthened resilience of small states and vulnerable states.

Under the Economic Development pillar (5), the Secretariat's programme of delivery was focused on four intermediate outcomes:

- 5.1 Effective policy mechanisms for integration and participation in the global trading system;
- 5.2 Commonwealth Principles and values advances in global development and financing decisions;
- 5.3 National frameworks facilitate effective debt management; and,
- 5.4 Effective, equitable, transparent and sustainable management of marine and other natural resources.

To realise the first intermediate outcome (5.1), the Secretariat engaged with emerging issues on trade integration and economic co-operation that affected Commonwealth developing countries. Trade policy-makers, negotiators, regulators and other stakeholders benefited from timely, relevant and high-quality research, analysis and technical

assistance upon which to frame economic goals and strategies. The focus was on developing institutional capacity at the national and regional level, in trade facilitation and negotiations and trade policy development and implementation.

To reach intermediate outcome (5.2), the Secretariat advanced its work in the area of global development and financing decisions through its policy work, expert placement, research and by convening efforts in global issues of relevance to Commonwealth member states. It worked towards the following: scanning major global developments; policy contributions to the G20 Working Group on Development; and facilitating discussions and developing collective Commonwealth positions on the post-2015 global development agenda.

In line with EPG recommendations (Recommendations 33 and 34) on debt management, the Secretariat assisted members to achieve intermediate outcome 5.3 through the design and implementation of sound and prudent debt management policies and practices. This role included capacity building in public debt management, advising member states on the appropriate legal and institutional structures;

developing government domestic bond markets; formulating and implementing debt strategies within a risk management framework; providing a suite of software solutions for recording, analysing, monitoring and reporting public debt; and assisting in setting up accurate and timely databases covering various debt categories.

Intermediate outcome 5.4 was targeted through actions to support member states to develop and benefit from marine resources by: securing access to marine resources through the delimitation of maritime boundaries in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea; realising the value of the ocean economy through coastal policy-making, investment and decision-making; and integrating ocean governance into national governance frameworks.

Members were also supported in the development of other natural resources through model laws and practice. The Secretariat supported the development of legal, commercial and environmental frameworks, as well as fiscal regimes, and in the preparation of transparent and fair bidding rounds to attract foreign investment.

2. Programme delivery, monitoring and reporting

Programme and projects were designed for each of the intermediate outcomes as follows.²⁹

	Project ID	Project title	Total budget (2013/14–16/17)	Directorate
1.	NJCWG0891	Pan-Commonwealth Maritime Boundaries and Ocean Governance Assistance	£2,304,743.00	TONR
2.	NJCWG0894	Pan-Commonwealth Natural Resources Advisory Assistance	£1,070,741.00	TONR
3.	NOCWG0960	The Hub & Spokes Programme 2 – Enhancing Trade Capacity in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific	£7,864,116.00	TONR
4.	NXCWG0898	Supporting Trade and Competitiveness in the Commonwealth	£1,606,164.00	TORN
5.	NBCWG0940	Advancing Commonwealth Principles and Values in Global Development and Financing Decisions	£1,051,229.00	EYSD
6.	NBCWG0923	International Trade Policy	£1,345,343.00	TONR
7.	NXCWG0927	Global Project – Strengthening Debt Management Capacity in Member States	£2,905,635.00	EYSD
8.	NXCWG0916	Re-engineering of the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System	£2,056,800.00	EYSD
9.	NXCWG0999	Providing Commonwealth Member States with a Trade Finance Facility	£140,000.00	TONR

29 In the Secretariat's RBM framework and Programme Management Information System, programmes and projects are used synonymously. However, all projects as designed and listed in the table are in fact 'programmes', being the collective of a number of projects delivered against a common objective.

The above project designs covered a comprehensive structure that included:

- Contextual analysis and project rationale
- Logical frameworks;
- Risk register;
- Monitoring plan;
- Implementation plan (workplan); and
- Detailed budget

During 2015–16, the Secretariat introduced a new system for monitoring and reporting with more robust, smart indicators and a six-monthly reporting requirement. A risk management component was further developed to project designs.

Programmes delivery was supported through the operations of the Technical Assistance Unit, which managed the placement of long-term experts in member states. In addition, the other enabling outcome areas of partnerships, global advocacy and Commonwealth profile also played a facilitative and supporting role in realising the intermediate outcomes. While gender equality was not a specific objective within Pillar 5, the Secretariat's approach to gender mainstreaming sought to ensure programmes were designed and delivered to address gender considerations in the specific policy context.

A number of other evaluations were undertaken during the review period and some are currently underway that may include evaluative information of relevance to this study. In particular, a Strategic Plan Evaluation and a Meta Evaluation was completed in 2017. Currently, an end-project evaluation of the Hub & Spokes Programmes, contributing to intermediate outcome 5.1, as well as a programme review of the Debt Management Programme, both commenced in March 2019 and are expected to be finalised during the summer of 2019.

3. Key challenges in the programme delivery context

A number of challenges experienced during the period under review that needs to inform the evaluation context include:

- This was the first comprehensive Strategic Plan that was implemented within a results-based management (RBM) approach. A

number of key changes to the RBM framework were made and implemented during programme implementation.

- The institutional capacity for planning, monitoring and evaluation was weak and as such, monitoring plans were often developed on paper but not implemented.
- The organisation went through significant reforms, that included two phases of restructuring which led to a sharp decline in staff numbers and a heavy loss of institutional memory as most of the more experienced staff left. This reform period slowed down programme implementation.
- Financial contributions from member states drastically reduced year-on-year, affecting the implementation of the planned results framework at the start of the Strategic Plan period. The reduction in budgets was not effectively reflected in the changes in programme scope.

4. Purpose and users of the evaluation

The Strategy, Portfolio and Partnerships Division (SPPD) is commissioning an independent evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's support in Economic Development 2013/14–2016/17. This commissioning is in line with the Secretariat's Evaluation Plan, which provides for at least one programme evaluation to be conducted each financial year.

Programme evaluations at the Secretariat serve both an accountability and learning purpose. For the primary intended users, the programme and project managers within the Directorate of Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development (EYSD), the evaluation serves a learning purpose, clarifying what delivery strategies work and in which contexts. This information will then serve to refine the current strategies of ongoing and new projects and programmes.

Programme evaluations also serve to evidence the outcomes realised under the previous Strategic Plan, thereby serving an accountability function and informing the Secretariat's member states, through its Board of Governors, of the results of their contribution to the organisation.

The final evaluation report and management response will be published on the Commonwealth Secretariat's website and therefore accessible to the wider Commonwealth countries and partners.

5. Evaluation scope and key questions

The study will cover the four-year period of the Strategic Plan 2013/14–2016/17. The evaluation will provide an independent opinion on the performance and results of the programme. It will assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the support provided by the Secretariat in meeting the needs of its member states and make recommendations from both the strategic and operational perspectives, to optimise the utilisation of resources in achieving sustainable impact. Specifically, the evaluation will:

- review the extent to which the Secretariat support in Economic Development was relevant to the needs of member countries, and consistent with intermediate outcomes of the Strategic Plan;
- assess the extent to which Commonwealth member states may have benefited from the Secretariat's work and tangible outcomes realised;
- assess the design and strategies used in the delivery of the programme, including rights-based perspectives and suggest improvements, if necessary;
- assess the extent of gender mainstreaming enabled and realised in Economic Development work;
- review the operational aspects of the programme delivery from economic, efficiency, effectiveness and equity perspectives to provide recommendations for improvement;
- identify issues, challenges and lessons learned and make recommendations both strategic and operational.

The evaluation will utilise the criteria recommended for evaluating public sector operations by OECD-DAC.³⁰ These criteria and questions consistent with their assessment are outlined below:

- (i) **Relevance: How relevant were the programme interventions in addressing key global issues and member states' development priorities.**
- (ii) **Efficiency:** To what extent have programme interventions delivered cost-effective outcomes and reflected an efficient allocation of resources?
- (iii) **Effectiveness:** To what extent have the interventions achieved or are expected to achieve their planned results? How have interventions added value to what member countries are doing collectively, regionally or with other partners?
- (iv) **Sustainability: What is the likelihood that the achievement of programme results and benefits will be sustained.** How resilient are the outcomes and impact to risks?
- (v) **Impact.** How have the Secretariat's interventions contributed to long-term changes in development and growth in institutional capacity in its member countries?

A fuller development of the evaluation questions will be undertaken during the inception period of the evaluation consultancy and with the full participation of the staff and management of the EYSD Directorate. The following questions were based on initial consultations on the Terms of Reference and will be further developed within the evaluation framework during the inception phase:

- Does the Secretariat have comparative advantage in delivering the selected programme areas?
- Did the organisational reforms improve effectiveness in programme delivery?
- How and to what extent did the Secretariat contribute to the major development objectives of member countries?
- What contributions has the Secretariat's research at pan-Commonwealth level made to thought leadership and advocacy at the international level? How relevant is this aspect of the Secretariat's work to the member states?
- Advocacy and consensus building are considered hard to measure. What lessons has the Secretariat drawn over the years in the delivery and measurement of results in this area, particularly on international

30 OECD/DAC (2004), 'Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management', OECD, Paris.

trade, development financing and G-20 engagements?

- Is the Secretariat's debt management systems and debt policy technical support keeping up with the needs and challenges of member states? What is the Secretariat's comparative advantage in continuing to deliver debt management systems in member states? Should the Secretariat continue to provide and support debt management systems? How sustainable is this approach? What are the alternative solutions available to member countries and how sustainable are they?
- How effective and efficient is the mode of delivery through programme advisers, as opposed to placement of experts in member states? What is the broader impact and implication of using either approach on the Secretariat's visibility, relevance and capacity to be effective in delivery of the broader mandate of the organisation?
- How are CFTC funds effectively used in Economic Development Programmes. Are programme activities aligned to the memorandum of understanding on the utilisation of CFTC funds?

6. Methodology

The consultant will include the following key steps in the conduct of the evaluation for information collection, analysis and report writing during the study:

- review of all pertinent records and data related to the Economic Development work of the Secretariat, including earlier reviews;
- interview relevant Secretariat staff directly engaged in the delivery and others whose work impacts on the delivery of the Commonwealth Economic Development Programme;
- interview selected stakeholders – governments, programme partners, collaborating institutions and consultants – through field visits and electronically/ telephonically;
- undertake any additional activities, as may be agreed with SPPD, in order to enable the proper execution of the review.

Sampling: The evaluators will review all the programmes developed and implemented under intermediate outcomes 5. Sampling will inform the field missions to be undertaken as part of the study and will be drawn from the list of target countries within each programme area during the period. From this population of targeted countries, the evaluators will purposively sample eight (8) countries to ensure regional representation, an adequate representation of the Commonwealth's 'small state' identity and a reflection of those countries most frequently targeted by programmes against those least targeted.

7. Deliverables

The evaluation will provide the following deliverables to the Secretariat:

- an inception report with the evaluation framework, work plan and methodology;
- a draft evaluation report (following the interviews, survey and field work);
- a dissemination seminar/ presentation on the evaluation findings and recommendations; and
- a final evaluation report, incorporating all feedback/ comments received on the draft report and during the dissemination seminar.

The deliverables must be submitted to SPPD electronically as a Microsoft Word document. The inception report is due within two weeks after the initial briefing with the Secretariat staff and the review of literature. The draft evaluation report is to be submitted within six weeks of completion of the survey and field visits. Following the presentation of the evaluation findings at a seminar at the Secretariat and receipt of feedback comments from the Secretariat and other stakeholders on the draft report, the consultant(s) is/are expected to submit a revised final evaluation report. The draft (and final) evaluation reports must be no more than 100 pages, excluding all annexes. The copyright of the evaluation report shall belong to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

8. Confidentiality

The Commonwealth Secretariat and the consultant will keep confidential at all times any information or data that may be exchanged, acquired, disclosed or shared in connection with any activity conducted

pursuant with the assignment, save where such information is already in the public domain or is project material intended for publication or is required to be disclosed by any applicable law or regulations or where the extent of such disclosure is authorised in writing by the other.

9. Schedule and level of effort

The study is planned to commence in late spring 2019. It is estimated that 120 consultant days will be needed to complete the study, including agreed fieldwork. Travel and Daily Subsistence Allowance expenses related to country field visits for validation of findings and documentation of country case studies will be covered separately as per Secretariat's Travel Policy for external consultants. The consultant(s) will work in close collaboration with SPPD.

10. Location

The consultant(s) will need to travel to:

- the Commonwealth Secretariat office in London, UK, for initial meetings and interviews with Secretariat staff and for presentation and discussion of the draft reports and recommendations; and
 - country field visits, as agreed with the Secretariat, for documentation of country case studies and validation of findings.
- substantive knowledge and experience in undertaking reviews, evaluations and critical research;
 - knowledge and experience of economic development work and programming matters, especially in the field of the global trading system, global financing, debt management, maritime and natural resource management, as well as challenges and issues of the measuring of progress in economic development work;
 - ability to handle and analyse big datasets, and conducting multicountry reviews and multimillion-pound projects;
 - excellent communication skills, both spoken and written English, including experience in the production of clear and concise reports for international/inter-governmental institutions, and delivery of messages to a diversified audience;
 - good understanding of the work of multilateral organisations, foreign and diplomatic institutions, and how they relate with member states, especially the Commonwealth; and
 - familiarity with Sustainable Development Goals and the international governance architecture.

Any other relevant work is to be undertaken at the consultant(s)' normal place of work and there is no provision for any other travel.

11. Consultancy requirements

The consultant(s)/ consultancy team should demonstrate the following:

Annex 2: Activities Reported Under the Economic Development Programme

Country	Description	Area of Work	Year Reported
Africa	East Africa – consensus reached to institutionalise and implement a 'Transports Internationaux Routiers' Carnet system	5.1 Trade	2014/15
	E-learning course on external debt piloted	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
Antigua and Barbuda	Development of National Maritime Policy Framework, Finalisation of maritime boundaries with France	5.4 ONR	2014/15 2015/16
	Draft National Maritime Policy submitted to the government	5.4 ONR	2016/17
Asia Region	E-learning course on external debt piloted	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
	Regional trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
Bahamas, The	Institutional strengthening of the Credit Union sector	5.2 Global development and financing	2013/14
	Detailed reform plan on public debt management drawn up	5.3 Debt management	2013/14
	Central Bank in the process of implementing recommendation to facilitate improved access to funds	5.3 Debt management	2014/15
	Accepted and began implementation of recommendations relating to bond market development	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
	Advised on National Ocean Policies and Governance Regimes	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Petroleum Bill developed by the Secretariat passed into law	5.4 ONR	2015/16
Barbados	Landmark agreement to settle boundary disputes Barbados/ Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Signing of maritime boundary treaties between Saint Vincent and the Grenadines/ Barbados	5.4 ONR	2015/16
	Draft maritime boundary treaties Saint Lucia/ Barbados	5.4 ONR	2015/16
	Strengthening policy framework and institutional arrangements	5.3 Debt management	2013/14

(Continued)

Country	Description	Area of Work	Year Reported
	Government receiving assistance in CS-DRMS	5.3 Debt management	2014/15
	Formulated a development plan for the services sector in Barbados	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Belize	Review of the country's third-party fiscal regime	5.4 ONR	2016/17
	Subsidy programme brought in line with WTO regulations	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	National trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	National Trade Policy in development and National Roadmap on Trade Facilitation	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	Technical assistance to attain compliance with WTO's agreement on subsidies and countervailing measures	5.1 Trade	2015/16
Botswana	Draft Mineral Policy	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Draft Mineral Policy completed	5.4 ONR	2015/16
	Designed a new Aid-for-Trade Strategy	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	H&S national trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	H&S adviser supported the implementation of the EU-SADC EPA, AGOA strategy response, and review of National Trade Policy	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Caribbean and the Americas	Strengthened financial sector regulation through Commonwealth institutional linkages	5.2 Global development and financing	2014/15 – 2015/16
	Development of Eastern Caribbean Regional Oceans Policy and National Oceans Policies, Collaboration with World Bank on Blue Economy	5.4 ONR	2015/16
	E-learning course on external debt piloted	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
	Regional trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	H&S adviser completed regional trade capacity needs assessment and established the Regional Trade Facilitation Committee (RTFC)	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Cyprus	Adopted CS-DRMS	5.3 Debt management	2016/17
Fiji	Accepted and began implementation of recommendations relating to bond market development	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
	Adopted Horizon public debt analytical tool	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
	H&S national trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2014/15
	National Trade Policy developed	5.1 Trade	2015/16

(Continued)

Country	Description	Area of Work	Year Reported
Ghana	New upstream Oil and Gas Policy	5.4 ONR	2014/15
Grenada	Work with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Lucia to explore options for resolution of their expected maritime boundaries with Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela	5.4 ONR	2015/16
	National Export Strategy developed	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Guyana	Formulation of a new upstream Oil and Gas Policy	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Submission for extended continental shelf approved	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Key reforms through the establishment of Petrol Commission as a result of the new Petrol Commission Bill	5.4 ONR	2016/17
	Development of a Public Debt Management Act	5.3 Debt management	2016/17
	H&S national trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
India	Trade Ministry launched a Commonwealth SME Association /technical assistance to identify the development of India's global value chains and links to LDCs	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	Opportunities and challenges of Brexit for India	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	India's global value chains: linking LDCs – report submitted to the Ministry of Commerce	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Jamaica	Assisted in the development of a new Model Petroleum Agreement	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Successful negotiation for an upstream exploration operation	5.4 ONR	2015/16
	Review of gas regulations and petroleum sector legislative reform	5.4 ONR	2016/17
	Adopted Horizon public debt analytical tool	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
	Consensus reached to develop dry-docking/ ship repairs	5.1 Trade	2014/15
	National Export Strategy developed	5.1 Trade	2014/15
	Government endorsed a new National Export Strategy – 2015 to 2018	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	Opportunities and challenges of Brexit for Jamaica and CARIFORUM	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	<i>New Products and New Markets Scheme Report</i> launched	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	National Trade Policies in development	5.1 Trade	2016/17

(Continued)

Country	Description	Area of Work	Year Reported
Kenya	Review of export strategies for non-tourism services	5.1 Trade	2013/14
	Consensus reached to establish apex body for non-tourism services, H&S adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2014/15 – 2015/16
	H&S adviser supported the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations, EU-EAC EPA negotiations, review of National Trade Policy and National Export Strategy	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	Developed a Services Export Competitiveness Strategy	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Kenya and Rwanda	Adding value to exports by boosting design capacity – launched Commonwealth COMESA Regional Design Studio	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Kiribati	H&S national trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
Lesotho	H&S national trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	Assisted SADC Trade in Services negotiations, negotiations in the Tripartite Free Trade Area Agreement (TFTA), and the African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) negotiations	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Malawi	National trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	National Trade Policy approved and completion of market access study	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Malta	Assistance to formulate the Public Debt Act and detailed reform plan on public debt management drawn up	5.3 Debt management	2013/14
	Accepted recommendations to strengthen policy frameworks to provide legal frameworks for debt management	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
Mauritius	Advice provided to implement a Joint Management Agreement on extended continental shelf	5.4 ONR	2013/14
	Developed a new seabed minerals law and draft legislation concerning the management of offshore petroleum resources	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Clarification of roles within the new National Oceans Council	5.4 ONR	2016/17
	Adopted Horizon public debt analytical tool	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
	Establishment of a sovereign wealth fund (SWF) – Mauritius	5.2 Global development and financing	2013/14
	Look Africa Policy and Strategy established to facilitate trade and investment	5.1 Trade	2013/14

(Continued)

Country	Description	Area of Work	Year Reported
	Regional integration and export diversifications advanced	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	Support for Mauritius' participation in the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) negotiations	5.1 Trade	2015/16–2016/17
Namibia	Renewable Energy Policy	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Renewable Energy Policy to be implemented by government	5.4 ONR	2015/16
Nigeria	Strengthened National Trade in Services Programme launched	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	Opportunities and challenges of Brexit for Nigeria	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	Policy advocacy capacity building for Nigeria in West Africa EU–EPA	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Pacific region	Technical support to the Ministry of Mineral and Natural Resources of the Cook Islands on the sustainable management and development of seabed mineral resources, Support for the delimitation of maritime boundaries	5.4 ONR	2013/14–2016/17
	E-learning course on external debt piloted	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
	Development and approval of five-year Strategic Plan of Action for Fisheries and Aquaculture in ACP states	5.1 Trade	2013/14
	Technical Support for Met. Services to Pacific Island Countries (SPREP)	5.1 Trade	2013/14
	PACER-Plus negotiations completed	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Pakistan	Finalised National Export Strategy	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	Cost of Implementing Trade Facilitation Agreement undertaken	5.1 Trade	2018/17
	Export Diversification Strategy for Pakistan	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	Export of Services Strategy for Pakistan	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Pan-Commonwealth	Technical support to the Fisheries Mechanism of the African Caribbean Pacific Secretariat	5.1 Trade	2013/14
	Assistance to small states on multilateral trade issues	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Papua New Guinea	Advice on National Ocean Policies and Governance Regimes	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Completed submission to UN Commission on the limits of the continental shelf	5.4 ONR	2016/17
	Preparing to transition new Oceans Office to a permanent body	5.4 ONR	2016/17
	Accepted recommendations of PACER-Plus	5.1 Trade	2016/17

(Continued)

Country	Description	Area of Work	Year Reported
Samoa	H&S national trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	Technical assistance in preparations necessary for implementation of Citizenship by Investment legislation 2016	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Seychelles	Advice provided to implement a Joint Management Agreement on extended continental shelf	5.4 ONR	2013/14
	Received assistance to integrate management of oceans resources through a Blue Economy	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Advice on National Ocean Policies and Governance Regimes	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Completion of draft Blue Economy Roadmap	5.4 ONR	2015/16
	Seychelles Blue Economy Strategic Roadmap and implementation	5.4 ONR	2015/16-2016/17
	Market access issues and bilateral negotiations/ agreements completed with nine countries	5.1 Trade	2013/14
	Institutional strengthening (Trade Policy and negotiation), Ministry of Finance	5.1 Trade	2013/14-2014/15
	Implementation of Industrial Property Rights Act 2014 in compliance with WTO TRIPS Agreement	5.1 Trade	2015/16-2016/17
Sierra Leone	Action plan developed for packaging industry	5.1 Trade	2015/16
Solomon Islands	Vanuatu and Solomon Islands supported to sign an agreement on their respective boundaries	5.4 ONR	2016/17
South Africa	Recommendation from review of fruit chain and benchmarking against major competitors implemented – reducing cargo dues by 8% in 2013	5.1 Trade	2013/14
	Opportunities and challenges of Brexit for South Africa	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Sri Lanka	Policy advisory mission on domestic debt market	5.3 Debt management	2013/14
	Accepted and began implementation of recommendations relating to bond market development	5.3 Debt management	2015/16
	Preparatory meetings for ten WTO ministerial meetings held	5.1 Trade	2014/15
	Export Diversification Strategy for Sri Lanka	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	Report to assist Bilateral Trade Negotiations of Sri Lanka with Pakistan, India and Singapore	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	Capacity building of export credit industry – establishment of an Export Import Bank	5.1 Trade	2015/16

(Continued)

Country	Description	Area of Work	Year Reported
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Built national capacity on trade negotiations and provided technical assistance for compliance with the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement	5.1 Trade	2016/17
	Training programme for custom brokers in Trade Facilitation Agreement	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	H&S national trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	Assisted with implementation of nation-wide bar-coding system and standards on importation of tyres	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Saint Kitts and Nevis	Support for conclusion of maritime boundary agreement with the Netherlands	5.4 ONR	2014/15
Saint Lucia	Long Term Expert supported development of a National Sustainable Development Strategy	5.4 ONR	2013/14
	Draft maritime boundary treatise Saint Lucia/ Barbados	5.4 ONR	2015/16
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	Legal and technical advice resulted in OECS Maritime Boundary Policy revision	5.4 ONR	2013/14
	Landmark agreement to settle boundary disputes Barbados/ Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Advised on National Ocean Policies and Governance Regimes	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Signing of maritime boundary treatise between Saint Vincent and the Grenadines/ Barbados	5.4 ONR	2015/16
	Development of National Maritime Administration	5.4 ONR	2016/17
	Strengthening of Maritime and Ocean Affairs	5.4 ONR	2016/17
Swaziland	Developed a new upstream Petroleum Bill	5.4 ONR	2014/15
	Adoption of guidelines and regulations for public debt management	5.3 Debt management	2013/14
	Technical support to the Entrepreneurship and Business Development Centre, University of Swaziland	5.1 Trade	2013/14
Tonga	H&S national trade adviser deployed	5.1 Trade	2015/16
	Supported the review the National Trade Policy and Draft of NES	5.1 Trade	2016/17
Trinidad and Tobago	Work with Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Saint Lucia to explore options for resolution of their expected maritime boundaries with Grenada, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela	5.4 ONR	2015/16
	Implemented recommended reforms to reorganise debt office with improvements to risk management	5.3 Debt management	2015/16

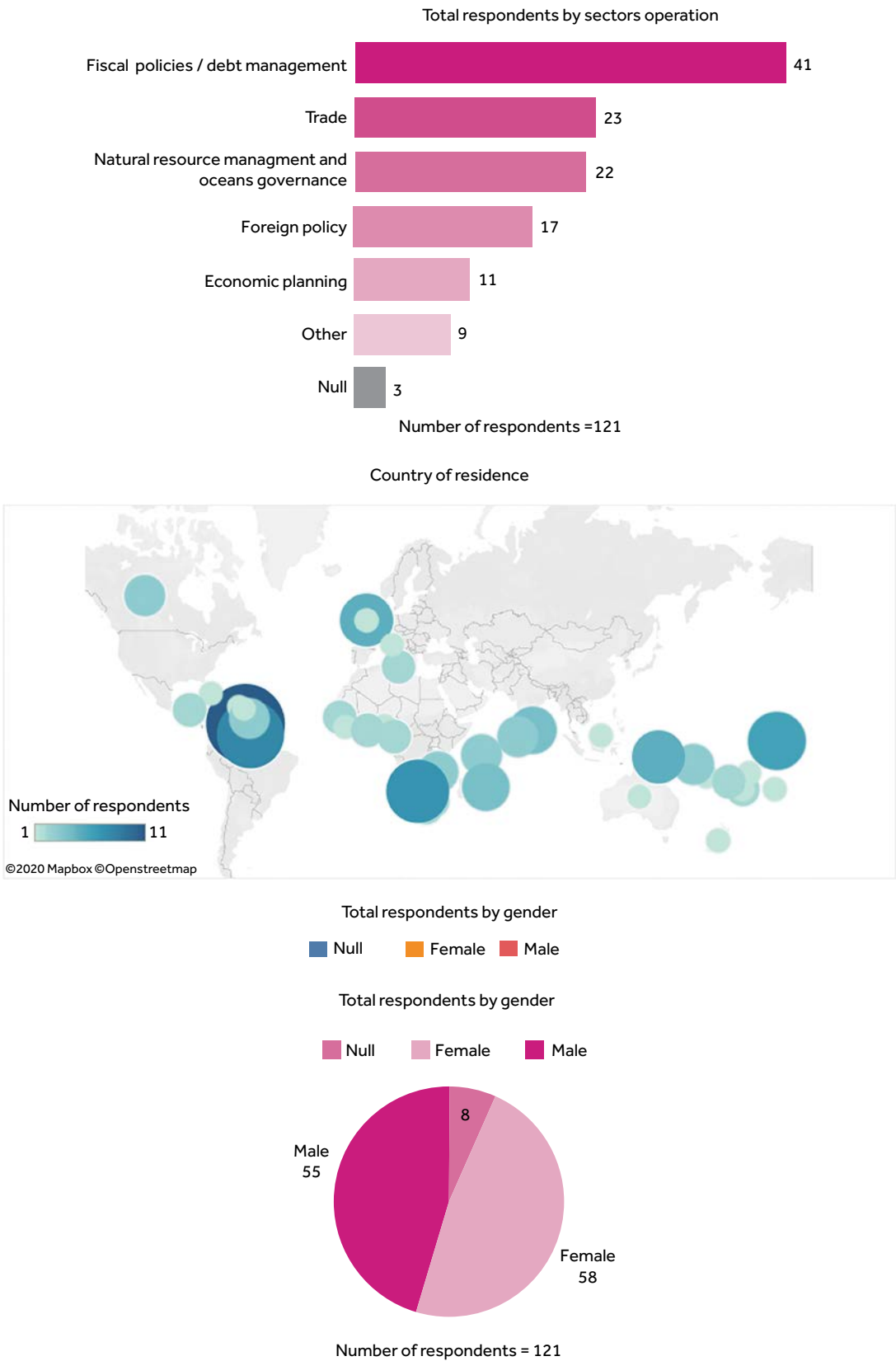
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Country	Description	Area of Work	Year Reported
United Kingdom	Supported implementation of the Sustainable Tourism Master Plan (STMP), Anguilla	5.1 Trade	2013/14 – 2014/15
Vanuatu	Vanuatu and Solomon Islands supported to sign an agreement on their respective boundaries	5.4 ONR	2016/17

Annex 3: Survey Characteristics

The survey was online from 3 April 2020 until 5 May 2020. The survey was responded to by 121 people.

The characteristics of respondents is provided in the figures below.



Annex 4: Questionnaire

Independent Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Development Programme, 2013/14–2016/17

Dear Stakeholder,

As part of its Programme of Independent Evaluations, the Commonwealth Secretariat is currently undertaking an evaluation of the former Economic Development Programme, 2013/2014–2016/2017. The areas covered under our Economic Development Programme include: trade, global development & financing, debt management and fiscal policies, and maritime & natural resource management.

The study will cover four years of the Commonwealth Secretariat's previous Strategic Plan from July 2013 to June 2017. Linkages will, however, be made to the current strategic period to ensure that the findings are relevant and up to date. The evaluation will provide an independent opinion on the design, performance and results of the programme. It will also make recommendations from both the strategic and operational perspectives, to optimise the utilisation of resources in achieving sustainable impact.

All response will remain strictly confidential, with individual responses not being provided to the Commonwealth Secretariat. Results will be provided in aggregate form.

We thank you for your kind co-operation in filling out ten questions on this online survey which should take between 5 and 15 minutes of your time.

Yours faithfully,

Paul Baker,

Team Leader

Independent Evaluation of the Commonwealth's Economic Development Programme

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pbaker@tradeeconomics.com

International Economics Consulting Ltd.

Grand Baie Business Park, Suites 207–208

Grand Baie – 30510 – Mauritius

Tel: +230 263 33 24

www.TradeEconomics.com

Basic information

Gender:

Country of residence:

Position:

Company / Organisation:

Sector:

Fiscal policies / debt management

Trade

Oceans governance

Natural resource management

Economic planning

Foreign policy

Other (please specify)

1. How aware are you of the Commonwealth Secretariat's work?

	Highly aware	Aware	Slightly aware	Not at all aware
Trade				
Global development and financing				
Debt management and fiscal policies				
Maritime and natural resource management				

Can you please provide any examples?

2. What has been your involvement in the Secretariats work?

	Direct involve-ment	Indirect involve-ment	Not at all involved
Trade			
Global devel-opment and financing			
Debt man-agement and fiscal policies			
Maritime and natural resource management			

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Can you please provide any examples?

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

The Secretariat's technical support has been consistent with the needs of my country.

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree
Don't know

Can you please provide any examples?

The Secretariats' technical support has kept up with the needs and challenges of my country.

Can you please provide any examples?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Trade					
Global development and financing					
Debt management and fiscal policies					
Maritime and natural resource management					

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?

The support provided by the Secretariat in the areas below is aligned to the needs and priority agenda of my country.

Can you please provide any examples?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
Trade					
Global development and financing					
Debt management and fiscal policies					
Maritime and natural resource management					

6. **How can the Secretariat's work and effectiveness in your country be improved?**
7. **What is the Secretariat's value-added compared to other development partners working in your country?**
8. **What are some of the constraints impacting on the effectiveness of the Secretariat's interventions / support in your country?**
9. **In your opinion, what is the level of impact achieved by the Secretariat's interventions?**

Strong impact

Medium impact

Low impact

No impact

Don't know

10. **The Evaluators may like the opportunity to discuss your experiences with the Commonwealth Secretariat. If you do not mind being contacted directly, please provide your contact details as follows.**

Full name:

Email address:

Phone number:

Skype ID:

Can you please provide some examples?

Annex 5: Events Organised by the International Trade Policy Section

Year	Event	Date	Venue	Participation
2013	LDC IV Monitor – Expert Group Meeting	3–6 February 2013	Dar es Salaam, Tanzania	LDCs
2013	Commonwealth Workshop on Trade Policy and Negotiations Skills for the Pacific Region	4–8 February 2013	Port Vila, Vanuatu	Pacific region
2013	Commonwealth Workshop on Trade Policy and Negotiation Skills for the Eastern Caribbean Region	4–8 March 2013	Castries, Saint Lucia	Caribbean region
2013	International Conference on Regional Trade and Economic Cooperation in South Asia: Trends, Challenges and Prospects	2–3 May 2013	New Delhi, India	Commonwealth / International
2013	Workshop on Strengthening Regional Supply Chains in Leather Sector in Sub-Saharan Africa	6–7 June 2013	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	African region
2013	Workshop on Multilateral Trade Issues: Development perspectives for SVEs [small and vulnerable economies] and LDCs, organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat	25–26 June 2013	Geneva, Switzerland	Commonwealth / International
2013	Regional Consultation on 'Road to Bali: South Asian Priorities for the Ninth WTO Ministerial'	2–3 July 2013	Colombo, Sri Lanka	South Asia region
2013	Sixth South Asia Economic Summit (VI SAES) 2–4 September 2013 – Colombo	2–4 September 2013	Colombo, Sri Lanka	South Asian region
2013	(WTO Public Forum 2013) Technology and Trade: Issues for LDCs, Sub-Saharan Africa and Small Vulnerable Economies	2 October 2013	Geneva, Switzerland	Pan-Commonwealth
2013	International Conference on Upcoming Ninth WTO Ministerial in Bali: <i>Securing the LDCs Deliverables</i>	25–27 October 2013	Dhaka, Bangladesh	International/LDCs

(Continued)

Year	Event	Date	Venue	Participation
2013	Reflections on Global Trade: From Doha to Bali and Beyond (during the Ninth WTO Ministerial Conference)	3 December 2013	Bali, Indonesia	Pan-Commonwealth
2013	Regional Workshop on 'South-South Trade and Regional Value Chains in Africa'	10–11 December 2013	Nairobi, Kenya	African region
2014	Regional Workshop on 'WTO and Post-Bali Agenda for Africa'	24–25 April 2014	Nairobi, Kenya	East African region
2014	Tentative Agenda Regional meeting on 'WTO and Post-Bali Agenda for West Africa'	28–29 April 2014	Accra, Ghana	West African region
2014	Regional Workshop on 'WTO and Post-Bali Agenda for Asia'	5–6 May 2014	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Asian region
2014	Towards A Post-Bali WTO Trade Agenda: Issues for the Caribbean	22–23 May 2014	Bridgetown, Barbados	Caribbean
2014	South-South Trade and Sub-Saharan Africa: Issues and Way Forward (During 2014 WTO Public Forum)	3 October 2014	Geneva, Switzerland	African region
2014	International Conference on 'Mega Trading Blocs: Implications for Developing Countries'	15–16 December 2014	New Delhi, India	South Asian region
2015	Consultative Meeting of Commonwealth Expert Group on Trade (CEGT)	25–26 March 2015	Valetta, Malta	Pan-Commonwealth Experts
2015	Conference on Mega-Trading Blocs and the Future of African Trade: Moving from Fragmentation to Inclusive Trade Multilateralism	26–27 May 2015	Nairobi, Kenya	African region
2015	Workshop on Post-Bali Issues and Preparation for the 10 th WTO Ministerial Conference: A South Asia Perspective	18–19 May 2015	Colombo, Sri Lanka	South Asian region
2015	Commonwealth Biennial Trade Symposium, 'Shaping a Global Trade Agenda for Development'	23–24 June 2015	Johannesburg, South Africa	Pan-Commonwealth
2015	Workshop for Commonwealth African Countries in Preparation for the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference	18–19 June 2015	Kigali, Rwanda	African region
2015	Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Trade in Sustainable Fisheries (UNCTAD/Commonwealth Joint Venture)	29 Sep – 1 Oct 2015	Geneva, Switzerland	Pan-Commonwealth / International

(Continued)

Year	Event	Date	Venue	Participation
2015	Meeting for Commonwealth Caribbean Countries in Preparation for the Tenth WTO Ministerial Conference	15–16 October 2015	Bridgetown, Barbados	Caribbean region
2015	Emerging Global and Regional Trade Issues for the Commonwealth Pacific Region	12–13 November 2015	Tongatapu, Tonga	Pacific region
2015	Eighth South Asia Economic Summit (SAES VIII): Regional Cooperation for Sustainable Development in South Asia	7–8 December 2015	Islamabad, Pakistan	South Asian region
2015	The Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and the Future of the Multilateral Trading System	16 December 2015	Nairobi, Kenya	Pan-Commonwealth
2016	Trade Flagship Launch The Commonwealth in the Unfolding Global Trade Landscape, High Level Panel Discussion	26 January 2016	London, UK	Pan-Commonwealth HCs and Academia
2016	Consultative Meeting of Commonwealth Expert Group on Trade Revitalising Global Trade and Multilateralism	30–31 March 2016	New Delhi, India	Pan-Commonwealth
2016	WTO Post-Nairobi and Regional and Continental Integration	14–15 April 2016	Lusaka, Zambia	African region
2016	LDC IV Monitor High-Level Midterm Review of the Istanbul Programme of Action	27–29 May 2016	Antalya, Turkey	LDCs (Commonwealth and Other)
2016	Commonwealth Caribbean Consultation on Recent Developments in Trade: WTO Post-Nairobi and Regional Integration	12–13 May 2016	Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago	Caribbean region
2016	Oceans Economy and Trade: Sustainable Fisheries, Transport and Tourism	10–12 May 2016	Geneva, Switzerland	Pan-Commonwealth / International
2016	Ministerial Round Table: Fostering Green Economies through Trade, Investment and Innovation (during UNCTAD 14)	21 July 2016	Nairobi, Kenya	Pan-Commonwealth / International
2016	WTO Public Forum: Inclusive Trade	28 September 2016	Geneva, Switzerland	Pan-Commonwealth / International
2016	Exploring the Effects of Non-Tariff Measures on Commonwealth Trade	12 October 2016	London, UK	Pan-Commonwealth

(Continued)

Year	Event	Date	Venue	Participation
2016	Update on Post-Nairobi and Preparation for MC11: Role of the Multilateral Trading System, Emerging Issues and Regional Integration	1–2 November 2016	Port Vila, Vanuatu	Pacific region
2017	Oceans Forum on Trade Related Aspects of Sustainable Development Goal 14	21–22 March 2017	Geneva, Switzerland	Pan-Commonwealth
2017	African Regional Consultation on Multilateral, Regional and Emerging Trade Issues	25–26 May 2017	Mauritius	African region
2017	Emerging Global and Regional Trade Issues for the Caribbean	26–27 June 2017	St Lucia	Caribbean region
2017	Commonwealth African Trade Negotiators Network	23–24 October 2017	Cape Town, South Africa	African region
2017	Trade and Climate Change: Opportunities and Challenges for SIDS, LDCs and Sub-Saharan Africa (during WTO 11 th Ministerial Conference)	10 December 2017	Buenos Aires, Argentina	ACP regions

Annex 6: Commonwealth Secretariat Analysis Dashboards

User guide

The Evaluation Team is grateful to the Secretariat for providing the data to support our analysis. The data provided came from different sources and also in different formats; some were provided in Excel files, which were well structured and easily extractable, while others provided from reports or even images required more extraction, formatting and cleaning. The information provided concerned primarily expenses by the Secretariat, project progress, budget information, as well as the annual contribution amounts from member countries.

Our understanding was that the information provided was pulled from the following source systems:

- PMIS – Project details and budget
- CODA – Financial extract and expenses from the Secretariat
- Commonwealth Secretariat audited signed accounts – Contribution by member countries

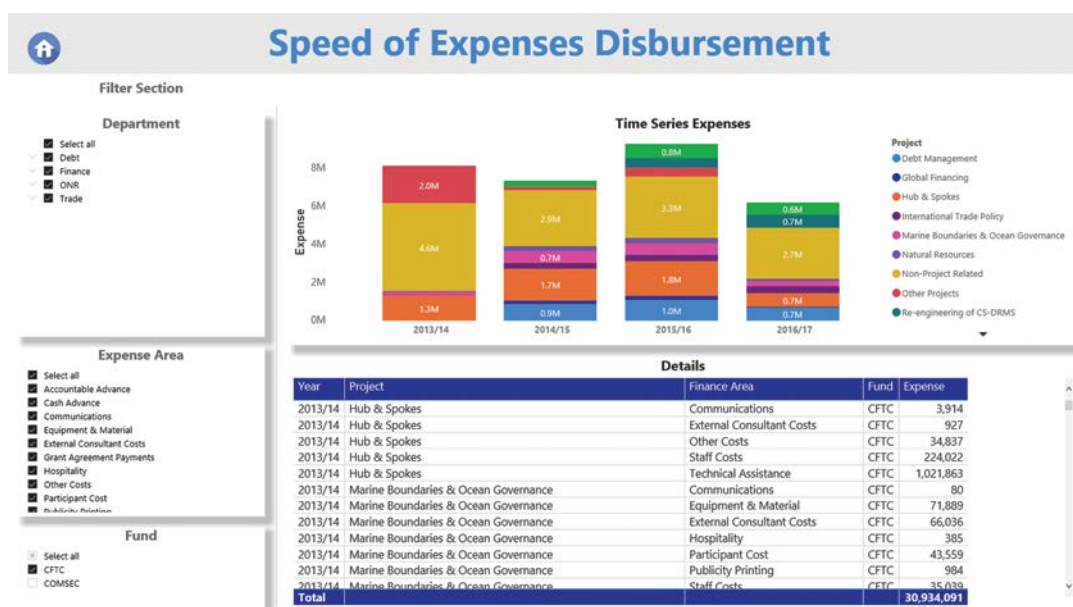
- Annual Results Report – Outputs and progress by departments.

Dashboards were built to allow further exploration of the data and gathering of insights. The latter were categorised in the following areas: Expenses of the Secretariat, Contributions by member countries, Budget analysis, Analysis of contributions by the member countries against the financing received by the Secretariat and, finally, Analysis of outputs (extracted from the annual reports).

The sections below give an overview of the dashboards.

Expenses of the Secretariat analysis

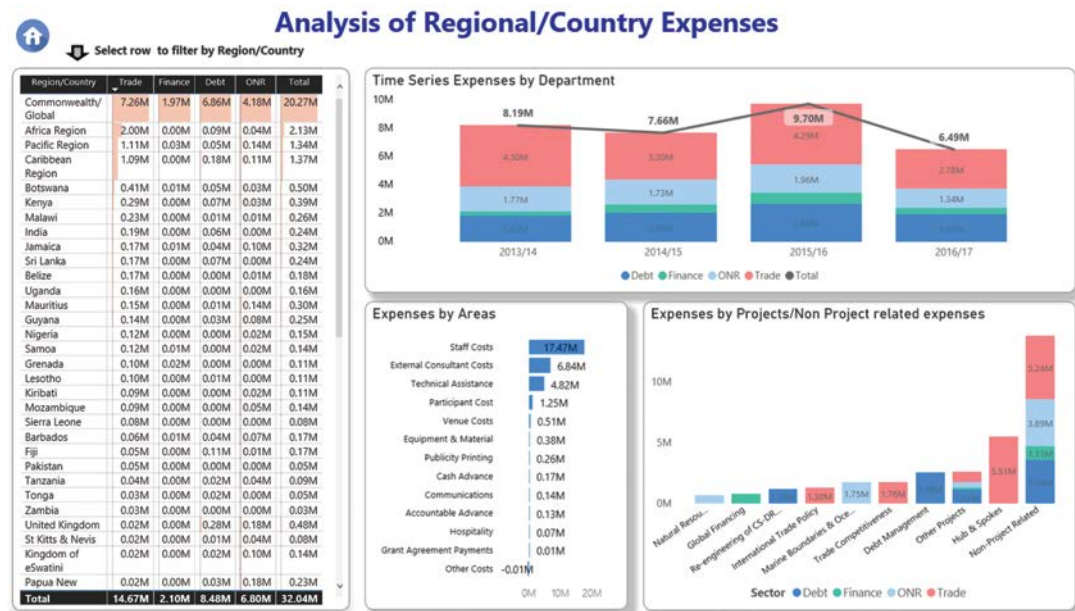
The speed of expenses disbursement dashboard provides a time series analysis (2013–17) of the expenditures of the Secretariat on the various projects. The different finance expense areas where money was spent are explored in detail. The dashboard can be filtered by department, expense area or type of fund.



The analysis of the regional/country expenses

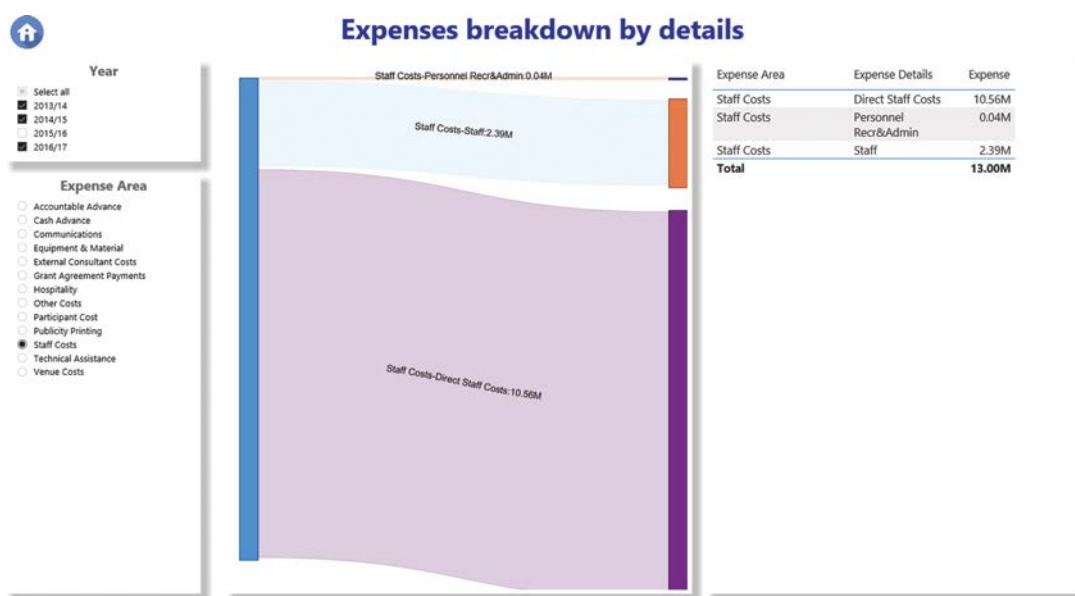
dashboard provides users with the ability to explore the expenses of the Secretariat on assignments related to the different member countries. Time-series analysis and other dimensions can be

explored, e.g. expenses areas, projects. A table on the left pane lists down the countries and yearly financing obtained. Note that the columns of the table are sortable and provide a filter for the dashboards of the selected country.



The expenses breakdown by details dashboard gives a breakdown of analysis of the expense areas. For simplification, the details of the expenses of the Secretariat have been grouped into expense areas.

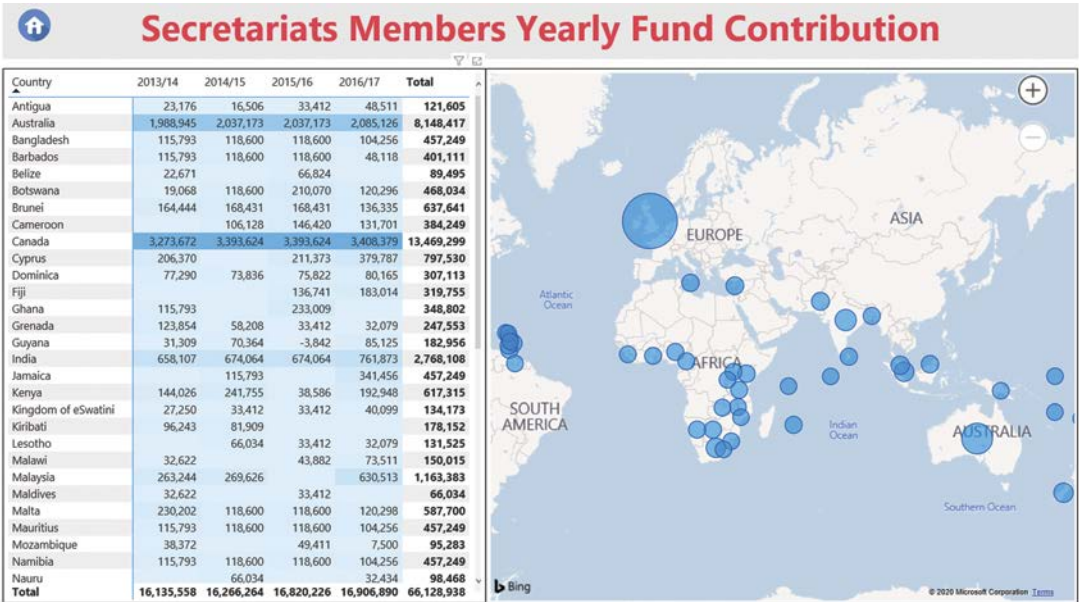
Selecting the expense areas in the filter zone on the left gives the mapping of the detailed description and financial breakdown.



Contribution by member countries analysis

The contribution by member countries dashboard shares on a year-by-year basis the contribution amount in pounds sterling (£) of all the member countries of the Commonwealth.

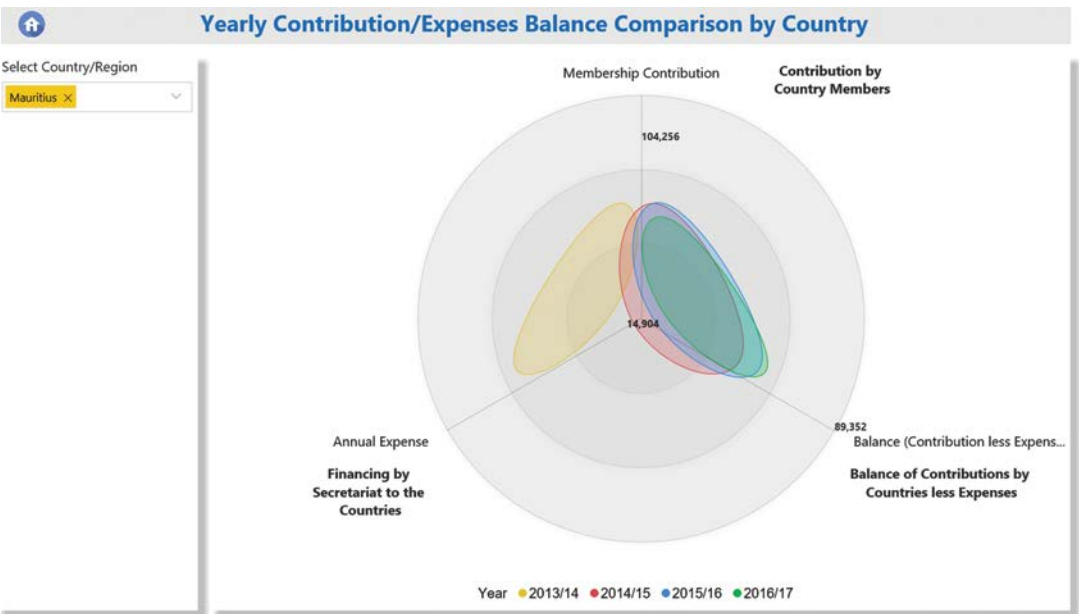
Interesting patterns can be found, such as the highest and lowest contributors, as well as gaps where member countries did not contribute. A bubble map on the right shows the distribution, as well as the proportion of the contributions.



Contribution by member countries versus financing received from the Secretariat

The contribution by country members versus expenses of the Secretariat balance dashboard analyses for each country selected through

the filter on the left, the contribution of the member country, the financing obtained from the Secretariat, as well as the net balance (financing minus contributions). The chart has four leaves each, denoting a financial year.



The contribution by country members versus expenses of the Secretariat matrix dashboard gives a detailed analysis of contributions by

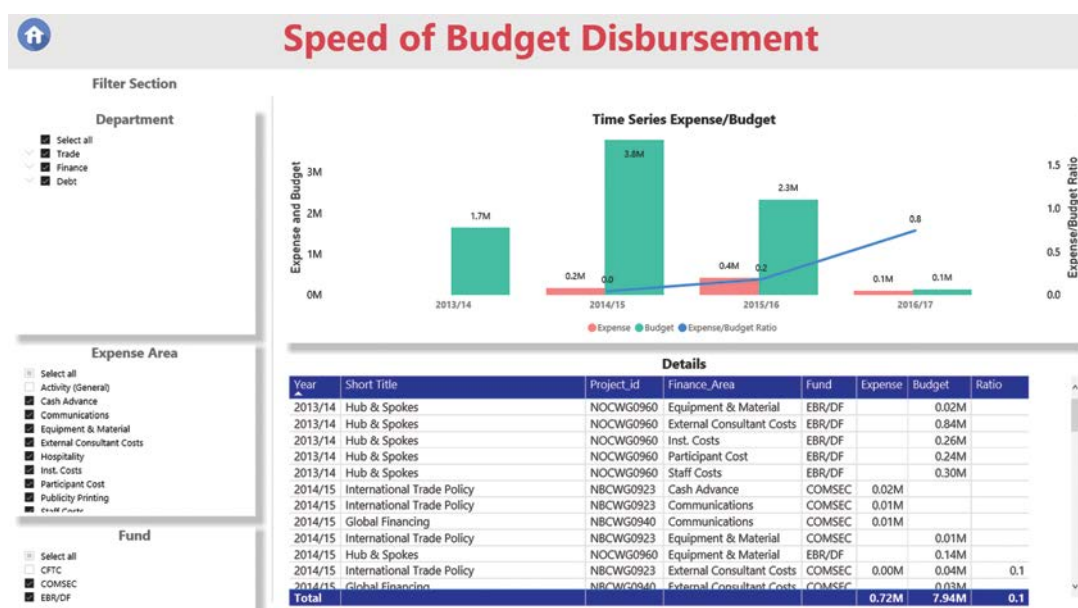
countries and financing obtained on a year-by-year basis. The matrix allows us to analyse trends and patterns.

Country	2013/14 Contribution	2014/15 Contribution	2015/16 Contribution	2016/17 Contribution	Total Contribution	2013/14 Expense	2014/15 Expense	2015/16 Expense	2016/17 Expense	Total Expense	Balance
Africa Region						651,904	638,752	469,610	369,845	2,130,110	-2,130,110
Anguilla								1,023	4,209	5,232	-5,232
Antigua	23,176	16,506	33,412	48,511	121,605		21,494	24,747	18,676	64,918	56,687
Asia Region						25,965		4,299		30,263	-30,263
Australia	1,988,945	2,037,173	2,037,173	2,085,126	8,148,417	15,777	7,358	6,837	7,300	37,272	8,111,145
Bangladesh	115,793	118,600	118,600	104,256	457,249	1,615		1,986		3,601	453,648
Barbados	115,793	118,600	118,600	48,118	401,111	55,652	42,297	55,492	19,153	172,594	228,517
Belize	22,671		66,824		89,495	3,210	37,728	97,021	42,944	180,904	-91,409
Botswana	19,068	118,600	210,070	120,296	468,034	116,022	125,228	144,885	117,741	503,877	-35,843
Brit Virgin Islands							11,267	234	13,129	24,630	-24,630
Brunei	164,444	168,431	168,431	136,335	637,641						637,641
Cameroon		106,128	146,420	131,701	384,249	51,935	89,272		-8,204	133,003	251,246
Canada	3,273,672	3,393,624	3,393,624	3,408,379	13,469,299		37	4,685		4,722	13,464,577
Caribbean Region						333,810	250,685	363,534	423,540	1,371,569	-1,371,569
Commonwealth/Global						5,360,062	4,371,858	6,462,328	4,075,352	20,269,600	-20,269,600
Cook Islands						9,821	91,865	25,078	6,040	132,804	-132,804
Cyprus	206,370		211,373	379,787	797,530			2,797	4,156	6,953	790,577
Dominica	77,290	73,836	75,822	80,165	307,113			3,833	1,409	5,242	301,871
Fiji			136,741	183,014	319,755		25,487	98,068	49,352	172,907	146,848
Ghana	115,793		233,009		348,802	4,834		11,744	107	16,685	332,117
Grenada	123,854	58,208	33,412	32,079	247,553	4,960	43,960	50,936	14,413	114,268	133,285
Guyana	31,309	70,364	-3,842	85,125	182,956	65,913	65,399	63,057	60,505	254,875	-71,919
India	658,107	674,064	674,064	761,873	2,768,108	7,520	51,073	85,952	99,152	243,697	2,524,411
Total	16,135,558	16,266,264	16,820,226	16,906,890	66,128,938	8,185,899	7,660,660	9,701,361	6,493,866	32,041,785	34,087,153

Budget – projects

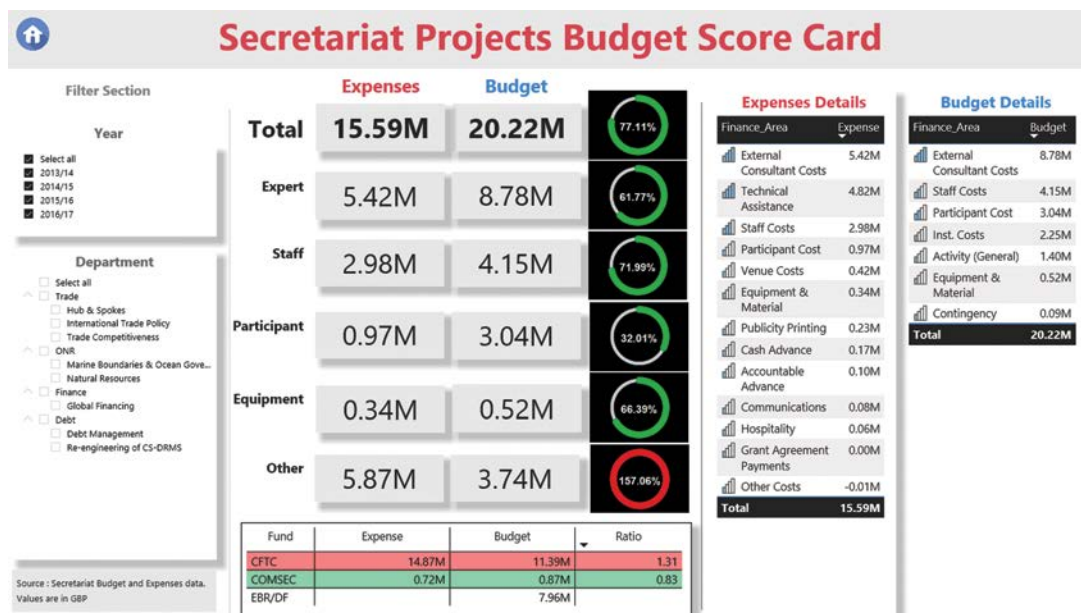
The speed of budget disbursement dashboard allows us to compare the time series expenses on the projects in comparison to the budget allocated. An expense/budget ratio allows us to

monitor whether the budget for the projects has been exceeded or not. The detail section provides information about the funds and expense areas as well. The left pane of the dashboard has a filter that allows filtering by project, expense area or fund.



The Secretariat projects budget scorecard provides a scorecard on the project's performance. The scores are sectioned by the different expense

areas such as Expert, Staff, Participant, Equipment, etc., as well as the funds CFTC, COMSEC. The filter pane allows us to filter by a specific year or project.

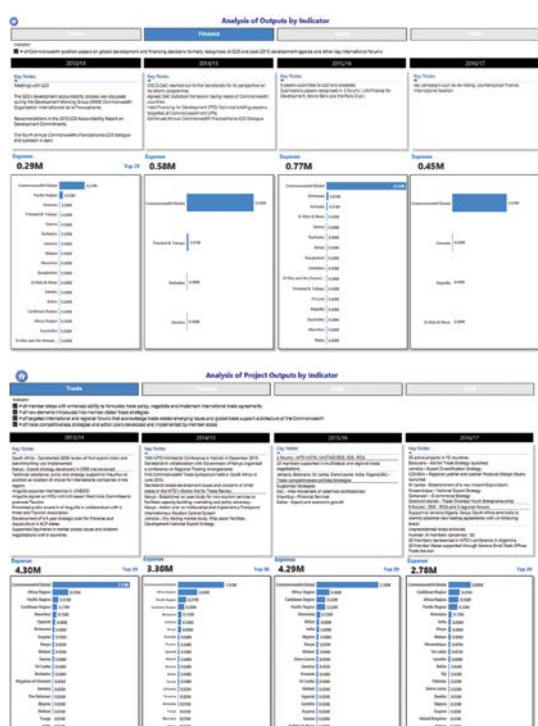


Analysis of outputs

The analysis of outputs dashboards represents data extracted from the annual reports. The dashboards provide the list of all key performance indicators (KPIs) set to monitor the progress of projects. For each year and department, a summary of the outputs is listed as keynotes. The keynotes also contain a list of countries where the Secretariat

intervened. The bottom part of the dashboard lists the expenses of the Secretariat to the countries. There are four tabs in the dashboard, with each one displaying the data per financial year (2013–17, from left to right).

Note: The analysis of outputs consists of four dashboards analysing a particular component area: finance, trade, debt and ONR.



Annex 7: List of Interviewees

Internal stakeholders

Directorate/Unit	Name	Role
Evaluation	Katherine Marshall Kissoon	RBM Officer, Strategy, Portfolio, Partnerships and Digital Division
Evaluation	Purvi Kanzaria	Programme Officer, Strategy, Portfolio, Partnerships and Digital Division
Director EYSD	Pamella McLaren	Acting Director, Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate
Finance Head	Kimberly Cliff	Head, Finance and Management Information, Finance and Management Information Section
Economic Policy	Heather Cover-Kus	Economic Officer, Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate
Economic Policy	Motselisi Matsela	Economic Adviser, Small States, Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate
Trade	Lisa Rodriguez	Operations Manager (Hub & Spokes), Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Amelia Kelly	Communication and Programme Analyst (Hub & Spokes, Trade), Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Florence Chilenga	Programme Coordinator (Hub & Spokes) Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Kirk Haywood	Acting Head of Connectivity Agenda Section, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Radhika Kumar	Trade Specialist, Commonwealth Connectivity Agenda, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Hilary Enos-Edu	Assistant Research Officer, International Trade Policy, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Ose Ayewoh	Research Officer – International Trade Policy, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Yinka Bandele	Adviser Trade Competitiveness, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Salamat Ali	Economic Adviser – Trade Economist, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Rita Broni	Operations Officer, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Shami Jabane	Programme Officer, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Trade	Shaneez Hassan	Programme Assistant, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate

(Continued)

Directorate/Unit	Name	Role
Trade	Luisa Sala	Programme Assistant, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Debt Management	Mac Banda	Adviser and Team Leader (IT Systems), Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate
Debt Management	Vikas Pandey	Systems Development Officer, Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate
Director TONR	Paulo Kautoke	Director, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
Portfolio Management	Diana Copper	Head of Portfolio Management, Strategy, Portfolio, Partnerships and Digital Division
ONR	Nicholas Hardman-Mountford	Head of Oceans and Natural Resources, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
ONR	Alache Fisho	Legal Adviser (Natural Resources), Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
ONR	Daniel Wilde	Economic Adviser – Natural Resources, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
ONR	Chilenye Nwapi	Legal Adviser (Natural Resources), Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
ONR	Rosemary Ademoroti	Operations Officer, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
ONR	Subaskar Sitsabeshan	Outreach Co-ordinator, Commonwealth Blue Charter, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
ONR	Victor Kitange	Economic Adviser – Natural Resources, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
ONR	Miski Omar	Programme Assistant, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate
ONR	Naadira Ogeer	Economic Adviser – Natural Resources, Trade, Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate

External stakeholders

Country	Name	Area
Bahamas, The	Derek Sean Rolle	Debt management
Bahamas, The	Cherran O'Brien	Debt management
Botswana	Boineelo Peter	Debt management
Botswana	Seitebaleng Fologang	Debt management
Fiji	Apenisa Tuicakau	Debt
Fiji	Hillary Kumwenda	Trade
Fiji	Cristelle Pratt	Economic policy
Fiji	Raymond Prasad	Economic policy
Fiji	Andrew Anton	Economic policy
Fiji	Zarak Khan	Trade, economic policy

(Continued)

Country	Name	Area
Fiji	Nikola Komailevuka	Trade, economic policy
Fiji	Jannett Handyside	Trade, economic policy
Fiji	Noah Kouback	Trade, economic policy
Fiji	Fredrick Kamusiime	Trade, economic policy
Fiji	Salome Taufua	Trade, economic policy
Fiji	Aholotu Palu	Trade, economic policy
Fiji	Hannah Hicks	Trade, economic policy
Guyana	Quacy Asheeke Grant	Foreign policy
Mauritius	Raj Mohabeer	Various
Mauritius	Erik von Uexkull	Trade, economic policy
Mauritius	Sunil Bhadoo	Trade
Mauritius	Hannah Rojoa	Debt management
Mauritius	Streevarsen Pillay Narrainen	Debt management
Mauritius	Satyajeet Ramchurn	ONR
Mauritius	Massimiliano Messi	Various
Seychelles	Jude Talma	ONR
Seychelles	Cillia Mangroo	Trade
Seychelles	Charles Morin	Trade
Seychelles	David Esparon	Trade, economic policy
Seychelles	Samuel Verghese	Trade, economic policy
Seychelles	Diwakar Singh	Trade, economic policy
Seychelles	Stefan Knights	Trade, economic policy
Seychelles	Irene Sirame	Trade, economic policy
Seychelles	Antoine-Marie Moustache	ONR
Seychelles	Alan Renaud	ONR
Seychelles	Michael Nalletamby	Trade, economic policy
Seychelles	Elizabeth Agathine	Debt management
Seychelles	Barry Faure	ONR
Sri Lanka	Rohan Crishantha	Debt management
Sri Lanka	Dhammika Nanayakkara	Debt management
Sri Lanka	Mr. Prabath	Debt management
Sri Lanka	G .C. R. Tharanga	Debt management
Trinidad and Tobago	David Persuad	ONR
Trinidad and Tobago	April Holder	Technical co-operation
UK	Teddy Soobramanien	Trade: Ex Commonwealth Secretariat
UK	Sujeevan Perea	Trade: Ex Commonwealth Secretariat

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The Commonwealth



Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Development Programme 2013/14 - 2016/17

Management Response



The Commonwealth

Evaluation title	Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Development Programme 2013/14 - 2016/17
Evaluation Published	September 2020
Management response prepared by	Trade Oceans and Natural Resources Directorate; Economic, Youth and Sustainable Development Directorate
Management response approved by	Senior Management Committee

Overall comments

The 'Evaluation of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Development Programme' was the first of its kind to assess the Secretariat's holistic contribution to Member States in the area of economic development. Drawing on two strategic plan periods, this evaluation provided a deeper reflection on the Secretariat's approaches and the extent to which the programme meets the needs of Member States. The timing of the Evaluation is particularly important as it provides timely recommendations for consideration in the next Strategic Plan.

The Commonwealth Secretariat and particularly implementing Directorates (Trade, Oceans and Natural Resource Directorate (TONR) and Economic, Youth and Social Development Directorate (EYSDD)) welcomes the Evaluation report and thank the consultants for their detailed analysis, which contained many pertinent insights into our work and useful recommendations. The Secretariat's Management have carefully considered the recommendations and agreed on the responses below.

Recommendation 1

The Secretariat's Programme Level teams must define objective prioritisation criteria for setting the scope of interventions due to the limited funding flows.

Management Response**AGREED**

Guided in its programme delivery by the Strategic Plan and the Delivery Plan agreed upon by the Member States, the Secretariat recognises the challenge with prioritization of interventions as noted in the evaluation report and the recommendation. The establishment of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Commonwealth Secretariat chaired by the Deputy Secretariat General is tasked with the role to centralise and prioritise the application of CFTC funds for Technical Assistance to promote sustainable development to Member States. DAC decision is based on assessment and recommendations made by Programme Level Teams. The assessment template from Deputy Secretary-General's Office contains explicit criteria for prioritisation. DAC will discuss the effectiveness of the newly established mechanism and strengthen its prioritization further.

Recommendation 2

The Office of the Secretary General to define key strategic priorities and better align resources to attain those targets, rather than seeking to meet funding gaps and ad hoc requests with its limited funding.

Management Response**PARTIALLY AGREED**

Strategic priorities are defined by Member States rather than the Office of the Secretary General (OSG). The OSG responds to those strategic priorities. The Secretariat, as indicated in (recommendation 1), agrees that greater focus should be made on prioritization of its interventions. The effectiveness of the DAC prioritisation criteria will be discussed in light of this recommendation and oversight of its implementation strengthened through the Programme Management Committee. A better operational approach to prioritisation that gives programmes clarity on how to direct limited resources, will need to be developed.

In addition, the Secretariat also recognises the need to implement a monitoring process that can track the specific countries requests, in order to ensure that one country does not make several requests and get the bulk of technical assistance while other countries are turned away due to a lack of additional Secretariat capacity.

Given the limited funding, going forward, the Secretariat will also address this concern in the strategic planning process to ensure that there are clear strategic priorities set out to enable the delivery planning to better align targets with resources.

Recommendation 3

The Secretariat's Partnership Team to identify a wide range of fund-raising measures, including stronger joint programming with partners, such as was the case with the Hubs & Spokes Programme.

Management Response**AGREED**

The Secretariat has made significant efforts in resource mobilisation and partnerships / joint-delivery through new and renewed partnerships following the development of the Commonwealth Partnership Strategy. A number of Memorandum of Understanding have been signed with key development partners that opens opportunities for increased funding flows, such as the MoU with the UN-India Fund Development Partnership.

In recognition of the gap identified in this evaluation, strengthening the resource mobilisation capacity of the Secretariat to meet the resourcing needs will be a priority in the new strategic plan.

Recommendation 4

Secretariat senior management to adopt longer-term planning, matching budget horizons with project horizons. Also rather than take a blanket (one-size fits all) approach to budgets (as it appears to do now), the Secretariat should seek to recognise that some programmes of work have far longer timeframes and require a greater level of assurance on multi-year funding. This would enable increased opportunities for building sustainability into the planning, design and implementation of these programmes.

Management Response**AGREED**

The Secretariat agrees that a more sustainable and certain budget is required to improve project effectiveness and it recognises the critical need for multi-year development projects, delivered over a longer period of time to ensure certainty and sustainability of results. Funding certainty for these projects is important and needs to be addressed in the delivery planning.

In response to this recommendation and several other recommendations from different evaluations that biennial planning is an intermediate solution to longer-term funding, the Secretariat will be putting forward funding proposals to the Board of Governors for consideration for the delivery of the next strategic plan.

Internally, within the existing funding framework, the Secretariat will discuss proposals to make provisional multi-year budgets that then go to the BOG for approval on an annual basis. Thus, prioritisation would be guided internally, among other things, by the needs of multi-year projects and the Programme Team's best estimates of needs rather than by historical financial allocations that do not reflect the strategic priorities, as is currently the case.

Recommendation 5

Enhance the Secretariat's Programme Level teams collaboration with other development partners by engaging them in a formal and systematic way during the PDDs or implementation of country projects, if countries allow.

Management Response**PARTIALLY AGREED**

The Secretariat agrees to the need for collaboration with other development partners in programme design and delivery. In the design of projects for the next strategic plan, the Secretariat will make deliberate efforts to look into what other partners are doing as part of context analysis and design of its programmes, a process that will identify appropriate partners for collaboration. An example of such collaborations is the Oceans and Natural Resource Team is consulting SEforALL (UN affiliated Agency) for inputs to develop a strategy for the Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition Agenda.

Strategic partnerships will be discussed and engaged in the development of the new strategic plan and areas for collaboration identified. At the country level, partnerships and collaborations will be discussed and agreed upon with Member States.

Recommendation 6

Promote inter-team cooperation, collaboration and pooling of resources. For example, the international trade policy team could provide research capacity to the trade competitiveness team.

Management Response**AGREED**

The Secretariat agrees to this recommendations, however notes that existing inter-team collaborations already active at the Secretariat including with respect to technical assistance to several Member States should be further strengthened. To enhance collaboration, new synergies for intra and other inter-divisional collaborations should be explored and established. In addition, crosscutting themes would benefit from dedicated crosscutting budget lines and staff resources that can only be accessed for crosscutting work.

Recommendation 7

Adopt formal strategies to tackle political economy challenges that affect the implementation of different projects. Whilst some of these activities are being implemented on an ad-hoc basis at the initiative of the Secretariat, all divisions should adopt a process of follow-up or an implementation strategy to enhance the sustainability and impact of this work.

Management Response**AGREED**

The Secretariat recognises the political economy challenges and how they affect programme implementation. Currently, these challenges are assessed and addressed in the project risk management strategies. The Secretariat will adopt formal strategies for collaboration between Democracy and

	<p>Development. Whilst some collaborative activities are being implemented between Directorates on an ad-hoc basis, all divisions will move to adopt a process to develop cross cutting programmes across the Secretariat with an implementation strategy to enhance sustainability and impact.</p> <p>Due to the demand driven nature of project delivery with strong government backing, political analysis as a tool for ensuring successful project delivery has not featured as a standard practice in project delivery. However, understanding the government decision system in order to render necessary support including direct engagement and capacity building is standard feature of project delivery. For smaller projects, the need for a formal 'political economy analysis' must consider whether additional costs (time and efforts) involved justify any incremental benefits over the existing practice where strengthening risk assessment could have achieved the same outcome.</p> <p>The Secretariat will strengthen its broader political economy analysis during programme design in collaboration with the Political Team to ensure sustainability of the programme, a process that is to be appraised during project/programme approval.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>Broaden the nature of support beyond bilateral technical assistance. The Secretariat should consider engaging in multi-country projects like the New Petroleum Producers Group and the Blue Charter, or the Hubs & Spokes Programme, which appear to have a more concrete and substantial outcome than the bilateral technical assistance implemented by the Secretariat. These projects can lead to Members to share experiences, and best practice builds something far greater than the sum of its parts and can help build capacity amongst member states through peer-to-peer learning, alleviating pressure on the Secretariat.</p>	
<p>Management Response</p>	<p>PARTIALLY AGREED</p> <p>The Secretariat notes that there is a positive role for both bilateral technical assistance projects and multilateral projects. There are advantages and disadvantages to both types of projects. Currently, multi-country approach is employed by the TONR Directorate in the Commonwealth Blue Charter, Connectivity Agenda, Hub and Spokes Programme and the Sustainable Energy Transition Forum. Multi-lateral projects, such as the Blue Charter, enhance peer-to-peer learning, allow for pan-Commonwealth training opportunities, and can build political momentum towards policy reform. Bilateral projects are best for specialised expertise needs for country specific policy, legal and economic reforms and implementation, and confidential advisory work.</p> <p>The Secretariat acknowledges that there are examples of excellence of pan commonwealth programmes. However, in programme delivery, the Member States' needs will always determine the appropriate modality to adopt. The Secretariat does not agree that multi-lateral projects are necessarily preferable to bilateral projects, as they are addressing somewhat different needs. The Secretariat also notes that the</p>

	Report provides no meaningful analysis of the relative efficiency of these two modalities.
Recommendation 9	
Ensure constant and timely communication with the beneficiaries and member states. A Customer Relationship Manager System could be implemented across the whole organisation to ensure that there is a systematic control and reminders of the need to engage with the Member States, replying to their requests in a timely manner.	
Management Response	AGREED
	<p>The Secretariat acknowledges the advantages in setting up a Customer Relationship Manager System, to keep our members informed on initiatives of the whole organisation. Currently, there are other initiatives undertaken by the Secretary-General's Office such as points of contacts, Small States Bulletin, creation of a Central repository: countries hyperlinked by themes and would contain information on the Secretariat's engagements in the country, existing and planned interventions.</p> <p>The Secretariat will assess the proposed system within the context of new and existing communication channels and make the necessary changes.</p>
Recommendation 10	
Raise awareness and capacity amongst the Member States about the Secretariat's services, breaking down the process through which Member States can request support from the Secretariat.	
Management Response	AGREED
	<p>The Secretariat acknowledges the recommendation on the need to increase Member States' awareness on services provided. In line with recommendation 9, the Secretariat will review its communications function to address the identified gap and provide more clarity on how Member States can request support from the Secretariat.</p>
Recommendation 11	
Encourage greater use of the knowledge and technical expertise of Senior Directors and other Senior Staff by reducing their responsibilities for day-to-day project management and promote inter-team cooperation and collaboration. This could be done by making sure that a certain percentage of Senior Officers time is spent on technical work or assigning a series of technical Key Performance Indicators in their performance reviews.	
Management Response	PARTIALLY AGREED
	<p>The Secretariat agrees that that Senior Officers responsibilities for day-to-day project management needs to be reduced. Options for review by Senior Management include either reducing the administrative burden by streamlining processes or providing sections with better administrative as well and programme monitoring, evaluation and reporting support. Currently, progress has been made towards strengthening administrative support.</p>

	<p>To further reduce the administrative burden, the IT Team are currently working on a systems integration project aimed at reducing administrative burden and increasing team efficiency.</p> <p>The Secretariat will review the balance between technical and administrative roles and the support required as part of the Human Resource Planning for the new strategic plan.</p>
Recommendation 12	
<p>Develop an internal centralised platform for knowledge exchange and training, ensuring that the right processes are in place to avoid the loss of institutional memory. This can be done by improving the record-keeping processes and/or adopting the appropriate knowledge-management systems.</p>	
Management Response	<p>AGREED</p> <p>The Secretariat agrees that the knowledge management function in the organisation needs to be strengthened as recognised by several other evaluations. A knowledge management strategy has been developed, currently in the approval stage for implementation. Key elements are already in implementation, such as IT systems integration and re-design of the organisations Programme Management Information System (PMIS). The full implementation plan that addresses the core knowledge management gaps and challenges will be rolled out alongside the new strategic.</p> <p>As part of the IT improvements, the Secretariat's documentation have been migrated into SharePoint that has improved knowledge management and sharing. The Secretariat notes that knowledge management systems at the moment are dependent on the different Directorates and how they choose to manage their data. Each Directorate has its own knowledge management system and use all the tools available to ensure data is readily available when required, a process that will be fully harmonised with the implementation of the knowledge management strategy.</p>
Recommendation 13	
<p>Undertake research to better understand the relative effectiveness of online support vs in-country support. The COVID crisis, which has drastically limited international travel, may prove to be an ideal opportunity to test this.</p>	
Management Response	<p>AGREED</p> <p>The Secretariat agrees with the recommendation that new ways of working needs to be explored. The Secretariat has had the time to live through the experience of changes due to Covid19, it is evident that some but <u>not</u> all processes can be carried out remotely. Critical travel policy is necessary and has been developed. However, some activities may be better carried out online going forward and this analysis of relative effectiveness should be the subject of a post-Covid19 evaluation to guide our ongoing delivery.</p>

	As Directorates already understand what elements of programme delivery can and cannot be converted to virtual delivery and this is being managed through the risk management processes, the Secretariat will conduct an organisation wide review on online and in-country support with the for consistency and sharing of best practice on elements of programme work which can be done remotely.
Recommendation 14	
Build on earlier investments in e-learning at the Secretariat and develop an e-learning platform that would help new member country staff get quickly up to speed on areas such as ONR or Debt Management, leading to a reduction in the cost and time associated with training.	
Management Response	PARTIALLY AGREED
	<p>The Secretariat agrees that to increase its returns on investments, e-learning platforms would facilitate continued learning. A harmonised Secretariat's e-learning platform has been developed to internally host e-learning platforms. In terms of remote technical training and knowledge sharing within our subject areas (e.g. through webinars), these online modules are being recorded when delivered and it is intended to have them available online as an ongoing resource. All of the online training under the Blue Charter, for example, are being made available for future use by members. However, the development of a dedicated e-learning platform, as recommended here, would require investment and time far beyond our small team's current capacity</p> <p>The Secretariat accepts this recommendation with caution as blended approach to learning needs to be considered. Utilising E-learning platforms for non-country specific courses, which does not duplicate available programmes, but instead complements existing work streams would be ideal, retaining the secretariat's approach to detailed, tailored training courses provided in country.</p>
Recommendation 15	
Improve the definition of indicators for measuring outcomes and impact and adopting a theory of change approach to project designs. The lack of a theory of change for each specific project, and the EDP in general, makes it difficult to unify staff towards a common goal, but also to reject or promote the selection of certain projects.	
Management Response	AGREED
	<p>The Secretariat agrees with the need to have clearly defined indicators at all levels of the results framework for improved measurements of results. Project level theories of change are developed as part of project design, however the level of engagement with them is limited. The application of the TOC at country level is difficult at the moment. The Secretariat notes the gap at the country and organisational level.</p> <p>As part planning the delivery of the new strategic plan, the Secretariat is already in the process of developing an organisational TOC to guide programme level TOCs. The</p>

	development of the strategic plan is already addressing the definition of realistic and achievable results, indicator issues and measurement.
Recommendation 16	
<p>Improve the collection of project-level data for Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning. One possible solution to explore is the practice of matched controls. This involves identifying countries, broadly similar in context to the ones where interventions are planned, to act as controls. By comparing the impact in the countries where the team works to the ones acting as controls, it would be possible for the Secretariat to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of their efforts. Properly implemented, it could be an improvement over current, narrative-driven approaches to impact assessment. Contribution analysis could also be explored to have a better understanding of the Secretariat's actual role in achieving the impact of its interventions.</p>	
Management Response	PARTIALLY AGREED
	<p>The Secretariat partially agrees to this recommendation. The Secretariat is in agreement to improving monitoring, evaluation and learning data collection at project and programme level. There is some level of improvement but not yet accomplished. The challenge is and continues to be around collect data on outcome and impact. Improving data collection will be the one of the primary targets for the new strategic plan monitoring, evaluation and learning plan.</p> <p>In assessing impact and determining the Secretariat's contributions, Secretariat will explore other approaches and will continuously support the programme teams to review opportunities for improving outcome monitoring and impact assessment. The recommendation of matching countries presents a challenge and cannot be taken forward. There are risks that it may not work in practice, due to many of our interventions are discrete, bespoke interventions and therefore using a control country will not be appropriate. Being able to control for all variables that affect the success of interventions would be impossible. Also, the political nature of the work prevents us from using a control country. Finally, every country is different; i.e. there are no 'controls'. The advantage of the Secretariat's technical assistance is that we provide bespoke targeted country interventions.</p>
Recommendation 17	
<p>Undertake a detailed review of the Secretariat's financial management system, with associated training, to ensure that staff fully understand the coding and classification system and as a result the itemisation of expenses and overall expenditure categories, including staff cost, distinguishing the allocation of costs between technical work, project management, administration, etc. is clear. This will help ensure increased accuracy in reporting and the consistency and relevance of the financial data for future evaluations.</p>	
Management Response	AGREED
	<p>The Secretariat acknowledges the gap in implementation of project level coding of expenditures for accuracy of data. On-going and induction training programmes are currently offered to all staff responsible and engaged with the financial system. Stronger linkages needs to be established between the</p>

	financial system (CODA) and the programme information management system (PMIS). As part of the organisation's systems integration, there is already underway with the aim of automation and simplification of as many processes as possible with single entry of data.
Recommendation 18	
Ensure that project budgets are properly tracked. In this evaluation, the team did not have access to activity-level budgets and expenditure, which made the efficiency analysis weak. Detailed planning and breakdown would be beneficial for future analysis and cost-benefit analysis.	
Management Response	AGREED
	Please see recommendation 17.
	The current financial monitoring system provides for activity level budget and expenditure tracking.
Recommendation 19	
For the Secretariat's debt management work, consider the development of a course, for field training and e-learning that covers valuation and analysis of government debt securities. The e-learning course currently offered is the first step but has room for further extension to cover topics in more depth.	
An increase in depth and coverage is also needed to achieve a better understanding of the practice (and related e-learning courses) on domestic debt management and the use of Horizon.	
Other areas of the EDP would also benefit from a similar concept, which wouldn't need to be started from scratch. For example, in the trade area, the Secretariat could partner with the WTO's e-learning campus, or the ITC SME Academy, to promote the access to such resources by its Membership.	
Management Response	PARTIALLY AGREED
	The Secretariat notes that the current eLearning on Debt Management Concepts (Domestic Debt) fully covers government debt securities.
	From a trade perspective, the Secretariat has an MOU with the ITC that could be expanded to promote access by member states to e-learning platform of the ITC as appropriate.
Recommendation 20	
Revitalize Horizon by undertaking a thorough re-assessment of its usability and training needs because despite the substantial resources already provided for its development it has yet to reach its full potential as a tool that is highly relevant for public debt management.	
Management Response	NOT ACCEPTED
	The Secretariat recognises the value in this recommendation, however, it is not acceptable for the following reasons:
	Horizon essentially had 3 main functionalities:

	<p>1. Portfolio Analysis - Presenting the current portfolio via different dimensions / measures and benchmarks</p> <p>2. Strategy Formulation - Evaluating alternative strategies using cost-risk framework</p> <p>3. Strategy implementation - Developing Annual Borrowing Plan and Securities Auction Calendar based on the selected strategy and using Government's cash flow forecast</p> <p>Of these, Portfolio Analysis is already implemented in Commonwealth Meridian.</p> <p>For strategy formulation, the World Bank's MTDS Toolkit is a fairly good alternative and the Secretariat does have an option to generate the debt data for use within the toolkit. Hence there may not be a need to develop this functionality for our clients.</p> <p>For Strategy Implementation, the Secretariat is not aware of any of the providers of technical assistance in public debt management having any utility to assist countries in this regard. Therefore, DMU could consider including this functionality in a subsequent version of Commonwealth Meridian. That way, it would be cost effective to maintain one software system Commonwealth Meridian rather than 2 separate software packages.</p>
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