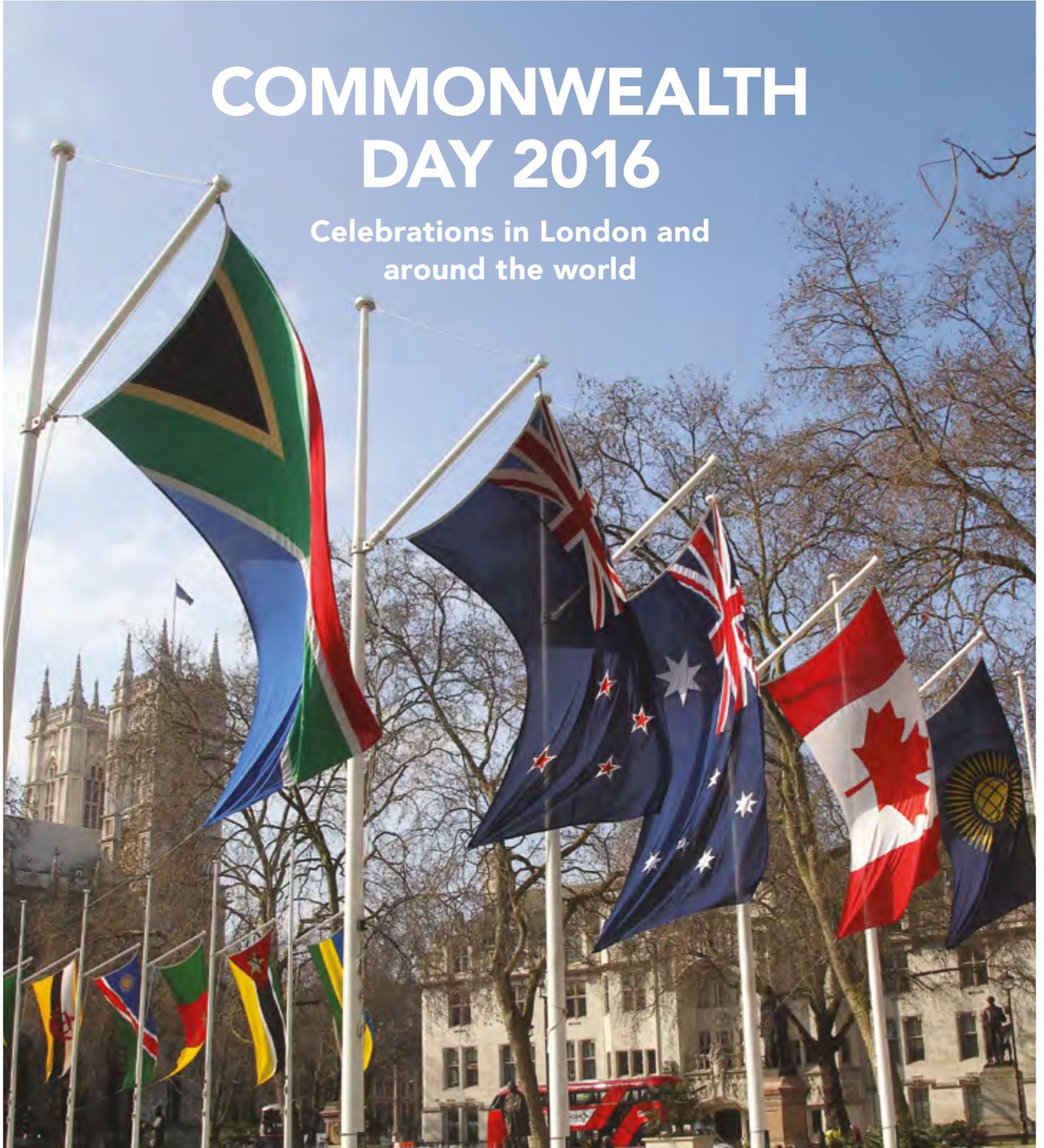


VOICES

COMMONWEALTH DAY 2016

Celebrations in London and
around the world



 **AN INCLUSIVE
COMMONWEALTH:**
The 2016 theme considered

 **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:**
Maintaining momentum through
citizen involvement

 **CIVIL SOCIETY IN ACTION:**
Saving and improving lives
in the Commonwealth

Your support could make a world of difference to Deaf people

1841 **175** 2016



Royal Association for Deaf people

Together with Deaf people;
creating a better future



Royal Association for Deaf People (RAD) is the oldest charity in England established to deliver services for Deaf people; celebrating its 175th birthday this year.

Deaf people are often isolated socially and within mainstream society. The majority of Deaf children are born to hearing parents and grow up in homes where not everyone uses a signed language.

Few mainstream providers deliver services in a Deaf person's first language, which in the UK, is usually British Sign Language (BSL). BSL is a signed language that has its own grammar and vocabulary and, contrary to popular belief, it is not a representation of English on the hands.

As with spoken language, there are hundreds of signed languages across the Commonwealth but there is one commonality that remains - activities that hearing people take for granted every day often prove to be challenging for a Deaf person. Often this means battling for access to services such as health, education and employment, all of which can have a negative impact upon physical and mental wellbeing.

The majority of Deaf children leave school with an average reading age of nine. Deaf people often have to work twice as hard as hearing counterparts to gain and maintain employment and access mainstream services.

All of RAD's services are delivered in BSL and include:

- Advocacy
- Advice and information
- Support and activities for children and families
- Communication
- Community Development
- Employment support
- Social Care
- Advice for young Deaf people moving into adulthood

It is vital that society continues to make itself more inclusive; be that via increased awareness of Deaf issues or by making services accessible via the use of Sign Language Interpreters.

To find out more about how you can support RAD's work, please visit www.royaldeaf.org.uk/support-us/

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/groups/royaldeaf

Website: www.royaldeaf.org.uk

Email: info@royaldeaf.org.uk

WELCOME



As Chair of the Royal Commonwealth Society for nearly two years, I have seen the Society grow in ambition of ideas, in reputation for delivery and in its convening power across our international networks.

The huge success of this year's Commonwealth Day celebrations, notably The Commonwealth

Service in Westminster Abbey, is testament to the hard work and dedication of the RCS team to deliver a powerful, yet sensitive service that reflected many of the strengths and values of the Commonwealth.

With its theme of inclusivity, the Service was inspiringly opened by Sara Ezabe Malliue, one from this year's cohort of Queens Young Leaders, who spoke of the racism she had encountered as a young Muslim woman. The former UN Secretary-General, Ghanaian Kofi Annan, endorsed the importance of our group of 53 countries saying 'very few countries can tackle the challenges we have today on their own, we have to work across borders and with other countries; it is such an interdependent world that we have no choice, and the Commonwealth brings countries, and the citizens of these countries, together which is extremely important'. The broadcasting of The Commonwealth Service live on BBC One and its live-streaming on the internet to celebrate the year of Her Majesty The Queen's 90th birthday, was hugely welcomed and enabled so many more to experience this truly celebratory event; joined by RCS branches in celebrations across the globe.

In the words of the Nigerian author, Ben Okri, engraved on one of the pillars of the Commonwealth Memorial Gates in London, 'our future is greater than our past'. The Royal Commonwealth Society is committed to turning this aspiration into a contemporary reality.

Claire Whitaker, OBE

Chair, The Royal Commonwealth Society



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

CONTENTS

- 2 IN THE NEWS:** CYGEN delegate reports from the UN Commission on the Status of Women
- 3 SPOTLIGHT:** Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma on his term in office
- 4 COMMONWEALTH THEME:** The 2016 theme: 'An Inclusive Commonwealth'
- 6 COMMONWEALTH CONCERN:** Time to See: focusing on avoidable blindness
- 8 COMMONWEALTH DAY:** The Commonwealth Service in Westminster Abbey
- 11 COMMONWEALTH DAY:** Interviews from the Abbey
- 12 COMMONWEALTH COMMENTARY:** The road to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda
- 14 COMMONWEALTH ACTION:** Preventing drowning through Survival Swimming programmes
- 16 COMMONWEALTH ANALYSIS:** Trading relationships – a new report
- 18 RCS REGION-WIDE:** Commonwealth Day celebrations world-wide
- 20 COMING UP IN THE COMMONWEALTH**

KEEP IN THE CONVERSATION

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- [@TheRCSLondon](https://twitter.com/TheRCSLondon)
- [Linkedin.com](https://www.linkedin.com/company/thercs)

UN HOSTS YOUTH GENDER EQUALITY DISCUSSIONS

Faith Nafula Wafula is Founder and CEO of the Kenyan 'She Project' and is representing CYGEN at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York.



On 11th March the first Youth Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was held in New York, with hundreds of young people coming to raise their voices and play their part in ensuring that we will have achieved 50/50 status by 2030. The young people were fully charged and hungry for change. The conference was well attended with the United Nations Envoy on Youth and the Executive Director of UN Women, among other high level delegates.

The discussions focused on youth engagement in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with particular focus on gender equality (SDG5). UN Women launched their 'LEAPS' framework; Leadership, Economic empowerment, Action to end violence against young women, Partnership and participation for young women and partnership with young men in gender equality and Strengthening inter-generational partnership throughout the cycle. As the first Youth CSW, of course it had its own challenges. It lacked diversity in attendees as most were U.S. based. The forum was also more a youth discussion, than an inter-generational one and despite the fact that the discussions were interesting and innovative, a dialogue between youth and other CSW attendees would have been more valuable. That said, it was the first of what we hope will be both the UN and the world's commitment to including young voices in the quest to achieve the SDGs.

While the UN is still building for inter-generational dialogue on gender equality, the Commonwealth has already incorporated this element through participation of the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN) in

the recent Commonwealth Meeting of National Women's Machineries. The meeting was attended by about 60 delegates, including two ministers. CYGEN gave a presentation on engaging youth in the achievement of SDGs and delegates were keen to find out how they could engage their youth further in gender equality. Civil society in attendance – the Commonwealth Foundation, Bangladeshi Civil Societies Network and The Commonwealth Business Women's Forum – declared an interest in engaging with CYGEN.

The Commonwealth Secretariat's Gender Division also plan to engage CYGEN further. It was however interesting to note that I was the only young person in the room. Understandably, this was a ministerial meeting but more young government delegates, or representatives from civil societies would have been good. A discussion of the outcomes from the Commonwealth Women's Forum did mention 'girls' as a target group for engagement but did not really address youth. The document also failed to acknowledge that gender was a spectrum, inclusive of LGBT issues. This topic appeared to have been excluded to avoid 'stepping on toes'. Most Commonwealth states still criminalize same sex relations; however this must be addressed within a gender context.

However, in a report evaluating the priority areas within gender equality programs for twelve countries, as submitted to the Commonwealth Secretariat, inclusion of youth was named. This is definitely a good starting point in the engagement of young people for gender equality within the Commonwealth.



MORE INFORMATION
www.un.org/youthenvoy/2016/03/youth-leaders-call-for-big-leap-for-gender-equality-at-first-csw-youth-forum/

THE COMMONWEALTH A GLOBAL FORCE FOR GOOD

Kamalesh Sharma became Commonwealth Secretary-General on 1 April 2008. He reflects on his eight year term and the state of the Commonwealth.



As Commonwealth Secretary-General, I enjoyed the immense privilege of being at the heart of a unique global family. During my term of office I was able to visit every Commonwealth member state, and witnessed the powerful attraction and influence of the Commonwealth connection. There are distinctive bonds within the Commonwealth that set us apart, making our relationships special and reminding us that the Commonwealth is as much about citizens and communities as it is about governments.

A memorable milestone was the adoption by all member governments of our Commonwealth Charter. This landmark document now binds us more closely together in common purpose around the shared values we seek to advance and to live by. It is a truly uplifting guide and inspiration to share with our fellow citizens in this year of 'An Inclusive Commonwealth'. We are committed to leaving no one behind, whether in our societies or the global family of nations.

Our aspirations of the Commonwealth family embrace the three 'Ds' of our portfolio—Democracy, Development and Diversity.

Democracy encourages the practice of inclusion, empowerment, participation, and respecting human rights and the rule of law. It drives our vital work in election observation—more than 130 elections in 36 countries since the early 1990s—and the creation of the Electoral Management Network digital platform. The 'culture of democracy' in the Commonwealth has been greatly advanced by civil society in promoting dialogue and encouraging pluralism. It is also why we invested time

and effort with the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group, the guardian of Commonwealth political values, in adopting eight priority goals and strengthening the independence and effectiveness of democratic institutions.

Development and democracy go hand in hand, and the Commonwealth has always maintained that global outcomes must be inclusive, equitable and embrace all human communities, irrespective of size and endowment. Thirty-one of our 53 member countries are small states, and we are at the forefront of global advocacy and creating pioneering and practical approaches to meet their challenges, whether it be in trade, debt, climate change or building capacity.

Diversity is a celebrated Commonwealth attribute and strength. The Commonwealth is special in its work as a champion and pioneer for young people, particularly in developing a Youth Development Index, recognising youth workers as professionals and supporting youth entrepreneurship. We have strengthened our gender equality programme for effective social, political and economic participation of women. We have produced seminal thinking on respect and understanding to tackle today's challenges of radicalisation and violent extremism. These are sound examples of our global wisdom function and our ability to build on the strength of respect for our diversity.

In changing times, the need for the Commonwealth to act as an inclusive network for mutual support, development and growth of opportunity and rights for all is as great as ever. I see great scope and widespread impact in the Commonwealth's potential contribution in the years ahead, as it continues to be a global force for good.



MORE INFORMATION
www.thecommonwealth.org/about-us/secretary-general

AN INCLUSIVE COMMONWEALTH

The annual theme provides a focus for Commonwealth Day celebrations planned by Commonwealth organisations, governments and schools, and for events and activities throughout the year.



The 2016 theme provides an ideal opportunity to have an inspirational Commonwealth conversation about how we can achieve a 'society for all' in which diversity, difference and rights are fully embraced. This means addressing inequality and poverty so that no one is left behind and we can build stronger, more resilient and inclusive societies.

As citizens, all of us should have the freedom to choose the lives we value and to reach our full potential. This includes developing the capabilities to participate in all aspects of life, including civic, social, economic and political activities and decision-making processes.

The Commonwealth Charter sets out the values of tolerance, respect and understanding, and asserts that everyone is equal and deserves to be treated fairly. In our Commonwealth family of nations, surely none of our more than two billion citizens should be condemned to endure a brief or miserable life as a result of his or her country, belief, age, race, gender, class or other identity?

We invited a number of individuals from the RCS network, each of whom is working actively in an area relevant to inclusivity, to reflect on their interpretation of the theme and to highlight their priorities for Commonwealth action to achieve an inclusive Commonwealth. Their responses are below.

-  **MORE INFORMATION**
- www.thecommonwealth.org/inclusivecommonwealth
 - www.thercs.org/our-work/commonwealth-theme-2016



Michelle Amri

Policy Analyst with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in Ontario

Associate Fellow of the Royal Commonwealth Society

To me, 'An Inclusive Commonwealth' means more than just respect and understanding for people of a different age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status. It is about equity and the action of fairly treating people. This theme ties in nicely with Sustainable Development Goal 10: 'Reduce inequality within and among countries'. It includes concrete aims provided by the United Nations, such as to 'ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard'.

Providing fair treatment is not just morally right for a nation. Giving all individuals equal

rights affords the potential to further develop a nation, the people and their way of thinking. By giving all individuals equal rights and opportunities, including those that are marginalised, such as First Nations, these sub-populations can further develop. Through fair treatment, they can be proud of their cultures and embrace diversity amongst the nation and inspire others to learn and develop.

By strengthening the sub-populations that need it the most, the collective Commonwealth family is further developed. Prosperity in ideas, visions, and hopes for the future can open up the nation to a world of endless possibilities – benefiting the world as a whole.



Sarah Soysa

Sexual and Reproductive Health Co-ordinator for Sri Lanka – Médecins du Monde
CYGEN Co-ordinator

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with the affirmation that ‘all human beings are born with equal and inalienable rights and fundamental freedoms’. Unfortunately, for many, these fundamental freedoms of equality and justice can be surprisingly difficult to achieve. Ensuring gender equality still remains a distant goal in the Commonwealth. When talking about an inclusive Commonwealth I would specifically like to focus on health, education and inclusive decision making. For me an inclusive Commonwealth is where all people living in the Commonwealth have equal access to opportunities and have the ability

to meaningfully contribute to policy and decision making processes regarding their lives. People of all genders in the Commonwealth should have access to education, health and accurate information, including comprehensive sexuality education, so that they can make informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health. However it is important to keep in mind that employment and political and civic participation goes hand in hand with health and education needs and rights, therefore socio economic empowerment of people of all genders will definitely lead to inclusivity in the Commonwealth.



David White

Head of London Office and Liaison Officer
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

This year’s theme, ‘An Inclusive Commonwealth’, provides a fantastic opportunity to reflect on the values that bind together our 53 member states. The Commonwealth charter is explicit that our strength lies in diversity, respect for all peoples, and in concern for the vulnerable. There are few more vulnerable people than refugees, who even accepting that ‘[t]he happy and powerful do not go into exile’ often give up everything they have and make perilous journeys in the hope of finding a better life.

already home to more than 400,000 refugees. Governments and their citizens are worried about the impact on resources, jobs, and security. Keeping people in remote camps, and in poor and unsafe conditions are not examples of respect, diversity, and concern. We must hope that as 2016 progresses the discussions around this year’s theme will lead to a deepening of those programmes that do genuinely reflect Commonwealth values such as Canada’s acceptance of 25,000 Syrian refugees.

One in every 122 people alive is today either a refugee, internally displaced, or an asylum seeker. Some Commonwealth members such as Kenya, Pakistan, and Uganda are

To live up to our values and make ‘An Inclusive Commonwealth’ a reality requires each of the 53 governments and their 2.1 billion citizens to be generous and welcoming to refugees.



Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose

Project Director – Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion or Belief

Living in Ghana and Trinidad in my 20s was not only a great introduction to rice and roti, but also to one of the many strengths of the Commonwealth: its religious diversity. Whilst the reasons for this diversity are often painful to accept, most Commonwealth countries now reflect the values found in the Charter of religious freedom and inclusion, affording their people the right to be a full citizen without reference to their religious beliefs or their choice not to have any.

I am therefore heartened that this year’s theme is ‘An Inclusive Commonwealth’. The broad spectrum of beliefs across our 53 countries deserves to be a source of celebration, and parliamentarians like myself

are in a unique position to protect this.

An inclusive Commonwealth means including those of all faiths and none. It is this fundamental right that the Commonwealth Initiative for Freedom of Religion or Belief (CIFoRB) will promote. We will be listening to and working with parliamentarians who want to further their country’s record for religious freedom. Sadly, there are a growing number of cases within the Commonwealth where religious freedom is under threat and people are suffering. This is an opportunity for Commonwealth countries to work together to bring about important changes that will result in a truly inclusive Commonwealth.

IT'S TIME TO SEE

80% of blindness is avoidable. Chief Executive of The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, **Dr Astrid Bonfield CBE**, tells us how they are making it their mission to bring vision and eye health to all.



THE QUEEN ELIZABETH DIAMOND JUBILEE TRUST

Papa Fakunle is a Nigerian farmer who lives with his wife and children. When he lost his vision to cataracts he was no longer able to farm, not being able to differentiate the weeds from the crops. One day he lost his way on the farm and had to be rescued and taken home by a neighbour. After this he did not leave his house. He was forced to employ a farm hand which placed huge financial pressure on him as he struggled to raise enough money to put his young children through school. Blindness robbed him of his independence, his source of income and his ability to support his family.

Good eyesight is infinitely precious. Those of us who can do our utmost to preserve it. We take regular eye examinations, we wear glasses and contact lenses, we take over the counter medication to deal with simple infections, we get advice and treatment when we need it. But not everyone has those options and the consequences can be devastating. Unfortunately, Papa Fakunle's

situation is not uncommon. There are 98 million people in the Commonwealth today who are blind or have low vision. Yet with today's knowledge four out of five cases of blindness can be prevented or treated. Simple and straightforward solutions exist but they are not yet available to everyone.

The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust was established in 2012 to mark and celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's 60 years as Head of the Commonwealth, with a mission to enrich the lives of its citizens in her honour.

We received generous donations from all regions of the Commonwealth, and are putting them into five-year programmes to combat avoidable blindness and make it possible for more people to have access to quality eye care.

We want it to be better known that four out of five blind people needn't be. This led us to team up with Standard Chartered, who also work to tackle avoidable blindness through their Seeing is Believing Initiative, to highlight the issue.

Time to See is a landmark photography exhibition that aims to bring to the attention of the Commonwealth and the world the impact of avoidable blindness and the solutions readily available to end it.

LEFT: Papa Fakunle, a farmer from Nigeria, stands in the doorway of his home.

RIGHT: Papa Fakunle tends to his farm after having his sight restored.



© Sam Faulkner / The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust

Five multi-award winning photographers, Ashley Gilbertson, Poulomi Basu, Sam Faulkner, Andrew Quilty and Adam Ferguson, visited seven countries across the Commonwealth – Australia, Fiji, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Pakistan and Uganda – to document the impact completely avoidable forms of blindness are having on people and communities.

We were delighted to be able to launch the exhibition at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Malta last year, with a selection of images on show at the dinner hosted by Her Majesty The Queen for Commonwealth leaders.

The exhibition documents the devastating impact of avoidable blindness, but also stories of hope. One of these is Papa Fakunle's. Thanks to an outreach programme he received treatment for his cataracts and regained his sight.

As he explained to photographer Sam Faulkner, "thanks to the cataract surgery I have my freedom and can farm again". He insisted on taking Sam to his farm, to convince him of his good sight and



© Poulomi Basu / The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust

health. He was overjoyed by his new lease of life.

Above all, Time to See aims to show that with vision and focus in the widest sense, avoidable blindness can be beaten.

ABOVE: A blind child lifts her arm to a light in the room. Retinopathy of prematurity left her with only partial vision.

MORE INFORMATION

The exhibition will be touring the Commonwealth in 2016. For more information and to view the photographs online please visit www.timetosee.org.
#TimeToSee



THE FACTS

- **80%** of blindness is avoidable.
- **90%** of the world's visually impaired people live in low income countries where there is little or no access to eye care.
- In India alone, **3,000** premature infants are losing their sight each year as a result of retinopathy of prematurity, often caused by the over-administration of oxygen in the incubator.
- Cataract is the world's leading cause of avoidable blindness. It can be treated with a simple **10 minute** operation.
- Diabetes is becoming a **global epidemic**. Diabetic retinopathy, resulting from the disease, is predicted to overtake cataract as the leading cause of blindness.
- Trachoma is the **world's leading infectious cause of blindness**. Repeated infection causes the eyelashes to turn inwards and with every blink, scratch the surface of the eye, eventually leading to blindness.
- Africa carries **65%** of the burden of trachoma.
- Australia is the **only high income country** where people are still affected by trachoma.

WHAT THE TRUST IS DOING ABOUT IT

- By supporting training opportunities, fellowships and the development of innovative technology the Trust is developing a new generation of trained and expert eye care providers across the Commonwealth.
- The Trust is supporting the development of Peek, the Portable Eye Examination Kit, which turns a smartphone into a comprehensive eye examination tool, allowing access to eye care in the remotest of settings.
- The Trust is working with the Ministry of Health in India to improve the training of nurses and develop protocols to ensure that premature babies with retinopathy of prematurity do not go undetected or untreated.
- The Trust is working to develop and integrate services for the detection and treatment of diabetic retinopathy into government health systems.
- The Trust is working to eliminate blinding trachoma fully in Kenya, Malawi, Australia, Kiribati, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Fiji, and make significant steps towards elimination in four further countries.



COMMONWEALTH SERVICE

Commonwealth Day 2016 began with some welcome sunshine in London as the 53 flags of the Commonwealth fluttered in Parliament Square. The Service at Westminster Abbey had the best Royal attendance in recent memory and the entire event was broadcast for the first time on BBC One television in the UK, live on the BBC World Service and available as a live stream to broadcasters in Commonwealth countries

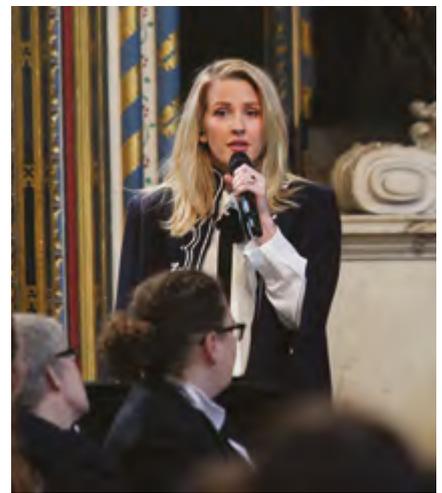
Her Majesty The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth for 64 years, attended with The Duke of Edinburgh, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Henry of Wales and The Duke of York. The Commonwealth Service this year was also the first major ceremonial event for Her Majesty in Her 90th birthday year.

Guests of honour included UK Prime Minister David Cameron, the Prime Minister of Malta and new Chair-in-Office of the Commonwealth, Dr Joseph Muscat,



“Perhaps my most memorable moment was watching the lady who was using sign language as she followed ‘Fields of Gold’. She brought the emotions of the song alive with her gestures and facial expressions.”

Ken Slatter, Lealands High School



High Commissioners, diplomats and faith leaders. The Commonwealth Service is now well known as the largest Commonwealth multi-faith service in the United Kingdom and possibly the world, given the attendance of around 2,000 people including almost 1,000 school children. The school children were very excited to see singer songwriter Ellie Goulding perform ‘Fields of Gold’. The entire service was interpreted by the Royal Association for Deaf people (RAD). Some of those at the Service remarked on the quite beautiful symbolism and signs made to communicate the words of the song.

The principal reflection was delivered by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan who said that, as a Ghanaian, he felt very much part of the Commonwealth family: “It has never been more important for the Commonwealth to stress the bonds of human compassion and solidarity that unite us across the divides of race and religion, gender and geography.” HE Kamalesh

Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary-General gave an address and Dr Joseph Muscat, Prime Minister of Malta, delivered a reading.

Sara Ezabe, a Queen’s Young Leader and advocate for social inclusion spoke eloquently about this year’s Commonwealth theme, ‘An Inclusive Commonwealth’. Sara is a law student at the University of Malta, who has faced discrimination because of her faith (see page 10).

Simphiwe Simon Shibambu sang ‘Qongqothwane’ a traditional Xhasa song; Dr Selina Tusitala Marsh read ‘Unity’ a poem specially written for the service inspired by the Hawaiian proverb: ‘Above all nations is humanity’.

MORE INFORMATION

Full transcripts of Kofi Annan’s reflection and HM The Queen’s Commonwealth Day Message, video interviews and highlights from the service can be found at: www.thercs.org/our-work/commonwealth-day-2016

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Royal Association for Deaf people interpreter; Ellie Goulding; Kofi Annan; Dr Selina Tusitala Marsh

LEFT: Her Majesty The Queen with The Dean of Westminster, The Very Reverend Dr John Hall



A REFLECTION BY SARA EZABE MALLIUE

FROM WESTMINSTER ABBEY

"It is a great honour for me today, as a Queen's Young Leader, to be delivering this reflection. I am delighted to witness such a wide representation of different nations and religions. Today we celebrate the establishment of a unique and global community, a community with a strong sense of unity and inclusivity; a community that cannot thrive if there is racism, xenophobia, homophobia and other divisions of fear and hate between us.

An inclusive Commonwealth champions the values of respect, understanding, equity and fairness. One cannot embrace these values without understanding that beyond each of these words there lies a long struggle to attain such harmony and for this reason I would like to honour those people who have lost their lives in the pursuit of dignity and equality to be achieved in this world.

It is not enough that these values are established in the Commonwealth Charter; together we must ensure that we bring them to life by practicing them every day of our lives. Every day I strive to eliminate racism, xenophobia and discrimination in my community, by promoting an inclusive education, discussing with young people the way forward and encouraging dialogue to bridge differences and live in an inclusive society. We aim to reduce islamophobia, overcome fears and eliminate prejudices and judgments by educating and informing people about Islam. It has been a challenging year for the Muslim community because of the rise of violent extremism and the terrorist attacks all over the world. Together



with millions of fellow Muslims, I condemn these barbaric acts.

I live in Malta – a developed country, where I have food, shelter and a good education. However, I have been the victim of racism and xenophobia because of my faith. We must not underestimate the power of the virtual world, especially social media, where hatred and vitriol can be expressed with impunity. In an effort to address the bad experiences of my community, my colleague Naomi Burge and I established the social media campaign #RedefiningUs. This campaign is intended to raise awareness about what defines a Maltese person, and strives to empower people who have encountered discrimination, helping

them identify the best ways of confronting people who share racist and xenophobic sentiments through meaningful dialogue.

In a Commonwealth that welcomes everyone, we should strive together to ensure that all human beings have their fundamental rights respected and that the values of the Commonwealth charter are put into practice. This is not just a call to action for young people, who form 60% of the Commonwealth's population, but a call to our leaders also. My experience of advocating for social inclusion and peace has taught me that change is not a single action but rather a long, and time-consuming process. However, I have also come to realise that every single action, no matter how small, can bring about positive change.

It is time, for us to wake up to the realities around us, to understand the pain others are going through. Indifference is no longer an option – support, empowerment and education are the way forward. We must empower the vulnerable people in our communities because humanity does not live up to its full potential when we are divided, and not united.

Thank you."



MORE INFORMATION
#RedefiningUs
www.queensyoungleaders.com



INTERVIEW HIGHLIGHTS

"I think the Commonwealth has an important role to play in this interdependent world. When you are able to have an organisation with that many countries engaged, and with two billion people involved who share certain values, they can play a role in stabilising our world ...

"I think the young people can make a difference, if we put our trust in them and encourage them to add, to lead. I often tell the young 'you are never too young to lead'. And quite a few of them are already playing leadership roles actively in their schools and their communities and they should be encouraged to do that ...

"I think education, and through example, diversity and plurality are at the centre

of the Commonwealth. We should really embrace and admire that. We should bring young people up to understand that. This is where the emphasis we put on human rights and rule of law and inclusive development becomes important; because equity and fairness often lead to stable and calmer societies.

"I firmly believe that the Commonwealth has made a big difference. It is an organisation we should treasure and build upon ... I hope we value what we have and really work together to make the organisation stronger, unified to be able to contribute to the members of the Commonwealth and beyond."

"I think The Queen has been the Commonwealth's greatest champion. Everybody knows she loves the Commonwealth, every tiny little bit of it, and I think what she has always welcomed is the coming together of the different people, different religions, different colours, different shapes, different cultures melding together to one Commonwealth. I went this morning to stand together with those who celebrated, from the

Commonwealth, the commitment and contribution we made during the war, when so many people from across the Commonwealth came not because of conscription but because they wanted to. To bring freedom, the sort of freedom that all of us have. And standing with the rest of our Commonwealth fellows this morning, I really felt that family, that friendship, and that we were stronger and better together."

© Commonwealth Secretariat

"... The need for more inclusion is paramount ...

"It means not shying away from tackling the maybe, thorny, subjects. Minority issues, LGBTIQ issues that are so important in many countries of the Commonwealth and maybe that we have so far shied away from addressing first-hand because of some fear that it might stir controversy. Well, I think that the Commonwealth was at its best when it didn't shy away from controversy. Just look at what happened during the Apartheid years in South Africa.

So we need to be very clear about what our values are ...

"Well, I think there should not be any code of silence. We should ruffle feathers when there is the need to ruffle feathers; we should speak our mind. Clearly we should give everyone the chance to voice his or her reservations and point of view, but at the end of the day it should be very clear that the Commonwealth stands for a number of values and they are there to stay ..."

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS:

BY THE PEOPLE FOR THE PEOPLE?

With the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals adopted in September 2015, the challenge is to maintain momentum and ensure delivery of inclusive policies. **Oli Henman** reflects on actions being taken to ensure an enabling environment for civil society.



During the last three years a wide range of civil society partners have come together to contribute to the process of drafting the Sustainable Development Goals and shaping the wider 2030 Sustainable Development agenda.

The process to develop the goals included a concerted effort to engage in structured dialogue with civil society bodies through the Open Working Group and other stakeholder forums co-ordinated by the UN Division on Sustainable Development. Although it is extremely difficult to provide a space for every individual to be heard, these forums act as an entry-point for many diverse voices and provide a systematic approach to engagement based on allocating space for defined constituencies, thereby guaranteeing each group has a recognised seat at the table.

This process was also marked by increased collaboration across civil society on major joint campaigns, such as action/2015 and Beyond2015. The action/2015 campaign enabled many thousands of citizens to come together at key moments, including on the eve of the SDG Summit in September 2015, and alongside the climate change conference, COP21, in December 2015. CIVICUS was proud to have been at the forefront of many of these moments of dialogue and mobilisation and to have enabled many of our members around the

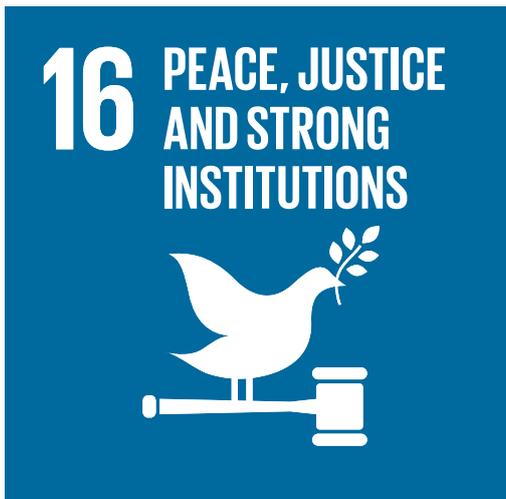
world to contribute their valuable insights and ensure a collaborative process. Whether they represented marginalised communities in India or were fighting for climate justice in Central America, many individuals came together as part of a global movement to call for a more just and sustainable world.

The challenge now is to keep the momentum going on the 2030 agenda and to ensure that active citizens around the world can continue to engage with their governments and the UN to guarantee delivery of inclusive policies. In order to deliver this, many organisations are continuing to collaborate through joint networks.

Two particular examples for citizen involvement emerge:

1. Goal 16 engagement

Goal 16 refers to peace, justice and the rule of law and explicitly states that member states will: 'Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements'. In this context, a number of national partners are considering how to ensure that Goal 16 on peace and justice is able to guarantee an enabling environment for civil society and the maintenance of core civic space. CIVICUS has already been working with a number of national partners for example in India, where there was still relatively limited engagement from key government ministries, to consider how national level implementation can provide the necessary support for an enabling environment for civil society and we are collaborating with a number of key partners to consider these elements.



2. People-powered monitoring and citizen-generated data

A second major priority area for CIVICUS is to develop civil society's own ability to hold its governments accountable, by providing them with the skills and understanding for monitoring the delivery of the targets according to relevant indicators. Through a specific project called 'Datashift', where possible, CIVICUS will provide access to tools that enable people to monitor the delivery of the goals themselves through citizen-generated data. This is a dynamic new area of opportunity for civil society to leverage the potential of using online tools and mobile phones for rapid and interactive monitoring of specific themes under the goals. A powerful example is 'Promise Tracker', a mobile data collection application that enables citizens to monitor the performance of their local governments on issues that matter to them, including basic infrastructure, sanitation, health and education.

Finally, in order to link the various initiatives which are taking shape under different themes and in different regions of the world, CIVICUS is working closely with Climate Action Network (CAN)



ABOVE: People's Climate March, Australia.
© Flickr/350.org

International, the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP), and the International Forum of Platforms (IFP) to establish a joint network to share knowledge and promote best practices within civil society on the Sustainable Development Agenda. The group will soon launch a shared website and will ensure joint advocacy, including providing a link between national dialogues and key global meetings to keep the momentum going towards implementation of an agenda that truly delivers a more just and sustainable world.

MORE INFORMATION

Find out more online:

- www.action2015.org
- www.civicus.org/thedatashift
- www.promisetracker.org
- sustainabledevelopment.un.org

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

As European Representative of CIVICUS Oli Henman promotes good practice in participation and developing key forums for dialogue with European institutions. He has considerable experience in working with civil society participation and governance including for the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).

action/2015



125 YEARS OF DROWNING PREVENTION

Drowning is one of the major causes of preventable death throughout the world. **Clive Holland**, Deputy Commonwealth President of the Royal Life Saving Society, outlines the importance of a Commonwealth focus.



According to a 2014 report from the World Health Organisation, drowning is responsible for killing 372,000 people every year – and more than 90% of those deaths occur in low and middle income countries (LMICs), many of which are part of the Commonwealth.

The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS), which was founded 125 years ago and has Member Branches in around half of all Commonwealth nations, is uniquely placed to offer leadership on research, training and innovation to combat these preventable tragedies.



ABOVE: RLSS Commonwealth President HRH Prince Michael of Kent chaired the Society's Commonwealth Council during the 125th Anniversary Conference in London.

The foundation of the Society

The Swimmers' Life Saving Society was founded in 1891 by champion swimmer William Henry, and achieved the 'Royal' designation in 1904 on the orders of Edward VII. 20 years later, it received its formal Royal Charter from King George V. Today, its Commonwealth President is HRH Prince Michael of Kent, GCVO, and HM The Queen its Patron.

As RLSS Deputy Commonwealth President, I believe our 125th Anniversary is a perfect opportunity to strengthen the links between our current Member Branches and encourage more Commonwealth countries to affiliate to the RLSS.

In the 30 or so years since I first got involved, the Royal Life Saving Society has become more inclusive and now focuses firmly on the particular needs of each nations' people. Low and middle income countries are represented on all our committees, for example, and play a huge role in formulating policy. This is vitally important, as many are small island states which have significantly different 'drowning profiles' than larger countries such as the UK, Canada and Australia.

The WHO Global Report on Drowning recognised that drowning threats in poorer countries more often relate to transport and work-based activities, whereas in richer countries, where fewer people travel precariously by water or rely on the sea, rivers and lakes for their livelihood, drownings more often occur as a result of leisure activities.

Survival Swimming

One of the initiatives being launched this year aims to establish Survival Swimming programmes in all member countries. This teaches the minimum skills required to survive an unexpected fall into deep water: keeping the head above the surface, and then moving to the nearest point of safety.

Survival Swimming is 'back to basics' water safety. When someone starts to drown, the outcome is often fatal. Survival usually depends on the speed of removal from the water and how quickly proper resuscitation can take place. So embedding basic swimming and lifesaving education, skills



LEFT: Survival swimming lessons in India.



RIGHT: RLSS instructors working with children in Australia.

and leadership can make a real difference to communities around the world.

In Canada, the Swim to Survive programme is offered by the Lifesaving Society in all provinces. In 2012, the Ontario branch helped the programme in St Lucia, offering funding and organisational support, and the aim there is to reach 400 students, from age seven to adult, by the end of 2016.

Successful Survival Swimming programmes are also established in Bangladesh and India, both based on the lessons learned from initiatives in Canada and Australia. As part of our anniversary programme, RLSS will be encouraging member countries to share knowledge and resources with other countries in their region.

The fundamental message of our anniversary year is to ensure all our branches, in countries large and small, are aware of the significance of their membership of a huge Commonwealth family and the support, guidance and resources which that membership brings.

Anniversary celebrations

Our 125th Anniversary fell on February 7th and shortly thereafter we held a conference and celebrations in London. Delegates from around the Commonwealth attended a week of events including a reception with HRH Prince Michael at The Cavalry and Guards Club, a 'history tour' of important sites in the Society's development, and an Anniversary Dinner.

Around the Commonwealth, Member Branches are marking the anniversary with special championships, gala events and conferences; awarding 125th Anniversary

Service Certificates and HRH Prince Michael of Kent 125th Anniversary Certificates of Merit to deserving individuals; and contributing to an historic record of the Society's past and present. Members will also be represented at events such as the Patron's Lunch in June to mark the Queen's 63-year reign.

The events and initiatives of 2016 will have a huge impact on the future of the Royal Life Saving Society. Under the patronage of Her Majesty and the presidency of His Royal Highness, the Society can look forward to many more years serving the people of the Commonwealth.



125 YEARS OF
COMMONWEALTH
DROWNING
PREVENTION

327,000
people drown
every year

90%
deaths are
in LMIC's

MORE INFORMATION

To find out more from the WHO Global Report On Drowning 2014, visit http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/publications/drowning_global_report/Final_report_full_web.pdf

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Clive Holland learned to swim at the age of 26 as a police cadet, progressing to teaching lifesaving in the 1980s and becoming chair of his local RLSS branch. He joined the Society's UK management board in 1997 and became its president in 2004. He has been Deputy Commonwealth President for over two years, liaising with the wider Commonwealth.

www.rlsscommonwealth.org

'TRADE IS THE LIFEBLOOD OF THE COMMONWEALTH' SAYS NEW REPORT

'Trade is the lifeblood of the Commonwealth'. These are the opening words from the Commonwealth Secretariat's recent publication: *The Commonwealth in the unfolding global trade landscape*. This work represents a sea-change in thinking and design. Importantly, it is a much welcomed one.

In recent years, and even decades, the Secretariat has placed considerable focus on other policy areas; however an improved concentration on trading relationships is timely but little understood. As a network of nations spanning the globe at differing stages of economic development the Commonwealth represents a curious ecosystem.

The report proffers a number of headline takeaways. The first is the 'Commonwealth Advantage' (which describes the practical economic value of shared language and systems between member countries) which has been calculated to be an average 19% higher than with non-Commonwealth nations. This is broken down as an

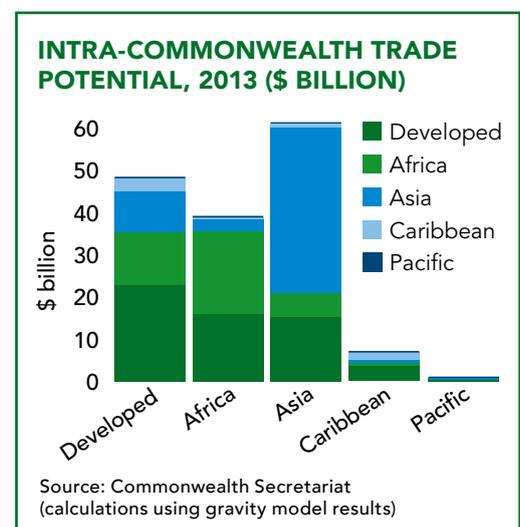
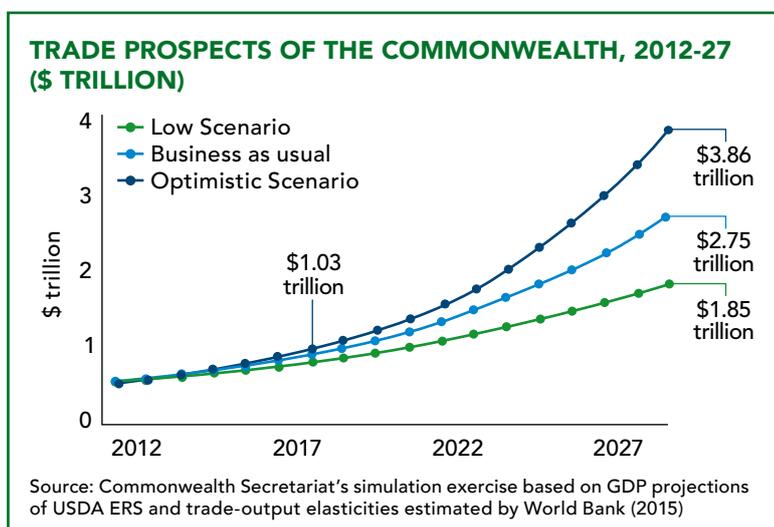
average of 17% for goods, 28% for services, and 10% for Foreign Direct Investment.

The second is the significant increase of total Commonwealth exports. This stood at \$1.3trn in 2000 and expanded to \$3.4trn in 2013 and makes up 15% of global exports. This trend is set to continue apace.

Thirdly, trade between Commonwealth members has also been growing rapidly, at ten percent per annum since 1995, is now above \$600bn and heading for \$1trn by 2020, and projected to reach \$2.75trn by 2030.

Fourthly, total Commonwealth exports to China have grown fourteen times – from \$19bn to \$268bn since 2000. As China becomes more integrated into the global economic community – both in terms of trade and investment – Commonwealth nations would do well to seek this partnership ensuring it is equitable and mutually supportive.

In summary these figures show why tapping into the Commonwealth is valuable and how



this has increased over the last decade.

The publication itself is certainly lengthy, but after a long hiatus in looking at Commonwealth trade a rigorous and academic approach is not a negative. To its credit there is a move to use infographics to explain key points at the start of the four chapters, while the tables and graphs are easy-to-read. This approach can be enhanced further in future iterations.

In the latter pages space is made for gender and trade concerns. This is fundamentally positive because unlocking the potential of the female workforces in developing and emerging economies will increase economic growth, create a more sustainable tax base, which will further democratic accountability, not to mention greater economic freedom for women. Collaboration with the recently established Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network is a must.

The overarching issue is how to turn this substantial body of work into a selling point for businesses both large and small. This pitch will have to be slick. Businesses will need to be able buy into the Commonwealth, its brand, and how this can be leveraged for future prosperity. A process of condensing these economic messages would be a positive next step.

There is also legitimate space for governments to grasp this too. Many ventures in emerging markets require a public-private partnership to succeed. This can take many forms with infrastructure both physical and digital being central. But again, governments must utilise the Commonwealth's trade potential, be this regionally or more globally.

One missing point was the movement of labour. As capital and goods move more freely so do people. Any future study should emphasise skilled immigration and visa concerns for intra-Commonwealth trade flows. Little attention was given to diaspora ties between Commonwealth nations and how these can be drawn upon for trade purposes. These people-to-people connections are crucial in opening up new markets where trust and familiarity are highly valued social commodities. Future research should cover this increasing dynamic.



The overall recommendations were sensible such as using existing trade preference schemes, building upon the Commonwealth Advantage, improving trade data collection, identifying implementation gaps, and promoting private sector involvement. However, the proof will be in the application and how the Commonwealth and its structures can assist with these processes.

“

Collaboration with the recently established Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network is a must.”

To conclude, and in keeping with the lifeblood analogy, the Commonwealth provides its producers and consumers a ready-made circulatory system, one that is in better health, but needs the body to exercise more to ensure prosperity is shared by all and poverty is eradicated. This publication is one such step.

MORE INFORMATION

Infographics from *Commonwealth Trade Review 2015*, reproduced with permission of the Commonwealth Secretariat. View the full report at www.thecommonwealth.org/commonwealth-unfolding-global-trade-landscape

RCS BRANCHES CELEBRATE COMMONWEALTH DAY

Across the globe, RCS Branches, Regional Co-ordinators and Associate Fellows organised events in celebration of Commonwealth Day and the launch of this year's theme: 'An Inclusive Commonwealth'.

RCS Guernsey Branch

The Commonwealth flags were raised on the Sea Mast in St Peter Port with the Bailiff, Richard Collas in attendance. It was an historic day for Guernsey as the new Lieutenant Governor was sworn in – Vice Admiral Ian Corder read The Queen's Message to the Commonwealth as part of the installation.



RCS Bath and District Branch

Students from Bath Spa University, the University of Bath and Beechen Cliff School read the Commonwealth Affirmation, the values that bind together members of the Commonwealth throughout the world, on Sunday 13th March at St Nicholas Church, Bathampton.



RCS Hong Kong Branch

President Sir David Tang welcomed guests to the Garden Lounge of the HK Club. The Queen's Message was read by Australian Consul-General, Mr Paul Tighe with the Canadian, New Zealand and Nigerian Consuls-General in attendance.



RCS Malaysia Branch

Joining 20 High Commissioners, 130 Fellows and guests at their largest ever annual Commonwealth Day celebration, were YBhgDato' Ho May Yong, the Deputy Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia and Mr Paul Rennie, Acting British High Commissioner

who read The Queen's Message and the Affirmation.



This year's celebration also saw the launch of Malaysia Branch's Youth Membership with nineteen young people welcomed into the Society by Ms Bernice Narayanan, Chair.



Commonwealth Club of Rome

His Excellency Christopher Prentice, CMG spoke on 'The Future of the Commonwealth in the light of the EU Referendum in the UK' to a packed meeting of members and friends including expats, embassy representatives from Commonwealth countries (Malta, Australia, Nigeria, Canada, South Africa and UK) and Italians at Rome's Savoy Hotel, to mark Commonwealth Day 2016.



The Commonwealth Peoples Friendship Association of Pakistan (CPFA)

A meeting was held on 14 March at the Hotel Beach Luxury Karachi, Pakistan, to observe Commonwealth Day. Sardar M. Yasin Malik accepted the role of President and praised the services of his predecessor, the late Mr. Qutubuddin Aziz.



RCS Manitoba Branch

A reception to celebrate Commonwealth Day was held at Government House, and at the Manitoba Legislature rotunda, where the Commonwealth flag and the 53 Commonwealth national flags were on display for the week.



RCS Auckland Branch

Leonie Lawson MNZM, RCS Auckland President conducted the Auckland Girls Choir at the Commonwealth Day Service at Auckland Holy Trinity cathedral.

RCS Barbados Branch

The annual Multi-Faith Observance for Commonwealth Day was held at the James Street Methodist Church in Bridgetown, Barbados. The choir of The Coleridge & Parry School performed the anthem 'Come, See'.



RCS Canberra Branch

The Commonwealth Day multi-faith celebration at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, Barton was attended by the Governor-General, General the Honourable Sir Peter Cosgrove

AK MC (Retd.), and Lady Cosgrove, as guests of the Executive Director, the Right Reverend Professor



Stephen Pickard and the Chairman, Commonwealth Day Celebration Committee, Mr Tony Eggleton AO CVO. The Governor-General delivered The Queen's Commonwealth Day Message.

RCS in Ghana

The pupils of Her Majesty School in Asamankese, Ghana observed



Commonwealth Day at their school in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The pupils, as part of the celebration, re-enacted 'Commonwealth Day 2016 at Westminster Abbey'. The highlight of the event was a showcase of traditional Ghanaian regalia indicating the cultural tapestry that is the hallmark of the Commonwealth.

BRANCH FOCUS



BIRMINGHAM COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION

Birmingham Commonwealth Association (BCA) is delighted that the Royal Commonwealth Society has approved its application to join its international network, committed to improving the lives and prospects of Commonwealth citizens across the world.

The BCA was established in March 2014 as an initiative of Birmingham City Council's then leader, Sir Albert Bore. Founding Chairman Keith Stokes-Smith said: "We look forward to giving the RCS our full support whilst using our membership of the Society to enhance and achieve our educational, civil society, business and governmental outcomes."

BRANCH FOCUS



A BRANCH OF
THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY



THE COMMONWEALTH FORUM IN BRUSSELS

Commonwealth Day in Brussels saw the first event of the Commonwealth Forum, a cross-party and multi-national initiative by Emma McClarkin, MEP to raise the profile of the Commonwealth within the city and institutions of the European Union.

This new branch of the RCS will bring together Commonwealth Members of the European Parliament, Ambassadors, senior officials, representatives of civil society and other friends of the Commonwealth in Brussels.

Emma McClarkin said: "It is important that the Commonwealth is visibly present and active in Brussels, a city which plays host to a vast network of international representatives. As a branch of the RCS we can strengthen and nurture these connections."

COMING UP IN THE COMMONWEALTH

11-13 APRIL

Commonwealth Journalists Association International Meeting, London

23 APRIL

Shakespeare 400: Anniversary of the Most Performed Playwright in the World's death



THE QUEEN'S COMMONWEALTH ESSAY COMPETITION

1 MAY

Entry Deadline for 2016 The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition



12-15 MAY

The Queen's 90th Birthday Celebration

22 MAY

Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting (CHMM), Geneva

23-24 MAY

First World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) UN OCHA, Istanbul, Turkey

5 JUNE

World Environment Day (United Nations)



JUNE

Opening of nominations for The Queen's Young Leaders Programme, 2017 (Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, Royal Commonwealth Society and Comic Relief)

18-25 JUNE

The Queen's Young Leaders' Residential Programme, London and Cambridge (RCS and Cambridge University)

1 JULY

Battle of the Somme Centenary

12 AUGUST

International Youth Day (United Nations)

1-10 SEPTEMBER

62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Dhaka, Bangladesh

5-9 SEPTEMBER

11th Women's Affairs Ministerial Meeting, Samoa

12-16 SEPTEMBER

Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation Forum, Nadi, Fiji

4-7 OCTOBER

The Royal Commonwealth Society International Meeting, London

27 NOVEMBER - 1 DECEMBER

8th Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8), Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, Malaysia, (COL and the Open University Malaysia)

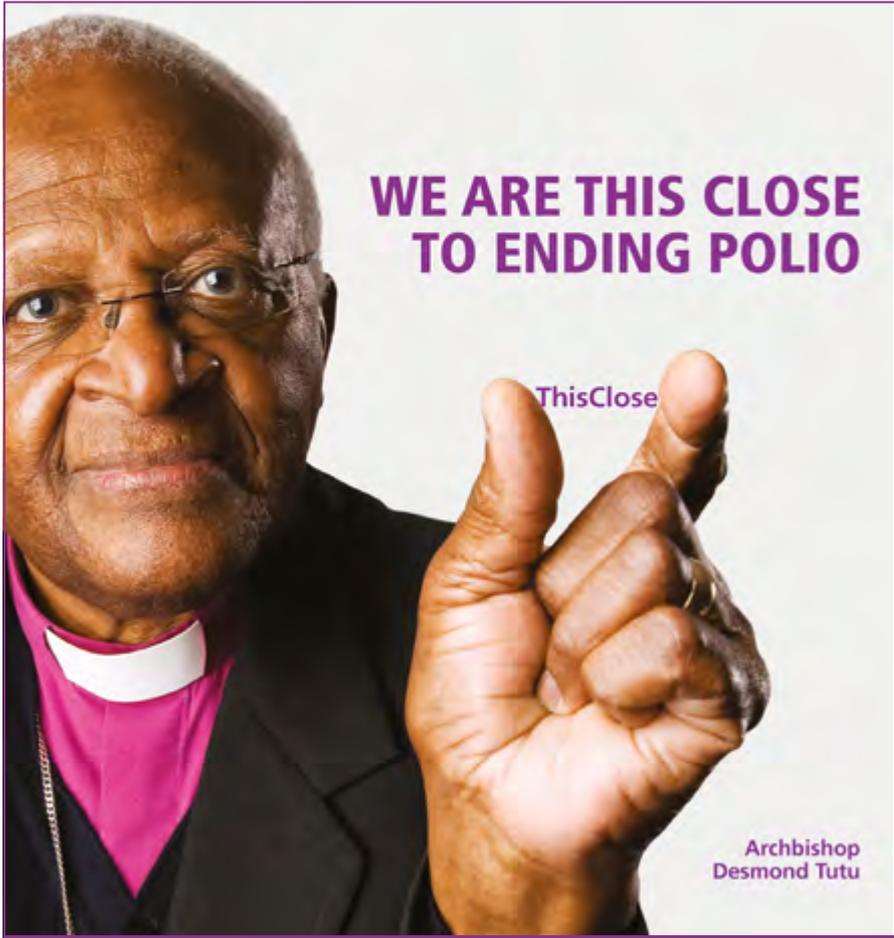
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WE ARE THIS CLOSE TO ENDING POLIO

ThisClose

Archbishop Desmond Tutu



Now is our chance to change the world. To make sure no child is affected by polio ever again.

Polio, a paralyzing disease that typically strikes children under the age of five, is nearly gone thanks to an extraordinary partnership including governments of the world, Rotary, WHO, UNICEF, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Rotary clubs throughout the Commonwealth have been at the forefront of the effort and applaud the continued commitment to polio eradication affirmed by The Commonwealth of Nations at the 2015 CHOGM.

Join in. Speak out. Donate. Be part of history.

endpolio.org



fly a flag 14 MARCH 2016
FOR THE COMMONWEALTH

In just its 3rd year, over 850 Commonwealth Flags were raised throughout the Commonwealth and UK Overseas Territories as part of the Fly a Flag initiative.

From Tonga, where time begins, through The Bahamas, Belize, Grenada, Jamaica, Malaysia, Maldives, Republic of Malta, Mauritius, New Zealand, Samoa, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago, Tristan da Cunha and including many UK locations, Girl Guides, Scouts and other communities hoisted the flag in a unique, collective, public expression of commitment to the Commonwealth.

flyaflagforthecommonwealth.co.uk

COMMONWEALTH DAY SERVICE

WESTMINSTER ABBEY
Monday 14 March 2016

Highlights of this year's celebration of the Commonwealth's unity and diversity.



 @TheRCSLondon  facebook.com/thercs  youtube.com/user/TheRCSociety



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

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