



Annual report for the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, August 2003-July 2004

The Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit (CPSU) consolidated its position as the only policy unit focused on the contemporary Commonwealth, with two meetings of its international Advisory Board and developments from its two largest projects -- on Indigenous rights, and on Civil Society and the Commonwealth. The second half of the year saw a growth in inception work, designed to prepare projects to the point at which they are fundable, and an important study on local democracy in ten Commonwealth countries.

1 Staffing

The staffing during the year, linked to projects, was as follows:

Richard Bourne , Head, (enhanced human rights mechanism in the Commonwealth, FCO funding)

Dr Helena Whall (Indigenous Rights in the Commonwealth Project, EC funding) until conclusion in March 2004

Tunde Omilola (Indigenous land rights/resource management/ ecological care inception project, London University/CPSU funding from June, 2004)

Dr Manisha Diedrich succeeded Amanda Shah in the Commonwealth Civil Society Project in September 2003, a project which concluded in June 2004 (FCO/LondonUniversity/CPSU funding)

Malaika Scott commenced a Local Democracy Project in April 2004 (Commonwealth Local Government Forum/Commonwealth Foundation funding)

Daisy Cooper, inception project on the Commonwealth and UN reform in June 2004 (London University/CPSU funding)

Dr Amanda Sives, Associate Fellow (Teacher mobility study, based at Nottingham University, DFID-funded)

Dr Manisha Diedrich, Associate Fellow, continuation of the Commonwealth Civil Society work

Dr Ehsan Latif, Commonwealth Professional Fellow, working on Commonwealth anti-tobacco strategies (Fellowship funded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission)

Katherine Phillips, Intern on the Indigenous Rights in the Commonwealth project

Geraldine Gilbert, Intern re a strengthened human rights mechanism for the Commonwealth and CPSU publications.

Victoria Cunningham, Intern, prepared a scheme for a Commonwealth Summer School during a work placement in July 2004.

2 Projects

A strengthened human rights mechanism for the Commonwealth

Richard Bourne carried out an inquiry in 2003 into the case for a strengthened human rights mechanism for the Commonwealth, particularly a Commonwealth Human Rights Commissioner, or a qualified Human Rights Adviser to the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (see below). His report, funded by the UK Government, did not win sufficient support at the meeting of officials in the “Committee of the Whole” to go forward to the Abuja summit, but has been widely welcomed by NGOs.

The Indigenous Rights in the Commonwealth Project

This, headed by Dr Whall, concluded in March 2004, with publication of reports from four regional workshops. Although Commonwealth Heads in Abuja in December 2003 did not make the commitment which the project had called for, its key document, the Manmohan Singh report, recognised the special disadvantages of the 150 million Indigenous peoples in the Commonwealth, and interest from Law Ministers, Women’s Affairs Ministers, the Commonwealth Foundation and civil society has grown substantially. Tunde Omilola has since been working up a joint CPSU-Commonwealth Lawyers’ Association project on land rights, resource management and the Indigenous role in ecological conservation. Richard Bourne with Ledum Mitee spoke at a workshop on Indigenous rights in the Commonwealth in Abuja.

Civil Society in the Commonwealth Project

Dr Diedrich took over this project which developed a strong concern for young people and their greater involvement in Commonwealth bodies. She played a key role in organising London conferences in September 2003 and May 2004 on youth engagement; these have led to a draft document on “Putting youth engagement into practice: a self-assessment framework”, designed to help organisations which want to become more youth-friendly. The CPSU is joining forces with the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in an application to the ESRC on non-governmental public action.

CPSU also participated in advocacy with the Commonwealth inter-governmental bodies. Earlier lobbying work by the Unit has led the Commonwealth Secretariat to adopt the principle of “accreditation to the Commonwealth” by civil society organisations. With the support of pan-Commonwealth NGOs, CPSU initiated the

formation of the “Civil society group on youth mainstreaming and Commonwealth promotion” in November 2003.

Local Democracy Project

This project, led by Malaika Scott, is funded by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum and the Commonwealth Foundation. It concludes in December 2004. It involves brief surveys of the local government scene in ten countries and a lengthy overview of local democracy issues. All material will go to participants in the Commonwealth Local Government Conference in Aberdeen in March 2005.

Commonwealth cooperation with the UN in the development process

Daisy Cooper has been carrying out wide consultations on the role of the Commonwealth in strengthening the UN, its development work and its reform process. Much of this has focused on Commonwealth support for Millennium Development Goals and also on process issues, given that different member states belong to different reform groups.

Extra-curricular Commonwealth Clubs in secondary schools

During the year the CPSU was negotiating with the the Department for Education and Skills to support a project, following a precedent in Nigeria, to stimulate Commonwealth Clubs. In September the Department approved a grant of £125,000 over two years to the CPSU, to develop extra-curricular Commonwealth Clubs in English secondary schools.

Water policy

In June 2004 the Unit inherited DFID-funded water policy projects, led by Dr Siyan Malomo and Sandra Wint, transferred to the CPSU following the closure of the Commonwealth Science Council.

Accessible guide to the UK constitution

During the year the Unit was negotiating, with the Department for Constitutional Affairs, the Constitution Union, University College London, and the Citizenship Foundation, to write a pocket guide to the UK constitution. Agreement was reached at the end of October 2004 for the CPSU and Constitution Unit to prepare a framework by March 2005; it is anticipated that the Citizenship Foundation will produce a text after that.

Other projects

The CPSU has also been carrying out inception work and preparing applications for a project on how the Commonwealth and European Union may collaborate to support the NEPAD process in Africa, and for a project on countering gun culture in Kingston, Lagos. Cape Town, Mumbai, Manchester and Lambeth. These preparations are being overseen by Richard Bourne.

3 Publications

“A strengthened human rights mechanism for the Commonwealth”, by Richard Bourne, was published by CPSU in early 2004.

“Nigeria’s Commonwealth Summit: a briefing on issues before the leaders at Abuja in December 2003”, edited by Richard Bourne, CPSU.

“Survival of the Youngest: from rhetoric to action,” brief report of a London consultation on youth engagement with Commonwealth and other organisations, 2003, compiled by Manisha Diedrich.

“From rhetoric to action: Youth participation in the Commonwealth,” Manisha Diedrich in CHOGM 2003 and the Commonwealth in the 21st century, Henley Media Group and the Commonwealth Secretariat, 2003.

“What young people think about the Commonwealth”, by Manisha Diedrich, a report of attitudes expressed at meetings in Australia, Britain and Nigeria in 2003 was published on the CPSU website in 2004.

“Stubbing it out”, by Dr Ehsan Latif, was published by the CPSU in March 2004. This report, on how Commonwealth Health Ministers could implement the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, was highly influential. By mid-July 24 states, of which 14 were from the Commonwealth, had both signed and ratified this treaty. Since only 40 ratifications are required to make the treaty effective this was a case where the Commonwealth alone could make an international agreement come to life. Dr Diedrich published an article on the World Social Forum 2004, Mumbai in the May issue of Commonwealth People and Richard Bourne’s article “Uncommonwealth” appeared in the June 2004 issue of Prospect magazine.

The CPSU continued its series of Policy Briefs prior to Ministerial meetings with Finance (Jeremy Scott-Joynt) and Education (Richard Bourne) in 2003 and Tourism (Alan Fyall) and Women’s Affairs (Dilhani Wijeyesekera) in 2004. There is evidence of steadily growing use of the CPSU website (www.cpsu.org.uk). Dr Whall has handed over management of this website to Ian Cooke.

Dr Whall published an article in the October 2003 issue of The Round Table entitled “The challenge of Indigenous peoples: the unfinished business of decolonisation”. Her article “Indigenous peoples and the Commonwealth: Reflections on the Abuja CHOGM, December 2003” appeared in CHRI News, Spring 2004 and an article on a similar theme, “Indigenous peoples and the Abuja CHOGM, 2003 – a lost opportunity” appeared in the June 2004 issue of Human Rights Update, the Commonwealth Secretariat’s newsletter.

4 Advisory Board

Membership of the Board, chaired by Professor James Manor, was as it had been in 2002-3 although at their meeting in July 2004 the members agreed to invite Amanda Shah, formerly with the CPSU and now a human rights researcher with the UK Immigration Advisory Service, to be a 13th member. At the suggestion of Dame Billie Miller, Senior Minister in Barbados, the Board now uses a telephone link with international members who are unable to attend in person.