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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The Commonwealth has been actively involved in responding to development needs in the Republic of Seychelles, a small island developing state (SIDS) member of the association, since the country's independence in 1976. The association is perceived by the current government as having "provided a broad and diverse programme of development assistance to the country" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012: Section 2.0). Official documents from the Commonwealth Secretariat also report on assistance provided, describing a wide range of Commonwealth-led and Commonwealth-funded activities for Seychelles (e.g. Commonwealth Secretariat 1977, 2008, 2010).

A recent evaluation of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC), the Commonwealth's main organ for supporting development in member countries, states that the CFTC is to "be seen as a unique example of multilateral, voluntary cooperation and partnership among like-minded nations". The evaluators further state that "it is clear that the CFTC's overarching mandate is to contribute to development efforts in member states, not so much by direct interventions as by laying the foundations for long-term relationships with partners through a process of building understanding, sharing experiences and promoting mutual cooperation" (Universalia 2010: iii).

There are a number of reports and case studies prepared by consultants, as well as dissertations by Seychellois nationals, about various Commonwealth-led projects in specific areas such as education (Purvis 2007; Pardiwalla 2008), the electoral process (Commonwealth Secretariat 2011a), government administration (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010), among others. None of the existing reports and studies have investigated the relationship between the Republic of Seychelles and the Commonwealth in terms of the support received from the association, within the

sphere of 'mutual cooperation', and the perceived effectiveness and usefulness of this assistance to Seychelles as a small island developing state.

Seychelles is a small island state (or more precisely a microstate) with a population of nearly 90,000 according to the 2010 census (National Bureau of Statistics 2012: v). The country which gained its independence from Great Britain in 1976, is described as an "idyllic archipelago in the Indian Ocean off the coast of Africa, best known as an island paradise playground for celebrities, royalty and the ultra-wealthy" (Prasso, 2009: 1). In reality, and like most small island developing states (SIDS), it faces a number of problems directly linked to its remoteness, vulnerable eco-system and limitations in human and other resources (Government of Seychelles 2004: 3), with inadequate means to tackle them on its own. In a book published six years after the country's independence, Franda (1982: 1), for example, wonders how a tiny country like Seychelles can survive economically; where it will find resources to be viable in today's world; and whether it can "maintain anything resembling its past peacefulness and unspoilt beauty".

Like many SIDS and microstates, the country is, to a great extent, dependent on external sources for the means needed to further its development. These can take the form of assistance from development partners, international loans, or revenue from activities such as tourism (Republic of Seychelles, 1990:4). Such assistance is clearly a matter of concern for the country, as reflected in statements made regularly regarding the need for the international community to initiate development aid approaches for SIDS that will take into account their specificities (e.g, President Calls for New Approach to Foreign Aid 2005: 1; Republic of Seychelles/UNDP/UN-DESA 2013: 19). In a speech given at the SIDS Forum convened by the UN in Mauritius in 2005, the President of the Seychelles, Mr. James Michel, expressed this concern about aid to Seychelles in general, and called for a new approach to foreign aid, adding that sustainable development would soon be out of reach for the country and for most SIDS "if our partners in development, and the international community at large, continue to support us half-heartedly" (President Calls for New Approach to Foreign Aid, 2005: 1).

It should be pointed out that development within the scope of this study is taken to be "essentially a 'friendly' process" whose congeniality "is seen as exemplified by such

things as mutually beneficial exchanges... or by the working of social safety nets, or of political liberties, or of social development – or some combination or other of these supportive activities” (Sen 1999: 36).

As pointed out earlier, one of Seychelles’ main, and closest, international partners is the Commonwealth. After having been a British colony from 1811 to 1976 (Taylor 2005: 18 and 628), membership of the Commonwealth at independence was essentially taken for granted. Informal discussions with various individuals in Seychelles in preparation for this study revealed that, to this day, there are people in Seychelles who think that membership of the Commonwealth was a required condition for independence from Great Britain, and that the country had no choice but to become a member of the association.

In its first few years as an independent country, Seychelles seems to have received extensive support from the Commonwealth, the best known area being capacity building, specially within public administration. Capacity building in this context describes a process which enables people of “developing countries to carry out development processes successfully by empowering them”, it “addresses all areas of economic, socio-cultural, political and environmental processes through a holistic approach” (James 1998: xvi). Such capacity building in the Seychelles public sector has traditionally occurred at two levels: 1) through staff training and development possibilities, and 2) through elements of professional development for national counterparts in technical assistance programmes. Despite the fact that this area is generally seen as the most useful area of cooperation between Seychelles and the Commonwealth, it is thought that Seychelles has been, to a large extent, a passive recipient of help offered by the Commonwealth (Confait 2009). Furthermore, it is felt that the lack of real dialogue about local needs may have meant that much of the help provided has not had the expected effect (Confait, 2009).

## **1.2 TOPIC OF STUDY**

In the mid-1980s, the Commonwealth had already acknowledged that there was “an emerging awareness of the reality of small states and some recognition of their special needs” (Commonwealth Secretariat 1985: v). Following a meeting held in Delhi in 1983, the report of a Commonwealth Consultative Group entitled

'Vulnerability – Small States in the Global Society', states that the Commonwealth concern with 'small states' had been given formal expression for the first time at a meeting held in Barbados in 1977 (Commonwealth Secretariat 1985: 1).

An update of the 1985 Vulnerability report later affirms: "As the only major international agency where the majority of members are from small states, the Commonwealth has a unique role of advocacy in the global arena on behalf of those members. It also has a substantial technical programme in support of their development and a wide range of other activities of particular and of general interest to small states. The Commonwealth Secretariat has a comparative advantage in dealing with a wide range of small states' issues and is widely recognised by international and regional agencies for its expertise" (Commonwealth Secretariat 1997: 12.7).

Furthermore, a 2005 report entitled 'Advancing Development and Building Prosperity' states that the CFTC spends about 60% of its resources on small island state members (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005: 7) through actions that include policy analysis and advice, as well as brokering policy and negotiating positions on international economic and financial issues (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009: 1).

In 1998 the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Government of Canada brought together 39 political leaders, civil servants, academics and private citizens from 13 countries to discuss the needs of small island states. Some of the major questions asked at the meeting were: "Can small states remain viable without a critical mass of knowledge or natural resources? Can small states put together all the elements to remain solvent in modern society? What happens if not?" (Commonwealth Secretariat/Government of Canada 1998: 6).

The Republic of Seychelles, one of the Commonwealth's SIDS members, has achieved significant successes in human development, and is known to have internal stability. Nonetheless, it faces considerable challenges at the economic, political, environmental and, increasingly, the social levels. It is, and remains, a vulnerable small island developing state with threats to its sustainable development (Government of Seychelles 2012b: 4). Speaking after the 2011 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), the President of the country, Mr. James

Michel, stated: “Sustainable development is still a dream”. He also felt that SIDS, in 2011, were “more in debt, more vulnerable and with less finance than in 1992” (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 2011: 1), the latter date being, presumably, a reference to the Rio Meeting on Sustainable Development. A major contributing factor to this perception of things could be that external assistance to Seychelles has decreased markedly in the last two decades. Some national reports state that the lowered level of overseas development assistance (ODA) may be due to the relatively high ranking of Seychelles on the UN development index (UNDP, undated: 14; Republic of Seychelles/UN-DESA 2013: 18). It has been said that Seychelles, currently, “seems at a crossroads as it seeks to consolidate past gains and address the challenges threatening some of its past successes” (UN/GOS 2009: 12).

The main multilateral contributor to aid for the Seychelles, for the period 2001 to 2005, was the European Union with a total contribution of 8,336,840 euros (GOS/EU, 2007: Annex 2) representing an annual average of 1,667,368 euros (approximately 26,677,888 Seychelles rupees). During the same period (2000/01 to 2005/06) the Commonwealth, through the CFTC, provided direct assistance to Seychelles worth GBP 423,476 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2008: 9). This represented an annual average of GBP 84,695 (approximately 1,693,900 Seychelles rupees), much of it going towards salary payments for technical support staff sent to Seychelles by the CFTC (Commonwealth Secretariat 2008: 9).

Despite the above, it is generally believed that Commonwealth support, like other forms of ODA, has dwindled over the years, and that the association does not contribute markedly to development in Seychelles. Comments gathered prior to this study indicate that the range of *ad hoc* technical assistance programmes and training offers, which represent the bulk of the support now being received from the Commonwealth, might not necessarily fulfil the expectations that stakeholders in Seychelles may have from a close multi-lateral development partner.

## **1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE**

### **1.3.1 Research problem**

There is no known comprehensive assessment of the assistance provided by the Commonwealth to the Seychelles. This could be due to a number of factors which can only be surmised: a lack of awareness as to the possible benefits of such an investigation; an 'international' relationship that is taken for granted and therefore does not seem to require investigation; or the virtual absence of institutional memory as to the growth of the relationship, all in all resulting in a lack of interest in the subject. As a result, it is not possible to know what effects the many Commonwealth activities, over nearly four decades, have had on development in Seychelles, nor is it possible to gauge how effective the approaches used for the provision of assistance have been, and more particularly, how valuable this assistance is deemed to be by major national stakeholders.

This study will therefore focus on the interactions between the Commonwealth, an international governmental association, and Seychelles, one of its small island developing state members, in terms of: the support that such an organization provides; the manner in which the international association and the member state determine areas which require assistance; the communication system in place; and, in particular, how recipients perceive such assistance.

### **1.3.2 Research questions**

Considering the development needs of Seychelles as i) a relatively young independent country, and ii) a small island state, and in view of the role that the Commonwealth has assigned itself in supporting the development of member countries (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012b), the main research question asks:

How effective has the support provided by the Commonwealth through its major formal agencies, namely the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC), the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), been in promoting the development of Seychelles since 1976, as seen specially through the perception of stakeholders?



Relevant additional questions are as follows:

- a) Has assistance from the Commonwealth to Seychelles been specifically responsive to, as well as clearly focussed on, the needs of Seychelles in fulfilling its development goals?
- b) What are the factors that have contributed to Seychelles' seeming inability to maintain access to the kind of assistance it needed, from the Commonwealth in particular, to manage the stages of development that it has gone, and is still going, through?
- c) Are the approaches used by the Commonwealth Secretariat to identify needs and to respond to requests from member states, in particular SIDS, appropriate and effective?

### **1.3.3 Research objectives**

The research objectives of this study are:

- To briefly survey historical and current approaches used for multilateral development assistance generally and to provide an overview of how these may impact on development.
- To investigate and assess the perceived effectiveness of the activities supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat through its formal agencies in terms of their significance and contribution to the development of Seychelles as perceived by stakeholders, and to determine the extent to which the Republic of Seychelles may have benefited from the activities of the association.
- To investigate, through the case of the Seychelles, whether the Commonwealth as an association has provided to the country, the kind of help that a small island state member could reasonably expect from such an association in terms of technical cooperation, human development support and possibilities for international advocacy.
- To identify possible gaps or ineffective procedures that may have handicapped assistance from the Commonwealth.
- To identify approaches that have delivered results deemed valuable by national stakeholders.

### **1.3.4 Scope of study**

The study looks at the track record of assistance from the Commonwealth to Seychelles for the period starting with the independence of Seychelles in 1976 to the present time (2012/2013) – based on information available in archival material, public records and accessible official documentation.

It is to be noted that this study will focus on the formal activities of the association as carried out by the Commonwealth Secretariat, which was set up in London in 1965 (McIntyre 1977: 11), as well as the activities of its organs and sister organizations such as the CFTC, the CYP, the COL and the Commonwealth Foundation (Commonwealth Secretariat 2011b).

The study attempts to assess the effectiveness and benefits of the known activities of the main organs of the association in Seychelles, through the perceptions, opinions and knowledge of representative groups of a) senior government officials and responsible individuals in the civil/NGO sector in Seychelles, and b) officers of the Commonwealth who have worked on projects which targeted or included Seychelles.

It should be noted that there are also a great number of professional associations and non-governmental organizations which are linked directly and indirectly to the Commonwealth but which operate independently of the Commonwealth Secretariat (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2011b). The study will not focus on the activities of the professional or other associations operating under the aegis of the Commonwealth because few of them are active in the Seychelles, with the exception of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

The name 'Commonwealth' in the context of this study will also, in a generic sense, refer to and include any relevant governmental or non-governmental grouping derived from and/or connected to this formal and historical association of states.

## **1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

The research is qualitative, an approach which “uses text as empirical material (instead of numbers), starts from the notion of the social construction of realities

under study, is interested in the perspectives of participants, in everyday practices and everyday knowledge referring to the issues under study” (Flick 2007:1). In practice, the study used the following combination of research methods: a desk review of documentary material and a field survey.

#### **1.4.1 Desk review of archival material and documentary sources**

In order to establish and review the ‘track record’ of Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles, the study relied on the collection of relevant documentary material from different sources. According to Mouton and Marais (1988: 77) this approach allows one to work with “products of human behaviour and of human characteristics” such as collections of records, documents or mass media material, among others.

The Seychelles National Archives and the office of the Commonwealth primary contact point (PCP) in Seychelles were targeted as the main sources of information for the secondary data. Other targeted sources of information were the Commonwealth points of contact (POC) in Seychelles as well as various ministries which have, in the past, acted as focal points for Commonwealth activities, for example, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry for National Development, the Department of Public Administration and the Ministry of Finance as well as the National Human Resource Development Council. An additional important source of information that was identified was the library and resource centre of the Commonwealth Secretariat in Marlborough House.

#### **1.4.2 Field research**

The secondary data described above was supplemented by primary data gathered through a survey of national stakeholders including some individuals who have served or are serving as contact points for Commonwealth activities in Seychelles. This group includes current and past officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Administration, the Ministry of Employment, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports and the National Human Resource Development Council (NHRDC), as well as former heads of the Manpower

Division. The target group also included some leaders in civil society and the NGO sector.

This specific selection of ministries was made because they have, or have previously had, close working links with the Commonwealth. Some of the names of ministries and departments have changed a few times over the period of the study. Some have been re-organised, while others are now attached to different parent ministries. Only former heads of the Manpower Division are mentioned as respondents for the study because this Division is no longer in existence, although many of its functions have been taken on board by the more recent NHRDC.

A few individuals currently based at the Commonwealth Secretariat were also targeted as respondents to emailed questionnaires. In view of the fact that information sought is about assistance to Seychelles through all forms of technical assistance, this target group included officers who are known to have been involved in the management and delivery of assistance to Seychelles.

### **1.4.3 Research techniques**

The following research techniques were used to gather information to address the research problem and respond to the research questions. They are presented here in chronological order although some overlap of items ii), iii) and iv) was inevitable.

- i) Research of general background material to inform the study and for the preparation of a literature review.
- ii) Research of available archival material relating to Commonwealth activities in Seychelles from 1976 to the present.
- iii) Desk review of the documentation gathered.
- iv) Design of a field survey including sample design, design of email questionnaires for Seychelles respondents and Commonwealth officers, and guidelines for semi-structured interviews with key informants in Seychelles.
- v) Implementation of field survey.
- vi) Data processing and analysis using Microsoft Excel.
- vii) Write-up of survey findings.

#### **1.4.4 Ethical issues**

The study, which focusses on the dynamics of the relationship between the Commonwealth and the Seychelles through events and decisions made by individuals and groups of people who participate in governance and in international relations, does sometimes touch on a few politically sensitive areas. It should be noted however, that the researcher attempted to i) steer clear of contentious issues when asking for respondents opinions; ii) avoid requesting personal details of any sort and iii) refrained from asking for information of any kind that could be interpreted as a breach of confidentiality. Moreover, respondents in the survey were given the choice of remaining anonymous if they felt this was needed.

#### **1.5 IMPORTANCE OF STUDY**

There are indications that the Commonwealth and Seychelles have cooperated in many other areas of development but this cooperation is not well documented. Furthermore, and as earlier stated, there are no comprehensive documents looking at development assistance from, and cooperation with, the Commonwealth, and activities related to these tend not to be known or to be given recognition, even by major national stakeholders. Regarding the lack of internal data on Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) activities generally, one evaluation report of this major organ of the Commonwealth noted that “the absence of monitoring or follow-up data limits an evaluation team’s ability to assess the totality” (Universalia 2010: 62).

In view of the needs of the country and the importance of external support to core development activities, an appraisal of the assistance from the Commonwealth could prove useful to Seychelles by: a) providing a comprehensive review of the kind of assistance that has been available over the years; b) offering an overview of how stakeholders in Seychelles perceive the assistance; c) highlighting possible drawbacks in current approaches used either to determine or to deliver the kind of development support and technical cooperation that the Commonwealth provides to the country, and by d) proposing possible ways for improving cooperation efforts.

Conclusions drawn will, hopefully, be beneficial not just to the Seychelles, but also to the Commonwealth Secretariat and other major Commonwealth organs through the insights they provide into the effectiveness of past and current approaches to technical support and development aid provided to SIDS or microstates. It is also hoped that some of the findings, when generalised, could be used positively for other small island states and microstates which are members of the association.

## **1.6 OUTLINE OF THESIS AND CHAPTER CONTENT**

In addition to this introductory chapter, the following chapters compose the dissertation.

In view of the fact that there are no known studies on any aspect of the relationship between Seychelles and the Commonwealth, Chapter 2 is a literature review which looks at documentation that has a bearing on the subject of the study as opposed to material that directly covers it. It presents a review of some of the literature that exists in international relations on the nature and purpose of inter-governmental organizations and what they mean to member states. The chapter introduces a generally accepted definition of SIDS and microstates, describing their best known characteristics, and providing a brief description of SIDS assistance needs. It covers some of the existing literature on the origins as well as the stated role and purpose of the Modern Commonwealth, as well as the way it has evolved over time. In addition, it describes what the organization represents to member states. The chapter also briefly looks at the generally accepted understanding of technical assistance or cooperation and the recent focus on evaluating assistance based on stakeholders' perceptions. It describes the system that is in place within the Commonwealth Secretariat to provide support to SIDS members, and positions Seychelles as a small member state of the Commonwealth. Finally, this chapter presents essential elements of the development of the Seychelles as seen through historical accounts, international reports and national documents which give an internal assessment of the country's growth, as well as the challenges that it faces.

Chapter 3 provides an enlarged context to the study by presenting essential geographic, historical, demographic, socio-economic, cultural, and political facts about the Seychelles. It describes the discovery and settling of the islands, the

formation of the current population, the rise of political thinking, and the country's independence, as well as current factors that relate to the development of the country. It highlights the threats and vulnerabilities that the country faces as a small island developing state and the historical events that led to it becoming a member of the Commonwealth.

Chapter 4 presents the research methodology and the conceptual base for the choice of approach taken. It presents the assumptions made from the start and gives a step by step account of how the research was carried out, for both the documentary review and field survey. For the documentary review, it lists the institutions contacted and the type of material accessed. For the field survey, it explains the sample design and describes the targeted respondents, the criteria used for their selection as respondents, and the approaches taken to contact them. It also describes and justifies the use of the tools for the collection of data and the approach chosen for the data analysis. In addition, the chapter describes problems faced during data collection and constraining factors in terms of utilising the information gathered.

Chapter 5 depicts the track record of Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles and looks at the links between the Seychelles and the Commonwealth in terms of the assistance and support provided by the association to the country and the relationship established between the country and the association through such interventions. It highlights the reasons behind Seychelles membership of the association and identifies the circumstances that prompted the association to provide help to Seychelles as from the mid-1970s. The chapter also presents examples and facts in order to document the Commonwealth response to Seychelles' growing development needs. Furthermore, the chapter considers the areas focused on for technical cooperation in terms of fulfilling the country's planned development objectives, and highlights Commonwealth projects and actions that are generally considered to have been successful, by Seychelles and by the Commonwealth, pointing out possible reasons for these successes.

Chapter 6 presents the results of a survey which evaluates the effects of Commonwealth development assistance to Seychelles, based on in-country perceptions of individuals who hold, or have held, responsible positions in the Government of Seychelles and within the civil society/NGO sector. The evaluation

includes an assessment of respondents' familiarity with the Commonwealth, knowledge of the work done by the association in Seychelles and respondents' views of the usefulness and effectiveness of Commonwealth actions in the country. The chapter also presents the knowledge that these individuals have of the Commonwealth and their sense of ownership of what the association is and does. The chapter includes, as a counterpoint, comments from officers of the Commonwealth. Respondents' opinions regarding factors that facilitate or hinder the effectiveness of Commonwealth actions are also presented, as well as their suggestions for improving Seychelles' participation in the functioning of the association.

Chapter 7 summarises the findings of the study and discusses them in relation to the research questions and objectives. It interprets the data collected in order to draw conclusions from them, and to identify their implications for the Commonwealth/Seychelles relationship. It also briefly compares the perceptions of respondents as shown in Chapter 6 with the actual participation of the association in Seychelles' development as shown in Chapter 5. It identifies the factors that are seen as having assisted or hindered development assistance from the Commonwealth. Finally, it makes recommendations regarding approaches that could maximise the Commonwealth's development support to Seychelles as a SIDS and, in more generalized terms, to all of the association's SIDS or microstate members.



## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF SELECTED RELEVANT LITERATURE

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will look at some of the existing and available literature on international organizations, the Commonwealth as an association of states, small island developing states (SIDS), and the Seychelles as a SIDS and member of the Commonwealth in order to provide an understanding of the relationship between the Commonwealth and the Seychelles. A list of key terms and their definitions according to how they are understood in the study is also included in the chapter.

A considerable amount of literature exists in the area of international relations, on why international organizations exist, how they function as well as what roles they play (for example, Slaughter 2004; Newman, Thakur and Tirinan 2009; Morefield 2005; Keohane 1984; Groom 1988). This literature which addresses the benefits of inter-governmental organizations to member states, as well as the dangers that may lurk behind such associations also provides an insight in the historical and political development of such organizations. To provide a conceptual context to the study, the theoretical underpinnings regarding the role of states and the reasons why they form international organizations, are discussed. This includes an overview of several of the paradigms used to explain and understand international relations. The nature of the domestic system and that of the international system are also explored. This includes a consideration of the interplay between them that can bring about the creation of international links which sometimes take the concrete form of an international governmental organization.

At a more practical level, international organizations are looked at in terms of: a) being vehicles for international cooperation; b) the role they play in the development and application of international 'norms and aspirations'; c) their ability to enforce international rules and commitments (Abbott and Snidal 2001); as well as d) being international platforms for promoting development.

The notions of multilateralism and international cooperation are also covered as they play a pivotal role in the understanding of the relationship between the Commonwealth and Seychelles as treated in this study.

Some writers on the Modern Commonwealth, “a voluntary association of 54 countries that support each other and work together towards shared goals in democracy and development” (Commonwealth Secretariat website 2012b) lament the fact that the Commonwealth has not been subjected to systematic, quantitative and behavioural study and that most of the existing literature on the organization has tended to be descriptive, historical and lacking in theoretical substance, even though international organizations have attracted much scholarly attention over the years (Polhemus 1981; Doxey 1989; Taylor 2001; Shaw 2008). Perhaps partly as a result of such observations, there is a growing number of scholarly publications that now focus on hitherto neglected aspects of the Commonwealth, including attempts to define its nature (Dale 1982; Armstrong 2001); its functioning (Groom 1988; Doxey 1989); its role in global governance (Taylor 2000; Shaw 2008); the theories behind its origins (Morefield 2005) as well as its possible future (Ockenden 2009; Auplat 2007). Additionally, there are a number of publications that have appeared over the years which are neither strictly historical nor merely descriptive (Polhemus 1981; Chan 1988; 1989; Srinivasan 2005) which tend to critically assess the role and functioning of the Commonwealth and its secretariat. At a more empirical level, there are evaluations of organs of the Commonwealth such as, *inter alia*, the study on the Secretariat’s utilisation of evaluation findings (Universalia/Commonwealth Secretariat 2003); the evaluation of the CFTC (Universalia/Commonwealth Secretariat 2010) or the evaluation of the strategic gap filling programme (ECDPM/Commonwealth Secretariat 2007).

Much has been written about small island states and their specific development needs, but there is only a very limited amount of relevant material about development in the Seychelles since independence (e.g. Maubouche and Hadjitarkhani 1980; Appleyard and Ghosh 1988, 1990; Rosalie 2000; Campling et al 2011; Briguglio et al 2008). In addition to numerous official national reports written to fulfil the requirements of international instruments, there are a number of general historical texts about the islands which cover the period of time relevant to this study (Mancham 1983; Franda 1982; Mc. Ateer 1991; Shillington 2009) but as is to be

expected, these texts tend to limit themselves to reporting on, and describing, historical events. None of the literature mentioned above investigates, evaluates or analyses the implications of Seychelles's membership of the Commonwealth, especially as a small island developing state.

It was not possible to find previously written and published material that was directly related to the topic of this study, i.e. the relationship between the Commonwealth and Seychelles, although there are indications that several studies have covered the relationship between the association and a few of its larger members, Nigeria (SAS, 2009: item 239), Malaysia (SAS, 2009: item 314), Canada (SAS, 2009: item 268), South Africa, (Anand 1998; Makin, 1996; Taylor 2000), among others. A PhD thesis entitled 'Membership of the modern Commonwealth(s): Mozambique and beyond' (te Velde 2006) also addresses the nature of the relationship between the association and one of its newer member states, a country with no prior links to Britain or the British Empire.

The information that exists on the work of the Commonwealth in Seychelles usually is in the form of reports about Commonwealth-led or Commonwealth-funded projects, such as the pilot exercise on the integration of gender into school and classroom processes (Pardiwalla 2008) or the School Improvement Programme in Small States (Commonwealth Secretariat 2000). These reports evaluate the successful implementation of the projects themselves, but do not venture outside the scope of the activities implemented. There may also be short administrative reports written by government officers about individual Commonwealth projects, but they could not be accessed nor could their existence be determined. Nonetheless, relevant sections of a comprehensive internal report, prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, looking at the worth of the assistance received from various international associations and organizations (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Seychelles 2012) was kindly made available to the researcher. Sections made available covered assistance from the Commonwealth from the year 2000 to 2012. Numerous short newspaper articles report on the work of the Commonwealth in Seychelles but they are not analytical; however, this type of documentary material, which dates back to the negotiations which took place with the Commonwealth prior to the independence of the country, is used in Chapter 5 to give a historical as well as a factual account of assistance from the Commonwealth.

In view of the foregoing, this chapter is a review of relevant literature, but it does not include a critique of existing literature on the specific topic of the study as no such written work could be identified. One of the major objectives of the present study is to make a distinct contribution to the body of knowledge in this particular area.

## **2.2 KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS**

Terms that are essential to the development, and an understanding, of the topic at hand are defined here according to the meaning they have in the context of this study.

*Association of states:* when states with common interests and values, form a society and agree on “sets of rules that constrain activity, shape expectations and prescribe role.” (Keohane, 1994: 5)

*Capacity building:* A course of action which enables people of “developing countries to carry out development processes successfully by empowering them”; it “addresses all areas of economic, socio-cultural, political and environmental processes through a holistic approach” (James 1998: xvi).

*Development:* A concept which is defined in various ways. One view is based on “the belief in the role of modernization as the only force capable of destroying archaic superstitions and relations, at whatever social, cultural, and political cost” (Escobar 1995: 39), that industrialization and urbanization are the inevitable routes to modernization and that material advancement is the only way possible to achieve social, cultural and political progress (Escobar 1995:40). Another view holds that development is “essentially a ‘friendly process’ whose congeniality is seen as exemplified by such things as mutually beneficial exchanges ... or by the working of social safety nets, or of political liberties, or of social development – or some combination or other of these supportive activities” (Sen 1999:36). This study leans towards the second view of development.

*(The) Commonwealth (or Modern Commonwealth, or Contemporary Commonwealth):* An association of states, composed for the most part of former

British colonies, which has the Queen of England as its symbolic head. The association's formal activities are carried out by the Commonwealth Secretariat which was set up in London in 1965 (McIntyre 1977: 11), its various organs and sister organizations such as, inter alia, the Commonwealth of Learning and the Commonwealth Foundation (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2011b). It should be noted that there are also a great number of associations and non-governmental organizations which are linked directly and indirectly to the Commonwealth but which operate independently of the Commonwealth Secretariat (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2011b). The name Commonwealth, in the context of the study, is used in a generic sense to refer to, and include, any relevant governmental or non-governmental grouping derived from and/or connected to the formal and historical association of states.

*International organization (IO):* Refers to a not-for-profit organization usually established by a grouping of states to achieve common goals. Typically, an IO has a Charter or a constitution and operates transnationally. According to Groom (1988a:8) an IO would normally have a general assembly which meets at regular intervals as well as smaller bodies which act on behalf of the assembly. Its main contact points are often found within the state apparatus in member countries, but it can also have links with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society. The activities of such an organization are carried out by a secretariat or headquarters. The Commonwealth association has, until recently, operated without a Charter or a constitution, but it "has been shown to have a constitutional structure similar to that of international organizations in general" (Dale 2007: 472).

*Microstate:* An independent state with a population of less than 1,000,000 (one million) (Connell, 1993: 117).

*Multilateralism:* The term is used to refer to "coordinating relations among three or more states in accordance with certain principles" (Ruggie 1993: 8) - although according to this definition the generic attribute of multilateralism is expressed differently according to types of institutional relations which can include the international order, international regimes and international organizations (Ruggie 1993: 12). In the context of this study the term *multilateralism* and the adjective *multilateral* refer essentially to the workings of international organizations.

*Point of Contact (POC) and Primary Contact Point (PCP):* These are officials in ministries or departments of member governments, with whom Commonwealth Secretariat officers liaise for projects and programmes of technical cooperation and other forms of support (Commonwealth Secretariat 2012a). The PCP is a single “designated” office/officer whose role is to prioritise and approve requests for CFTC-funded assistance. As part of its role, the PCP also “aligns the CFTC programme of assistance in support of national development efforts (including the work of other donors) and assists with the monitoring and evaluation of the Secretariat’s development assistance to the member country as a whole” (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012a).

*Small island developing state (SIDS):* Population is used as the main defining factor for a ‘small state’ although a number of other factors are also taken into consideration. In 1985, a Commonwealth report defined such states as having a population of ‘around a million’ (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1985: 9) although a 1997 publication mentions ‘a revised upper limit of 1.5 million as the new cut-off point’ (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1997: 2.1). The acronym SIDS is used in the text to indicate any type of small island developing state.

*Sustainable development:* The 1987 Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (also known as the Brundtland Commission) first defined sustainable development as the kind of development that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need” (Rogers et al. 2008: 20). Rogers and co-authors also state that this definition “established the need for integrated decision-making that is capable of balancing the economic and social needs of the people with the regenerative capacity of the natural environment ... According to the Brundtland Commission, sustainable development, in the final analysis, must rest on the political will of governments as critical economic, environmental, and social decisions are made” (Rogers et al 2008:42).

*Technical assistance (or technical cooperation):* In broad terms, aid given to a country or organization through financial support for projects, or through specialists and consultants who either deliver services for a programme or a project, or who

assist in the delivery of existing services and functions. In some cases it may include offers for training and other scholarships. Overall, it has to do with exchanges or transfers of knowledge or techniques (UNDP 2002:1).

*(Commonwealth) Vulnerability Index:* An index designed to assess the vulnerability levels of a small states based on a set of pre-determined criteria. The elaboration of this index was supported by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the ongoing work and the results of work done in this area were published as part of the Commonwealth Economic Paper Series (Atkins et al, 2000) and independently (Briguglio 1995, 1997, 2009; Briguglio and Galea 2003; Farrugia 2004). The Commonwealth Vulnerability Index was presented to the UN among a number of others but no single index has yet been officially adopted by the international community (Guillaumont 2007:8).

## **2.3 THE INTER-STATE SYSTEM AND THE CONCEPT OF ASSOCIATION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY**

### **2.3.1 The nation-state and international structures**

The idea that states can form associations stems from the belief that the world can and should be divided into territorial states, otherwise referred to as 'nation states' – the foremost legacy of the 1648 Peace Treaty of Westphalia. The treaty's aim, which was to stop the destructive religious wars in Europe, also brought into being the notion of state sovereignty. It thereafter became widely accepted that all states were to be 'sovereign equals, regardless of their actual power' (Weiss et al 2004: xliii).

Fulcher (2000: 527) claims that international structures have always existed and that past "overseas empires were global structures but also worlds of their own" and that it was the development of international organization which provided an "overarching political framework". According to this author, the development of the nation-state was inseparable from the growth of international structures and even though the autonomy of the nation state was based on the principles of sovereignty and the equality of all states, the nation-state "depended upon the construction and maintenance of the international norms that recognised and protected them"; the author further contends that the sovereignty of nation states has become

“increasingly constrained through international laws and organizations“ (2000: 527). In contradiction to this position, Hopkins and Wallerstein (1998: 2) declare that “the interstate system is not something that has always been there. It was a creation of, and in turn a formative element of, the modern world-system ... It has been constructed of many pieces, including diplomacy and the rules governing extraterritoriality, the protocols governing interstate treaties, and the various trans-state institutions.” These authors also challenge the validity of a fundamental element of the Westphalian Treaty’s underlying tenets: that of states being ‘sovereign equals’. They assert: “But above all, the interstate system is a matrix of reciprocal recognitions of the (limited) sovereignty of each of the states, a framework that has been (more or less) enforced by the stronger on the weaker and by the strong on each other” (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1998: 2). This perception reflects, in part, the point of view of Realism which assumes, amongst other things, a) that evil is an inherent part of human nature that “no social arrangement can eradicate”, b) that in international politics, “the only really important collective actor is the state” – since the important unit of social life is the collectivity, c) that power and its pursuit by states is “ubiquitous and inescapable” and finally, d) that “international institutions, networks or norms are epiphenomenal” (Smith 1986: 219).

### **2.3.2 International organizations in International Relations theories**

Within the Realist school of thought, IOs are not considered to be serious political entities. Realists see such organizations as being of little interest since ‘they merely reflect national interest and power’ (Abbott and Snidal 2001: 14). Abbott and Snidal also state that Realists may be underestimating the utility of IOs, arguing that “powerful states structure such organizations to further their own interests but must do so in a way that induces weaker states to participate” and that this “interplay is embedded in IO structures and operations.” (Abbott and Snidal 2001: 14). These writers suggest that the role of IOs is best understood through a synthesis of Rationalist (including Realist) and Constructivist approaches in that “states consciously use IOs both to reduce transaction costs in the narrow sense and, more broadly, to create information, ideas, norms, and expectations; to carry out and encourage specific activities; to legitimate or deligitimate particular ideas or practices; and to enhance their capacities and power” (Abbott and Snidal 2001:14). These functions turn IOs into agents which thus ‘have the ability to influence the interests, intersubjective understandings, and environment of states’ (McNeely, 1995 as quoted



by Abbott and Snidal 2001: 15). Potentially, these roles give IOs “an influence well beyond their material power, which is trivial on conventional measures” (Abbott and Snidal 2001: 15).

Institutionalists, on the other hand, claim that “rules, norms, principles and decision-making procedures can mitigate the effects of anarchy and allow states to cooperate in the pursuit of common ends” (Slaughter 2004: 25) through means of international regimes. Keohane (1984: 244) believes that international regimes are important because they can facilitate agreements as well as decentralised enforcement of agreements among governments in that they “create the conditions for orderly multilateral negotiations, legitimate and delegitimate different types of state action and facilitate the linkages among issues within regimes and between regimes”. He also adds that the fact that governments are brought into continuous interaction over long periods of time, in forums that deal with clusters of issues helps to enhance compliance with international agreements in a variety of ways, by reducing incentives to cheat and enhancing the value of reputation. Keohane (1984: 245) adds that the “importance of regimes for cooperation supports the Institutionalist claim ... that international institutions help realize common interests in world politics”. In summary, Institutionalists agree with Realists that ‘states are the primary actors in the international system’ but differ in their belief that: a) the underlying interests of states are not necessarily conflictual; b) that common institutions can modify anarchy sufficiently (for states) to cooperate over the long term to achieve their common interests; and c) that “in assessing the factors that determine international outcomes, institutions are as fundamental as the distribution of capabilities among states” (Keohane 1984: 9, 11; Slaughter 2004: 27).

Another essential concept in international relations is Liberalism and one of its best known theories is liberal internationalism which can be described as a ‘program for world democracy’ (Slaughter 2004: 29). Liberalism emphasises the importance of the role of societal actors and in that sense differs from most other theories, in that it sees the nature of “domestic representations as the decisive-link between societal demands and state policy” (Slaughter 2004: 30) because it does not perceive national decision makers as autonomous. This perception is different from Realist thinking which sees strategic interaction at international level as being based on fixed state preferences (Slaughter 2004: 31). Moravcsik, on the other hand, thinks that Liberal

theory is just as systemic a theory as Realism or Institutionalism, and that “the major difference is that the distribution of preference, not of capabilities or information, decisively shapes the behaviour of states, and thereby systemic outcomes. In all three theories, states strategize, that is, they compare their characteristics with those of foreign states to develop their policy” (Moravcsik 2001:9).

Constructivism, which is considered more of an ontology than a theory, is a “general conception of what exists rather than what causes what” (Slaughter 2004: 34). Constructivists tend to agree with most of the basic beliefs of Realists in that “the international system is anarchic, states possess offensive capabilities, they can never be certain of each other’s intentions; they wish to ensure their own survival; and they are rational” (Slaughter 2004: 35). Constructivists also perceive state structures essentially as power structures that “both regulate the behaviour of pre-existing subjects, and constitute who those subjects are and what they are empowered to do” (Wendt 1999: 203). Wendt, (1990:193) in his explanation of Constructivist thinking states that while material forces matter and while structures do regulate behaviour, “the structures of human association are primarily cultural” and “they construct identities and interests”. He also believes that, from the Constructivist view, the “referent object of the state should be conceptualized as an organizational actor that is internally related to the society it governs by a structure of political authority” (1999: 201). Wendt (1999: 5) believes that, overall, “Neorealists see the international system as a distribution of material capabilities because they approach their subject with a materialistic lens while Neoliberals see it as capabilities plus institutions because they have added to the material base an institutional superstructure; and Constructivists see it as a distribution of ideas because they have an idealist ontology”. Ruggie (1998: 33) states the differences that exist between Constructivists and the others in the following words: “Constructivists believe that the “building blocks of international reality are ideational as well as material; that ideational factors have normative as well as instrumental dimensions; that they express not only individual but also collective intentionality; and that the meaning and significance of ideational factors are not independent of time and place.” Finnemore and Sikkink (1998: 887) add that from a Constructivist perspective, international structure is determined by the international distribution of ideas and that “shared ideas, expectations, and beliefs about appropriate behaviour are what give the world structure, order and stability”. According to these authors, despite differences which may exist, Realists and

Constructivists face essentially the same problem in trying to define international structure – explaining change (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: 894).

For Constructivists, "international structure is determined by the international distribution of ideas" and "in an ideational international structure, idea shifts and norm shifts are the main vehicles for system transformation" (Fennimore and Sikkink 1998: 894). These authors also claim that these norm shifts are, to the Ideational theorist, what changes in the balance of power are to the Realist. They describe the three stages of the life cycle of a norm shift, and their dominant mechanisms, as being: i) norm emergence that is brought about through persuasion; ii) norm cascade which depends on socialization, institutionalization and demonstration; and finally iii) internalization which operates through habit and institutionalization (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 895-898)."

When one considers the functioning of the political world at an empirical level, it seems reasonable to submit that, despite differences that may exist between the main IR theories as presented above, they tend to reflect reality as specific to particular sets of circumstances involving specific sets of actors (and the triggers that cause such actors to choose one course of action over another), at specific points in time. Moreover, the theories also represent particular world views that originate in their proponents' thinking about the world and how it is, or ought to be, organised<sup>1</sup>. One could therefore conclude that the applicability of such theories may merely be contingent on these variables and that 'truth' regarding the workings of states in the international system may constantly be in a state of flux. Nevertheless, the Constructivist approach may be of great practical value in understanding the functioning of states facing development challenges since, from this perspective, the state can be understood as a structure of political authority made up of norms, rules and principles "by which conflict is handled, society is ruled, and social relations are governed" (Wendt 1999:202) and that the emergence of such norms, and possible subsequent shifts, are often dependent on time and place, and factors such as changes in the balance of power.

From the point of view of development and democracy in Africa, it is interesting to note that while the notion and possibility of 'cheating' by states is briefly

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<sup>1</sup> As a professor of mine used to say: "We are all trying to make sense of our universe!"

acknowledged in some of these theories, the phenomenon of institutionalised 'prevarication' by states, or by political parties who identify the survival of a regime with their own survival, as described by Bratton and Van de Walle (1994: 476, 478) in their paper on political transitions in Africa, is not really visible in mainstream theorizing.

### **2.3.3 The domestic system and the international system**

In his book on globalisation and international relations, Ian Clark (1999: 16,17) challenges the position in international theory that there is a fundamental difference in the nature and functioning of an international system versus the nature and functioning of a domestic society where the state is seen as rule-based whereas the international system is seen as being based on universal rights. He disagrees with Caporaso's (1997: 564) position that: "Domestic society and the international system are demonstrably different. The latter is a competitive anarchy where formally similar states rely on self-help and power bargaining to resolve conflict. Domestic society (not system) is, by contrast, rule based." Clark (1999: 16) claims that such distinctions create a "fault-line within the theories of the state and in so doing, create a distorted picture of the state and of the way it behaves". He believes that these distinctions are reinforced by the Neorealist position that the international system is autonomous and that it is a domain with its own, distinctive, political structure. He posits, instead, that the state is in fact, "the common but contested ground that brings the international and the national together rather than the barrier that marks the line of separation between" (Clark 1999: 17).

Finnemore and Sikkink (1998:893) also believe that domestic norms "are deeply entwined with the workings of international norms. Many international norms began as domestic norms and became international through the efforts of entrepreneurs of various kinds... In addition international norms must always work their influence through the filter of domestic structures and domestic norms, which can produce important variations in compliance and interpretation".

Clark affirms (1999: 141) “international society is not some preordained structure within which states are compelled to behave, but is itself a social construct: it is shaped by, but also reinforces, state practice”.

#### **2.3.4 The emergence and growth of international governmental organizations**

Cupitt, Whitlock and Whitlock (2001: 46) assert that, according to a realist perspective, modern IGOs came into being “as a means for the status quo powers to preserve order and seek peace after the Napoleonic Wars”. IGOs were the vehicles for alliances which were a “necessary function of the balance of power operating within a multiple-state system”, such alliances being not a matter of principle but rather of expediency (Morgenthau 2005: 193). For Weiss (2004: xxxix), the first major experiment with collective security was the setting up in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century of the League of Nations – an experiment which ultimately failed.

In a study of IGOs covering the period 1865 – 1989, Cupitt et al (2001:53) find that most of them are relatively recent. They started with 1865 because it was only at that point in time that at least five IGOs existed simultaneously. They found that 1,209 IGOs came into being during the period in question although in the absence of data on the establishment or termination of 63 of these, their study effectively analyzed 989 IGOs and found that 71% of these IGOs were still in existence in 1989 and 15 of them had survived for over a century, confirming the belief that IGOs tend to be durable, and supporting the assertion that their “death rate is remarkably low” (Cupitt et al 2001: 58).

Cupitt et al (2001: 55) also find that there are sharp increases in the formation of IGOs in years of crisis, for example in 1910 and 1940 as well as the period just after World War II. During the latter period in history, government leaders began to search for ways to prevent war from happening again and a second experiment in universal international organization was launched – the United Nations (UN) which was essentially linked to “a series of international institutions aimed at promoting and fostering the social and economic conditions necessary for peace to prevail” (Weiss 2004: xxxix). Weiss traces the evolution of the UN which eventually led to “an unprecedented use of the Security Council as a global security mechanism” particularly in the years following the end of the Cold War. He also believes that the

UN's role in promoting humanitarianism, human rights and sustainable human development has grown and evolved over the years, and that, overall, the UN has "continued to be centrally involved in many if not most important situations" in world politics (Weiss 2004:xlii).

In their study, Cupitt et al (2001:55) also find a shift that occurs after the Cold War when states associated with the former USSR left their original IGOs and transferred their allegiance to Western IGOs. According to them, post-Communist states appear to have a preference for joining established Western IGOs such as the International Monetary Fund – thus implying a greater degree of satisfaction with the prevailing world order and its associated IGOs (Cupitt et al 2001: 58). A similar pattern has been observed for the Commonwealth recently, where countries, particularly on the African continent, with no former, or at best tenuous, links to the association have applied to become members - as in the case of Mozambique,(joined in 1995), Rwanda, (joined in 2009), as well as Algeria, Madagascar, Yemen and the Condominium of Sudan, whose membership applications are still outstanding (Howden 2009: The Independent website). Records of the UK Parliament also indicate that the Commonwealth SG spoke of an expression of interest from South Sudan in 2011, and that Lord Howell had reported interest from Algeria and Suriname (UK Parliament website 2014). This could indicate that such states, which are strongly focussed on development at this point of their history, consider the Commonwealth both as a useful platform from which to seek and access international support, as well as being a community whose values and political aspirations might mirror their own.

### **2.3.5 Types of international organizations**

International organizations (IOs) can be governmental, non-governmental or business types of organizations. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are usually those established by treaty, while the establishment of non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and business organizations is less formal (Groom 1988a: 7). Diehl (2001:73) also points out that the relationship between INGOs and IGOs is rather complex and that in fact, "at a practical level, their interrelationships represent a general process of mutual legitimation". Examples of these are the International

Labour Organization and the World Meteorological Organization which were founded as INGOs and later 'co-opted' by states (Boli and Thomas 2001: 72).

According to Groom (1988a: 7) international organizations can also be broadly categorized as universal, regional and selective as well as general or specialised, although as he points out, these distinctions present anomalies in that, for example, the United Nations which is considered a 'universal' international organization has not achieved the goal of bringing together all possible members from this particular set. He further mentions two sub-categories, forum organizations and service organizations, but goes on to state that many international organizations serve both purposes (Groom, 1988a: 8), a position endorsed by Cox and Jacobson (2001: 102) who also mention other methods for classifying IOs, for example, according to membership potential, scope of purpose, and breadth of concerns (Cox and Jacobson (2001: 5).

Auplat (2005: 51) believes that intergovernmental organizations have become "the backbone of modern society" and that their numbers are growing. She admits that most of them appear as 'fuzzy structures' to the general public and that it is often difficult to grasp who and what they actually stand for, as "their constitutions or other binding documents tend to be similar, encompassing peace and development" (Auplat 2005: 52) but seldom indicating what this actually entails for the citizens of the member states. Auplat thinks that a number of these IGOs actually belong to a category she calls 'conditional organizations' in that they are based on the principle of exclusion, like private clubs which exist by linking member status to specific conditions. She cites the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the African Union (AU) or the Francophonie as examples of conditional organizations, and claims that such organizations can bring answers to the issues of fuzziness and lack of a clear comparative advantage for their members (Auplat 2005: 52).

While categorizations, as described above, are useful for theorizing about international organizations, a brief look at the Commonwealth as an IO shows that there is considerable overlap in such groupings and that an IO may fit in different categories depending on characteristics being taken into account. For instance, the Commonwealth can be categorised as selective and transregional (Groom 1988a:8) while both Doxey (1989: 11) and Groom (1988a: 8) find that the Commonwealth is a

service organization as well as a forum organization. For Auplat (2005:52), it is clear that the Commonwealth has traditionally been a conditional organization even though its comparative advantage (which, in her view, is the century-old Commonwealth network), has become dilapidated. Armstrong (2001: 44) sees the Commonwealth in terms of a network of networks as opposed to being a more formal, bureaucratic IGO.

### **2.3.6 Durability of international governmental organizations**

For some, the international governmental organization (IGO) is a type of organization that was not expected to be either extensive or durable because the states' "constant pursuit of gains relative to other states diminishes their chances for lasting cooperation" (Cupitt et al 2001: 44).

In contrast, others maintain that the institutional basis for international cooperation is very durable, and that research findings show that "conventional IGOs seem likely to be among the most durable forms of international cooperation" (Cupitt et al (2001: 47), although there is no indication as to what exactly the term 'conventional' refers to in this case. Some go so far as to conclude that "even immoral and inefficient international institutions are likely to endure" (Young as quoted by Cupitt et al: 47). Neoliberals in particular, believe that IGOs are likely to endure because IGOs have the potential of shaping state behaviour, of shaping judgements about the interests and commitments of others, and of influencing state preferences (Cupitt et al 2001: 47).

Neoliberals also present IGOs as having a certain amount of autonomy which allows them to "influence states through the use of oversight, majority rules, weighted voting, monitoring compliance, support for allies, and support for international services" (Murphy 1994: 219-221).



## **2.4 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION, MANDATE AND ROLE OF AN INTERNATIONAL GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION**

### **2.4.1 Levels and nature of international cooperation**

Alliances which can mutually benefit partnership between nation-states, or states with shared interests, are recognised as being part of the functioning of the contemporary political world. These alliances come into being “when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, form a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations with one another, and share in the working of common institutions” (H. Bull as quoted by Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 34).

As a general principle, it is agreed that many international governmental organizations are established by states either to cooperatively resolve problems that they cannot resolve individually (Mitchell and Keilbach, 2001: 891), or to fulfil a shared vision (Shore, 2000: 1, 42). Regarding this, Claude (as quoted by Groom 1998: 14) writes: “The cooperative concept is not essentially idealistic or altruistic. Its focus is on the satisfaction of needs, which demands not so much the sacrifice of sovereignty as the utilization of the resources of sovereignty to create institutions and methods capable of supplementing the functional activity of national governments.”

It is clear that, in practice, cooperation between states can only occur when certain conditions have been satisfied. Abbott and Snidal (2004: 51) claim that “states often cannot move directly to a cooperative solution because of informational, bargaining and distribution problems that hamper collective action”. These authors focus on three dimensions which they affirm to be key elements of cooperation: i) substantive content, ii) broad participation, and iii) legalization. They claim that “the absence of any of these conditions renders an agreement virtually meaningless” (Abbott and Snidal, 2004: 52). They describe three pathways along which, depending on circumstances, strategies for cooperation can prove to be more effective, stating that “different actors will prefer to pursue cooperation along the pathways on which they are most advantaged”, cautioning that “their ability to do so will be strongly

conditioned by the availability of appropriate institutional arrangements” (Abbott and Snidal 2004:50).

It is claimed that international cooperation, if it exists, tends to increase incrementally although there are circumstances where the increase “sometimes occurs in big bangs” when cooperation between states suddenly move from low to high levels on an issue. In usual circumstances cooperation tends to progress “through one, or sometimes several, way stations, such as non-binding declarations, vague undertakings and narrowly plurilateral agreements” (Abbott and Snidal, 2004: 50). These authors also point out that “not infrequently, the process is halted at one of these intermediate points” and “that, at least in the context of soft law, this should not automatically be regarded as a failure; states and other actors may simply prefer softer forms of cooperation (or lower levels of cooperation) as superior solutions to the political problems they face” (Abbott and Snidal, 2004: 50).

Ockenden (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009a:1) seems to project the generally accepted Commonwealth’s view of the value of international cooperation, as seen through much of the documentation the Secretariat makes available to the public, when he writes that cooperation “plays an important role in the lives of the world’s citizens. Whether it be in maintaining economic prosperity nationally and internationally, supporting peace and security and defining and monitoring respect for human rights, international cooperation is key. In all these areas it is international institutions that provide the channels through which this necessary governmental cooperation takes place” (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009a:1)

#### **2.4.2 Multilateralism and state sovereignty**

Multilateralism, a concept used in IR to ‘describe a variety of different forms of international’ cooperation is, according to Caporaso (1992: 601), not adequately conceptualized although he does go on to propose some possible routes for conceptualization. The first route is the Individualist paradigm whereby states enter into contractual relations with other states “in a rational, self-interested way”, the second route still allows a focus on identities and powers of states but also includes communication, persuasion, deliberation and self-reflection, and the third route is an

Institutionalist approach which “assumes that enduring structures and patterns of rule are important” (Caporaso 1992: 622) and where “norms are not treated as utilities but as prescriptions lying outside preference structures” (Caporaso 1992: 625). In the latter case, cooperation is seen as having a major instrumental role.

Keohane (1990:731) describes multilateralism as ‘the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states, through ad hoc arrangements or by means of institutions’. Multilateralism is further described as “a weapon of the weak” (Kagan 2002:4), and comments are made stating that “states that seek multilateral agreements are those that lack power to impose solutions to international problems” (Bouchard and Peterson, 2011:5). It is important to note that multilateralism is based on the premise of the existence of functioning and autonomous sovereign states, which according to Newman, Thakur and Tirinan (2009:3) “is in some instances a fiction”. Newman et al, also believe that, in fact, sovereignty as an exclusive norm of domestic jurisdiction is being challenged by universal norms relating to human rights and governance (Norman et al 2009:3). A case in point is the ongoing WikiLeaks saga which has been extensively covered in the formal media as well as on the internet, and therefore openly accessible all over the world. This has been made possible by the increasing numbers of transnational actions which are facilitated by the considerable changes that have occurred in the way we communicate, as well as the permeability of national borders (see Castells 2000; Keck and Sikkink 1998). Many of Wikileaks actions, including the most recent one involving whistleblower Edward Snowden, have caused an international uproar as well as embarrassing diplomatic situations, all widely reported in the media. Wikileaks states that its goal is to bring important news and information to the public, based on the defense of freedom of speech, and with the aim of improving the historical record and supporting the rights of all people to create a new history (<http://wikileaks.org/About.html>). This means that, increasingly, states are being made to answer to their own citizens as well as to other members of the international community, on matters that are seen as going against internationally accepted rules of behavior.

Bouchard and Peterson (2011: 8) point out that the preamble of the UN Charter implies that multilateralism means “establishing conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law

can be maintained” and therefore, that “multilateralism thus involves justice, obligation, and a sort of international rule of law.” Ruggie claims that “multilateralism is built on principles that distinguish it from other forms of IR and that these principles are: generalised principles of conduct; indivisibility and; diffuse reciprocity” (as quoted by Bouchard and Peterson 2011: 7).

For Keohane multilateral institutions can be distinguished from other forms of multilateralism such as ad hoc meetings and short-term arrangements to solve particular problems (Keohane 1990: 733). Keohane (1994: 5) also states that multilateral arrangements, as they occur in the international system, can be defined as “persistent sets of rules that constrain activity, shape expectations and prescribe role”.

Bouchard and Peterson (2011: 6) wonder whether multilateralism is just a subset of cooperation or a specific construct in international relations; and whether the world is moving to a fundamentally more multilateralised international order. They also think that “multilateral institutions, by implication, take the form of international regimes or bureaucratic organizations”. (Bouchard and Peterson 2011: 7)

Chan (1988: 9) points out that despite the fact that the Commonwealth of the 1970s had a secretariat as well as a set of principles did not mean that it had the structure “normally associated with an international organization”, and that at the time, it “could not initiate, sustain or service the sort of multilateralism” that could bring mutual benefits to all its members. He states his belief, at that point, that for this sort of multilateral Commonwealth to work, the Commonwealth needed to be able to commit its members to decisions (Chan 1988:9). As pointed out in section 2.5.4, changes in that direction are already taking place within the organization. Ingram (2007:558) adds that “quietly, all too quietly, the Commonwealth has been marking up remarkable achievements” which include laying down rules and procedures pointing member countries into more sensible directions, as well as the establishment of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) whose way of operating is, according to him, based on “revolutionary concepts in terms of international organizations” (Ingram 2007: 558). The CMAG is composed of a rotating group of eight foreign ministers from member countries, headed by a representative of the Chairperson-in-office. The group deals with persistent violations of the

Commonwealth Harare Declaration of 1991, and recommends actions, which can include suspension from the association, aimed at “speedy restoration of democracy and constitutional role” (Commonwealth Secretariat website 2014. CMAG).

It should be noted that not all writers on the subject believe that commitment to multilateral solutions by all members in a group is necessarily to the benefit of all members. Taylor (2001: 7) for example, finds that in view of what can be seen in practice, a definition of multilateralism which argues “that the essential functioning of international institutions is the justification and defence of the hegemon’s politico-economic interest” is a “more satisfying” description than that of other traditional definitions. He goes on to state that multilateralism not only serves to ‘legitimize’ normative regimes but can also act to delegitimize the hegemon’s position at certain moments in time (Taylor 2001: 8). Moreover, multilateralism, according to him, tends “to propagate an elaborate set of structures which serve to limit the boundaries around which ‘realistic’ policies may be formulated” (Taylor 2001: 8).

#### **2.4.3 Technical assistance or cooperation**

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) defines technical assistance as follows: “Technical assistance cooperation encompasses the whole range of assistance activities designed to develop human resources through improvement in the level of skills, knowledge, technical know-how and productive aptitudes of the population in a developing country. A particularly important objective of technical cooperation is institutional development based on human resources development, i.e. to contribute to the strengthening and improved functioning of the many institutions essential for sustainable development through the effective management and operation of an economy, and of society more generally, from government ministries, local administrative structures, or hospitals and schools, to private enterprises. Human resources development is a prerequisite for institution building, capacity building for improved policy analysis, and development management by the core government institutions is of special importance” (OECD 1992: 51 – as quoted by Baser, Morgan and Zinke, 2007:23). According to Baser et al, technical assistance also includes the provision of expertise and training as well as the supply of support equipment and the exchange of information. In its definition,

the OECD also states that in the 21st century, technical assistance is an expanding and appreciated global phenomenon in the private sector, particularly where multinationals are concerned, and that the 'reputation' of technical assistance is actually more contested in the international development community (Baser, Morgan and Zinke, 2007:23).

Regarding the practice of technical assistance and technical cooperation by development organisations, the report of a two-year UNDP research programme, involving experts and practitioners, points out that while exchanges and transfers of knowledge have been happening for centuries, a shift took place around the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when many such organizations started taking what could be described as a positivist approach to their work, with a "particular view of the nature, creation and transfer of knowledge" (Morgan 2002: 1). Approaches to technical assistance from then on focussed on 'task accomplishment' in an attempt to solve what were perceived to be urgent development problems (Morgan 2002:2). From such a perspective, knowledge had an "independent existence detachable from context, perception and action" since it had not grown out of a process of social construction. Morgan claims (2002: 3) that this particular viewpoint has led to the technical assistance advisor or practitioner being seen as an "expert physician and diagnostician" whose role was to transfer "generic technician solutions to fill knowledge gaps that would enable counterparts to improve their performance" (Morgan 2002: 3).

The evaluations of TA within the UNDP programme led to various conclusions, one of them being that country ownership of development interventions was a key principle in the effectiveness and success of the assistance being provided (Morgan 2002: 16). Another major conclusion was that stakeholder inclination, and their commitment to wider ownership of the TA objectives, make a critical difference to assistance efforts, and that this sense of ownership can only be developed through stakeholder participation and involvement as well as through 'building stakeholder consensus' (Singh: 2002: 48).

## **2.5 THE COMMONWEALTH AS AN ASSOCIATION OF STATES, SEEN THROUGH INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY**

### **2.5.1 The origin and functioning of the Modern Commonwealth**

The Modern Commonwealth, sometimes referred to as the Contemporary Commonwealth, is an association of states which came into being in 1949 through the Declaration of London, although the origins of the Commonwealth stretch back much further. As noted in the British government website “1949 marks the pivotal point at which the Commonwealth’s colonial legacy was transformed positively into a partnership based on equality, choice and consensus” (HM Government website 2012).

Prior to 1949, the association was known as the British Commonwealth; it was subsequently called the Commonwealth of Nations (Groom 1992: 1) although for a while it was referred to simply as The Commonwealth and retains this appellation in the name of the current website (see [www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)).

According to Srinivasan (2005:1) the Commonwealth was designed by the British “to comfort those in Britain who keenly felt the loss of empire” and to create an “instrument to replace empire with a British sphere of influence covering a quarter of the world’s surface” while providing what he calls a “surrogate for colonial rule.” Taylor does not agree with this view, arguing that despite its origins in empire, the Commonwealth is more than just a “kith and kin family”; that there are important legitimising functions of the Commonwealth which continue to propagate a particular view of the world, and that “certain rules of membership – spoken or unspoken – guide the actions of its members and define its norms” (Taylor 2000: 52). Shaw and Ashworth (2010: 1160) disagree even more strongly with Srinivasan on this point, stating that the British are not central to the future of the Commonwealth since the association has been able to bring together richer, more powerful states with weaker states, all united by common aspirations and a common history.

It needs to be remembered that the Commonwealth was founded on liberal thinking. When the ‘principle of commonwealth’ was emerging as an alternative vision of

empire in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Zimmern, a member of the then powerful British pro-imperialist Round Table Society and a key liberal thinker behind the development of the commonwealth 'principle', claimed that such an organization would be made up of 'national actors who chose to throw in their lot together' and that such an organization was in no need of state coercion, because it was 'freely cooperative' (Morefield 2005: 105, 109). Morefield (2005: 107) writes that "inherent in Zimmern's approach to the commonwealth were two basic principles: voluntarism and diversity", and is quick to point out that the principle of voluntarism in this case, "worked to obscure the underlying power relations of the empire" while on the other hand the principle of diversity "opened the door to a reconsideration of national sovereignty that balanced the particularities of nationhood with universal ethics".

According to Groom (1988: 8) a number of IGOs tend to follow the Western mode of organization which generally includes the existence of a constitution and of regular and periodic general assemblies, as is the case with the UN. Such organizations also tend to have secretariats "whose potential may be great or restricted to mundane administrative tasks" (Groom 1998:8). For the Commonwealth, a secretariat was eventually set up in 1965 and links established with other IGOs (Armstrong (2001:37). Nonetheless, and until very recently, the association had neither a Charter nor a constitution. A. Banerji, Director of the Political Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, stated in 2009 that "One of the reasons the Commonwealth has been successful and effective is that it is not over-formalized. Unlike at the UN there is no Commonwealth Charter. Commonwealth meetings promote direct and spontaneous dialogue not set-piece interventions. Much of the CHOGM now takes place in Retreat mode, where the atmosphere is very informal and where no record is kept, except the outcomes" (Banerji 2010: 4). Ockenden, in his contribution to the Commonwealth Secretariat's Economic Paper Series confirms this when he asserts that "the Commonwealth is not a formal decision-taking body" (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009a: 4).

Groom (1998:8) thinks that the Commonwealth, though considered a large IGO and despite having (at the time of his writing) no constitution 'manages very well without one or, at least, not a written one'. He also believes that the association has contributed to the creation of a sense of "we feeling" among the membership thus encouraging members to consider Commonwealth interest and even international



community interest above self-interest (Groom 1988:186) although he does not illustrate this through actual examples.

Mole (2004:535) comments that because of the informality of the head of states meetings, there is “considerable attractions for leaders to be able to meet and speak on equal terms with their peers, regardless of their nations’ size, wealth, military strength or geographic location.”

### **2.5.2 The Commonwealth as an international organization**

In the late 1950s, an article about international government commented: “What this Commonwealth is would be hard to say. It has no constitution, no organization and no headquarters” (Eagleton as quoted by Dale 1982: 451). Dale (1982:451) reports that the Commonwealth was described as “a kind of international organization” by Fawcett in 1963 and as “a kind of residual international organization” by Crawford in 1979. Nonetheless Dale (1982:472) believes that the Commonwealth association does in fact have a constitutional structure similar to that of other international organizations in general. Doxey (1989: 4) notes that the nature of international organizations and the role of their secretariats have attracted much ‘scholarly attention’ but that the “Commonwealth, although well served by historians, was largely overlooked by international relations specialists”. She does nonetheless admit that “in recent years its importance as an international organization has received wider recognition” (Doxey 1989: 4).

But how does the Commonwealth view itself? Official statements, such as the Lusaka Declaration of 1979, use the terms ‘an institution’ as well as ‘an international organization’ when referring to the Commonwealth (Armstrong (2001: 37). Despite this, Chief Anyaoku, the third Secretary General of the Commonwealth, is reported as saying that anyone who tried to define the Commonwealth would miss its uniqueness and that “the Commonwealth is a system of networks from the highest level of Heads of government down through government ministers, professional organisations, sporting groups and NGOs to the humble community worker...” (Armstrong 2001: 44).

Groom (1988:184), believes that the Commonwealth, “despite its nebulous character which defies definition... is real, significant and relevant.” He is convinced that the Commonwealth has played a small but efficient role in world affairs, and that through its ‘network of ties’ it facilitates transactions and cooperation in a wide range of domains (Groom 1988: 195). Srinivasan (2005:144) disagrees and claims that in fact, the Commonwealth is unable to ‘play any role of substance’ and that it “falls well short of playing any noteworthy operational role in major matters of multilateral political, economic or diplomatic concern.”

Chan, from an insider’s point of view (he worked for the Secretariat for a number of years) had this to say in the late 1980s: “To the wider international community, the Commonwealth can only be regarded as peripheral – though certainly, on occasion, useful. As a case study, however, of organizational growth and change – and change conceived as a genuine contribution to international affairs – the Commonwealth is both illuminating and noble” (Chan 1988: 69). He believes that the Commonwealth’s international action could be worthwhile if its future principles “distinguish its actions, and if its actions, on a range of issues, do more than circle the outskirts of international relations” (Chan 1988: 72).

In her assessment of the Commonwealth, Auplat writes that even though it is one of the oldest intergovernmental organizations in history, the association gradually lost importance on the international scene because of its inability to clearly define its identity as well as what it stood for, after the period of decolonization (Auplat 2005:53).

Despite the fact that virtually all writers on the Commonwealth agree that it is complex and hard to define, the literature clearly indicates a dichotomy in the way the Commonwealth is seen by these writers. On the one hand, there are those who see it as having played a pivotal role in world affairs by influencing international agendas, for example the issue of ‘small island developing states’, and through the building of consensus among its non-negligible number of member states on many issues of global importance. Such writers for the most part have been close to the association and to the Secretariat over the years, and tend to have intimate knowledge of the activities being undertaken by the association. Others, whose links with the association may have been more tenuous or whose expectations of this specific IGO

may not have been met, tend to see it as rather ineffective, possibly because many of the Secretariat's activities, including those of advocacy, are narrowly focussed, small-scale and low-key – therefore having little noticeable impact at international, and sometimes national, levels.

### **2.5.3 The multi-faceted, plural Commonwealth**

Despite the fact that the Commonwealth is known primarily as an association of states, its existence has also generated a great number of professional associations and civil society groups. According to Armstrong, 'globalisation' is described as producing a 'global civil society' composed of interlocking networks of NGOs, professional associations, and other groups, interacting with governments and IGOs and 'dissolving' the distinction between global and local (Armstrong 2001:43). In that sense, the Commonwealth's fluid networks, anticipated 'globalisation'.

Weiss (Shaw 2008:xii) in his foreword to Shaw's book on the Commonwealth's inter- and non-state contribution to global governance states that the Commonwealth is far more than just an intergovernmental institution in that it is also a 'family' of non-government bodies working "to promote cooperation, peace and understanding" among the people of members states. Groom (1992: 2) refers to a network of over two hundred organizations, both governmental and non-governmental bodies, although the Commonwealth Secretariat website currently acknowledges the existence of 76 accredited organizations regardless of type or affiliation. According to the website, "accreditation provides formal recognition for Commonwealth organizations and establishes their membership in the Commonwealth Association. It indicates... that the organization... is committed to the purposes and goals of the Commonwealth" (Commonwealth website 2014, Organization Directory).

### **2.5.4 The reform of international organizations and of the Commonwealth itself**

Ockenden (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009a:1) reports that the 2007 CHOGM final statement expresses the concern of Heads of Government "that the current architecture of international institutions, which was largely designed in the immediate

aftermath of the Second World War, does not reflect the challenges in the world of the 21st century” and that this has tended to “undermine the legitimacy, effectiveness and credibility of the whole international system”. The view of Commonwealth leaders at the 2007 CHOGM was that, generally, (international) institutions needed to be reformed if they were to be effective. The meeting asked the Commonwealth Secretary-General to set up a working group to develop a Commonwealth reform initiative that would help to improve the international system in three areas: the UN development system, international environmental governance, and the Bretton Woods institutions – while giving special consideration to least developed countries (LDCs) and small states. Following this, a group of 11 Commonwealth leaders met in June 2008 and their discussions were guided by papers prepared by experts from the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London, the United Nations University of Advanced Studies in Tokyo and the Global Economic Governance programme at University College, Oxford (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009a: 2).

Ockenden (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009a: 2) mentions three factors which may have contributed to the view that reform at the international level was needed. The first factor is “the governance of the institutions themselves”. He states that “to be effective, institutions must have the confidence of all members ... Equally problematic is the sense that the institutions may not have been responding to the particular concerns of all their members. This is especially important for the poorest and smallest countries which have long felt that their interests were not being properly catered for by the international system”. The second factor has to do with the institutions’ mandates, which ‘might inhibit their effectiveness’. Ockenden sees the second factor as creating two types of risks: “The first is internal to the institution ... its remit might be either too narrow or wrongly focussed, so that it is unable to be as effective as it could be ... The second is that the system as a whole is becoming less coherent as new issues arise” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009a: 3). The third factor is the “commitment of members to multilateral solutions”. Ockenden believes that institutions cannot be effective if there is no willingness to co-operate among members. According to him, “This commitment depends partly on the credibility of the governance and mandate of the institutions to the membership. However it also requires consideration of whether other mechanisms could be set up through which members can reaffirm their commitment to international co-operation and multilateralism” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009a: 3). This position followed what

had already been noted, seven years earlier, by Item 31 of the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development which stated clearly: “To achieve our goals of sustainable development, we need more effective, democratic and accountable international and multilateral institutions” (UN 2002: 4). This was a clear indication, firstly, that the international community was dissatisfied with the performance of international organisations which were seen as not delivering expected results, and secondly, that the Commonwealth, as represented by the 2007 CHOGM, felt that not much had been done in the intervening years to concretely approach the reform of international institutions, and that they needed to take a lead in the matter.

Having expressed the need for the reform of international institutions at the global level in 2007, the CHOGM of 2009 takes this further to include the need for reform within the Commonwealth itself: “We note the need to strengthen Commonwealth processes, institutional frameworks and capacities for delivering collective action and global public goods as highlighted by the Report of the High Level Group in 2001/02 and the ‘Commonwealth Conversation’. We call for the creation of an Eminent Persons Group to undertake an examination of options for reform in order to bring the Commonwealth’s many institutions into a stronger and more effective framework of cooperation and partnership” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009b: 4).

In November 2009, the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group (EPG) was set up and given the task of “developing options for reform to sharpen the impact, strengthen the networks and raise the profile of the Commonwealth” (Zambian Parliament 2011). In March 2011, the EPG announced that the group was making recommendations to the 2011 CHOGM being convened in Perth, Australia, for reform within the Commonwealth. Sir Ronald Sander, spokesperson for the group, stated: “Many of the reforms are, we believe, bold.” These included developing a ‘Charter for the Commonwealth’; creating a role of Commonwealth Commissioner on Democracy and the Rule of Law; and ‘leveraging the association’s strength as a convening and influencing body’. The move to change the Commonwealth was meant to create, in Sir Ronald’s words, “an association fit for purpose in a world that is changing rapidly” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2011c) although this did not reflect everyone’s position. M. Kaul, head of the Commonwealth Business Council, expressed a dissenting opinion when he wrote that the report did not specify what reforms needed to be conducted to ensure that the association stayed relevant in the future and kept

delivering for all 54 states (Kaul 2011: personal blog). He concluded by saying: “given the contents of the eminent persons report, I fear it is again going to be tweaking rather than true reform”.

Despite misgivings, the new Commonwealth draft Charter which had previously been circulated to all member countries, was endorsed by Commonwealth ministers on the margins of the United Nations general assembly in September 2012 (Seychelles hails SIDS inclusion in Commonwealth Charter 2012) in preparation for the heads of states endorsement. Seychelles was a member of the Commonwealth Ministerial Task Force for the submission of the draft Charter and the national official daily reported that Seychelles had played a key role in ensuring that the Charter “enshrines the Commonwealth’s commitment to support small and vulnerable countries, in particular Small Island Developing States, in new and more fundamental ways” (Seychelles hails SIDS inclusion in Commonwealth Charter 2012).

The Charter itself, is a commitment by “We, the people of the Commonwealth of Nations” who “solemnly resolve by the decision of the Heads of Government of the Commonwealth of Nations made on our behalf and in our own name, to uphold, preserve and defend” the values and aspirations of the Commonwealth as declared in the Charter (The Royal Commonwealth Society website 2012). This reflects an interesting shift in terms of ownership when compared to the wording of the usual Commonwealth declarations which are statements made by heads of government. It is clear that the Commonwealth is undergoing a process of internal change, possibly brought about by the increased global focus on the role of civil society in the affairs of states.

The above may be an indication that the organization is reassessing the role of its various constituents, and that it is becoming more conscious, and more accepting, of the notion of direct participation of citizens from member states in the functioning of the association, even if the carefully worded statement ensures that the final decision-making remains with the Heads of Government. It is not possible, at this juncture, to predict how far this change will go but as Auplat (2007: 53) has pointed out, using rather circular logic: “If the Commonwealth stands on the common humanity shared by its members, which are states, it seems legitimate to consider that the expectations of members will reflect the preoccupations of their own citizens,

and that by trying to answer the preoccupations of these citizens, the Commonwealth will meet the expectations of its members”.

## **2.6 SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES AND THEIR DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES**

### **2.6.1 Small States, Small Island States and Microstates**

A significant criterion used to define smallness for states is the size of the population, originally fixed at around 1 million by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) in 1969 (Commonwealth Secretariat 1985: 8). Other more recent publications suggest a threshold of 1.5 million (Commonwealth Secretariat 2000b: 4; Commonwealth Secretariat and World Bank 2000: 1). Composite criteria which combine population, national income and/or land area have also been used to determine what kind of state qualifies as a ‘small state’ for specific purposes, nonetheless, “despite the existence of substantial specialized literature on small states and the existence of small states in large numbers... there is no internationally established or academically agreed definition of the small state” (Henrikson as quoted by Maas 2009: 66).

Small island developing states (SIDS), a sub-category of small states, were first given recognition as a distinct group in 1992 by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UN-OHRLLS website 2014). A further sub-category, that of ‘island microstates’, is defined generally as states having populations of less than a million (Connell 1993: 117). This category includes countries, like the Seychelles, whose population is less than 100,000 (NSB 2010).

According to the website of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), small island states represent nearly 28 per cent of developing countries and 20 percent of the UN’s total membership. While SIDS communities constitute some 5 percent of the global population (AOSIS: 2011) they represent a significant 44% of Commonwealth membership (Commonwealth Secretariat 2012d).

Small states generally, and SIDS in particular, are seen as being prone to a multitude of challenges that create vulnerability. A background paper for the Mauritius 2005 UN International Meeting to Review the Implementation of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (United Nations 2005a:1) lists the following elements of vulnerability: smallness, remoteness, geographical dispersion, vulnerability to natural disasters, fragility of ecosystems, constraints on communications, isolation from markets, vulnerability to exogenous economic and financial shocks, highly limited internal markets, lack of natural resources, limited freshwater supplies, heavy dependence on imports, depletion of non-renewable resources and migration (particularly of personnel with high level skills). The paper further states that these vulnerabilities are interrelated and have cumulative effects (UN 2005a: 2).

Briguglio reports that new challenges have emerged for small states in the recent past and that these include “faster anticipated preference erosion for traditional exports and the related and pressing need to diversify into new economic activities; a rapid rise in the debt burden for many small states; increased environmental susceptibilities; rising concerns with respect to youth unemployment, security and crime; and the HIV/AIDS pandemic” (Briguglio et al 2006: iv).

It is clear that the traditional view of islands does not always reflect the difficulties SIDS face as independent states. This conflict between perception and reality is described by Connell (1993: 140) in the following words: “The exotic image of tropical islands and widespread assumption of something akin to history or ‘subsistence affluence’ (Fisk 1982)<sup>2</sup> even enabling some to discover situations ‘where the poor are happy’ (Owen 1955)<sup>3</sup>, contrasts with a reality of struggle for survival, and the erosion of sovereignty, as self-reliance becomes no more than a chimera”.

### **2.6.2 Development needs of a SIDS**

Connell (1993: 117) who writes about SIDS, and especially microstates, from a ‘development’ point of view cautions that ‘definitions of development have been legion, mainly revolving around issues such as basic needs, equity, self-reliance and

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<sup>2</sup> Reference as provided in the quoted text.

<sup>3</sup> Reference as provided in the quoted text.



power', and that despite much debate, few have "concluded anything other than that development was complex, multifaceted and relative" (Connell 1993: 117). For SIDS in particular, he refers to "a litany of now familiar problems" – as described in the previous paragraphs – which emphasize "the difficulties of development" (Connell 1993: 120). His evaluation of the situation is that, having become independent, it would be a struggle for most island states to make, "in any conventional sense, the transition to developed country status"; stating that "on balance, the constraints to development appeared to overwhelm the advantages" (Connell 1993: 120).

The 2005 United Nations Conference on SIDS stated that there needs to be special recognition accorded to the special circumstances of small island developing states because while all developing countries face challenges, small island developing states experience specific problems arising from the interplay of the vulnerability factors listed earlier. "All small island developing States face these challenges to varying degrees, and the combinations of different permutations of these challenges is what constitutes the vulnerability of small island developing states" (United Nations 2004, Panel Five background paper: 1).

In an assessment of small states' progress towards the millennium development goals (MDGs) Briguglio et al (2006: 6) found that "the overall picture appears to be mixed" and that the "performance of the African small states has been generally disappointing ... all but Botswana, Mauritius, Namibia and the Seychelles are falling seriously off target." They also add that "the high and growing prevalence of HIV/AIDS, particularly in the African and Caribbean small states, threatens to reverse past gains in health indicators, with grave consequences for overall growth and development".

With regard to economic development, the joint Commonwealth/World Bank Task Force report (2000: 3, 4) had already made clear that "the work carried out by the Commonwealth and other organizations in analysing the vulnerability of small states and deriving vulnerability indices for developing countries demonstrates that most small states are considerably more vulnerable than larger developing countries." They felt that this vulnerability needed to be taken into account in programmes of assistance provided by the multilateral development, finance and trade institutions. They go on to say that many small states have vulnerable physical environments as

well as vulnerable economies and that it would be crucial to ensure that any development that takes place should be sustainable, by protecting the environment at the same time. “It will be important for donors and international agencies, including the World Bank, to continue to support small states in this regard, both with advice and finance” (Commonwealth/World Bank 2000: 3, 4)

### **2.6.3 Small states and major international organizations**

Small island states are currently a well-accepted sub-group in the international system. Acknowledging this, the UN chose Small Island Developing States as one of four specific themes for the year 2014 (UN Website: <http://www.un.org/en/events/observances/years.shtml>). The UN's Inter Agency Consultative Group (IACG), an informal coordinating mechanism, regroups 25 international bodies representing the interests of SIDS. The IACG, which provides members with the possibility to “exchange expertise, experiences, approaches and information on planned activities, and explore collaborative efforts” includes 12 other UN agencies, Regional Commissions and regional intergovernmental organizations. The IACG currently meets once a month and it is hoped that this overarching mechanism will eventually be formalized so that it is like other UN mechanisms. Interestingly, while the Economic Commissions for Latin America and the Caribbean, and for Asia/Pacific, participate in the IACG, the Economic Commission for Africa is absent (UN website 2014a: Inter-Agency Consultative Group on SIDS). Other members of note include the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Global Island Partnership (GLISPA) launched in 2007 and currently co-chaired by the President of Palau and the President of Seychelles (<https://www.cbd.int/island/glispa.shtml>). It is to be noted that many of the non-UN bodies that are members of the IACG tend to be forum agencies that target environment-related matters.

The UN work with SIDS formally began in 1994 with the Barbados Programme of Action which set forth “specific actions and measures to be taken at the national, regional and international levels in support of the sustainable development of SIDS”. This plan was updated in 2005 and it then became known as the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation (SIDS Milestones, UN website 2014b).

It is clear from the number of UN agencies which are members of the IACG that they are the main vehicles for implementing or helping to implement the actions and measures in favour of SIDS; they also cover a very wide range of areas including, inter alia, health, education, the environment, habitat, humanitarian affairs, industry and political affairs (UN website 2014a: Inter-Agency Consultative Group on SIDS). A brief look at the track record of one of the best known UN agencies, tends to show that actions for SIDS are often along the lines of organising meetings and conferences and preparing reports on problematic issues that may exist in a country (see UNDP website 2014: search). It should be pointed out that one agency, UNESCO, decided not to mainstream SIDS issues and chose, instead, to create a SIDS Platform. This intersectoral Platform “mobilises UNESCO’s house-wide contribution to the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy ... through an integrated approach to sustainable island living and development, emphasising interregional linkages and cooperation, reflecting the priority status assigned to SIDS” in the agency’s current strategy (UNESCO website 2014: UNESCO SIDS Platform). There is also the Office of High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN OHRLLS) whose mandate is plainly described in its rather lengthy name.

Reporting on the achievements of UN agencies and countries in their efforts to implement sustainable development in small island developing states, the Secretary-General of the UN recent concluded that “while SIDS have had an uneven path towards implementation of sustainable development, some activities have been successful” (UN website 2014c: UN Secretary-General Report Reviews Support for SIDS’ Sustainable Development), a rather ambiguous comment that does not reveal whether the progress regarding programmes targeting SIDS is satisfactory or less than satisfactory, although the report admits that some SIDS may have regressed in the 5-year period following the Mauritius Strategy (UN website 2014c: Decisions by Topic, item 178).

#### **2.6.4 Small states’ membership of the Commonwealth**

It is often said that the Commonwealth has a particular interest in small states because thirty-two of its fifty-four members are classified as small states

(Commonwealth Secretariat website 2012d) and twenty-four are small island developing states (SIDS) (Commonwealth Secretariat website 2012d).

It should be noted that the group of small Commonwealth states also includes countries such as Botswana, Jamaica, Lesotho and Papua New Guinea which despite having populations over 1.5 million, share the characteristics of 'small states'. To fulfill its small states agenda, the Commonwealth reports that it has developed programmes and activities, taking the special situation of these states into account (Commonwealth Foundation, 2004:5).

Member states of any IGO have expectations as to the benefits they can derive from their membership. As stated in a Commonwealth publication, "the bulk of the Commonwealth's membership, 32 small states, is particularly affected by the development of the international system. These countries are disproportionately affected by global development and also disproportionately unable to influence them. It is only through a well-functioning multilateral system that there is any possibility that the interests of these states will be taken into account in global policy" (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009d: 2).

### **2.6.5 Benefits of membership of the Commonwealth to developing member states**

Regardless of the difficulties which may exist in precisely defining the nature of the Commonwealth, "there can be no question that it is a political body. Its members are individually – and collectively by virtue of their membership – concerned with political issues and their responses are shaped by political considerations, dictated by their own interests" (Doxey 1989: 42). Despite this, Doxey (1989: 11) claims that the "main benefit of Commonwealth membership to the developing countries, however, is not political but practical. It derives from the Commonwealth's function not as a forum but as a service organization and is the product of Secretariat-administered programmes of co-operation and assistance in economic, technical and social fields". The Commonwealth is not the only IGO which offers such services to member states, and a brief look at the membership list of large IGOs such as the various UN agencies or other Bretton Woods institutions show that states usually belong to a number of these organizations thus multiplying the possibilities for assistance to

support development. The International Labour Organization (ILO), for example, offers both an extensive technical assistance programme and a framework for the negotiation of International Labour Conventions (Cox and Jacobson 2001:102). Other organizations such as the ITU, UNESCO, the WHO and the IAEA also serve both as forum and service organizations (Cox and Jacobson 2001: 102) although the perceived greatest benefit of any of these two roles would ultimately be dependent on the objectives and strategic positioning of a member state at a particular moment. In that sense, Doxey's conclusion regarding Commonwealth benefits may simply reflect a point of view or may be seen as an argument meant to encourage the increase of financial support to Commonwealth Secretariat activities – since the comment appears between two other paragraphs that discuss economic issues, membership contributions and the cost of supporting the Secretariat.

Representatives of member states present their own perception of the reasons for their membership of the association in formal documents which affirm, for example, that “the special strength of the Commonwealth lies in the diversity of its membership, bound together not only by shared history and tradition, but also by an ethos of respect for all states and peoples, of shared values and principles, and of concern for the vulnerable.” They also state their belief in the “Commonwealth as a voluntary association of sovereign independent states whose pursuit of common principles continues to influence international society to the benefit of all” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009b: 1).

While attempting to evaluate the extent of the association's ability to fulfill the 'ambitious mandate' that heads of member states set themselves in the 1971 Singapore Declaration and the 1991 Harare Declaration, Mayall (1998) also looks at what he describes as 'the enduring appeal of the Commonwealth'. He writes: “International organizations, it has often been said, cannot accomplish more than their members wish them to do; they remain, in the last analysis, the servants not the masters of their members. This is of course, their attraction ... the Commonwealth is neither a surrogate empire nor an alternative to the world market. In the past, existing members have not found the costs of membership particularly onerous, in either financial or political terms” (Mayall 1998: 380).

Some, in particular among the general populations of Commonwealth country members, believe that the association is an 'anachronism' (Aldworth 2010; Prasad 2010). Among those who know the organization, some think that the activities of the Commonwealth are rarely reported, that it has suffered from poor public relations over decades and that its role in international relations is frequently either ignored or misunderstood (Mayall 2001: 19; Ingram 2007: 557). Despite this, reports from the Commonwealth Secretariat show that attendance at Commonwealth Heads of State Meetings (CHOGM) has remained consistently high over the years – despite occasional internal disagreements. Polhemus (1981) who carried out a study for the period from 1944 to 1979, found that 73% of eligible heads of state attended the meetings on a regular basis. He also found that attendance at CHOGMs drew a much higher percentage of eligible heads than the Organization of African Unity (OAU) or the group of Non-Aligned Countries (Polhemus 1981: 483).

Referring to the findings of his study, Polhemus (1981: 488), asks if such an indicator reveals 'anything worth knowing' and wonders, rather tongue-in-cheek, whether the high level of attendance at CHOGMs reflects a 'careful assessment of the importance of the respective conferencing systems', or whether 'London offers better dental facilities' than locations such as Addis Ababa. Thirty years after Polhemus' paper, it is interesting to note that while CHOGMs now take place in a wide range of locations worldwide they still attract a large number of heads of states – official reports show that approximately 68% of eligible heads of state attended the 2007 CHOGM in Kampala, Uganda (Commonwealth Secretariat 2007) and 63% attended the 2009 meeting in Port-of-Prince, Trinidad and Tobago (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009c).

#### **2.6.6 The mandate of the Commonwealth in regard to Small Island Developing States**

The current mandate of the Commonwealth, as determined essentially by the CHOGMs, focusses on three main areas: i) working for peace, democracy, equality and good governance, ii) being a catalyst for global consensus building and iii) being a source of assistance for sustainable development and poverty eradication (Cox 2005: 2). Cox, who was a Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth at the time of writing, states that the organization is good at fulfilling its mandate generally,

and points out that while some say more 'effort should be put into publicity' regarding the work done by the Commonwealth, "the truth is that this sort of delicate work achieves its results for the very reason that it is done discreetly" (2005: 2).

In regard to the third objective of the association, as listed above, Cox (2005:3) has this to say: "This assistance is provided mainly through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) which the Heads of Government established in 1971 to be a flexible and effective international mechanism for the delivery of North/South and South/South cooperation. The CFTC supports capacity building and institutional strengthening in international trade, investment, finance and debt management, public sector development, environmentally sustainable development, education, health, and gender equality and equity. The Commonwealth Youth Programme, funded separately, supports our vital work with young people". He acknowledges that the Commonwealth works with 'small budgets and large ideas' and to illustrate the results of Commonwealth interventions at international level, claims that "it was the Commonwealth acting through its Finance Ministers, that forged the consensus which resulted in the global initiative to forgive the debt of highly indebted poor countries" (Cox 2005: 3). Cox also believes that "the current attention the international community now pays to issues affecting small states is in large measure due to the Commonwealth working with the World Bank" (2005:3).

### **2.6.7 The Commonwealth response to development problems faced by small and vulnerable member states, in particular small island developing states**

It has been openly acknowledged that SIDS constitute a group of countries with special needs. As early as 1977, the Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers held in Barbados identified the need for action to deal with some of the problems facing small island members of the Commonwealth (Commonwealth Foundation, 1982: 21). The emphasis at the time was on the "development of appropriate skills and qualifications required to serve the community in small island states" as it was felt that the one feature which was common to all small island economies was the rather low level of skills which were available in the country at any point in time (Commonwealth Foundation, 1982: 22).

In 1997, a Commonwealth Advisory Group reports that the “Commonwealth Secretariat has an extensive programme of support to enhance human development and capacity-building in small states” and that its “focus on small states has given it a particular expertise which illuminates the type of measures small states need to take and the sort of help they can expect” (Commonwealth Secretariat 1997: 11.9). This document lists a number of areas where the aforementioned support has been provided to small states by the Secretariat. These include: training for public servants in small states in areas such as economic research techniques, property taxation, debt management, financial management, environmental impact assessment, tourism, and the sustainable development of marine resources. Other areas where support has been provided are maritime boundary delimitation, human resource development, privatisation, entrepreneurship development and general management programmes, in addition to management capacity-building within education ministries. The report further states “Commonwealth networks to exchange information and experiences on best practices in civil service reform have proved to be highly effective and have involved senior officials from a spread of small states” (Commonwealth Secretariat 1997: 11.10). The assertion is also made that the role played by the Commonwealth in supporting small states “is not matched by any other international institution in advocacy, policy advice and practical assistance” (Commonwealth Secretariat 1997: 12.9). Despite these achievements, the report does admit that there is a need to consolidate arrangements for co-ordinating programmes of assistance to small states within the Secretariat; it also mentions the need to include developing relations with non-governmental organizations (Commonwealth Secretariat 1997: 12.9).

In 2005, the Commonwealth’s Gozo Statement on Vulnerable Small States (Commonwealth Secretariat 2005) again declared that small states face well-recognised vulnerabilities. In response to this situation, the Commonwealth reaffirmed its “longstanding and dedicated commitment to small states”, stating that the association will “continue to be a strong advocate for vulnerable small states and their concerns” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2005). The statement further says that “there is a pressing need for firm, sustained and suitable resourced responses to the challenges and vulnerabilities of small states to mitigate disturbing emerging trends...” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2005).



In July 2010 a Small States Global Biennial Conference was convened by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London in response to calls made by Commonwealth Heads of Government and Commonwealth Finance Ministers at their respective meetings in 2009. Fifty-six participants from Commonwealth small member states, in particular SIDS, least developed countries (LDCs) and vulnerable states, attended. Representatives from aid and other international organizations such as the AUSAID, DfiD, OECS, UNCTAD and the World Bank, among others also participated (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010a: 51). The report from the Conference for Small States stated that small states had been disproportionately affected by the global economic crisis of the preceding years (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010a: 3). It also acknowledged the support provided by the Commonwealth through the Secretariat and welcomed the resilience framework designed for small states by the Secretariat in collaboration with the University of Malta (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010: 4). It recognised that international trade was key to growth and urged the Commonwealth to invest efforts in analysing the potential for “emerging new South-South trade corridors as well as identifying effective trade-related growth strategies” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010:10), hinting here at the establishment of more active multilateral links at that level.

## **2.7 THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES AS A SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATE AND MEMBER OF THE COMMONWEALTH**

### **2.7.1 Overview of the development of Seychelles since independence**

Several recent reports indicate that the country’s development has been rapid both in terms of economic indicators and human development indicators. A government report states that “Seychelles has managed its development in a pragmatic way, adapting an ambitious development strategy in the light of emerging problems and opportunities. The underlying philosophy behind this strategy has been the promotion of ‘equitable growth’ through active state participation in economic activity. Before independence in 1976, Seychelles was a tropical island nation operating at or near subsistence level with a gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of USD 981 ranking 67th among the world’s countries (UN Data website 2014). Since then incomes have risen almost eightfold, led by a strong tourism industry, which provides

70% of the foreign exchange and employs about a third of the work force” (Republic of Seychelles 2002: 1). Table 2.1 compares selected characteristics of the Seychelles, located in the Indian Ocean, with three other island states, with roughly similar population sizes, from the Caribbean region and from Oceania. All of them have been members of the Commonwealth for about the same length of time.

**Table 2.1: Comparison of selected characteristics of four SIDS members of the Commonwealth**

Name of Country	Date of joining Commonwealth	1976 Population (estimated)	2012 Population (estimated)	1976 GDP current prices (USD)	2012 GDP current prices (USD)
Antigua & Barbuda	1981	71,000	87,884	1,117	13,207
Dominica	1978	75,000	72,969	538	6,958
Kiribati	1979	59,000	100,074	1,170	1,745
Seychelles	1976	56,000	89,188	981	11,164

Sources: Nationmaster website 2014; UN Data website 2014; World Bank Atlas 1976

As can be seen from Table 2.1, population figures show a steady growth for all islands, with Kiribati showing the greatest increase. The GDP for the two Caribbean countries and for the Seychelles also show considerable growth unlike that of Kiribati. McElroy and Medek (2002:17) confirm that, according to studies in which they participated, island microstates in the Caribbean were significantly more affluent and socially progressive than their Pacific counterparts. They also found that successful small island tourist economies (SITEs) tended to be geographically close to their main tourist origin markets. Other factors that were identified as success factors were a preference for political affiliation (most of them being realms as opposed to being republics) and being relatively uncrowded. Adequate levels of modernisation as measured by GDP and sufficient tourism infrastructure were also identified as important factors for successful SITEs (McElroy and Medek 2002: 18). Some of these factors, such as the existence of infrastructure and a certain level of affluence, clearly apply in the case of Seychelles, although the fact that the country’s major tourism markets are located twelve hours flight away - on average, raises questions regarding the degree of validity of the characteristic of geographic closeness. The figures in the above table also lead one to wonder about the decision-making processes regarding the ‘allocation’ of Commonwealth assistance to member states and whether the almost exclusively demand-driven (or rather request-based) approach currently practiced by the major organs of this organization for providing

assistance, is the most appropriate way to fulfill the organization's mandate in regard to the development needs of small islands.

Seychelles currently belongs to the group of countries categorized as having High Human Development (HDI) with an index of 0.845. As stated in the Seychelles 2006–2008 Common Country Assessment (UNDP undated: 45) these achievements are seen essentially as being the result of well-utilised overseas development assistance although the report goes on to say that “this satisfactory performance has paradoxically led to a reduction in the amounts of ODA available to Seychelles as grant assistance.” Seychelles is currently a Net Contributing Country to the UN system, i.e. contributing more than it is receiving in grants (UNDP undated: 14).

The reduction in various forms of assistance as a result of internationally set measures for development was recently highlighted when a representative of Australia, a donor country and member of the Commonwealth, was asked about the declining number of scholarships offered to Seychelles. In response, the representative stated that ‘as a country reaches middle-income level, the number of scholarships goes down’ (20 Minit avek 2009). It is to be noted that the programme of scholarships, offered to developing Commonwealth countries, is now being re-introduced in the Seychelles, with the aim of assisting capacity-building in the public sector and with a specific focus on current IMF-led economic reforms (20 Minit avek 2009), which included a downsizing of government as one of the initial requirements.

A study by Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-Querol (2006: 2) found that aid can also affect government consumption and that this indirectly affects economic growth; they quote Sachs et al. (2004) who argue that unconstrained aid may increase public consumption, and report that aid neither significantly increased investment nor any human development indicator, but that it did increase the size of government (Djankov et al. 2006: 12).

Beyond and despite the above, it is interesting to note that the Republic of Seychelles is among the group of small member countries whose contribution per head to the Commonwealth is higher than those of richer countries (McIntyre 2007: 101).

## **2.7.2 Highlights of major development issues and challenges for Seychelles**

### **2.7.2.1 Seychelles national development plans**

As from 1978, macroeconomic and sectoral plans, objectives, strategies and policies of the Seychelles government were stated in five-year rolling National Development Plans. The 1979-83 Development Plan, launched in 1978, was the first of the five-year rolling plans prepared for the country (Maubouche and Hadjitarkhani 1980: ii). Physical planning was provided by the revised and updated 1975 Structure Plan (pre-independence) which was used as a complementary document to the 1979-83 National Development Plan (Maubouche and Hadjitarkhani 1980: 12). The 1980 World Bank memorandum on Seychelles prepared by Maubouche and Hadjitarkhani summarizes their assessment of the country's development outlook in the following words: "(i) the management capability of Seychelles' administration is impressive; (ii) the development strategy of Seychelles is well-designed on the whole, and clear priorities have been set with a view to support long-term development; and (iii) the Government is, however, likely to be confronted with financial constraints in the near future" (Maubouche and Hadjitarkhani 1980: ii). In the same document, Maubouche and Hadjitarkhani (1980: 3) point out that the "Seychelles is fortunate to have, relatively speaking, fewer human and social problems than most other developing countries".

According to a conservation website, the next national development plan for the period 1985–1989 "emphasized tourism, agriculture, and fisheries. It proposed to improve the balance of payments by achieving 60 percent self-sufficiency in food, and by stimulating tourism. Improved productivity, increased exports, and a lowering of the unemployment level were additional aims" (Mongabay 1994).

The 1990–1994 National Development Plan of the Republic of Seychelles states that in a strategic review of Seychelles, three "striking and overwhelming strategic features of the nation and economy emerge fairly directly", namely a) the extremely limited land area accessible for economic activity (the small usable land area being further reduced by the 'unique combination of steeply mountainous and fragile coralline geography'); b) the dominant role of tourism in the economy; and c) the

long-term strategic and economic importance of Seychelles' vast sea area (Republic of Seychelles 1990: 22). The same document further states that "transition to sustainable development entails dealing with and effectively reducing the unacceptably high degree of vulnerability to economic, environmental and social factors that Seychelles continues to face" and that this required that the country "put in place the infrastructural, social and institutional requirements for sustainable development" (Republic of Seychelles 1990: 22).

The 1990–1994 Development Plan also points out that Seychelles faces the problem of not being able to finance the 'requirements for sustainable development' as mentioned above due to the following reasons: a) most bilateral and multi-lateral financing agencies focus on a single development indicator – GDP per capita – for providing grants and development finance on concessionary terms and Seychelles performance in this area is remarkable, de facto excluding it from being a regular beneficiary of such grants and concessions; b) the country's balance of payments and its domestic savings, would in all likelihood, fall short of the total borrowing requirements of the public sector (therefore creating a situation where the Government would continue to depend on borrowing as well as on aid from abroad to finance development projects), and c) Seychelles was (in 1990) already approaching the limit at "which one can afford to undertake foreign borrowings, and thereby mortgage future export earnings" (Republic of Seychelles 1990: 22). In 1989, it was estimated that 25% of the country's expected export proceeds would go towards servicing its domestic and foreign debt. The Plan comments that "the level (of debt) attained, and even more the magnitude of the increase from one year to the next, is a clear indication that throughout the current Plan period the task of reducing the foreign debt burden will occupy a place at the top of the economic agenda" (Republic of Seychelles 1990: 21). In contradiction to this intention, a recent report claims that "After 1992, Seychelles returned to an expansionary stance. Spending exceeded revenue, and there was a dangerous buildup of debt, both external and domestic" (World Bank/Republic of Seychelles 2013: 6).

The Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP) 1994-96 which charts national development intentions for that period of time is simpler and less ambitious, its attention being clearly on the economy. An internal draft document prepared in 1993 highlights the fact that a key feature in economic performance has been state control

and management of key sectors of the economy, and that “growth has been fuelled by successful mobilisation of foreign savings largely on a grant and concessional basis” (Government of Seychelles 1993: 2). The document also points out that while inflows of ODA had averaged US\$300 per capita between 1977 and 1990, these transfers had fallen by more than half in the period 1991-92.

In the succeeding 1996-1998 PSIP, we read that “in the past, National Development Plans were perceived as authoritative documents that expressed the will of the state even if they were not always fully implemented. With the reorientation of the Seychelles towards a more liberal political and economic regime, ‘planning’ has come into disrepute. And yet some ‘planning’ is always necessary and is undertaken by all governments, however liberal... This is where a three-year Public Sector Investment Programme can be useful” (Republic of Seychelles 1996:1.9). This document points out that budget deficits were registered in 1991, 1992 and 1993, and that public debt both domestic and foreign have led to increased foreign exchange shortages; it further adds that “commercial arrears (commercial debts abroad unpaid because of shortage of foreign exchange) of some 200 million rupees had accumulated by the end of 1994” (Republic of Seychelles 1996: 2.6).

The document also explains that “the gulf war took a heavy toll in 1991 when tourist expenditure dropped by nearly a fifth” (Republic of Seychelles 1996: 2.6) and that “the 1995 budget registered a significant shift in economic policy, continuing fiscal austerity and introducing measures to encourage the private sector and foreign investment” (Republic of Seychelles 1996: 2.7). It was deemed that these measures, coupled with an improved global climate, would allow Seychelles to overcome its economic difficulties and gave cause for ‘cautious optimism’. The 1996/98 PSIP also states that total government debt, according to the Seychelles Central Bank, stood at 2.3 billion Seychelles Rupees in 1994, “an amount equal to approximately 90% of GDP” (Republic of Seychelles 1996: 2.9). Measures taken subsequently did not arrest or diminish the level of the country’s indebtedness which rose to represent a reported 202% of GDP in 2002 (GOS/EU 2007: executive summary – no page number).

From 1998 to 2007, there seems to be no comprehensive plan or document focusing on national development. In June 2007 the Government launched the Seychelles

Strategy 2017 which is described in the foreword as “a template for sustained growth through a strategic positioning of Government as facilitator” and that the emphasis remains “on the empowerment of economic actors in the productive sectors of our economy” (Republic of Seychelles 2007: 3).

#### 2.7.2.2 Economic and social situation 2005 – 2013

The joint Government of Seychelles and European Community Country Strategic Paper and National Indicative Programme for 2008-2013 (GOS/EU 2007: 7) highlights specific problems such as a relatively sensitive economy that remained “particularly vulnerable to exogenous shocks, and very sensitive to further rises in oil prices as well as to interest rate increases linked to its high level of bilateral external indebtedness”. The report states, among other things, that “despite some progress in promoting democratic values since 1993 (start of a multiparty system), certain improvements are still required in relation to media coverage, the judiciary and electoral process” – the source of their information being quoted as the Commonwealth Observers Report of the 2006 Presidential elections in Seychelles (GOS/EU 2007: 7).

In 2005, the President of the Seychelles, in view of the economic difficulties facing the country, had appealed to the international community in the following words: “countries like Seychelles are victims of their success and trapped in situations where most of the indicators used fail to capture the very specific nature of their constraints, needs and efforts” (President calls for new approach to foreign aid 2005: 1). He suggested that a country’s situation should not be assessed using economic indicators only, but a ‘vulnerability index’ based on a comprehensive set of criteria, adding that “a few encouraging steps have been taken in that direction, most notably by the United Nations, the World Bank and the Commonwealth, but we still have a long way to go before workable mechanisms are put in place” (President calls for new approach to foreign aid 2005:1).

In addition to the economic challenges facing the country, a number of social problems have surfaced, and in view of their sharp and relatively sudden increase, the government has taken steps that it felt were necessary to tackle them. A strategy on Domestic Violence was launched in June 2008 in response to the fact that

“statistics obtained from several sources indicate a significant rise in the number of cases of domestic violence” (GOS 2008: 2). More recently a special high-powered national committee was also appointed by the President to deal with drugs and prostitution (Tough Steps to deal with drugs 2011: 1). In 2013, a national policy to regulate the consumption, production, sale and advertising of alcohol in Seychelles was put forward by the Drug and Alcohol Council which felt that this was an essential step in the fight against ‘endemic alcohol abuse’ in the country (Alcohol policy proposed to promote responsible drinking 2013:1). There has also been a raise in serious criminality as anyone who lives in the country is able to vouch for, but inadequate record keeping (Simmons 2008:4) often means that the existing statistics seldom reflect the actual situation. Nonetheless, there are occasional articles in the local press that mention the increase in criminality, for example, an article reporting the recruitment of a South African crime specialist by the Seychelles Government, “because of the significant rise in crime in Seychelles” (enews 2011). In 2012, the National Bureau of Statistics compiled a Crime, Justice and Statistics Bulletin although they did point out the limitations that exist and the constraints faced in collecting and compiling the data (NBS 2012: 3).

In the last few years there has also been the external threat of piracy threatening the security of the country with Somali pirates being active in Seychelles waters close to the main islands. As a result of these activities a number of nationals and visitors in Seychelles waters have been captured and detained by pirates (Coast guard rescues four Seychellois from pirates 2011:1). The negative long-term effects of these events on fishing and tourism, the two main sources of revenue for the local economy, are yet to be fully understood and evaluated.

### **2.7.3 Commonwealth assistance to development in the Seychelles and benefits accrued through membership of the association**

As already noted, the Seychelles, following in the footsteps of most former colonies of Britain, became a member of the Commonwealth at its independence in 1976. While there are no direct references to the reasons which led the Seychelles to join the Commonwealth, these reasons seem to have been in line with the thoughts of Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India who is quoted as saying in 1949: “We join the Commonwealth obviously because we think it is beneficial to us and to certain



causes in the world that we wish to advance” (Millar 1967: 1). Former President James Mancham of the Seychelles confirms this when he states in one of his publications (1983: 10) that the speech he had prepared for the 1976 CHOGM – as head of state – included the following paragraph: “It is really important for us to exchange views and learn from each other, to share our common experience, to examine present and future problems, to profit by the wise advice of one and constructive criticism of another. It’s imperative that we find acceptable solutions by making use of the aims and quality of knowledge and reason in order to reach a higher level of communication, of cooperation, of trust...” (Mancham 1983: 9). Mancham’s speech however, was never delivered because he was toppled in a coup three days prior to the start of the CHOGM.

Some Commonwealth internal reports document the work done by the association in the Seychelles since the country first became a member in 1976. These annual reports, which present the work done in all member states, are prepared by the Commonwealth Secretariat and are typically composed of short descriptive paragraphs or statistics on activities implemented (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002: 1).

On the other hand, few of the national reports produced in Seychelles refer to work being done by the Commonwealth in Seychelles, even though they highlight the problems that Seychelles faces as a developing country and describe the work being done with a wide range of international partners to resolve these problems. Among recent major national reports covering development, the Commonwealth is only mentioned in a peripheral way. The Seychelles National Assessment of the Barbados Programme of Action+10 Review (BPOA+10 Review), for example, mentions the Commonwealth only once stating that “the Vulnerability Index lacks the coordination of the World Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the United Nations and UNCTAD to see it through” (GOS, 2004: 59). The GOS/EU Country Strategy Paper 2008–2013, mentions that “the Commonwealth Secretariat made a number of recommendations to further strengthen the electoral process in 2006” (GOS/EU, 2007: 7) and that Seychelles often recruits judges from other Commonwealth countries (GOS/EU, 2007: 8).

Another national report, the United Nations Common Country Assessment 2006–2008 prepared jointly by the UNDP and the Government of Seychelles, refers to the Commonwealth in passing: “The specificities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been recognised and documented by the UN, the Commonwealth, the EU-ACP Cotonou Agreement and other North-South cooperation mechanisms” (UN, undated: 46). These examples illustrate the very limited recognition given to the Commonwealth’s contributions to development in official documents generated locally in Seychelles. An internal paper prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs lists Commonwealth activities in the decade starting from 2000, by sector and assesses them according to their monetary value but it is not a public document (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012).

In 2008, a paper prepared by the University of Malta for the Commonwealth Secretariat, provided a profile of Seychelles economic vulnerability and economic resilience. This was presented at a national meeting held in Seychelles. The aim of the exercise was to identify manifestations and sources of inherent economic vulnerability in the Seychelles, identify the sources of policy-induced economic resilience, and propose policy orientations aimed at bridging gaps in economic resilience (Briguglio, Cordina, Farrugia and Vella 2008:1). When the exercise was carried out the country was already in deep economic crisis and was in the process of negotiating an arrangement with the IMF. One can only surmise at the final practical usefulness of the exercise for the country, as it probably came too late, although it is clear that the findings of these authors can be of great help to researchers and writers on the matter.

## **2.8 SUMMARY**

This chapter has attempted to establish the background for understanding the nature of the relationship between the Commonwealth as an association of states involved in multilateral cooperation, and the Seychelles as one of its SIDS member states, and recipient of technical assistance.

International organizations and the way they function as well as the reasons why they exist are perceived differently by various schools of thought in international relations theory. Realists, for example, do not consider IOs to be serious political entities since

these only reflect individual states' preferences and national interests. Moreover, they tend to see states as vying for power in their interactions with other states. Institutionalists, on the other hand, believe that the establishment of rules and norms allow states to cooperate in order to achieve common goals. The main alternative to the two paradigms just mentioned is Liberalism which believes that the way states operate internationally reflects the way society functions within that state, that the national and the international are closely linked, and that they mutually influence each other.

One of the common forms of inter-state cooperation occurs when states agree to associate in order to fulfill agreed-upon agendas and to act through a common agency. Such agencies, which can be forum or service organizations, can be categorised as universal, regional or selective in terms of their constituencies. They are also seen as being durable. The mechanism through which states cooperate often takes the form of an international governmental organization, many of which are associations with an operating structure and a secretariat.

The Commonwealth which describes itself as “a voluntary association of 54 countries that support each other and work together towards shared goals in democracy and development” (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010: back cover), has eluded categorization for most of its existence and there are many aspects of the organization that do not fit neatly into definitions and frameworks that currently exist for international organizations and the functioning of the international system. Despite this, it is clear that the association has evolved over time and that it is, despite the quirks of its nature, an international governmental organization. Moreover, while much of the thinking surrounding the ‘birth’ of the original Commonwealth reflected the beliefs of Liberalism, some of the ways in which it has operated since 1949 seem to reflect a more Realist-focussed paradigm. There are signs that the organization may yet transform itself further if one takes into account the almost finalized acceptance of a Charter which i) is in the name of the people of the Commonwealth of Nations, ii) has a considerably greater emphasis on the principles of democratic governance and accountability, and iii) clearly indicates the increasingly important role of civil society.

Small island developing states which are, traditionally and rather flexibly, defined as states with a population of less than 1.5 million were first given recognition as a specific group in 1992 by the United Nations. It is acknowledged that they are prone to many challenges that create vulnerability, and that the challenges they face for development cannot be equated with those of larger states.

It is to be noted that 32 members (59%) of the Commonwealth association are categorised as small states and that most of these are small island developing states (SIDS). In view of its membership composition and its stated role, the Commonwealth has committed itself to supporting its SIDS member states through the establishment of a thematic area which concentrates on small states related issues. The work done by the association in this area has produced a generous number of research-based documents and has also led to the development of both an index which allows the identification of the levels of vulnerability of a developing country, and a resilience framework for small states, although it is to be noted that these tools have not yet been internationally accepted.

The Republic of Seychelles, a former British colony and member of the Commonwealth, has developed rapidly since its independence in 1976. Current economic and human development indicators, using conventional international measurements, show that the country's progress has been remarkable. External support in the form of ODA to achieve the country's successive national development plans was extensively available during the first decade after independence. This form of aid has dwindled over the years as international statistical indicators showed Seychelles reaching middle-income status. In recent years the country has been faced with relatively serious economic and social problems as highlighted in section 2.7.2 of this chapter, and as will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

Available information makes it clear that the Commonwealth has expressed a strong commitment to providing support to its small member states, but a review of the limited number of documents on development assistance to the Seychelles tends to indicate that Commonwealth support has been neither very perceptible nor widely acknowledged in-country.

A thorough investigation of the archival and historical material available in Seychelles and at the Commonwealth Secretariat, documenting the activities of the Commonwealth in the Seychelles, will, hopefully, provide a picture of the kind of relationship established between the association and the member state, and thus allow an assessment of the assistance provided based on factual information.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE REPUBLIC OF SEYCHELLES - OVERVIEW

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Seychelles is an archetypal small island developing state (SIDS). It exhibits most of the known characteristics, and weaknesses, of this type of country, the more prominent ones being a great vulnerability to economic shocks; a marked susceptibility to climate change and other environmental threats (McEnroy and Medek 2012: 19) as well as very limited national resources (UN 2005a:1). Much of this is due to geographic and topographic factors directly linked to small, and as is often the case, remote islands.

An important characteristic shared by SIDS members of the Commonwealth is that they have been for varying periods of time, colonies or dependencies of Great Britain in the recent historical past. As a consequence, they tend to have relatively similar administrative structures and systems of governance acquired through the inheritance of colonial models as well as through the Western educational experiences of many of their civil servants (Kersell 1992: 291).

This chapter covers essential geographical, historical, demographic, socio-economic and political information about the Seychelles with the aim of providing a factual context to the study. It does not venture into deep analysis of the various aspects covered. More in-depth coverage of areas directly related to the study is presented in chapter 5.

#### 3.2 LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

The Seychelles is an archipelago of 115 islands located between latitudes 3' and 7' south of the equator, in the western part of the Indian Ocean (See Map 3.1). Most of the islands lie outside the cyclone belt and are therefore not directly affected by them,

although many of the islands are subject to monsoons. Because of its positioning, the country's climate is even-tempered with temperatures averaging 27 degrees Celsius in a year (UNDP undated: 6). In recent years though, temperatures have reached peaks of 33 to 34 degrees Celsius - to the concern of organizations such as the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Division of Risk and Disaster Management and the Meteorological Services (Weather set to get hotter in April 2013:1). Such factors, along with others related to climate change, have generated a strong national focus on environmental issues, specially over the last couple of decades - a period during which a multitude of studies were carried out looking at the impact of environmental benefits or threats on various national features, including the economy, (inter alia, Tilly 1995; Emerton 1997; Cazes Duvat 2003; Cesar et al 2004).

More recently, a few voices have been raised either in gentle caution – as when it is pointed out that apart from a few activities in the areas of conservation, sustainable fishing and protection of the environment, “not much else is being done in a structured and systematic way” beyond the rhetoric and debates (Houareau 2013: 8); or more acridly – as when a former expatriate employee of the Island Development Corporation (Foulkes 2012 : 45) describes what he calls “The Great Seychelles Greenwashing”, suggesting that despite its seemingly good environmental record, there is a considerable gap between the theory and the practice of environmental protection in the country. He highlights the fact that there are “aspects... which will likely surprise the non-Seychellois” and that things discussed in his book “are not common knowledge outside of Seychelles”, such as the hunting dolphins, and shark finning. Despite these concrete examples of environmental crimes (of which the writer states he has personal knowledge), a few inaccuracies – as when the author states that there is little financial oversight of government departments and parastatals (Foulkes 2012: 19), a fact which was true for parastatals until very recently but not applicable to government departments which are strictly regulated regarding finances, could, for an informed Seychellois reader, put in question the reliability and credibility of other information presented in the document. Nonetheless, Foulkes' book pinpoints an important and often overlooked aspect of life in the Seychelles – that not everything is as it is made to appear.

The country's land area is a mere 455 km<sup>2</sup> but its current Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) covers a total of 1.4 million km<sup>2</sup> (Government of Seychelles 2012b: 5) of the

south western part of the Indian Ocean – and area of combined land mass and territorial waters that is slightly larger than the land area of countries such as Angola or Mali (Joinafrica.com 2013), thus giving Seychelles access to considerable marine resources which are referred to by national leaders as the country's 'blue gold' (Efforts stepped up to exploit our 'blue gold' 2013: 1). The size of this maritime territory also means that it is not possible to patrol all areas at all times.

Mahé, where the country's capital, Victoria, is located, is the largest and most densely populated granitic island. Two other important granitic islands are Praslin and La Digue. All granitic islands are within a 56 km radius of Mahé (Seychelles Tourism Board website 2013). On the other hand, the coralline islands, with the exception of two, are found in clusters at a considerable distance from the granitic islands - the most distant of these being about 1,000 km south-west of Mahé (Commonwealth Secretariat 1976b: 1). Most of the coralline islands are part of the Island Development Company (IDC), a parastatal, whose mandate is to "accelerate the development of outer islands" (Republic of Seychelles 1990:33).

The intention of government when it set up the IDC was to ensure that development occurred, as much as possible and as appropriate to context, on all the islands (Republic of Secyhelles 1990:49). Considering the current level of development of the various islands in the archipelago, it could be said that the geographical dispersion of the islands may have meant that development in the country, despite the best stated intentions, has been rather uneven - with most of the focus being, rather logically, on the granitic islands, and in particular Mahé, where the bulk of the population resides.



Map 3.1: The Republic of Seychelles – Physical



Source: GEOATLAS website 2013

### 3.3 HISTORICAL HIGHLIGHTS

There are indications that some of the islands were probably known to Arab navigators as early as the ninth century, and an early Portuguese map shows a group of islands called Sete Irmas in the approximate position of the Seychelles (McAteer 1991: 20), although the first description of the island of Mahé is provided by an English expedition that landed in 1609 (McAteer 1991: 24). From then on and until a 1756 French expedition came to lay formal claim to ‘the uninhabited islands lying north-east of Madagascar’, it is reported that the Seychelles were a favourite haunt for pirates and corsairs, the most famous of them being Olivier Le Vasseur, known as La Buse, who reportedly buried treasure on one of the islands (McAteer 1991: 26). The 1756 expedition was led by a Corneille Nicolas Morphey who described their place of anchorage at Mahé’s Port Royal as ‘the most beautiful he had ever seen’ (McAteer 1991: 28).

The French sent a small group of people from Mauritius to settle the islands in 1770 (Taylor 2005: 2). Until then, the islands had not been permanently inhabited by humans but there were a great number of crocodiles and giant tortoises on land as well as large populations of turtles and sharks in the sea. Within 30 years of the settlement on Mahé, the crocodile was virtually extinct and the same applied to the giant tortoises whose meat formed both the basic diet of the settlers as well as their major source of income as they sold it to visiting ships (McAteer 1991: 36, 37). Despite this, the giant land tortoise did survive on the distant Aldabra Atoll, now a World Heritage site, which is home to the world’s largest population of this particular species of reptile (Government of Seychelles 2004: 2).

Despite the islands’ generally poor soil, the country had a rather promising start in the area of agriculture. A French engineer sent to assess the military needs of the colony in 1786, commented that there were “few places in the world where vegetation grows so rapidly”. Bananas, pineapples and sugar-cane grew well as did tobacco and cotton, the latter becoming the country’s cash crop until cheaper cotton was produced elsewhere. Cinnamon, which had been introduced as part of a project to grow spices,

flourished (McAteer 1991: 122). The French government eventually decided that there was no need to defend the Seychelles militarily and that they ought to confine themselves “to profiting from the natural product of this archipelago and the advantages that these islands offer to (our) navigators” (McAteer 1991:123). This situation changed considerably over time as Seychelles became increasingly dependent on imports of various foodstuffs, including fresh produce, a situation that is still the case today (GOS/EU 2007:10). In fact, since the ‘opening of the market economy’ and the removal of foreign exchange restrictions, in line with the IMF reforms which started in 2008, the market has been flooded by a wide selection of imported goods.

The islands were taken over by the British in 1811 - according to the terms of the Capitulation of the Ile de France (Mauritius). During negotiations for the 1814 Treaty of Paris, France clearly indicated its view of the worth of the South West Indian Ocean islands - sometimes referred to as the Mascarenes, when Britain offered to return Mauritius and its dependencies, including the Seychelles, to France if the latter would “renounce all claims to its few remaining territorial possessions in India. France refused and the islands were formally ceded to Britain as part of the Treaty” (Commonwealth Secretariat 1976b: 5). From then on, the Seychelles would be under the influence of the British who tried in some ways to leave an imprint on the islands. For example, the main settlement area on the island of Mahé, which was known as Etablissement du Roi, was renamed Victoria in honour of the British Monarch when she gave birth to her first son in 1841 (McAteer 1991: 285). The Seychelles were to remain a British colony, first as a dependency of Mauritius, then as a Crown colony, until independence in 1976.

The change from French settlement and colony, to British colony ensured that the Seychelles developed a somewhat dual personality as a country. This is reflected in its official languages (Kreol, English and French), its culture (which, despite a century and a half of British rule, has remained decidedly Francophile) and its legal system which is based on a mix of common law (inspired by British Law) and aspects of the Napoleon Code (ODEROI 2006: 97).

## 3.4 POPULATION AND SOCIO- ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

### 3.4.1 Population

The population of the Seychelles, which is currently composed of about 90,000 individuals can neither be described as racially homogeneous nor can it be grouped in relatively clear ethnic communities, as is the case in the neighboring island of Mauritius which acknowledges four ethnic groups: Hindus, Muslims, Sino-mauritians and a “residual category” called ‘general population’, which includes people of African, European and mixed descent (Eriksen 2002: 26).

Records indicate that among the first settlers who came from Mauritius to Seychelles in 1770, there were 27 males (15 French, 7 slaves, 5 Indians) and 1 black woman (McAteer 1991: 64). The population of Seychelles at the time of the take-over by the British had grown to a total of 3,418, being composed of 317 French, 3,015 slaves mainly of African and Madagascan origin as well as 86 free blacks and Creoles (Taylor 2005: 13). Some Chinese settlers came later, as free immigrants, when possibilities for retail trading became apparent (Chang Him 2011: 48).

In the islands, the name ‘creole’ was first applied to people of Afro-French and/or Madagascan mixed blood, but by the middle of the 19th century it was used for slaves who had been emancipated (Taylor 2005: 14). In the 1860s, several thousand African slaves liberated from Arab slaver dhows captured by the Royal Navy along the east coast of Africa were landed on Mahé (Chang Him 2011: 46; Taylor 2005: 174) and were referred to as ‘Liberated Africans’ to differentiate them from the Creoles. They became indentured labourers and apprentices and were gradually integrated within the rest of the population. It is from “this mix of African and European, with additions of Indian and, later, Chinese blood, that the people of the Seychelles Republic were formed” (McAteer 1991: 286).

While the above description may give an impression of willing and harmonious ‘inter-mixing’, it is generally admitted that the first mixed race individuals were probably the result of French settlers using what is known as ‘le droit de cuissage’ - the right to be the first to go through the thighs (Chang Him 2011: 23). This was a practice whereby

slave owners could, and did, choose sexual partners among their slaves as and when they wished. The practice seems to have continued on plantations, between land owners and their workers, well after emancipation and there are researchers in this area who believe that the rather libertarian attitudes that exist regarding sexuality in Seychelles today can be directly linked to such practices (e.g. Chang Him 2011: 83; Taylor 2005: 775).

As early as 1911, the British colonial administration considered stopping the bringing out of “censuses that classified inhabitants by racial origin because the races had by then become so thoroughly mixed” (Commonwealth Secretariat 1976b: 3). A 2003 UN document claims that ethnicity was included up to the 1990 round of censuses in Seychelles (United Nations Statistics Division 2003: 20) but information gathered for this study indicates that censuses in Seychelles included ethnicity until 1947 when the practice was stopped entirely (Rosalie 2013). It is clear that the issue of ethnicity is a somewhat ‘touchy’ subject in Seychelles, as shown in a comment made by a representative of the Seychelles National Bureau of Statistics (first established in the 1970s), who stated relatively recently: “NSB<sup>4</sup> has never collected data on ethnicity. It is considered unethical here” (Deletourdie 2009). It is nonetheless commonplace and generally seen as inoffensive to describe individuals by their appearance using a very wide range of local terms and expressions that refer to specific racial traits or looks. For example, ‘rouz’ (red) - usually lighter skinned people with reddish afro hair, or ‘malbares’ (originally meaning someone from Malabar) - referring to Indian-looking individuals usually with straight hair, ‘byen nwar’ (very black) – referring to a very dark-skinned person, ‘toutou blan’ (white puppy) – referring to an albino, etc. It is also to be noted that it is not unusual to find a range of skin colours and racial types within the same family unit.

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<sup>4</sup> The National Statistics Bureau became the National Bureau of Statistics when its legal status was changed in 2010 ([www,nsb.gov.sc](http://www,nsb.gov.sc)).

Table 3.1, which provides key demographic indicators for Seychelles shows that according to the 2010 Census, the actual total population in that year was 90,945, a figure that included both Seychellois residents (91.4%) and non-Seychellois residents (8.6%) (National Bureau of Statistics 2013b: 26). The 2010 Census also showed that there were more males (51%) than females (49%) (National Bureau of Statistics 2012a: 8).

**Table 3.1: Key demographic indicators 1977 - 2012, at 5-year intervals**

	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997	2002	2007	2012
Population <sub>1</sub>	54695	64413	68499	70763	78064	81177	85033	88303
Population growth <sub>2</sub>	2	0.6	4.2	0.5	1.6	0.5	0.5	1.8
Total fertility rate	4	3.4	3.1	2.5	2.2	2	2.2	2.4
Infant mortality <sub>3</sub>	43.2	19.3	18.4	11.9	8.1	17.6	10.7	10.3
Life expectancy at birth <sub>4</sub>								
Male	62.5	64.26	63.73	65.75	65.67	66.55	68.9	69.34
Female	69.9	74.55	73.01	76.87	77.02	75.77	77.6	79.54
Age Distribution %								
0-14	39.7	37.4	33.7	32.0	28.6	34.6	19.9	19.8
15-64	53.8	56.2	59.2	60.9	64.1	57.7	58.1	63.1
65 and above	6.4	6.5	7.1	7.1	7.3	7.7	7	6.8
Median Age <sub>5</sub>	---	20	23	24	27	28	29	30

Notes:

<sub>1</sub> These are mid-year estimates. Figures for the years 1987 to 1993 have been rebased on the 1987 Census

<sub>2</sub> Including migration

<sub>3</sub> Death of infants under one year per 1000 live births

<sub>4</sub> The life expectancy for 1977 has been derived from the age specific mortality data for the years 1971-1975 using coale demeney West model

<sub>5</sub>Median age: age that divides the population in two parts of equal size

Sources: National Statistics Bureau 2007; National Bureau of Statistics 2013, Rosalie 2000

A very high number of the births (79%) registered in the country do not occur within marriage but most of these (61%) are acknowledged, i.e. recognized by the father who is not married to the mother while about one-fifth (18%) are natural (not recognized by father) (National Bureau of Statistics 2013a: 2). The same source

also reports that out of the 1,645 births registered in 2012, only 21% were nuptial (occurred within marriage).

Two of the Seychelles official languages, English and French, are established languages while the third, Kreol, started as a French 'patois' made up of a mixture of French-based terms and words from African and Madagascan dialects. It is reported that when the French colonists, many of whom came from Mauritius, settled in the Seychelles, "they and their slaves brought some kind of stabilized Mauritian Creole along with them. Therefore, Seychelles Creole can be characterized as an offshoot of Mauritian Creole. The two languages are nowadays mutually intelligible" (Michaelis and Rosalie undated: 2). Kreol (as it is now spelt), was given a spelling system and a syntax in the late 1970s and was introduced in 1982, amid some controversy, as the medium of instruction in the first four years of school which include 2 years of crèche and the first 2 years of Primary School (Michaelis and Rosalie undated: 2; Purvis 2003: 4). It is also used for formal communication in several areas, such as the media or the court (Michaelis and Rosalie undated: 2). This move towards establishing Kreol as a national language occurred during the years of the Second Republic, shortly after independence, when, as will later be seen, many efforts were being made to develop a national identity. Not everyone agreed that Kreol was the best medium of instruction and the country's few private schools use English, or French, as the medium of instruction. Results from the SAQMEC study carried out in 2005 (Leste et al 2005) and 2011 (Leste and Benstrong 2011), show that Seychellois students, attending government schools which use Kreol as the sole medium of instruction for the first two years, perform well, with Seychelles, Mauritius and Tanzania having the highest reading scores among 15 countries in the Southern African region (Hungu 2011:4). Nonetheless, from the point of view of an average person, the existence of multiple media for instruction seems to be creating differences in terms of 'social standing' – the English and French medium schools being seen generally as elitist, partly because they are private and expensive, but also possibly because students in such schools tend to use English and French to communicate, rather than Kreol.

English, which was made an official language in 1944 (Commonwealth Secretariat 1976b: 3), is also widely used. In recent years, many English words have been

'transliterated' and have found their way into the Kreol language, for example, the word 'approval' which would be translated as 'approbation' in French has recently become 'aprovasyon' in Kreol. French, which had been the language of the church and the 'better classes' for a very long time (Taylor 2005: 664) seems to have fallen in disfavor – it is still widely understood but infrequently used (NBS 2013b: 67), although it remains very present at a cultural level. For example, many of the traditional songs and church hymns are sung in French and the majority of roads and public places such as shops and restaurants have French names. In fact French patronyms are borne by the majority of Seychellois and it is clear that the French portion of their origins is inextricably linked to their cultural identity.

The islands are essentially Christian, with a very large percentage of people belonging to the Roman Catholic faith. Other Christian religions are Anglicanism, Seventh-Day Adventism, Pentecostalism and a number of other Christian Evangelical denominations which seem to be constantly growing in popularity. The main non-Christian religions are Hinduism, the Baha'i faith and Islam (Rosalie 2000: 4). The Seychelles are known to provide freedom of worship to all religions although the authorities will sometimes impose some restrictions on practices that the bulk of people may find disruptive - as in the case of the 5-daily muezzins from mosques which are allowed but controlled (Personal observation).

### **3.4.2 Education and Health**

The current education system in Seychelles has been "strongly influenced by the principles and practices of the British education system of the post-war era" (Purvis 2007: 10), although the 1977 change of government brought a re-orientation of education principles towards comprehensive and inclusive education for all, free of charge. Private schools were abolished and compulsory school age was set at 5½ to 16 (Purvis 2007: 14). About 95% of all children aged between 3½ and 16 years attend state schools while the remaining 5% attend private schools. There is also a zoning policy which requires that children attend school in the district of their families' residence (Purvis 2007:14), although this is not applicable for private schools. Pre-school and school age children have ready access to education through a network of 33 state pre-schools or crèches, 23 primary schools, and 12 secondary schools spread across the country's 26



districts. Nearly all Seychellois children attend school and net enrollment in primary school is considered to be nearly 100% - since 1990 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010: 49). Enrolment rates for secondary school is reported to be 94% (African Economic Outlook website 2013). The average expected number of years of schooling is 13.3 years (UNDP website 2013).

Generally, the Seychellois people are literate, and published figures indicate an average adult literacy rate of 92% (UNDP website 2013), although locally sourced figures as presented in Table 3.2, indicate that literacy rates may currently be somewhat higher.

By the start of this century, there were nine (9) post-secondary institutions offering courses ranging from one-year certificates to four-year diplomas (Purvis 2007:14). In September 2009, the University of Seychelles was set up by combining a number of existing educational and training institutions. It offers the possibility for students to earn a number of undergraduate degrees locally through “enrolments with the University of London International Programme” (University of Seychelles website 2013).

**Table 3.2: Key socio-economic indicators, Census years - 1994, 2002, 2010**

	1994	2002	2010
Primary school enrolment	97.5	98	92
Secondary school enrolment	94.5	83	84
Literacy rates (all residents 15+)	87.8	91	94
No. of patients per doctor	803	743	780
No. of patients per dentist	6,714	3028	3762
No. of households	17107	20933	24770
Average size of household	4.3	3.9	3.7
Owner occupied houses (%)	69.4	66	71
Block/stone houses (% of houses)	67	77	85
Onwership motorized land transport (%)	21	21	24
Access to electricity(%)	89	96	97
Access to treated water (%)	76	87	93
Access to internet (PC + mobile) (%)	--	7	32
Flush toilets (%)	78	94	97

Sources: National Statistics Bureau 1994, 2004, National Bureau of Statistics 2013b, UNESCO website 2013, Index Mundi website 2013

A relatively recent African Development Bank (AfDB) paper indicates that government spending on education represents an average 5% of GDP (AfDB 2011: Annex 4) while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs reports that the combined public and private sector spending on education represents 6% of GDP (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010: 23).

Primary health care in Seychelles is readily accessible in all districts and is usually free of charge. The main provider of health services in the country is the Ministry of Health, which operates one central referral hospital on the island of Mahé; three smaller district hospitals (described as 'cottage hospitals') in the southern part of Mahé, on Praslin and on La Digue; one rehabilitative hospital; one mental hospital; one youth health centre and 16 district clinics or primary health care centres evenly distributed across the granitic islands (WHO/GOS 2009: 6). There are no health facilities on the outer islands although it is well known that individuals who fall seriously ill on these islands are flown to Mahé for treatment, sometimes at their own expense and sometimes at the expense of the Government, depending on circumstances. One of the original objectives of the government had been to make essential health services available to all of the people (Campling et al. 2011: 55) in Seychelles. These services were almost completely financed and operated by government (Shamlaye and Shamlaye 2003: 3) until the 1990s when there was a visible move towards encouraging the setting up of private medical services. Currently, the government funded services are complemented by private health service providers. In 2006, there were 7 private medical clinics, 5 private dental clinics and 2 private pharmacies but most private practitioners offered only primary care and referred patients to government services for secondary and tertiary care. Overall, and despite the good coverage of health facilities on the main islands, health services are limited in some aspects. The main referral hospital, for example, offers some tertiary care but because of limitations in facilities and trained personnel, highly specialized treatment is usually done overseas. The cost of overseas treatments to government was US\$ 1.6 million, or approximately SR 9,000,000<sup>55</sup> in 2006 (WHO/GOS 2009: 6), representing about 5% of the Ministry's total SR 183,866,000 budget.

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<sup>55</sup> At the rate of SR 5.5 to 1 USD. The World Factbook 2007 published by the CIA, p.508.

In 2009, the first National Health Accounts report showed that Seychelles with a health expenditure representing 2.8% of GDP lagged behind islands such as Mauritius (4.2% of GDP), the Maldives (11.2% of GDP) and Barbados (6.8% of GDP) (Republic of Seychelles 2009: 15).

The infant mortality rate (IMR) for Seychelles, which was, for example, 10.3 per thousand live births for 2012 and 9.8 for 2011 (National Bureau of Statistics 2013: 2) is considerably better than the average for countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, whose average IMR is 55. Life expectancy at birth computed for the years 1980-2012 showed that in Seychelles, a woman's average life expectancy during the last decade was 79 years, while a man's life expectancy was nearly 70 years (National Bureau of Statistics 2012: 2). The life expectancy of a Seychellois compares favourably with other countries in the region where it is an average of 55.1 years (SADC website 2014). Such figures may attest to the accessibility and quality of the primary health care which is offered free of charge to citizens throughout the country, but Rosalie (2000: 95) points out that the 1960 census in Seychelles showed a life expectancy of 63.3 years despite poor public health services and housing conditions as well as the lack of decent sanitary facilities (Rosalie 2000: 280), indicating that there are other factors at play. Other studies covering the 60s and 70s have also shown that life expectancy at birth in most island countries is relatively high (Levin 1992; Dommen 1980).

The current main causes of death in Seychelles are non-communicable diseases, "particularly cardiovascular diseases which might be popularly termed as diseases of development as opposed to... poverty-related causes of death" (Campling and Rosalie 2006: 118). This is confirmed by statistics which indicate that for the years 2007 to 2010, an annual average of 33% of deaths were related to diseases of the circulatory system, 19% were related to neoplasms (abnormal growths/cancer); 12% were related to the respiratory system followed by a smaller percentage (7%) related to the digestive system and a similar percentage (7%) being due to infectious and parasitic diseases (National Bureau of Statistics 2011: 11).

According to Campling et al (2011: 7) Seychelles main health and education indicators are comparable to those of other developing island states such as Mauritius in the Indian Ocean or the Bahamas and Barbados in the Caribbean

region, and somewhat better than the indicators for a high income island state such as Trinidad and Tobago.

Table 3.2 also gives an indication as to the living conditions of the Seychellois population in terms of their habitation and their lifestyle over the last fifteen years; most of them own their own houses which are built of durable material, and about one-quarter own some form of motorized transportation. The country is also very well served by public transport, in particular through the services of the Seychelles Public Transport Corporation, a parastatal company which has managed to keep bus fares at a rather low level despite substantial increases in the cost of living (Campling et al. 2011: 98, see also SPTC website - <http://64.202.117.173/~sptc/about-us/>).

### **3.4.3 Social problems**

One of the most frequently heard expressions used to describe the Seychellois people is that they have 'joie de vivre' (literally 'joy of living' but with a meaning closer to 'enjoyment of life' – [www.thefreedictionary.com/joie+de+vivre](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/joie+de+vivre)). To a casual observer this is still very much the case, but there are serious underlying social problems which have become more visible in the last few decades. According to a paper prepared in 2003 (Maiche 2003: 3), the Seychelles 'social fabric' was in need of strengthening. The author identifies some of the main sources of social problems as being i) weak and dysfunctional family units, ii) alcohol abuse and iii) the feminization of poverty (Maiche 2003: 7-13).

Another major problem affecting the country is, in the words of the 2010 MDG report for Seychelles, "the explosion of heroin on the local market in 2005" (UNDP 2010: 40). There are frequent reports in the media regarding the arrest of drug 'traffickers' as, for example on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2014, when an article in the Nation gives a summary of drug cases that have been brought to a conclusion in the courts whereby 10 individuals were convicted of various illegal drug trafficking charges (Over SR 750,000 seized in drug raids 2014: Nation online).

The drug problem in the country has reached such proportions that it led to the launch of a large national campaign aimed at fighting it, and other social ills

(Seychelles State House 2012: A Moment with the President October 2012). The Renesans Sosyal (Social Renaissance) campaign, which was launched in 2011, comprises 254 actions at 3 levels of intervention: victims, at risk, and prevention (Renesans Sosyal website 2014: documentation archives). Some of the actions include the establishment of a Law Reform Commission, the establishment of a Prisoner Rehabilitation Programme, the introduction of a support system for the behaviourally challenged, the introduction of parenting classes for would-be mothers, responsible drinking campaigns, and other similar interventions (Renesans Sosyal website 2014: documentation archives).

In an interview in 2012, the President of Seychelles stated that this was a challenge that many countries were facing and that “Government on its own will not be able to succeed if it does it alone. We all need to join together as a people. We say OK we do have a problem, that we need to contribute to tackle it. We need the communities, the churches, the NGOs and government to work together. And this is what we are doing. And I think this will in a way help tackle the source of the problems. We are also aware that there is criminality, and other issues, to deal with” (Seychelles State House 2012: A Moment with the President October 2012).

Linked to the above is the issue of prostitution, an activity, illegal in Seychelles, which has increased markedly in the last decade prompting the relevant ministry to commission a study to assess the situation (Rosalie 2010: 10). There have also been comments made at international level about the country’s involvement in some forms of human trafficking, possibly related to the ‘sexual exploitation’ and ‘labour exploitation’ of migrants (Island nation Seychelles not immune to human traffickers, warns UN rights expert 2014: UN News)

Yet another national campaign aimed at improving the social situation in the country was launched at the end of 2013 - the ‘Values for One, Values for All’ programme, possibly indicating that there was a felt need for more intensive work in the area and that the Renesans Sosyal campaign was not having the expected results within the hoped-for timeframe.

Despite all of the efforts described above and in addition to the work of relevant local NGOs with often limited means (Rosalie 2010: 47), statistics show that

overall criminality has continued to increase. Total figures of recorded crime cases grew from 5,699 in 2006 (CJS 2012: 15) to 10,168 in 2012 (CJS 2013: 3). For the first 3 quarters of 2013, there were 10, 265 cases recorded (CJS 2013:3), more cases than for the whole of 2012. It comes as no surprise that categories of crime such as drugs, burglaries and sexual offences are among those which show the greatest increases. More surprising is the increase in the 'Public Order Act' category (CJS 2013: 3) which relate directly to Police-generated interventions. The latter could be a way of enabling the Police and other similar agencies to deal with 'antisocial behavior', but it is not possible to confirm this assumption. What can be said is that crimes related to drugs, burglaries and sexual offences are increasing while the POA category is also increasing; this could be seen as a sign that, so far, the use of the POA by the Police and other agencies may not be effective in deterring other kinds of crime or criminality in general.

The sister island of Mauritius is also facing a similar rise in crime rates and this has generated a public debate about the re-introduction of the death penalty – something which an article in the daily newspaper, *Le Mauricien*, opposes, suggesting that the death penalty is not the solution but that education might be. The author further asks a very pertinent question which might also be worth considering for the Seychelles: “Should we not attempt to find out the root of these social problems and provide appropriate and workable solutions rather than hastily come up with palliative solutions which are short term?” (Chumun 2011: *Le Mauricien* online).

#### **3.4.4 The economy**

When concessions of land were given to the first French settlers in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was for them to cultivate the land, but few of them knew about cultivation. They found it more profitable to kill land tortoises and turtles and sell the meat to passing ships (Taylor 2005: 13). Later on, the French administration established some small scale plantations producing rice, maize, cassava, various kinds of vegetables as well as tobacco, cocoa and coffee for local consumption (McAteer 1991: 76, 285). They also went into the production of coconut oil, salted fish and tortoise shell for export (McAteer 1991: 76). A spice garden was established and seemed to have been doing well until it was intentionally burnt

when ships which had appeared on the horizon were mistakenly thought to be English – as the French did not want the valuable spice plants to fall into the hands of the enemy (McAteer 1991:104). By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the production of cotton which had quickly become the most important cash crop declined to be replaced by the production of coconut oil from copra. Cinnamon bark had also become an important export for the colony (McAteer 1991: 285).

An agricultural survey done in 1978, two hundred years after the first settlements, found that large farmers in Seychelles continued to produce most of the export crops which remained copra and cinnamon (Campling et al 2011: 21). Large farms also produced chickens, eggs and milk for domestic consumption while smaller holdings produced fruits and vegetables. By then, many farmers' expenditure was greater than their income. The 1978 National Budget address referred to an agricultural reform which aimed at better utilization of the land available, with the intention of tapping into the potential of outer islands (René 1977: 61). As it was, by the late 1970s, many farmers were already “diversifying out of agriculture into other activities such as tourism” (Campling et al 2011: 21) – leading the move away from an agricultural economy towards what is currently a service-based economy. Nonetheless, efforts have been made to boost agriculture and reduce dependency on imported produce; the most recent being a study on agriculture and marine aquaculture which is being carried out with the help of the African Bank for Development (AfDB). No one can predict at this point the extent to which future policies based on the findings of the study will have the desired effect of ‘complementing the national efforts on food and nutrition security’ (New study set to boost agriculture 2013: 4).

The international airport which started operating in 1971 opened Seychelles to the rest of the world and the growth of tourism globally was seen as a boon to the small, unspoilt islands (Gabbay and Ghosh 1996:2; Campling et al 2011:17). Tourism showed a constant growth up to the late 1970s with the number of visitor arrivals<sup>6</sup>, increasing from 3,175 in 1971 to 71,762 in 1980 (Gabbay and Ghosh

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<sup>6</sup> The term ‘visitor arrivals’ is used instead of ‘number of tourists’ because statistics are collected from immigration records which include all visitors, some of whom may not at all be tourists. A spokesperson for the National Bureau of Statistics states that the NBS prefers to use this term (Mellie 2013), despite the fact that the figure for visitor arrivals is often quoted as the actual number of tourists who visit the islands – a somewhat misleading statistic.

1996: 2; René 1977: 58). The figures slumped in the early 1980s (Campling et al. 2011: 22, Gabbay and Ghosh 1996: 3), at which point the government decided on a more interventionist approach and the head of the country took on the role of Minister of Tourism in 1981 (Campling et al. 2011: 22). It is believed that as a result of these interventions, the tourism sector showed signs of recovery within a few years. Despite another slump following the 1991 Gulf War, visitor arrivals grew from 98,500 in 1992 to 129,800 in 2001. During that period of time the direct and indirect contribution of tourism to GDP averaged 16.1% annually (Campling et al. 2011: 34). After the ban on Charter flights to Seychelles was lifted in the middle of the last decade, the number of visitors grew to 174,500 in 2010 (National Bureau of Statistics 2011: 30). This trend has continued over the years, although the classification used for data collection does not provide a completely accurate picture of the actual increase in the number of tourists (or more specifically - leisure visitors) entering the country. There are also, so far, no statistics on local tourism, and no way to gauge whether this tourism category might be significant in economic terms.

For 2011, tourism was the largest single contributor to Gross Domestic Product (GDP<sup>7</sup>) with revenues representing 18% of the total figure, although the highest growth rate was in the area of 'information and communication', which represented 13% of GDP (Central Bank 2012: 6) - giving an idea of the rate at which the use of new technologies is growing in the country. According to the Central Bank of Seychelles report for 2011, the services sector has, for a number of years, been the main contributor to GDP with a share of 86% and is currently seen as the 'key driver of growth' (Central Bank 2012: 6).

Fisheries is also considered to be one of the pillars of the Seychelles economy. In 2011 revenue from fisheries which was equivalent to 0.9% of GDP (Central Bank 2012: 7), was considerably lower than revenue from the services sector, but it is crucial to the country's economy, since it accounts for more than 80% of the value of local export or 10% of foreign exchange earnings (SFA 2003: 10).

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<sup>7</sup> Gross domestic product (GDP) is the total final output of goods and services produced by the country's economy, within the country's territory, by residents and non-residents.



It is to be noted that in the early 1980s, government had allocated up to 40% of its annual investment budgets to the main productive sectors of the economy, namely fisheries, agriculture, manufacturing and the services sector generally (Republic of Seychelles 1990:2). This led to the creation of numerous parastatal companies with the objective of building economic self-reliance through import substitution (Campling et al. 2011: 27). These parastatals flourished for a while but a number of them were privatized, phased out or 'remodeled' in the 1990s (Republic of Seychelles 1996: 3.14, 3.15; Shillington 2009: 224, 225). The surviving ones which remained under government control, because they were 'key' parastatals (Shillington 2009: 225), still offer the most competitive salaries in the country, as shown in Table 3.3, a fact which appears to be an anomaly as it is generally accepted that the majority of existing parastatal companies do not generate huge profits. Moreover, and until very recently, none of this could be verified and/or challenged, as parastatals were not required to submit annual auditors' reports (Unacceptable that parastatal companies' accounts are not audited 2012).

The rate for unemployment in Seychelles hovered around 10% for decades as from the 1950s. This changed around the start of the 21st century when the unemployment rate fell to about 2%, and remained low (Campling et al. 2011: 66). These authors contend that the drop in formal unemployment rate is due to the creation of various relief and training schemes which meant that individuals on such programmes were no longer recorded as unemployed (Campling et al. 2011: 66).

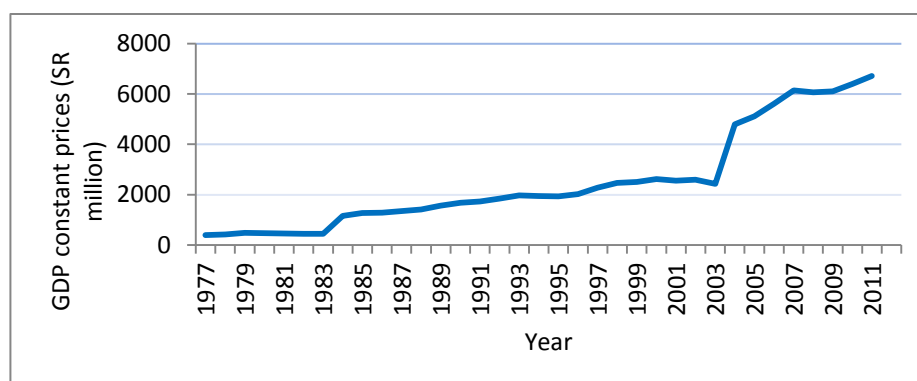
#### **3.4.5 Economic Performance**

The country's national recurrent budget had increased considerably after independence in 1976. This was due to inflation, the ending of UK grant support and the rapid and substantial increases in social services and defence spending, although there also was an increase in revenue as a result of "improved collection of taxes and duties on significantly increased imports" (Campling et al. 2011: 20). There was a small surplus in 1980 and 1981, but "budget deficits and increased social spending were the trend from these years onwards" (Campling et al. 2011: 20). It is believed that it was the high levels of overseas development assistance

(ODA) received by Seychelles from multilateral as well as bilateral sources that kept the country's debt burden manageable in the 1980s (Campling et al. 2011: 26). Conscious of this, the Government itself had stated in the 1990-1994 development plan, "if we pass on an unmanageable national debt burden, on a social structure strained by dis-unity and inequality, we... compromise the inheritance of future generations" (Republic of Seychelles 1990: 3). One of the main objectives of the 1990-1994 plan therefore, was that the reduction of the foreign debt burden would "occupy a place well at the top of the economic policy agenda" for the duration of the 5-year plan (Republic of Seychelles 1990: 21).

In their 2008 assessment of the economic vulnerability and the economic resilience of the Seychelles, Briguglio et al. found that during the decade ending 2006, the Seychelles had experienced no effective increase in real GDP, with the level in 2006 being practically unchanged from that in 1997 (2008: section 3.1). Briguglio et al. also point out that the country had a "consistently negative and volatile performance on its external current account" during the decade in question (2008: section 3.1).

**Figure 3.1: Gross domestic product at constant market prices (in Seychelles rupees), 1977 - 2011**



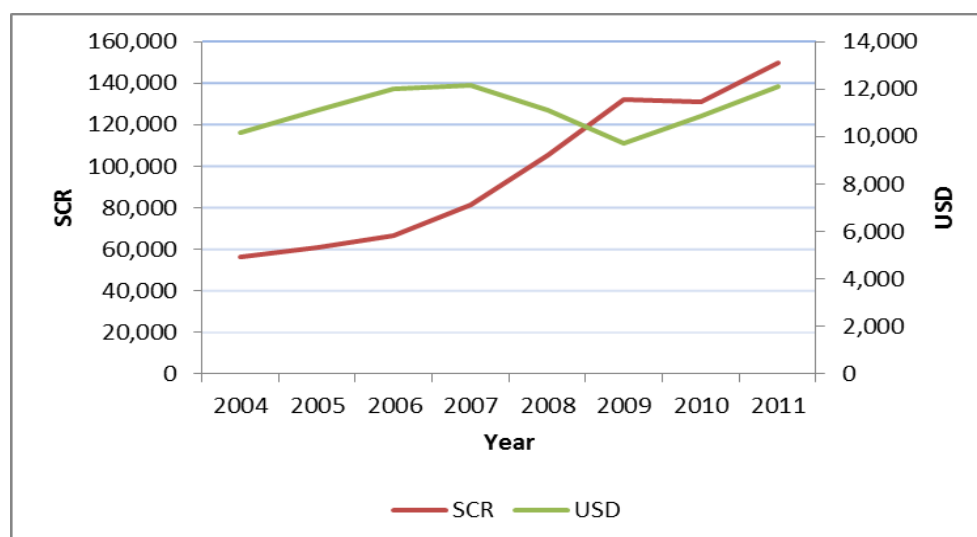
Notes:

- 1) 1977-2003 at constant 1986 market prices
- 2) 2004-2011 at constant 2006 market prices

Source: National Bureau of Statistics Bulletins 2002 to 2013

Figure 3.1 shows the growth pattern of the Seychelles GDP at constant market prices in Seychelles rupees for 1977 to 2009. Figure 3.2, on the other hand, shows the GDP per capita at current prices from 2004 to 2011, both in Seychelles rupees and in US dollars, and clearly highlights both the fluctuations that have occurred during this period of time and the fact that the GDP, in US dollars, remains relatively unchanged (see also Briguglio et al. 2008: section 3.1) while the value of current price GDP in Seychelles rupees has nearly tripled. As already stated in 2008, “efforts at promoting macroeconomic stability... have so far not been sufficient to ensure long-term macroeconomic equilibrium” (Briguglio et al. 2008: section 4).

**Figure 3.2: Current price GDP per capita in Seychelles rupees and in US dollars, 2004 - 2011**



Source: NBS Statistical Bulletin, National Accounts Estimates, 2013d

A number of economic reforms which had been introduced were intensified and expanded when the country entered into an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2008. The agreement stated that the Seychelles was launching a reform programme because it was “in the midst of an acute balance of payment and public debt crisis” which jeopardized its living standards and economic development. The reform programme, described as bold and wide-ranging, included liberalization of the exchange regime, significant and sustained fiscal tightening, reform of monetary policies and a strengthening of the social safety net (IMF website 2008). One of the effects of the reforms as from 2007 was

a sharp increase in inflation rates, and despite an attempt by government to increase average wages in the public sector, these increases were reduced to pre-increase levels by inflation which has the effect of “annulling” any intended benefits (Campling et al. 2011: 70).

It is reported that figures collated by the Seychelles Revenue Commission for 2012, indicate that 88% of earners in Seychelles earned less than SR10, 000 a month, with 61% earning less than SR6,000 a month while 882 individuals earned SR25,000 or more a month<sup>8</sup> (Chow 2013: no page number). Table 3.3 shows the levels of earnings in the three main employment sectors - over a period of five years, and since the start of the economic reforms, according to the National Bureau of Statistics and the Central Bank.

**Table 3.3: Employment and earnings 2008 - 2012**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Total employment (number)	40,822	43,199	44,159	49,891	51,426
Average monthly earnings in Seychelles Rupees					
Parastatal sector	5,781	7,365	8,959	10,907	10,531
Government	4,650	5,340	6,929	8,040	8,829
Private sector	4,387	5,915	6,693	7,409	8,450
Inflation rates (year on year)	63.3	-2.5	0.4	5.5	7.2 <sub>1</sub>

Note <sub>1</sub> : The inflation rate for 2012 is estimated.

Sources: National Bureau of Statistics 2013c; Central Bank 2011

By 2012, the GDP at 2006 constant market value was 4.9% higher than 2006 and growth from 2007 to 2011 averaged 4.2% with a peak in 2007 (see also Figure 3.1) and a negative growth figure in 2008 (Central Bank 2011: 9) confirming Briguglio’s comment that the Seychelles economy has “a high degree of susceptibility to external economic conditions, affecting especially the terms of trade as well as foreign direct investment” (Briguglio et al. 2008: section 3.1).

<sup>8</sup> The average exchange rate for the period 2007-2011 was 1USD to about SR11 (Central Bank of Seychelles 2012: 45).

In March 2013, five years into the IMF-driven reforms, it was reported that the Seychellois economy had shown resilience in the face of difficult global economic environment, but that challenges remained since Seychelles open economy remained highly vulnerable to external shocks. The IMF also recommended applying “the same level of fiscal discipline observed at central government” to the broader public sector to include the ‘gradual price adjustments and rebalancing’ of domestic utilities, food and transport prices, stating that while these were ongoing, it would be necessary to take steps to protect the most vulnerable segments of society (IMF website 2013).

While the official reports and statistics show that the economy is improving, the situation on the ground is still difficult for the average consumer (Prices in Seychelles continue to rise 2013). A UNDP-sponsored poverty study conducted in 2012 concluded that 17% of Seychellois (Muller 2012: 1) were living under the locally defined poverty line of SR 38.90<sup>9</sup> per day (Poverty in Paradise 2012: 1). Results from the 2006/2007 Household Expenditure Survey which was carried out just prior to the full impact of the economic reforms, also revealed that 18% of Seychellois households were not able to meet basic caloric needs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010: 28). Briguglio reports that a study of the statistics showed that around 9% of the population suffered from undernourishment ‘right up to 2004’ and 20% lived under the poverty line (Briguglio et al. 2008: section 3.3.4). Figures from 1992 had shown that 19% lived under the poverty line then (with an estimated 7% living below the absolute poverty line) and a comment had been made at the time “that poverty levels remain high for a country at the Seychelles income level” (World Bank 1994: iii).

## **3.5 OVERVIEW OF LOCAL POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE IN SEYCHELLES**

### **3.5.1 Political developments**

The first executive and legislative councils of Seychelles were established in 1903 – when the country became a Crown colony with its own Governor appointed by the British Government (UK 1975: Annex B). The small number of Members of the

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<sup>9</sup> About USD 3.50 - at an approximate rate of SR 11.00 to USD 1 (see [www.cbs.sc](http://www.cbs.sc)).

Legislative Council were nominated by the governor and Seychellois representation was non-existent (Seychelles National Assembly website 2012). In the 1940s a Seychellois was nominated for the first time to the Legislative Council (CEFRAD 2002: 27) and as from 1947 members of the Council were elected (Taylor 2005: 501), although the first election of universal adult suffrage in the country only took place in 1967 (National Assembly website 2012).

For many decades, it had been felt that life for the majority of the islanders, who happened to be Creoles, was hard and that they were being exploited by their masters, the *grand blancs* (descendants of the French settlers) who owned large farms and plantations (Taylor 2005: 371). A British cleric working in Seychelles had written in 1957 that “the conditions under which the majority of Seychellois live, low wages, poor housing, totally unacceptable educational services, and a general lack of faith in the impartiality of the law, and the absence of ability for them to improve their lot will not continue to be tolerated by them indefinitely” (Taylor 2005: 510). In the 1960s the social situation in Seychelles had become ‘a cause for concern’ and workers had started thinking in terms of ‘grouping for political ends’ (CEFRAD 2002: 28). The aim of the Seychelles People’s United Party (SPUP) led by France Albert René and launched in June 1964, was to dismantle what to them was a “system which had brought chaos to our economy and poverty to our small landowners” and to generally redress the injustices of the past (CEFRAD 2002: 28; Parti Lepep website 2012). A second political group, the Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) appeared shortly after, led by James R. Mancham, who had been elected to the Seychelles Legislative Council in 1963 and who, it is reported, also had genuine ideas of social justice (CEFRAD 2002: 28).

In 1970, after his party had won the elections held in November of that year, James Mancham was named Chief Minister. His party did not believe in independence for the country and openly advocated integration or association with Britain, seeing this option as offering greater security to Seychelles (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives, Shridath Ramphal Collection 1976: 2). On the other hand, Mr. René’s party, the SPUP, had been fighting for independence for a number of years (Seychelles National Assembly website 2012). Prime Minister Mancham was eventually led to accept independence for Seychelles

when “the SPUP’s independence platform had... succeeded in winning international approval for its independence aim at the UN General Assembly as well as financial backing from the OAU Liberation Committee, and perhaps more decisively, because Britain itself had indicated that it would not be willing to offer Seychelles any kind of association status” (Commonwealth Secretariat, Shridath Ramphal Collection 1976: 2).

The Seychelles Constitutional Conference of March 1975, which was organized by the British government, had the following agenda: “(a) consideration of the form of a possible Constitution for an independent Seychelles; and (b) consideration of the form of a possible interim Constitution” (United Kingdom 1975: 5). The meeting led to the formation of a coalition government, described as being ‘apparently the result of a personal initiative taken by Mr. Mancham and Mr. René during private discussions at that time’ (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives, Shridath Ramphal Collection 1976: 2). Despite the establishment of a political coalition, deep and bitter political divisions still existed in the country (Parti Lepep 2012). It is stated that “one student of Seychelles’ affairs, unable to detect any significant difference in the social or economic bases of the two parties, has attributed their growth largely to intense rivalry between leading personalities and also between different localities, fostered by the novelty of political contest” although it was acknowledged that the SDP “is the more conservative party, while the SPUP has a socialistic outlook” (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives, Shridath Ramphal Collection 1976: 2).

Seychelles became independent on 29 June 1976 but less than a year later, there was a coup d’état which one author describes as having taken everyone by surprise, carried out by what he calls ‘a Marxist-Socialist minority’ (Taylor 2005: 668). Thereafter, a one-party system was established which would last until 1993 when multi-party politics were re-introduced (Parti Lepep 2012). The latter move, according to Nieuwkerk (2003: 3) could be “read as the regime’s response to a changing world”. The party’s original name, the SPUP, was changed to the Seychelles People’s Progressive Front (SPPF) in 1979 and then nearly 30 years later, to Parti Lepep, meaning the ‘People’s Party’ (Parti Lepep website 2012: History). There have been presidential and general elections in 1993, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2006, 2007 (Campling et al. 2011: 33) and 2011. All presidential elections

have been won by the representative of the party that has been in power since 1977 (Campling et al. 2011: 33; Commonwealth Secretariat 2011a: 28; African Economic Outlook 2012: 11). The same party has also won the majority of seats in the legislative assembly at each of the elections, inevitably during the one-party state period, but also since the re-introduction of multiparty politics. (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa website 2013; Campling et al. 2011: 33). The Seychelles National Party is the dominant source of opposition in what is still described as “a bitterly politically polarized society” (Campling et al. 2011: 33).

### **3.5.2 Current Governance**

Briguglio et al. state that the Seychelles has a system based on democratic principles but that “the country has been subject to pervasive state interference up to recent years”. They also add that “attempts at social dialogue are sporadic” and that within this context, “there is growing recognition for the need to further develop notions of government accountability and transparency with the active participation and development of existing institutions” which, according to the authors are sufficient to contribute to effective governance in the Seychelles (Briguglio et al. 2008: section 3.3.3).

The Seychelles is seen as having a strong overall performance in governance, as indicated by its high ranking of fourth (out of 53 African countries) in the 2011 Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance (African Economic Outlook 2012: 10). Its percentile rank in the World Bank Institute Governance Indicators is 50 and above, except for the area of Regulatory Quality (World Bank Institute website 2010). However, when one looks at the sub-category of public management it only ranks a ‘poor’ 35<sup>th</sup> on the Index of African Governance, indicating “that the government’s public sector reform programme is still to bear fruit” (African Economic Outlook 2012: 10). It is also reported that the government is continuing to pursue a public enterprise reform strategy which have included: a revised policy to formalise the selection criteria of board members, the alignment of board remuneration with the level of responsibility and work entailed. Nonetheless, there are still concerns over alleged public sector corruption which have focused on the lack of transparency in privatisation and the allocation of government-owned land (African Economic Outlook 2012: 11). In a recent interview, the Minister of Finance stated that it was



unacceptable that parastatal companies' accounts are not audited and that an amended Public Enterprise Bills was about to be submitted that would ensure that all companies and associations would be obliged under the law to register their audited accounts at the Registrar's Office every year. (Unacceptable that parastatal companies' accounts are not audited 2012).

### **3.6 SUMMARY**

The Seychelles archipelago has had a short but very eventful history. It has been 'owned' and controlled by two empire-building nations: the French and the British. Its recent past has been marked by what could be described as ideological struggles whose effects are still being felt by the population. The small island developing state has a population that is the result of a meeting and merging of very different races and cultures – a merging which took place in situations of great social inequality and in some cases, outright violence to human dignity. Its natural beauty and geographic characteristics have provided it with its main sources of income throughout its history, although this income may not always have been fairly distributed. It became an independent nation in difficult circumstances and has struggled to find funds to generate and maintain development.

Nonetheless, and despite the above, it has excellent human development indicators; has already achieved most of the Millennium Development Goals (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2010: 13) and currently has the highest GDP per capita in sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank website 2012). Some attribute these successes to good governance based on democratic principles, while others imply that these glowing achievements may deflect attention from existing, persistent and possibly hidden problems – as implied in the words of the first Seychellois to become an Anglican Archbishop: "There are two Seychelles: one that we can see with our eyes, another that we can't. The second is the real Seychelles." (CEFRAD 2002: 31).

## CHAPTER 4

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL APPROACH

It is acknowledged that the role of social research is to “understand and explain social phenomena, to focus attention on particular issues and to challenge conventionally held beliefs about the social... world” (May 2001: 8). Various theoretical perspectives inform the approaches used in social research which “thus becomes more than a reflection of opinions and prejudices: it substantiates, refutes, organizes or generates theories, and produces evidence which may challenge not only our own beliefs, but also those of society in general” (May 2001:9).

The more traditional perspectives include Positivism - where the focus is on the prediction and explanation of phenomena and where objectivity is the most important characteristic; Empiricism - where it is believed that the facts speak for themselves and can be analysed independently of people’s interpretation; and Realism – which, like Positivism, aims at explanation but which also assumes that people’s knowledge and understanding of their social world, partial or complete, determines their behaviour in ways which can “be seen as ‘tendencies’ that produce particular effects” (May 2001:10,11,12).

Beyond these established theories, Creswell (2003: 6, 9) describes ‘alternative knowledge claims positions’ which include, among others, Pragmatism which is pluralistic, real-world practice orientated, and which focusses on consequences of actions; and Constructivism where ‘understanding’, multiple participant meanings, social and historical construction as well as theory generation are essential concepts.

It is against a backdrop of the Realist and Constructivist paradigms, that this study was carried out using the qualitative research approach which, according to Skate (2010: 11), means that “it relies primarily on human perception and understanding”. The study is also evaluative in nature since it is primarily concerned with the assessment or evaluation of the effectiveness of a given practice or intervention (Mouton and Marais 1990: 45) – in this case the provision of development support by an association of states to a small island member state.

The design of the study assumed from the start that it would focus on the relationship with the Commonwealth from the standpoint of the Seychelles, as a member state and recipient of assistance from the association. Information from the Commonwealth Secretariat and other major Commonwealth organs was sought to complement the information gathered in-country, in order to provide a balanced picture. Two main data collection methods were used to gather information: a documentary review and a field survey.

Marais and Mouton’s caution (1988: 15) that the likelihood that research findings may have only limited or merely contextual validity needs to be accepted, although the aim of the research is to generate findings “which approximate, as closely as possible, the true state of affairs”. The approach taken for the study acknowledges these realities.

## **4.2 KEY CONCEPTS AND INSTRUMENTS**

### **4.2.1 Key concepts and variables**

The aim of the research was to gauge i) government and other national agents’ **knowledge of, and familiarity with**, the Commonwealth and the work that it does in the Seychelles; ii) the perceived **effectiveness of the technical assistance** (TA) support received by a small island developing state (SIDS) member (the Seychelles), from an intergovernmental association (the Commonwealth); iii) the government and other national agents’ perception of the **value of the relationship**

between the Commonwealth and Seychelles; and finally iv) the perceived **effectiveness of mechanisms** that exist for cooperation with the Commonwealth.

This study also made the underlying assumptions listed below:

- i) The main objective of the Commonwealth association of states, as stated in the association's documents, is to allow members to work together towards shared goals in democracy and development (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009g: 4).
- ii) The major Commonwealth organs execute plans agreed by Commonwealth Heads of Government through various forms of support and assistance, including advocacy; coalition-building; information sharing; technical assistance; advice and policy development; the promotion of democracy; and, encouraging the development of open learning and distance education (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009g: 6).
- iii) One of the desired ends of technical cooperation, and possibly other forms of international assistance, "is an appropriate level and type of ownership by all stakeholders" (Singh 2002: 47).
- iv) An important measure of the success of assistance may be the extent to which the intervention ensures there are real benefits for intended beneficiaries (Singh 2002: 62).

The basic concepts for the study were to be evaluated within the framework below:

#### 4.2.1.1 Knowledge of and familiarity with, the Commonwealth

To gauge the levels of familiarity with, and knowledge of, the association and its work, respondents were asked to: i) describe the nature of the Commonwealth; ii) give details of the work that the Commonwealth has done or is doing in the Seychelles; iii) identify organizations in Seychelles that liaise with the Commonwealth, as well as organizations or departments within the Commonwealth that have links with Seychelles; and for respondents in Seychelles, iv) the extent to which they are kept informed of relevant Commonwealth activities generally. The latter also gave some kind of indication as to their interest regarding the Commonwealth, although the level of interest of respondents was not identified as a variable for the study.

#### 4.2.1.2 Effectiveness of assistance received

Effectiveness, in this context, is taken as referring to whether Commonwealth actions in Seychelles, or for Seychelles, are seen by individuals working in the governance structure as having made a difference to someone or something, and to what extent.

The perceived effectiveness of Commonwealth support to the Seychelles was drawn from the opinions of senior personnel in government on: i) the level of helpfulness of Commonwealth actions in the country; ii) the perceived benefits derived from the assistance provided, and iii) whether the assistance was ultimately seen as 'significant' for the country.

#### 4.2.1.3 Perception of Value of Relationship

Respondents' perception of the value of the relationship between Seychelles and the Commonwealth was based on two main criteria: i) the level of satisfaction with the Commonwealth work being done in and for Seychelles; and ii) whether Seychelles contribution to the association as a member was seen as worthwhile and able to influence decision-making within the Commonwealth.

#### 4.2.1.4 Effectiveness of mechanisms for Cooperation

Respondents were asked about their perception of how well the various contact points, on both sides, were able to put across the values and needs of the other side. They were also asked to propose approaches that might help to improve cooperation – if there was such a need.

### 4.2.2 Instruments used

It has been stated that the obvious and most common approach to collect data on theoretical concepts, such as the ones listed above, is by means of 'indirect measurement' through a list of questions on the elements perceived to be directly related to the concept (Marais and Mouton 1988:65). To do this, the field survey

made use of three tools: a questionnaire designed for respondents in Seychelles, a questionnaire for respondents from the Commonwealth, and a guide for the semi-guided interviews (see Annex 1).

The two questionnaires were composed of a mix of closed-ended questions, multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions grouped in sections relating to the main concepts. This was done: i) to access the information required as directly as possible, ii) to access information on activities and then bring the respondent to give an opinion about them, and finally iii) to bring some 'variety' to the act of completing the questionnaire since these were self-administered.

Questions were worded so that they would not be loaded or leading, thus reducing the need for interpretation as much as possible. A four-point scale was used for questions that were meant to elicit information on respondents' opinions. An effort was made to restrict the number of questions, so that the questionnaire would not be off-putting in terms of length. Attempts were also made to formulate some questions in a manner that would allow cross-checking of the information being gathered. A few versions of the questionnaire for Seychelles were tested during a pilot phase (using a limited number of individuals with similar characteristics as the intended respondents), and suggestions were incorporated into the final draft. Because of the difficulty of accessing respondents from Commonwealth organizations, there was no pilot phase for that group although the first person to respond requested a summary of the research proposal. This was provided in the form of a one-page summary which was also made available to others in this group of respondents. A short introductory section describing the purpose of the research was included at the top of the first page for both types of questionnaire.

The guide for the interviews was composed of six statements and questions which were meant to generate descriptions and comments rather than elicit direct answers. This was done because, as Mouton and Marais (1990:91) point out, interviews usually target information of a more general nature, particularly on norms and the status of things.

It should be pointed out that for the survey material, a conscious decision was made to avoid terminology which is part of the jargon of development work

because i) some of it could be misconstrued by the average respondent who might not be familiar with such terms, and ii) providing definitions in questionnaires would add to length and complexity - something considered undesirable as it has been shown that shorter email questionnaires attract more responses than longer ones (Michaelidou and Dibb 2006: 291).

#### **4.2.3 Ethical issues**

In order to have access to official documents that were not in the public domain, the researcher wrote to the Principal Secretaries of the Ministry of Administration which is responsible for applying the Official Secrets Act in all government departments, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs which is responsible for all matters regarding links with external agencies. The Ministry of Administration allowed access to identified staff in their organization while the Ministry of Foreign Affairs agreed to provide some information by making part of an internal report available, stating that additional information would only be given if specific requests for specific items were made (see also Chapter 2, section 2.1). There were no conditions imposed as to the use of this documentary material although a Ministry of Foreign Affairs message suggested that they would like to see the document once it was completed. It should also be noted that in general unwritten practice, it is expected that the product of such research be placed in the public domain by making a copy available to the Seychelles National Library.

The researcher knew from personal experience that senior officials in the Seychelles public service can generally use their discretion regarding survey participation and information provision (unless they have received specific instructions to the contrary), as long as they do not violate the Official Secrets Act which they are required to sign upon joining the public service. The research tools used for this exercise clearly stated that information gathered from respondents and interviewees would be 'on record' but that it was possible for a respondent to remain anonymous. A few of the survey participants felt that a number of the issues covered in the questionnaire were rather sensitive and chose the option of remaining anonymous. In such cases, the respondents' names are omitted from written documents and from the annexes. Even though the possibility of withdrawing after having agreed to participate in the study was not overtly stated,

one respondent decided to withdraw after having received the questionnaire. As the reason for withdrawing was not stated, this person's name was not included in the final list of respondents.

### **4.3 SAMPLE DESIGN AND CRITERIA USED IN CHOICE OF SAMPLE**

#### **4.3.1 Type of sampling**

Purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probability sampling, was used for the selection of respondents. According to Adler and Clarke (2011: 124), in purposive sampling, "the researcher selects elements based on his or her judgment of what elements will facilitate an investigation". These authors also comment that while "non-probability samples are less likely than probability samples to represent the populations they're meant to represent, they are useful when the researcher has limited resources... or when one is doing exploratory research (say, about whether a problem exists or about the nature of a problem, assuming it exists)" (Adler and Clarke, 2011: 123).

#### **4.3.2 Criteria used for sampling**

##### **4.3.2.1 Type of organizations selected**

For the Seychelles, and aside from the NGO sector, the survey targeted representatives of public sector organizations which were identified as having direct or indirect links with the Commonwealth's main organs: the nine (9) government ministries, two (2) departments attached to the Vice President's Office, (5) five public/statutory bodies, one (1) constitutional body, the legislature and one (1) body within the judiciary (see Annex 2 for details). It should be noted that the survey started during the third quarter of 2011, and there was a cabinet re-shuffle and a re-organization of ministries and departments in the first quarter of 2012. Organizations which were included in the survey may currently be part of different ministries or may have become full ministries themselves, e.g. the former Department of Finance and Trade which is, at the time of writing, the Ministry of Finance and Trade. As of July 2012 there were thirteen (13) government ministries



in Seychelles instead of the nine (9) ministries which existed when the survey was launched (Government of Seychelles: 2012a – egov website).

#### 4.3.2.2 Characteristics of target group in Seychelles

Some of the respondent characteristics used for the choice of respondents included: a) position and seniority, b) duration of current employment and c) level of education.

##### a) Position and seniority

It was assumed that the position and seniority of the individual might mean i) a greater ability to speak openly and authoritatively about the issues covered in the questionnaire; and ii) a wider knowledge and understanding of the workings of the organization. Targeted respondents were individuals holding positions equivalent to that of Director and above, or long-term employees in highly skilled and/or technical areas.

##### b) Duration of current employment

The duration of current employment was included as a factor because the Seychelles' public sector is generally known for having an elevated rate of staff turnover, described by a Seychellois journalist as "alarmingly high..." (SFA worse off..., 2010) at all levels (E-government with room for progress, 2012), including higher management in government or in government-associated organizations (Seychelles NGO representatives, 2011: 3). The intention behind choosing individuals employed in the same post for a relatively long period of time, was to have access to some form of 'institutional memory'.

##### c) Level of education

Level of education in this context refers both to formal qualifications and to experience-based 'qualifications' that allowed respondents to move up in the public sector's scheme of service. The level of education was taken into account because i) it was felt that this would reflect on the quality of the information provided in this context; ii) the questionnaires which were sent by email had to be completed electronically and emailed back and this required a certain level of competence in computer skills; and iii) the questions in the survey tools were in

English, and respondents had to have mastery of the language to provide useful information.

### **4.3.3 Size of sample**

The nature of the study required inputs from a representative number of officials in Seychelles. The emphasis was not on numbers, but rather on representation from as wide a range of public sector organizations as possible. A few individuals from the NGO sector and civil society were also included. The target was set at thirty (30) participating respondents. In attempting to reach that target, forty (40) potential respondents were contacted by email<sup>10</sup>.

It is important to note that due to the smallness of the human resource pool in Seychelles there is considerable overlap between the experience and knowledge of individuals in the public sector and those in the NGO sector, many of those currently operating (as leaders) in the NGO sector having spent a significant part of their working life in government ministries or in parastatals. Only two (2) of the contributors to the study had never been employed in government.

For the Commonwealth, the target was set at ten (10) respondents from the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth of Learning, and the Commonwealth Foundation. Fifteen (15) individuals were contacted by email for these three entities.

## **4.4 DATA COLLECTION**

### **4.4.1 Collection of secondary data**

This type of data was collected as follows:

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<sup>10</sup>To put these numbers in context, information from the Seychelles Department of Administration indicates that there were, in January 2013, 438 individuals in senior positions within the Seychelles public sector, excluding the judiciary, the legislature and the commercial parastatals (Department of Administration 2013).

- i) Relevant archival material was gathered at the Seychelles National Archives over a period of three weeks in the months of May, June and August 2012. The Archives are open to the public, and accessing the records was relatively straightforward although it needs to be noted that there was a 10-year gap in terms of documentation available, from 1978 to 1986 inclusive (see section 6.3).
- ii) Relevant archival and current material was gathered from the Commonwealth Resource Center in Marlborough House in London. The material was identified online and arrangements made with the librarian for physical access to the documents and books. This took place in August 2012.
- iii) Additional material was sourced online from: i) the online version of the *Seychelles Nation* (government sponsored daily paper), ii) e-news Seychelles – which presents articles from various daily and weekly newspapers in Seychelles, iii) the independent Seychellois daily *Today in Seychelles*; and iv) a number of other relevant websites. The Commonwealth Secretariat website was also an important source of information.

Some publications and articles available in the public domain (public libraries and online) were identified in the course of the study, and used where relevant. Additional information was also received from the Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Seychelles Department of Administration and the National Statistics Bureau, in response to specific queries. The local UNDP sub-office also provided several reports on the Seychelles.

A number of books and articles were accessed through i) the UNISA library - both in hard copy format and from electronic resources; ii) the library of the University of Botswana; iii) the SADC Secretariat resource centre in Gaborone; iv) the Institute for Commonwealth Studies, University of London; v) Google books and Google scholar. Some books were also purchased from public bookstores because of their relevance to the study.

## 4.4.2 Collection of Primary data - Field Survey

### 4.4.2.1 Survey approaches used

Two research methods were used for the exercise:

- i) An e-mail survey. This mode was chosen because, as described by Fricker and Schonlau (2002: 1), the use of e-mail for sending questionnaires offers the possibility of “nearly instantaneous transmission of surveys to recipients while avoiding any postal costs”. Both of these characteristics were seen as distinct advantages for this study because firstly, the researcher was living temporarily outside the Seychelles in a country where postal services are sometimes less than reliable, and secondly, the study being self-funded, the researcher sought the most cost-effective ways of collecting data.
- ii) Face-to-face semi-guided interviews with a limited number of senior individuals in government, and leaders in the NGO sector and civil society. These were meant to supplement information collected through the questionnaires. Tansey (2007:5), who refers to such interviews as ‘elite interviewing’, asserts that one of the major uses of this method of data collection is to corroborate what has been established from other sources since this type of interview data is rarely considered in isolation.

### 4.4.2.2 Timing and duration of data collection

The survey was launched in mid-August 2011 in Seychelles when a first email was sent to all potential respondents, giving the end of October as the deadline for the exercise. Some responses were received within a day or two while others took several weeks. Two reminders were sent in September and October to those who had not responded to the initial invitation. Over time, additional positive responses were received, although several stated that they would only do the questionnaire when they could find the time. The deadline was eventually extended because of the year-end festivities, and the severe illness and death of a close family member

of the researcher. The email survey for Seychelles ended towards the last week of April 2012.

The survey targeting Commonwealth organizations started in mid-February 2012 and the last completed questionnaire was received in May 2012.

The face-to-face interviews took place over a period of about two months and ended in mid-September 2012.

The planned time frame for the email survey and the interviews was twelve (12) months. The email survey required considerable flexibility time-wise as many of the targeted respondents travel overseas frequently and are often out of the office. This implied keeping track of dates when the first response was an automated reply, and re-sending messages when the respondent was back in the office. Because of these circumstances, the researcher had no leverage in terms of getting respondents to reply within a very specific time-frame, although it was possible to complete all of the data collection within a period of thirteen months.

#### **4.4.3 E-mail survey**

##### **4.4.3.1 Gaining access to respondents in Seychelles**

For the in-country survey and collection of primary data, a list of Seychellois organizations most likely to have links with the Commonwealth (according to information already gathered during the preparation of the research design) was drawn up using information from the Public Sector Directory published by the Department of Public Administration and readily available online ([www.virtualseychelles.sc/index.php?...public-service-directory](http://www.virtualseychelles.sc/index.php?...public-service-directory)). or <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan0321>). Email addresses for potential respondents were found in this directory, and email messages were sent to them directly. For the non-governmental sector, a letter was sent to the CEO of the Liaison Unit for Non-Governmental Organizations (LUNGOS) and phone calls were made to respective offices in order to get email addresses. Representatives from civil society were contacted individually.

The request to participate was two-tiered. The first email message introduced the work being done by the researcher on Seychelles and the Commonwealth, explained what was required of respondents, and asked if they would agree to participate. Questionnaires were only forwarded when the potential respondent agreed to participate in the survey. A small number of individuals who were contacted did not respond at all, even though the invitation email was sent out twice to them within a space of a few weeks. Among them were several former government officials who had been closest to the Commonwealth over the years. In the absence of other information, it is not possible to put forward possible explanations for this, but it was clear that these targeted respondents, for reasons best known to them, did not wish to participate in the study despite their close and well-known association with the Commonwealth.

#### 4.4.3.2 Gaining access to Commonwealth organizations respondents

For the Commonwealth Secretariat, an introductory letter from the department of Development Studies (UNISA) was provided in November 2011 to confirm that the research being done was part of an academic course of study. The names of respondents were taken from the Commonwealth Secretariat website and emails were sent to them describing the research, and requesting their assistance. The university's letter of introduction and the questionnaire were attached to the message.

Some additional names were provided by one of the administrative staff members of the Commonwealth Secretariat who was contacted by email. One name was also provided by a respondent from the Ministry of Education in Seychelles.

#### 4.4.3.3 Participation rate for email survey

Of the forty (40) persons contacted for the email survey in Seychelles, nine (9) did not respond and two (2) declined the invitation to become respondents. The remaining twenty nine (29) persons contacted agreed to participate. In one particular case, the intended respondent provided a replacement who had all the characteristics expected of respondents; this replacement was therefore included.

By the close of the exercise twenty-six (26) of those who had agreed to become respondents had sent in their completed questionnaires. This represents a 65% valid participation rate for the email survey for Seychellois respondents.

Six (6) of the fifteen (15) persons contacted at the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth of Learning responded to the email inviting them to participate in the survey. Despite several reminders being sent over a two-month period, no additional responses were received. Four (4) agreed to complete the questionnaire, and one (1) of the responses received was negative. A sixth person responded stating that a heavy workload was preventing participation but added that, time permitting, the questionnaire would be completed and sent. Unfortunately, no completed questionnaire had been received from this potential respondent by the close of the exercise. In all, three (3) completed questionnaires were received from the Secretariat and one (1) from the COL, bringing the total of completed questionnaires to four. This represents a 27% valid participation rate.

Slightly different approaches were used in contacting the two groups of respondents for the email survey (see the two preceding sections) and this may have played a role in the participation rates of the two groups. Selwyn and Robson (1998: no page number), report that researchers have found that e-mail survey response rates increase if an initial e-mail is sent requesting participation in the study. It should be noted that the researcher only came across the Selwyn and Robson paper after the survey had been launched.

#### **4.4.4 The semi-guided interviews**

In order to complement the primary data collected through the questionnaires, semi-guided interviews were scheduled for the end of the period allocated for field work. This was done in order to reach individuals who had played important roles in the Seychelles/Commonwealth relationship and/or who may not have been available for the questionnaire-based survey. This also made it possible to address a few information gaps that had been identified as the data collection progressed. Five (5) such interviews were carried out with very senior government officials in the Seychelles government and there were informal discussions with two (2) leaders in the NGO sector. Additionally a well-known figure from civil

society agreed to make available a copy of a personal dissertation which provided much useful background information.

The Special Advisory Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, which has been working with the Seychelles on a number of long-term projects, was also contacted. The response was positive and arrangements were made to meet with three representatives of the division, but because of scheduling problems and the unavailability of one officer at the proposed time, it was only possible to have one (1) semi-guided interview.

#### **4.4.5 Capturing and editing data**

The use of electronic questionnaires for the first 2 groups of respondents facilitated the collection and initial processing of data since email questionnaires offer “the considerable practical advantage of providing 'ready-transcribed' data” (Selwyn and Robson 1998: no page number).

For the small number of face-to-face interviews, after the first respondent in Seychelles expressed discomfort with the idea of being tape-recorded, discussions were noted down in writing and the notes were later entered and saved in electronic format.

### **4.5 DATA PROCESSING**

#### **4.5.1 Data entry and analysis – email survey and interviews**

When completed questionnaires were returned to the researcher, they were given a number linked to the sequence in which they were returned, and placed in dedicated folders on the computer. A few questionnaires were printed out by the respondents and the completed hard copies returned to the researcher. In these cases, the information was entered in electronic format and saved with the others. There was virtually no editing needed for the questionnaires, neither was there a need to verify information with the respondents. Where responses were provided, they were usually clear and easily comprehensible.



At the end of the survey, master documents – in table form – were designed for each of the two groups of respondents. Each master document included questions as they appeared in the questionnaire, the number allocated to each respondent, and the response provided. Once the data entry was complete, the information in the master document was transferred to Excel, which allows a certain level of manipulation of data. Each question was given a separate spreadsheet and responses were grouped according to categories derived from the responses themselves. This approach also allowed, among other things, a certain quantification of some of the qualitative data.

Data collected from the interviews were organised in one master Word document. The small number of interviews meant that it was possible to manually go through the information and use words or thematic expressions to group the information – connecting these with the data gathered from the email survey.

#### **4.5.2 Data analysis – secondary data**

All material collected was organised according to the main themes of the study, and according to whether they were directly related to the Seychelles or to the Commonwealth. They were also organised chronologically so that it would be possible to see events as they happened over the years, in the hope that this might show whether there had been some kind of pattern of interactions between the country and the association, and the possible outcomes of these patterns if they existed.

Many national reports and historical accounts, both electronic and in hard copy, were used to provide the Seychelles overview, according to the relevant parts of the chapter. In most cases these did not relate to Commonwealth activities in the country.

Because of the large amount of information collected, it was not possible to convert everything into electronic format, instead much of it was organised in lever arch files.

## **4.6 CONSTRAINTS, LIMITATIONS AND SHORTCOMINGS**

### **4.6.1 The difficulties of using e-mailed questionnaires**

When the research design was being elaborated, the main research technique for the field survey in Seychelles was the guided interview. A major constraint arose when due to unforeseen personal circumstances, the researcher had to relocate overseas just prior to the launch of the survey. The approach for conducting the survey changed and most of the primary data had to be gathered through e-mailed questionnaires. This method has advantages as well as limitations. According to Selwyn and Robson (1998: no page number), "Using e-mail as an interview tool eschews the conventional constraints of spatial and temporal proximity between interviewer and respondent... However, e-mail interviews suffer from a lack of tacit communication". Michaelidou and Dibb (2009: 290) also state that "the general consensus is that email questionnaires tend to have poor return rates compared with postal surveys". On the other hand, a desk review of internet-based surveys showed that "there is no evidence in the literature that concurrent fielding of a survey via a conventional mode and via an Internet-based mode results in any significant improvement in response rates" (Fricker and Schonlau, 2002: 8).

Another significant challenge was the format of the questionnaire – which was originally designed in Word 2010. Respondents using the same format could simply tick boxes and type/enter responses directly where required. It became apparent within the first few days of the survey that this version of Word was not accessible to a number of respondents therefore a version in Word 97-2003 was also provided. Despite this, some respondents reported difficulty in completing the questionnaire. It was suggested that these respondents use any basic method to indicate their chosen answers. These included underlining text, highlighting text or changing the font colour.

It should be noted that in email exchanges during the survey, a few respondents openly stated their dislike of having to complete questionnaires generally – their participation in the study is, therefore, the more appreciated.

#### **4.6.2 Poor response rate from Commonwealth bodies**

As described in section 4.2.1.3, most of the targeted respondents from Commonwealth organizations did not answer the email inviting them to participate in the survey. One responded negatively stating that “we do not feel that we can comment on such issues regarding one of our members states...” while another stated that the questionnaire would be done if/when there was time, and did not communicate again.

Mouton and Marais (1990:88) in their discussion of respondents’ motivation to participate in research, point out that much depends on the respondents’ perception of either the existing ‘level of interest’ in the topic or of an implied ‘level of threat’ connected to the giving of information. The available data gathered does not allow to clearly determine what may have prevented greater participation of respondents from Commonwealth organizations. Nonetheless, the response quoted in the previous paragraph, together with the reluctance of potential Seychelles respondents closely linked to the Commonwealth to participate in the study, seem to point to the existence of an organizational culture where the utmost caution is practised as regards expressing opinions or giving a personal evaluation of the work of the Commonwealth in a member state. While some of this could be construed as being respectful of individual state members of the association, it may possibly hint at issues of openness and transparency in the functioning of the association and, currently at least, indicate a sense of discomfort regarding anything that might seem ‘critical’ of membership. There is also no evidence that internally-driven investigations even when carried out by external groups (e.g. ECDPM/Commonwealth Secretariat 2007; Universalia 2003, 2010) discuss or report on the possible existence of such constraints.

Should such a study be replicated, it would probably benefit from a more formal route being used for contacting Commonwealth staff – for example through a very senior office at the Secretariat – in order to increase ‘credibility’ and maybe, the level of participation. Moreover, the inability to ‘test’ the questionnaire for these respondents also meant that it was not possible to incorporate changes which might have made the tool somewhat more appealing or more acceptable to them.

#### 4.6.3 Restrictions on access to, or unavailability of, documents

Current information from the Commonwealth Resource Centre and on the Commonwealth website is limited to articles, reports and documents that are released for public consumption. Other types of Commonwealth documents which are considered confidential are subject to the '30-year release' rule and are only made available to the public after that time period (See <http://commonwealth.live.rss-hosting.co.uk/Internal/157082/archives/>). This meant that it was only possible to access this type of documentation for the years covering 1976 (the year when Seychelles joined the Commonwealth) to 1981 (last dates of available Commonwealth released records at the time of data collection in 2012).

Most of the secondary data collected in Seychelles for the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s came from the Seychelles National Archives. Much of this material was composed of articles from the official government-sponsored daily, the Seychelles Nation, and a few official documents. It was also possible to get copies of a few articles from other newspapers from the National Library. As mentioned earlier, there were no relevant archival records in Seychelles, for the years 1978 to 1986, even though it is clear through various reports of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, that numerous joint activities took place during this period. A senior archives officer explained that it is usually the responsibility of government ministries to send copies of documents to archives, and if there were no records for that period, it probably meant that no relevant documents had been submitted to archives during that period of time. While this might be the case, the numbering of the index cards indicates that such records may have existed: index card number 2 of the series ends with item D/59.1 and index card number 3 starts with item D/59.25, meaning that items D/59.2 to D/59.24 are missing. Archive staff informed the researcher that each item number usually covers information gathered during a period of about 3 months. There is a single item numbered D/59.21 which appears on Index card 4, dated 15 October 1985 – referring to an article entitled "President Rene attends Commonwealth Summit". This shows that there probably were records for the period, but that these records and relevant index cards are no longer available, and that index cards might have later been re-numbered to accommodate this gap.

As mentioned earlier, written requests for information was made to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the form of a letter and email messages. Some information was subsequently provided, but it was limited to a recent, comprehensive report covering the work of the Commonwealth for the decade starting in 2000. Further emails did not elicit responses.

#### **4.6.4 Researcher characteristics for Seychelles respondents**

Seychelles is a very small country and the fact that the researcher was employed in government for over 15 years meant that the majority of potential respondents were acquainted with her at a professional and/or a personal level. This unavoidable situation may have influenced the content of the responses provided by respondents in Seychelles. Mouton and Marais (1990: 81) when discussing the effects that 'researcher characteristics' have on respondents state that these can determine the basis for interaction between researcher and respondent and thus, eventual results. This situation had a positive aspect since it made access to respondents in Seychelles relatively easy. On the other hand, there is the possibility that this factor may have influenced both the researcher's approach to the research as well as the respondents' participation in the survey – in ways that are difficult to determine.

#### **4.7 CONCLUDING NOTE**

While the work done in order to prepare for the research was reasonably uncomplicated, the implementation of the survey proved to be complex and demanding, requiring constant adjustments as the work progressed. These challenges seemed related to i) respondents' level of willingness to participate in a survey where results were not predictable and which could, possibly, cause embarrassment or difficulties for themselves or their respective organizations; and ii) their work schedule as individuals holding responsible positions in a small island state, or within an international organization.

Access to respondents in Seychelles was relatively easy and the good response rate made it possible to gather a satisfactory level of information. On the other hand, getting access to Commonwealth respondents was quite arduous, except in the case of one of the divisions where interviews were requested. Despite the submission of documents certifying that the survey was part of an academic course of study, the level of participation from the Commonwealth organs was low, which meant that the information received was quite limited. It needs to be pointed out, nevertheless, that the Commonwealth officials who did agree to participate were most helpful and willing to provide information where they felt comfortable doing so.

The primary data and secondary data gathered have been used to both describe, and assess, the nature of the relationship between the Commonwealth and Seychelles as well as gauge the overall perception of individuals in positions of responsibility in Seychelles regarding the usefulness and significance of this relationship to the country. This information is presented in Chapters 5 and 6.

**THE ESTABLISHMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF COLLABORATION  
BETWEEN SEYCHELLES AND THE COMMONWEALTH: FINDINGS OF A  
DOCUMENTARY REVIEW**

**5.1 INTRODUCTION**

In November 1975, the Prime Minister of the British colony of Seychelles, called on the Secretary General (SG) of the Commonwealth to inform him that the House of Assembly in the Seychelles had passed a resolution for Seychelles to apply for membership of the Commonwealth upon attainment of independence in June 1976 (Seychelles and the Commonwealth 1975: no page number). The SG's response was that he would do everything for Seychelles to become a member of the Commonwealth, noting that Seychelles was already receiving considerable technical aid from the 'Commonwealth Foundation'<sup>11</sup> even though the country was not yet a member of the association. Furthermore, the Secretary-General gave 'assurances that this aid would continue both before and after independence', stating that discussions had also been held on the present and future levels of technical assistance to be provided to Seychelles by the Commonwealth Foundation<sup>12</sup> for Technical Co-operation (Seychelles and the Commonwealth 1975: no page number).

This chapter looks at i) the interactions between Seychelles and the Commonwealth in the light of the assistance and support provided by the latter, from the time of the country's independence to the present day, and ii) the type of relationship established between the country and the association through these

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<sup>11</sup> It was not possible to find details of this assistance from the 'Commonwealth Foundation'. In fact, the article does not make it clear whether the newspaper report is referring to the Commonwealth Foundation (an organization working with civil society and NGOs) or to the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (described as the principal means by which the Commonwealth Secretariat delivers development assistance to member countries).

<sup>12</sup> Again, the article makes use of the word 'Foundation' when it seems that it may be referring to the 'Fund'.

interactions. It should be noted that there is no information available on the Commonwealth for a 10-year period (1978 to 1986) in the Seychelles National Archives, the main source of historical data in Seychelles, and that the archival material from the Commonwealth Library was only available for the period ending 1981 (because of the 30-year rule referred to in Chapter 4), thus constraining but not preventing, attempts to study this period of time. Using data available in accessible historical records, the chapter will consider the areas focussed on for development and technical assistance in terms of fulfilling the country's planned development objectives.

## **5.2 BECOMING THE COMMONWEALTH'S 'NEWEST MEMBER' IN 1976**

On 24 June 1976, and following the request for membership made by Seychelles, the Secretary General (SG) of the Commonwealth, Mr. S. Ramphal informed the Prime Minister of the country, Mr. J. Mancham, that following consultations with the heads of government from Commonwealth member states, it had been agreed that Seychelles would become a member of the Commonwealth on achieving independence (Commonwealth Secretariat 1976a: Released Records 2007/021). More specifically, he declared: "we are announcing to the press on 25 June that Seychelles will become the 36<sup>th</sup> member of the Commonwealth on 28 June 1976" (Commonwealth Secretariat 1976a: Released Records 2007/021). This is how Seychelles' membership of the Commonwealth was made official.

The use of this process is confirmed by a former Assistant Director, International Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, who states that Commonwealth membership is not automatic for former British dependencies or dependencies of Commonwealth members, it has to be sought by these countries "before or after the attainment of independence of the proposed member" and assented to by existing members through an informal process of consultation (Papadopoulos 1979:6).

The SG's role in facilitating the entry of Seychelles into the Commonwealth is clearly reflected in a letter dated 21 June 1976 written to Mr. Stanley of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the British Government, in which he writes: "in your letter of 25 February 1976 notifying us of the British Government's



sponsorship of the application of the Government of Seychelles to become a full member of the Commonwealth on achieving independence on 28 June 1976, you asked me if I would seek the agreement of other Commonwealth Heads of Government. I am happy to be able to inform you that these consultations have been completed and that all Commonwealth Governments have agreed to full membership of Seychelles on independence” (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1976a: 2007/021). It is to be noted that Papadopoulos, in his description of the admission process of independent countries into the Commonwealth (Papadopoulos 1979: 6), does not make reference to the sponsorship element referred to in the processing of the Seychelles membership. Neither was it possible to confirm that ‘sponsorship’ by Britain, as the former colonial power, was common practice in the admission of former colonies or dependencies to the association.

Derek Ingram who reported on the independence ceremony of the 29<sup>th</sup> June uses the expression ‘a curious state’ in regard to the Seychelles in an article published in a local newspaper and entitled ‘Newest member of the Commonwealth’. He describes the crowds present at the ceremony as being subdued, adding that “freedom had come but in the Seychellois manner they (the crowds) were showing little outward emotion” (Ingram 1976: 1). In view of the rather limited access to education (Campling et al. 2001: 48) and the resulting deficiencies in the level of education of the majority of the population at the time, added to the limited access to information – there was only one radio station which operated a few hours per day (Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation website 2014) – it is possible to think that the lack of emotion was due to the crowds inability to fully understand what was taking place rather than the evidence of any national behavioural characteristic. Another possible explanation could be that many in the crowd did not particularly welcome the idea of independence but it is not possible to substantiate this proposition.

Ingram makes mention of the strong French cultural influence and the fact that when the new President (Mr. Mancham) set out to find ways of supplementing the country’s tight budget, he first went to Paris rather than to London, although the article notes that little hard cash had been forthcoming from France (Ingram 1976: 1). There is also a fleeting reference to the role of the British who had pledged to

help the new Republic of Seychelles by providing GBP 10 million in capital aid for the first two years after independence and GBP 1 million a year in technical help for the next 'few' years. Ingram admits that this would "keep the budget balanced but not properly because Britain is providing all the capital expenditure" (Ingram 1976: 1). Campling et al. (2011: 20) note that the grant support from the UK actually ended in 1979, having been available to Seychelles for 3 years. There is also a mention of possible help from companies or individuals from South Korea, Greece and Saudi Arabia. Ingram goes on to state that "what Seychelles must concentrate on, as its new Prime Minister Albert René forcibly pointed out during independence celebrations, is development of its enormous resources in the sea..." since the new rules expected to emerge from the UN Law of the Sea Treaty,<sup>13</sup> would give Seychelles control of great areas of the Indian Ocean (Ingram 1976: 1). It was not possible to find information indicating the effects, if any, of the withdrawal of direct financial support by the British after 3 years but, as will be highlighted later, the work on attempting to maximise marine resources started within a few years of independence and has continued unabated to this day.

Regarding the establishment of a coalition government after independence, a Commonwealth Secretariat document (Commonwealth Secretariat 1976c: 3) states that it is probably because the leaders of the two parties had been informed that Britain would consider arranging for new elections, that they negotiated a deal to share power. The paper further says that the crucial element of compromise on Mr. René's part was, presumably, his consent to allow for Mr Mancham to become the country's first President (Commonwealth Secretariat 1976c: Brief for SG's Visit, p3). Ingram, for his part, believed that it was a matter for speculation whether the newly-born coalition – formed between the two series of constitutional talks in London by the then ruling Seychelles Democratic Party (SDP) led by Mr. Mancham and the Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) led by Mr. René, would hold together (Ingram 1976: 1). He predicted that the chances of a one-party state emerging by the time of the next elections in 1979, were strong and that in the SPUP view "if there is to be one party, it will not be a coalition but the SPUP". He quoted René as stating his belief that the country was probably not yet ready for such a development, but that it could well happen by 1979 (Ingram

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<sup>13</sup> Formally known as the Third United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea - UNCLOS III - which was adopted in 1982. See <http://www.unlawoftheseatreaty.org/>

1976: 1). According to Ingram, much would depend on the personalities of the two men – as René’s business-like approach contrasted “strongly with the flamboyant playboy type character deliberately cultivated by Mancham” (Ingram 1976: 1). Ingram’s perceptive comments were to be realised when, in 1977, a coup led by Mr. Rene placed the SPUP in power.

Ingram’s article is a thorough review of the situation in Seychelles at that point in time despite the fact that his article does not mention the Commonwealth (apart from the title) or the organization’s role *vis-à-vis* the fledgling state (Ingram 1976:1). Nonetheless, a reader is left with the impression that, for the newly independent country, participation and involvement in the Commonwealth is seen as unavoidable and therefore taken for granted. Despite being a relatively short analysis, the article touches on most of the major issues that would concern the Seychelles in the following decades, as a small island developing state and as a member of the Commonwealth: the constant struggle to establish and maintain a healthy national economy; great dependence on external aid of various sorts; persistent attempts to exploit the country’s vast maritime territory to generate wealth for the country, and the continued existence of an ambiguous and somewhat opaque political climate masking deep divisions in the local society.

### **5.3 THE FIRST REPUBLIC WORKING WITH THE COMMONWEALTH AND ITS SECRETARIAT: SETTING THE AGENDA FOR THE COUNTRY’S DEVELOPMENT**

#### **5.3.1 The establishment of links and the provision of assistance**

It is clear from correspondence between the newly independent country and the Commonwealth Secretariat that representatives of both parties seem to value Seychelles membership of the association highly. In a letter dated 11 November 1976, addressed to the President of the First Republic of Seychelles, the SG expresses his wish for the full participation of Seychelles in the various activities of the Commonwealth. He refers to the signature of the Memorandum of Understanding on Basic Local Support which describes the conditions under which technical assistance is provided to a member state, and the responsibilities of Governments receiving such assistance. He adds: “during a meeting with Prime

Minister René, which I valued very much, the possibility of CFTC assistance in a number of areas was explored” (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1976a: 2007/021). It can also easily be deduced from the tone of the written documents that, from the start, the rapport between the head of the Commonwealth and the Prime Minister of the country was good and that the association was supportive of national actions and plans as put forward by the Prime Minister.

An internal memo, dated 12 November 1976, from the then Managing Director of the CFTC refers to some of the areas for assistance and adds that the Prime Minister of Seychelles had emphasised “the importance to his government of early recruitment for the posts of Civil Aviation Advisor (6 months) and Legal Draftsman (2 years)”. The Commonwealth Secretariat concerns at the time were, according to the letter, firstly, “the importance to CFTC of an early pledge by the Seychelles” – the words are not explicit but in this context, it is reasonable to assume that this referred to the monetary contribution Seychelles would be making to the association. In the same letter, the Commonwealth also expresses discomfort with the appointment of a highly placed individual in the public service structure, openly stating its “reluctance to fill such sensitive posts in future” (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1977: 2009/070). The letter implies the existence of problems regarding this particular type of arrangement. It is to be noted that the tone of internal communications within the Secretariat, as seen through archival material, is usually unambiguous and forthright, while, unsurprisingly, the wording of communications directed at member states are couched in diplomatic ‘speak’ and merely hint at or imply problems.

Already in April of the same year (1976) and just prior to independence, a request had been made to the Commonwealth for the services on an Advisor on Gaming. In response to the request, the Attorney General of another Commonwealth member state, Australia, had forwarded to the Commonwealth Secretariat a list of reports on gambling and gambling laws to be forwarded to Seychelles in the hope that “it might be possible for the Prime Minister’s office to identify the particular areas of special concern” (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1977: 2009/070).

In anticipation of an intended visit to Seychelles in September 1976, various documents providing background information about the Seychelles were prepared

for the SG of the Commonwealth. These covered, among others, the status of government after independence, general technical assistance, education and agriculture (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives, Shridath Ramphal Collection 1976c: 2007/138). The document on technical assistance lists a considerable number of projects for which advisors and specialists were sent to Seychelles for short- and long-term assignments. These projects, and others, cover major development areas: the economy, the constitution, aid planning, legislation, tourism, aviation, transport, financial institutions and human resource development. Figure 5.1 provides a non-exhaustive list of Commonwealth projects in, and with, Seychelles from late 1975 to late 1976.

Towards the end of 1976, additional projects had been identified for the provision of support to Seychelles. These included “assistance in training for fisheries development and the provision of experts in intermediate technology”, such issues having already been discussed “by the Secretary-General of the Secretariat and Prime Minister René in August this year (1976)” (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1977: 2009/070). The documents also list other requests that were ‘in the pipeline’ as well as possible areas of assistance for which official requests had not yet been received by the Secretariat (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1977: 2009/070); these included a viability study for the establishment of a Free Trade Zone, the possibility of developing Mahé port as a trans-shipment area; and facilitating access to the Solomon Islands study on the market prospects of copra and coconut oil (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1977: 2009/070) since copra represented 50% of Seychelles exports at the time. (See Annex 3 for a complete list of activities). It should be noted that a number of these ‘projects’ were not new ideas and had to some extent already been included in the 1973 Seychelles Development Plan which was meant, for example, to “propose an economic and viable pattern for future land use” (Colony of Seychelles 1973: 1/1/1) by the government of Chief Minister Mancham while the country was still under British rule.

Existing documents from the period of the First Republic indicate a high degree of involvement between the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Seychelles government of the day. These collaborative efforts start immediately prior to independence and continue on an increasing trend throughout the period of the

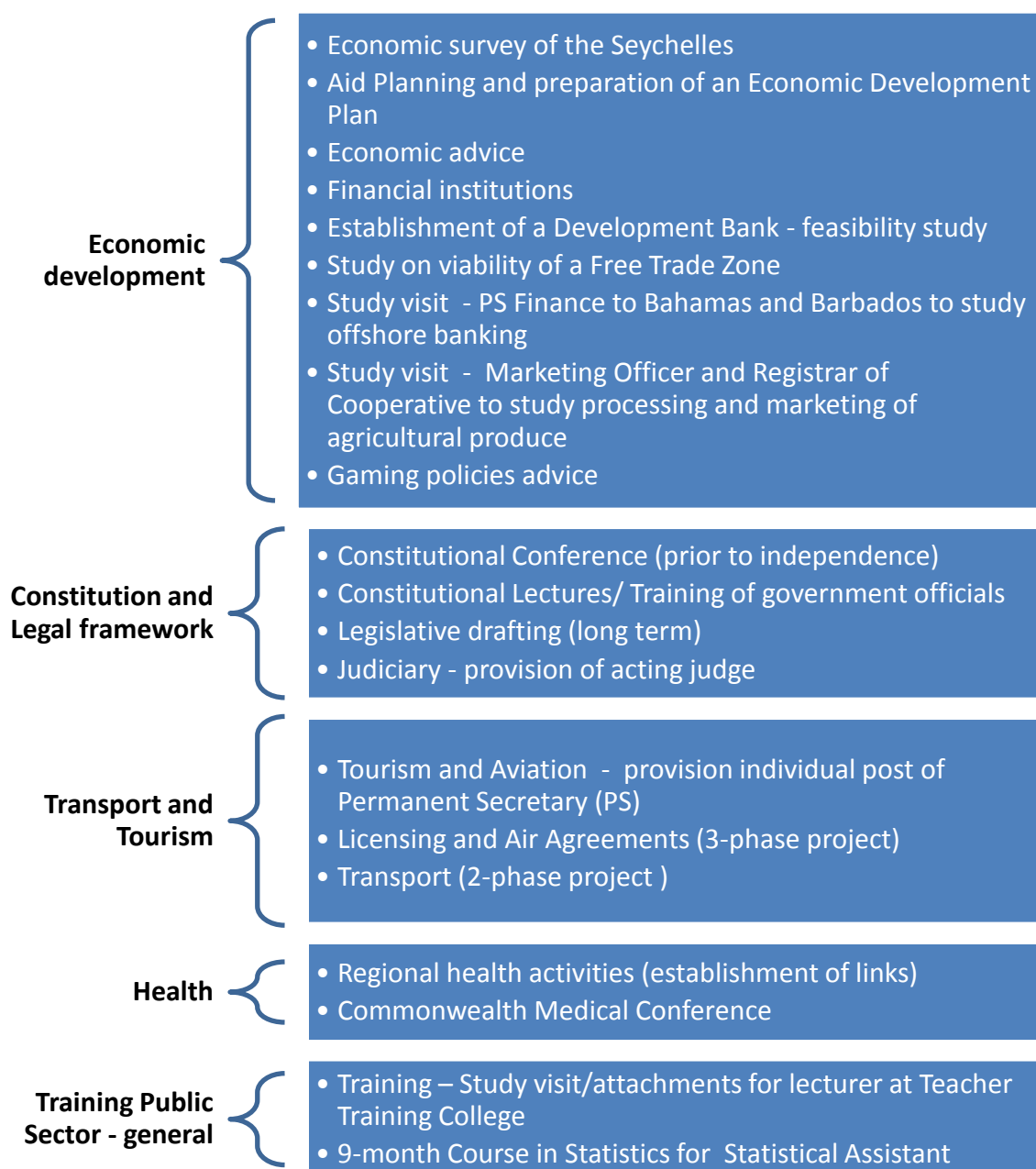
coalition government, which would be in power for about a year. It is clear that the Commonwealth provided, during that period, significant support to areas that were foundational to the country's governance and future growth including the nationalization of the public sector, the development of infrastructure, and the development of the economy at all levels.

Figure 5.1 shows clear areas of priorities: the development of economic policy and economic activity, followed by the development of constitutional and legal structures, the training of senior officials in key areas of the public sector, the development of transport and related tourism policies, and participation in regional meetings, especially in the area of health. These priorities closely reflect the objectives of the 1973 Seychelles Development Plan<sup>14</sup> (Colony of Seychelles 1973: introduction).

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<sup>14</sup> The intention of the 1973 National Plan was to propose an economic and viable pattern for land use with a focus on conservation. It was intended to cover 15 years (1972 to 1987), with 5-year reviews. Areas included were: Tourism, Agriculture, Services and Infrastructure, Communications, Sea Communications, Air Communications, Housing, Education, Reclamation of Land and Outer Islands.

**Figure 5.1: Commonwealth-related assistance during 1975/1976 and areas of priority (list is non-exhaustive)**



Source: Commonwealth Secretariat Archives, released records – Shridath Ramphal Collection, 2007

The considerable investments made by the Commonwealth Secretariat in a country with a population of 58,000 in mid-1975 (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1976b: 2007/116), were certainly influenced by a wide variety of factors

and might possibly have been part of a strategy for providing a 'soft landing' to a colony which had become a 'state' in rather difficult circumstances, the country being politically very divided and the Chief Minister having to reluctantly accept the independence status which was being thrust upon the country by the British Government, in line with what the opposition of the day had been demanding. As was later stated in a draft circular note to all Directors of the Commonwealth Secretariat after a seminar at Sussex University on the Future of Britain's Remaining Dependent Territories, it had become clear that Britain had no intention of changing its policy of decolonization despite some practical difficulties and that the 'one problem to be faced' was how to persuade some reluctant dependencies to move to independence (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1979: 2008/029).

The great interest shown by Seychelles in being a member of the Commonwealth upon becoming independent from Britain could be a reflection of the perception that "perhaps Commonwealth countries did feel some dependence on Britain or what Britain could provide..." (Chan 1988: 6) and that "primarily, the Commonwealth is a British interest" (Miller 1965: 269). Miller believes that "Commonwealth members retain or acquire membership because they consider it more in their interests to be in the Commonwealth than out of it..." (Miller 1965: 269). For a country as small, as remote and with as few developed resources as the Seychelles of the 1970s, the eager move towards Commonwealth membership at the time of the country's independence appeared to be a logical step.

As a confirmation of the high level of involvement and interest on both sides, the Commonwealth as a whole is very visible in Seychelles in the year following independence. It was also presented in a very positive light in the local media. For example, on 14 March 1977 a front page article in the country's main paper, entitled 'The Commonwealth: Linking 1,000 million people' describes the international work of the Commonwealth in great detail stating essentially that the Commonwealth has come to be seen by the world community as increasingly important, there being many recent examples of its impact on international affairs (Ingram 1977: 1). The article, nonetheless, does not provide specific illustrations of the 'impact' of the association on international affairs, although, it was becoming clear by then that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Mr. S. Ramphal, appointed in 1976, "consciously sought to use the Commonwealth as a



force for change in the word” (Doxey 1989: 42) and that he “seems to have envisaged the Commonwealth functioning as a pressure group in world politics as well as a model of multilateral cooperation” (Doxey 1989: 43).

### **5.3.2 Seychelles makes a case for Commonwealth development support for itself specifically and for SIDS generally**

The Seychelles involvement with, and efforts to participate in, the development of an agenda for SIDS within the Commonwealth becomes apparent in 1977. A paper presented by the Minister for Education and Social Development, Mr. Guy Sinon at the Commonwealth Education Ministers Meeting in Accra, Ghana, in March of that year presents the plight of small island states in regard to education – using Seychelles as a case in point. The paper argues that “the cost of smallness to Seychelles is so high that the country, and other small island states similarly placed, should be singled out for special treatment separately from the other larger countries because their problems and their remedies to problems can be so radically different” (The Cost of Smallness 1977: 3).

Later on that year another front page article reports that the Seychelles government “has put forward special pleas for consideration and assistance in solving the problems of small states, and at the recent Commonwealth Education Conference ... a special group of such states was formed” (Still newest but not smallest 1977: 1) The article also describes the Minister’s attendance at the Commonwealth Youth Programme conference in Jamaica and his visits to other small Caribbean islands which share similar problems as the Seychelles (Still newest but not smallest 1977: 1) pointing to an interest in i) networking with other small island states and ii) forming potential pressure groups that could speak and act on behalf of SIDS.

### **5.4 THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE SEYCHELLES COUP D’ÉTAT**

In early May 1977, an announcement is made to the fact that President Mancham had been invited to respond to the British Prime Minister’s Speech on the Opening day of the Commonwealth Conference of Heads of Government (CHOGM) to be held in London from 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> June of that year (President J.R.M. to address

Commonwealth Conference 1977: 1). On May 30<sup>th</sup> the last article to appear in the country about the First Republic and the Commonwealth informs readers that President Mancham would be leaving the country on Wednesday 1 June 1977 and gives a list of the engagements planned for him in London which included dinner with the British Prime Minister and lunches with two other Commonwealth prime ministers, namely those of Australia and New Zealand (H.E. heads for Commonwealth Conference 1997: 1).

There was a couple d'état in Seychelles on 5 June 1977 (see chapter 3 also). While President James Mancham was in London for the CHOGM, Prime Minister René took over the government and 'was instituted' as the new President of the Seychelles (Parti Lepep 2012).

According to one historian "a handful of Commonwealth leaders indicated their sympathy with Mancham's predicament, but they took their lead from their hosts, the British, and kept their distance from the ousted president. Not only was his invitation to speak at the opening ceremony on Tuesday 7 June withdrawn but he could not even get the issue on the agenda. Acknowledging defeat, Mancham bowed to Secretary General Ramphal's request that he stay away from the Commonwealth Conference" (Shillington 2009: 131). The account also highlights the cold shoulder treatment that Mancham received from the British, their prime concern being that the Queen's Jubilee celebrations which were taking place at the time, "should not be disrupted by the embarrassing political row" (Shillington 2009: 130). In Seychelles a sense of disappointment still persists among members of the former SDP. A former SDP party official, who sat on the Constitutional Commission of 1992/93 at the re-introduction of multi-party politics, recently wrote that, in his view, the Commonwealth "let our people and country down when it refused to accept the credentials of the legitimate and legally elected head of state of our country at the Heads of Government meeting in London after the coup d'état in June 1977" (Chow 2013).

To this day, there seems to be no mention of the Seychelles coup d'état in accessible Commonwealth Secretariat archival records (which at the time of researching, covered up to 1981 because of the 30-year rule), except for an internal CFTC letter dated 14 June 1977 which is worded thus: "The Attorney-

General of the Seychelles telephoned [name of a CFTC consultant] on Saturday to say that Mr. René would like him to go there at the end of this week to help draft a new Constitution... Before we authorise [the consultant's] visit you would no doubt wish to consider the impact of recent events on CFTC assistance ... we suggest that [the consultant] should indicate that he is returning to complete work on the petroleum and other legislation. On arrival he could say that he does not have authority to undertake constitutional work ... and that the Secretariat would need a specific request from the Government for that purpose. When the request is received it could be considered in the light of the circumstances then prevailing, including the extent of recognition in the Commonwealth for the new government." At the bottom of the letter, a handwritten response states "I would prefer [the consultant] to indicate his willingness to assist with the constitution, subject to a written request to the Secretariat..." (Commonwealth Secretariat 1977: 2009/070). There are no further comments made. This may indicate that even at such an early stage, and while more junior staff had concerns about the situation in Seychelles, senior personnel at the Commonwealth already considered the new governing structure in place in the country as a legitimate interlocutor.

The party that had taken power in Seychelles states the matter in the following words: "On 5 June 1977 partisans of the SPUP who were very dissatisfied with the state of affairs in the country, led by the Prime Minister Mr. France Albert René who was also the leader of the SPUP, overthrew the existing government in a coup which the international community at large accepted as a fait accompli. Mr. René was called upon and accepted to lead the country, as head of the new government which the world recognized" (Parti Lepep 2012).

The Commonwealth association remained, at least on record, aloof and distant from the happenings in Seychelles. This, one could surmise, was probably in accordance with the terms of the Agreed Memorandum on the Commonwealth Secretariat, which required that documents produced by the Secretariat on international questions should "not propagate any particular sectional or partisan point of view, contain no policy judgements or recommendations by the Secretariat" but more importantly, such papers were not to "touch upon the internal affairs of a member country or disputes or serious differences between two or more member countries..."(Chan 1988: 79). While the SG could circulate papers

submitted by a member Government, the Memorandum clearly stipulated that if it happened that papers were to 'touch upon' the internal affairs of member countries, they "will not be circulated without the prior concurrence of the country or countries concerned" (Chan 1988: 79), effectively preventing the circulation of information about a country with internal disputes unless the country in question agreed to it – an unlikely scenario in cases of political upheaval or unconstitutional power takeovers such as a coup d'état.

At that particular point in history, the Commonwealth's stated areas of focus are human rights and the existence of 'guarantees for personal freedom under the law' (Commonwealth Secretariat 1971: 2). Official pronouncements do not yet overtly refer to what would eventually become part of the core 'principles' of the Commonwealth association: democracy and the rule of law.

Another possible contributing factor to the silence of the Commonwealth over the Seychelles coup d'état could be what one author describes as the Commonwealth's 'unique principle of identity' which, according to him, stands without reference to the political or ideological compatibility of its members (Srinivasan 2005: 2). To Srinivasan this principle is simply one of a "voluntary reconciliation between Britain and almost all its decolonized territories under the auspices of an institution for collective cooperation" (Srinivasan quoting the Times of India 2005: 144). Srinivasan firmly believes that the Commonwealth will never achieve consensus on any member's domestic situation and that the Commonwealth, despite current attempts at regenerating itself into a post-Cold War organization with a platform of democracy and human rights to be enforced through peer-pressure (Srinivasan 2005: 2), is neither suited to resolving contentious disputes, nor able to impose binding settlements in case of a resolution, and that "through default or inaction, it also runs the risk of becoming a pliant legitimizer of undemocratic and unaccountable regimes, turning a blind eye where regional, economic or other considerations appear more important" (Srinivasan 2005: 3).

Unless intentional, it would be reasonable to infer that the absence of written references to the Seychelles coup d'état in Commonwealth archival material,<sup>15</sup> an event which occurred three days prior to the start of the 1977 CHOGM, and the circuitous wording of the sole document that could be accessed on the topic, are indications as to the Secretariat's discomfort with such issues, further lending support to Srinivasan's assessment of the Commonwealth and the limits of the role that it can play. To add weight to his assessment, Srinivasan quotes Virginia Crowe as saying that "to turn the Commonwealth from being a club to wielding a club is not appropriate" (Srinivasan 2005: 145). To support his opinion, he refers to the case of Zimbabwe which caused a division in the association's membership along racial lines and this, from his point of view, highlights the danger of attempting to formally give a more interventionist role to the Commonwealth, as well as the attempts at seeking to promote good governance and democracy without an 'enforcement machinery to do anything concrete about it' (Srinivasan 2005: 144).

Doxey believes that "the Commonwealth tradition of non-interference – *and indeed non-comment*<sup>16</sup> – on the internal affairs of members imposes constraints" and that the role of the SG is to engage in quiet diplomacy, but that "his public utterances must be extremely circumspect" (Doxey 1989: 49), a situation which, considering the official utterances of the succeeding SGs, has not changed over the years. This is in marked contrast to the UN where, for example in 1992 regarding Somalia, the Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali "publicly pressured states to demonstrate the same concern for suffering there as they were showing for the 'white-man's' war in the Balkans (Weiss, Forsythe and Coate 2004: liii). It is possible that the well-entrenched perception of the Commonwealth as a 'club' which functions by 'consensus', creates a climate where open criticism of other members of the club will bring divisions, as it did on the issue of Zimbabwe, making it difficult for the association to openly face, let alone jointly resolve, contentious issues.

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<sup>15</sup> The researcher also asked Commonwealth archive staff if they had come across any such references while preparing the records for release. The response was that they had not.

<sup>16</sup> The italics are mine.

## **5.5 RULE BY DECREE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW CONSTITUTION**

### **5.5.1 Transition period of rule by decree - 1977 to 1979**

As a result of the event of 5 June 1977, the Seychelles no longer had a valid constitution, although it did have a government. As indicated above, help was sought from the Commonwealth Secretariat for the drafting of a new constitution (Commonwealth Secretariat 1977: 070) and according to the numerous letters and memos on record, the role of the Commonwealth was to provide the services of a legal expert, who had been specifically requested by the country, to chair and lead the Seychelles Constitutional Commission (Commonwealth Secretariat 1978: L/155/G/185).

### **5.5.2 The Constitutional Commission of 1978 and its effect**

The Seychelles People's United Party (SPUP) which had taken power in 1977 was succeeded by the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) in 1978. It was the same party but a new name had been adopted at the party's assembly. One of its major stated objectives was to "promote and safeguard popular democracy based upon regular elections on the basis of universal adult suffrage" and therefore the country, which was being ruled by decree since the coup, had to be given a new constitution (Parti Lepep 2012). Shortly thereafter, a constitutional commission was appointed and meetings and discussions were held all over the country (Virtual Seychelles 2012). The commission was headed by Mr. Telford Georges, a Caribbean jurist who had been recruited and sent to the Seychelles by the Commonwealth Secretariat after a few delays, and as reflected in an internal memo to the SG proposing an alternative to Mr. Georges because of the latter's unavailability at the time. The proposal of recruiting an alternative person was not pursued and Mr. Georges was eventually recruited (Commonwealth Secretariat 1977: 2009/070).

Regarding the process of putting together a new constitution in 1978, the paper of one of the opposition parties recently commented that when it was declared that “Seychelles should have a new constitution of the people, by the people and for the people”, a number of intellectuals in the country started organising consultative meetings, but when it became apparent that the majority opinion was that there should be a multiparty system, the party in power organised its own consultations with the people “where paid agents of the SPUP, together with planted loyal supporters took control of the agenda to campaign for a one-party state” (History Revisited 2007: 3). Regarding the role of the Commonwealth sponsored legal expert – Mr. Georges, the *Seychelles Weekly* writes that the constitutional commission that was appointed was “presided over by a left wing judge ... duly recommended by the then Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Shridath Ramphal ... an avowed Marxist, to draft a new constitution” (History Revisited 2007: 3). The commission headed by Mr. Georges also included four Seychellois members – two prominent members of the SPUP, one of whom was to later become a minister in the one-party state, and two other members whose political affiliations are not publicly known (Commonwealth Secretariat 1977: Charting our Course report, page 1).

From a 21<sup>st</sup> century point of view, the report of the constitutional commission makes some rather interesting, not to say controversial, points. It concludes, for example, that the commission did “not think that the one-party state, by its very nature, infringes any of the provisions either of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with the right to persons to participate in the government of their country” (Commonwealth Secretariat 1977: Charting our Course report, page 2). The commission’s report admits that a one-party state limits the right of freedom of association, but felt that because of the political situation in the Seychelles and “the weight of public opinion in so far as it has expressed itself, that it will be in the general welfare of the society that the limitation of that right be accepted” (Commonwealth Secretariat 1978: Charting our Course report, page 3).

The Commission, in considering whether the Seychelles should be a one-party state with the single party being the Seychelles People’s Progressive Front (SPPF) – the newly renamed SPUP – and after having looked at the aims,

objectives and programmes of the SPPF as presented in the party's manifesto and its constitution, determined that "[they] are such that it would appear to us that the vast majority of Seychellois could accept them as desirable goals and objectives" (Commonwealth Secretariat 1978: Charting our Course report, page 3). No mention is made of dissenting voices and no alternative routes proposed for governance on a more democratic basis.

Predictably, there were disagreements in the country regarding the recommended approach. After the publication of the report one senior civil servant voiced her disapproval in a letter addressed to the Commission, stating that the only way to judge people's opinion on the matter was by a free referendum. She further suggested that the referendum should preferably be held under the supervision of the United Nations – probably a subtle way of saying that, in her view, the Commonwealth's help had not proved as impartial as expected. Among other things, she wrote against the appointment of ministers as opposed to their being elected. The Seychelles Weekly reports that this civil servant was sacked from her post the week following the publication of the letter (History Revisited 2007: 3). It is to be noted that to this day, ministerial incumbents in Seychelles are appointed by the elected president of the country.

The Commission's report, as presented, was used as a basis for the establishment of the 1979 Constitution, which served to legitimize the government in place after the coup d'état, making it illegal for any other party except the SPPF to exist, and concentrating power in the hands of the President who was "concurrently head of state, government and the armed forces" (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1991-UNHCR website). Other recommendations in the commission's report such as the suggestion that the right of judicial review in regard to Human Rights be removed from the courts, or that "senior civil servants can and should identify with the single party" since "in the one-party state the concept of neutrality has no logical place" (Commonwealth Secretariat 1978: 3) also seemed to have had far reaching effects on governance in Seychelles, up to the time, a mere 14 years later, when the decision was made to re-introduce a multiparty system.



## **5.6 THE SECOND REPUBLIC AND THE COMMONWEALTH – 1979 TO 1992**

### **5.6.1 Commonwealth support during the early years of the Second Republic**

Assessing the working relationship between the Commonwealth and the Second Republic is difficult because, as stated in Section 4.6.3 of Chapter 4, there are no records available about the Commonwealth or Commonwealth-related activities at the Seychelles National Archives for the period 1979-1986. Moreover, the archival records from the Commonwealth Secretariat for any year beyond 1980/81 are not currently available because of the 30-year rule which prevents such documents from being placed in the public domain until this period of time has elapsed.

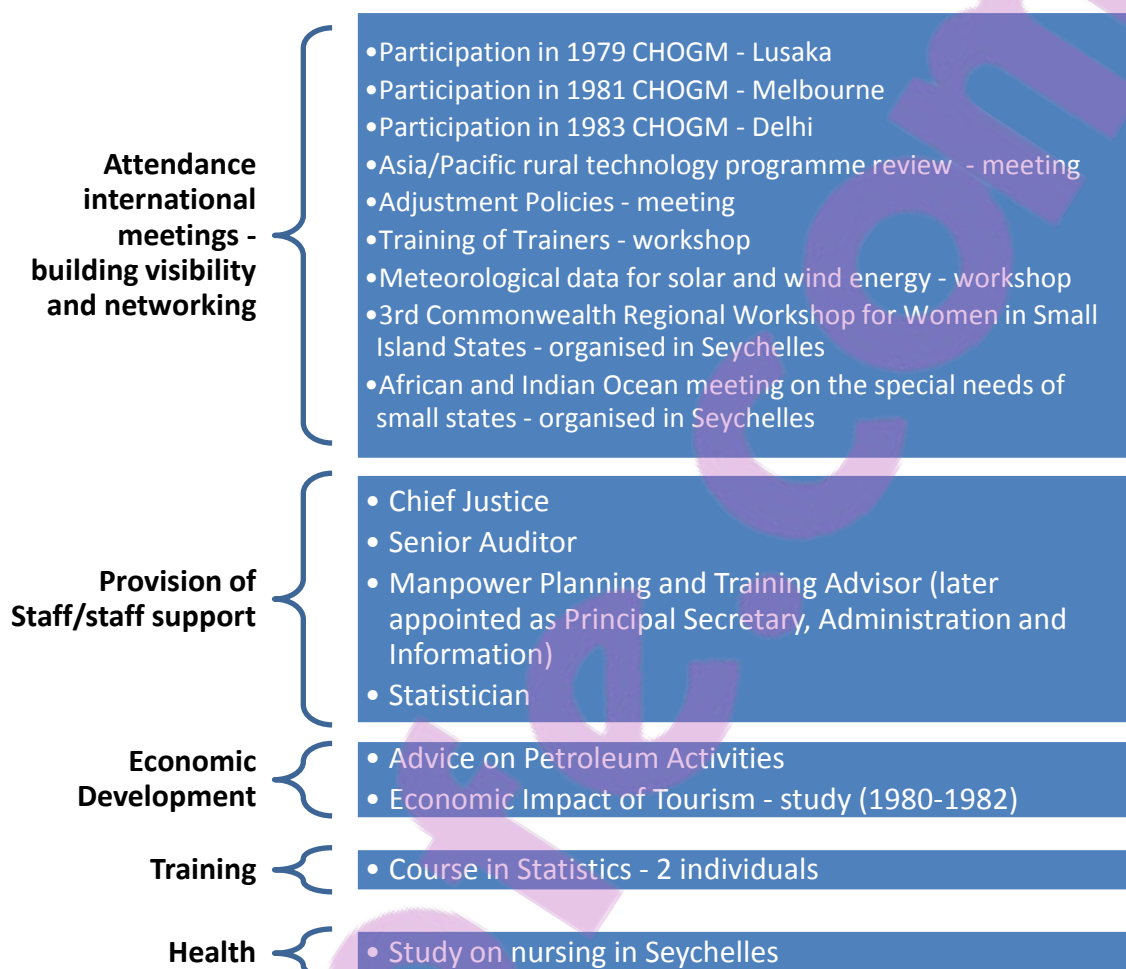
Information available shows that Commonwealth participation in development work in Seychelles during the Second Republic continued unabated, and that Seychelles regularly participated in high level Commonwealth meetings (see Figure 5.2). There is also the claim that the period of the 1980s “was the most eventful and productive in the history of Seychelles” (Virtual Seychelles website 2012).

In 1979, a major study was undertaken by a CFTC consultant focussing on nursing in Seychelles. The intention was to investigate how best to implement the Seychelles Government Health Plan (Helman 1979: ii). The report recommended two major reforms: a restructuring of the ‘service role’ and a complete revision of the training programme for health workers. It suggested to the Secretariat that there was “an urgent need to respond to any requests emanating from the Seychelles to assist with the detail of these new programmes” (Helman 1979: iv).

At some point in 1979, it was also agreed with the Secretariat that a Manpower Planning and Training Adviser sent to Seychelles by the CFTC be placed in the post of Principal Secretary of the Department of Administration and Information – despite the Secretariat’s earlier misgivings, and their expressed “reluctance to fill such sensitive posts in future” (see Section 5.3.1 above). This appointment had originally been extended by 12 months. In a letter dated 10 October 1980, a request is made to the SG to further extend this appointee’s contract by an

additional 12 months, in view of the fact that the appointee had responded 'with enthusiasm' to the call for restructuring the Seychelles Public Service "from the elitist relic of the former regime to becoming a positive and progressive element in our programme for economic and social reform" (State House 1980). The letter goes on to say that the adviser in question "has been with us long enough to know us and our problems" and was therefore fully able to carry through the planned reform measures (State House 1980). The tone of the letter which ends with the expression "warmest personal regards" gives an indication as to the 'quality' of the relationship that existed between the head of the country and the SG of the Commonwealth. A response from the SG dated 17 October and sent by telex, states: "I am glad CFTC technical assistance is proving so helpful to you and willingly agree to extend [adviser] for a further year" (Commonwealth Secretariat 1980: Miscellaneous Correspondence). This is followed on 21 October by a letter confirming the telex message, adding that the adviser's contract was being renewed for a further year as from March 1981 (Commonwealth Secretariat 1980: Miscellaneous Correspondence).

**Figure 5.2: Activities that could be identified for the period 1979 to 1985 and areas of priority (list is non-exhaustive)**



Note: As mentioned above, there are no documents referring to the Commonwealth in the Seychelles National Archives for the period 1978 to 1986. The information above was found in a variety of published material, including the SGs reports, produced by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Sources: Commonwealth Secretariat archives; LSE Library

In mid-1984, the SG of the Commonwealth makes an official visit to Seychelles. As part of his official engagements he attends celebrations marking the 20th anniversary of the SPUP, predecessor of the SPPF, and the only party recognised as legal in the country. He also participates in the seventh anniversary of the 'Liberation', a term used by the one-party state to refer to the coup d'état of 5th June 1977 (The World is taking us seriously 1988: 1). Regarding the SG's

presence at the anniversary of the coup for a number of years after the event and his tendency to, in the words of a representative of one of the opposition parties, “honour and praise the illegal regime” led the same writer to state recently: “in my opinion the Commonwealth is not a reliable partner to rely on to protect our fundamental rights” (Chow 2013).

The examples of cooperation and public support mentioned above are evidence of the good relations which existed between the head of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the head of the country in the early days of the Second Republic. This seems i) to have greatly facilitated the possibilities for assistance from the Commonwealth and ii) to have ensured that the assistance was of such a nature as to fulfil the strategies that the head of government had determined were necessary for the development of the country. In that sense, it can be said that during the period under consideration, the Commonwealth fulfilled, to a great extent, its objectives of supporting development in a member state, and in particular, a small developing island state.

### **5.6.2 Interaction with the Commonwealth during the last five years of the Second Republic**

Seychelles participated in the 1987 CHOGM, which was reported by the press as being stormy “with Britain under fire from other members for its opposition to the use of tougher sanctions against South Africa” (Commonwealth summit ends with Britain isolated over sanctions 1987: 1). Because of the seriousness of the main issue under consideration and the attention that it generated in the media, other decisions that were also made seemed to escape public attention. One of these concerned the situation in Cyprus. As part of its final resolutions, the Commonwealth “repeated its position on Cyprus, condemning the unilateral secession by Turkish Cypriot leaders in 1983 and refusing to recognise their authority” (Commonwealth summit ends with Britain isolated over sanctions 1987: 2). Apartheid in South Africa and the situation on the island of Cyprus were both internal matters for these countries. Whether the Commonwealth’s stance on these issues could be reconciled with the association’s rule of non-interference in ‘domestic disputes’ is not explained in the documentation the researcher had access to, although it is reported that SG Ramphal commented that “although it

was often hard to draw a line on when human rights abuse became of international concern, there were occasions when everyone was aware that that line had been crossed” (Doxey 1989:49). Regardless of possible explanations, the decisions made at the CHOGM were clearly indicative of a shift in perception. This process would culminate in the establishment of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) in 1995, a body composed of representatives of the association, whose responsibility is to bring ‘errant members into line’, often through suspension from Commonwealth meetings and activities (Baird 2008: 1). This seemed to imply that the official stand of non-interference in domestic contentions and disputes was now subordinate to acknowledged ‘errancy’ in terms of disregard for the core principles of the association.

During his third visit to Seychelles, in July 1988, Chief Anyaoku, then Deputy SG, visits the Seychelles in order to prepare for a meeting of Commonwealth senior officials (Senior Officials to meet in Seychelles 1988: 1). He comments that at every visit, he has been “enormously impressed” by the progress made. He adds that he has seen many countries similar to the Seychelles and with similar resources but that he has not seen many that have made “such identifiable progress” (Senior Officials to meet in Seychelles 1988: 2). The report quotes him as saying “I doff my hat to the Seychelles Government and Seychelles people for progressively making this place a little paradise on earth” (Senior Officials to meet in Seychelles 1988: 2).

Shortly thereafter, a Seychellois nurse is elected to the board of a Commonwealth affiliated body, the Commonwealth Nurses Federation for East, Central and Southern Africa, while another official from the Ministry of Health attends the Regional Health Conference held in Arusha, Tanzania where the objective is to review health policies and programmes of Commonwealth countries in the region, as well as to discuss cooperation in the fields of training for health personnel, food and nutrition, drugs and pharmaceuticals, blood products and others.

For the Seychelles/Commonwealth relationship, 1988 ends on a high note, with a senior officials’ meeting attended by representatives from 35 of the 48 Commonwealth countries being held in Seychelles (35 countries attend Seychelles meeting: 2). The SG, who is present, states that the meeting will prepare the way

for the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM the following year, and describes the association as being “healthy, virile and vibrant” (The World is taking us seriously – Ramphal 1988: 1). On the same occasion, he comments that the meeting in Seychelles will give the meeting participants the opportunity to experience the realities of a small state, adding “we have a good grasp of the fact that problems of small countries are not scaled down versions of the problems of big countries” (Seychelles will show realities of smallness 1988:1). The Seychelles chief protocol officer believes that in terms of prestige, this is the most important conference to have been held in the Seychelles so far (Commonwealth official praises Seychelles as conference venue 1988: 1). On the Commonwealth side, the SG comments to the press that the meeting has been “one of the best senior officials meetings” that he had been associated with, and that part of the reason was the environment of Seychelles. (Never a better meeting, says Commonwealth Sec-Gen 1988: 1).

The high level of involvement with the Commonwealth continues well into the Second Republic, and although it was not possible to find complete reports on all the forms of assistance for these years, there is, in addition to the information presented in Figure 5.3, considerable non-documentary evidence of scholarships, study visits, as well as consultancies provided by the Commonwealth in various areas. Some of the scholarships and study visits are referred to by participants in Seychelles who were part of the survey for this study (see Chapter 6), as many of the recipients of these scholarships have progressed to positions of responsibility in the government. It was also not possible to find records showing Seychelles’ participation in the Kuala Lumpur CHOGM of 1989.

**Figure 5.3: Indicative list of Commonwealth activities - 1987 to 1991 (list is non-exhaustive)**



Sources: Seychelles National Archives, Seychelles Nation

### 5.6.3 Achievements of the Second Republic

It is generally agreed that the Second Republic covered a period that saw the country develop and grow in many areas. Even the opposition “has never disputed the achievements” of the SPPF government, especially in the area of social development, “and particularly housing, health and education” (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1991-UNHCR website). This source also reports that at the beginning of the 1990s, the gross national product (GNP) per capita was estimated at US\$5,000 and that this surpassed the GNP per capita of some

European countries, including Portugal (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1991-UNHCR website).

The information available, as described above, indicates that the Commonwealth played an important role as facilitator and supporter of the country's development during this period of time. It also i) provided Seychelles with an international platform for pushing forward a special agenda for small states, ii) allowed the country to connect bilaterally with other Commonwealth members, and iii) helped to boost the country's visibility and possibly, the budding tourism industry, by providing opportunities for connecting with and learning from other similar states, and by the organization of a high-level Commonwealth meetings in Seychelles. Furthermore, and as mentioned earlier, there are signs that the effects of this role might have been enhanced by the good relations that existed between the country's head of state and the Commonwealth SG of the day.

## **5.7 COMMONWEALTH SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL TRANSITION TO A MULTIPARTY SYSTEM**

### **5.7.1 Towards political pluralism**

A decision is taken at the 1991 congress of the SPPF to re-introduce a multi-party system. The explanation given officially was that "as the Cold War came to an end and countries clamored for changes, more particularly for representative democracies, the time came for Seychelles also to embark on a new road" (Parti Lepep 2012).

In an article on foreign and democracy promotion Brown (2005:182) comments that, in his view, changes at that level were brought about by the fact that donors who were no longer in grave need of strategic alliances in the developing world, were becoming more involved in the domestic matters of weaker states. According to him, "the 1990s saw the rapid growth of democracy promotion as bilateral and multilateral donors reformulated their priorities for assistance" (Brown 2005: 182). He reports that new guidelines and policies from major donors, including the Americans, British, Canadians, Dutch, French, Germans and others,



took into account political liberalisation. The European Community, as it was then known, “changed its rules to enable it to take into account a country’s political system when determining aid levels”. (Brown 2005: 182). Bratton and van de Walle’s (1997: 219) study of transitions from authoritarian regimes – military, autocratic or single party rule – to democracy in African countries found that “among the 25 cases of politically conditioned aid in Africa”, eight had resulted in a democratic transition, one of them being the Seychelles.

As hinted at by Nieuwkerk (2003:3), the decision to move to multi-party politics in Seychelles could be seen in this context as a pragmatic decision by a small, remote island state with few obvious natural resources, and with a great level of dependency on external help, to survive and to avoid losing the development gains made in the first fifteen or so, years of independence.

The decision to introduce multi-party politics in Seychelles is made nearly two years after a new SG, Chief Emeka Anyaoku, had taken over the leadership of the Commonwealth Secretariat. In a relatively recent speech (April 2012), Chief Anyaoku recalled that, during his tenure, he faced a number of challenges in several member states while trying to promote the association’s fundamental principles and its commitment to democracy and good governance, including human rights and human development, adding that “among these were helping the transition from one-party to multiparty State in Zambia, Seychelles, Tanzania, Ghana and Malawi...” (Anyaoku 2012).

An article in the paper of the Seychelles National Party (Seychelles opposition party), reporting on the Auckland CHOGM in November 1995, claims that the Zimbabwe CHOGM held in 1991, is credited with being ‘a crucial factor’ in persuading the Seychelles head of state “to accept the arrival of multi-party democracy for Seychelles” (The Commonwealth heads of government meeting 1995: 2).

Fourteen years had elapsed from the 1978 Constitutional Commission which, under the guidance of a CFTC funded expert, had declared the one-party state and its rules and structures as an acceptable form of governance for Seychelles, to discussions of the re-introduction of multi-party politics in order to fulfil the

agreed-upon 'fundamental principles' of commitment to democracy and good governance – now understood as requiring the existence of more than one party (Commonwealth Secretariat 1991: 1).

In 1992, the Commonwealth was ready and eager to play an active and involved role in the process of the country's transition to multi-party democracy. In March of that year, it is announced that a "2-man delegation from the Commonwealth arrived in the Republic ... to lay the groundwork for the consultative process on the new constitution based on the multi-party system" and that this mission followed Seychelles' request for Commonwealth assistance in the transition process to pluralism (Commonwealth here to discuss with political parties 1992:1). In addition to the observers, the SG also announces that a legal drafter has been sent by the Secretariat to Seychelles (Commonwealth assisting Seychelles 1992: 2). A few days later, it is also mentioned that i) the Commonwealth mission has been asked to look into sensitive areas of assistance for political parties, ii) there were possibly eight or nine political parties which might be expected to compete in the elections, and iii) an office of Director of Elections was about to be created so that "government would not be seen to be conducting election matters in a biased way" (Delegation asked to look into funding of political parties and air time 1992: 1).

**Figure 5.4: Commonwealth support - 1992 to 1997 (list is non-exhaustive)**

Sources: Seychelles National Archives; Seychelles National Library

**Supporting move to multi-party politics: Commonwealth Secretariat**

- Consultations to prepare for multi-party system
- Commonwealth observers to elections of political parties to be part of Constitutional Commission
- Head of opposition meets with SG Anyaoku
- Commonwealth observers attend referendum on new Constitution
- Commonwealth expert for re-drafting of new Constitution
- Two C'W observers attend referendum on re-drafted Constitution
- Commonwealth observers attend general elections
- Speaker and Clerk of assembly attend a Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding officers meeting in Cyprus

**Supporting move to multi-party politics: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA)**

- Seychelles formally becomes member of CPA
- Clerk of assembly participates in CPA meeting in Swaziland
- Speaker of Seychelles assembly and one member of assembly attend CPA regional conference in Arusha
- Speaker attends CPA Africa Region meeting in Malawi
- Three British MPs visit Seychelles on an exchange visit
- Three members of the assembly attend CPA meeting in Lesotho
- Opposition member from National Assembly attends CPA seminar in London
- Commonwealth symposium for Women Parliamentarians in London
- Ombudsman attends meeting of Commonwealth electoral commissioners in Mozambique

**International meetings/Technical Cooperation**

- Meeting held in Seychelles for scientists and research officers from eastern, central and southern Africa for Commonwealth project on adolescent reproductive health
- Two officials attend Commonwealth meeting of Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs
- Head of state is asked to make lead statement at Commonwealth Summit on Women and Development
- Minister for Finance attends Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting in the Bahamas
- Commonwealth Consultative Group on Technology Mgt. visit s Seychelles
- Seychelles participates in Commonwealth Senior Officials meeting in Pakistan
- Minister for Local Government, Youth and Sports attend Commonwealth Triennial Youth Ministers meeting in Trinidad
- Minister for Health attends Commonwealth Health Ministers meeting in South Africa

**Building international links/cooperation**

- 2 representatives sent to South Africa /Commonwealth Electoral team
- Seychelles and South Africa establish diplomatic relations based on Commonwealth approval of events in SA
- Minister for Foreign Affairs attends CHOGM in Auckland

**Training**

- Seychelles participated in Commonwealth workshop on environment impact assessment in Mauritius
- A CFTC officer visits Seychelles to identify training needs
- Secretary of Seychelles Commonwealth Games association receives a 3-month scholarship in England and Canada

**Official visits**

- Head of Commonwealth Foundation visits Seychelles

### **5.7.2 Commonwealth Secretary-General: “Triumph of democracy in Seychelles”**

After the elections of parties to the Constitutional Commission in July 1992, the chairman of the Commonwealth observer group commented that democracy had triumphed in Seychelles and that the country could count on the support of the Commonwealth “of which Seychelles is an honoured and valued member”, in order to make democracy a permanent reality in the country, in particular by putting the national interest above partisan pursuits (Make democracy permanent 1992: 1). The observers’ report also contains a chapter which describes issues of concern. There are seven items in the list, including the voters list, the conduct of the security forces, the links between Party and State, as well as post-election security (Commonwealth Secretariat 1992: 9).

Three months later, the Commonwealth shows its commitment to the process of transition, by sending a special envoy whose task is “to observe the progress of the transition to multi-party democracy as set out in the calendar” and to report to the Secretary General on the current state of developments (Commonwealth envoy arrives 1992: 1). The envoy meets with the head of state, and the head of the opposition, Mr. J. Mancham, former President ousted in the coup d’état, is also present, after having spent nearly fifteen years in exile. Meetings are also held with other political leaders (Mr. Gaylard meets Mr. Rene, other political leaders 1992: 1). At the end of his mission, the envoy observes that the country is going through a “sensitive and potentially fragile” transition period; he adds that the head of state and the head of the opposition have agreed to the Commonwealth’s proposal to meet shortly and explore points of possible agreement (Transition fragile, envoy calls for continued dialogue 1992: 1). The language used to describe the encounters as well as the situation in the country, is reminiscent of the pre-coalition period of the mid-seventies (see 5.2 above).

Shortly thereafter, in November 1992, a small observer team from the Commonwealth also attends the referendum for acceptance of the new constitution. At the end they openly comment about the voting arrangements, which were praised, and voice the concerns they have regarding the draft constitution, which was according to them, “in effect, formulated by members of

the ruling party following a walk-out by the opposition” and that “this being the case, they felt that the draft fell short of being a consensus document” (Referendum free and fair, say observer group 1992: 2). They also recognised the “historic step” taken by the President and the Government and hoped that the next round in the transition process would foster national reconciliation as Seychelles moves forward on the road to democracy” (Referendum free and fair, say observer group 1992: 2). The new constitution does not get the votes necessary to go through and has to be taken back to the drawing board. An American constitutional expert, Professor Albert Blaustein, who reviewed the proposed constitution at the time, is quoted as saying: “I see only two correct things: the title and the date” (Spotlight 1994: 2).

The Commonwealth support and assistance in the transition to multi-party politics is well documented, and the position of the association is plainly stated and covered by the media at every step of the way. The picture which emerges of the Commonwealth’s role in the process is clear and unambiguous. Nonetheless, the interventions of the Commonwealth are not praised by everyone. The leader of the Democratic Party (DP) believes that the “Commonwealth is taking far more than it can chew with respect to the various transitions from one-party to multi-party democracy on the world stage” (Commonwealth is taking far more than it can chew – Mr. Mancham 1992: 1). He goes on to state that “whilst the goodwill prevalent within the Secretariat is appreciated and respected, in view of the limited human and financial resources available within the organization, they may well end up not doing a proper job anywhere” adding that the organization had the opportunity to play a meaningful role in Seychelles, but “because they are stretching their resources so thinly, they seem unable to maintain a continuous presence which could contribute in keeping alive a dialogue between the contending factions” (Commonwealth is taking far more than it can chew – Mr. Mancham 1992: 1). The message is that the Commonwealth may have fallen short of the opposition parties’ expectations.

Figure 5.4 shows that the Commonwealth provided a considerable amount of direct and multilateral assistance in a wide range of areas during that period, but in formal documentation, these activities become nearly invisible, shadowed by the important political changes taking place in the country. The areas of assistance

also reflect the new priorities of the association according to the Harare Declaration: democracy, democratic processes and institutions (which reflect national circumstances), the rule of law as well as just and honest government, (Commonwealth Secretariat 1991: 1).

### **5.7.3 Restoration of the multi-party system**

Once more, in July 1993, a Commonwealth observer group is dispatched to Seychelles to observe the general elections which are won by the SPPF. SG Anyaoku sends his congratulations to the “Government and people of Seychelles on the successful and exemplary completion of the transition process which has restored multi-party democracy to their country” (The people win again 1993: 1). He also adds that this is a proud moment for the Commonwealth as they have assisted Seychelles throughout the transition period.

In the months that follow the successful conduct of the elections, Seychelles is asked to either present some of its successes at Commonwealth meetings, or to help train others about to undergo elections, or to act as observers in countries where elections are being held (Seychellois Women ahead in Development 1993: 2; Mr. Gappy at South African elections 1994: 2; Mr. Sauzier to form part of Commonwealth Observer group 1994: 2).

The Government of Seychelles invited the SG to visit the country in September 1994. Upon his arrival the SG conveys the Commonwealth Secretariat's satisfaction with the political transition in the country, adding that the Commonwealth had been involved in 12 democratic national elections during the previous years (Chief Anyaoku arrives 1994: 1). After a two-day visit and many meetings, the SG also expresses the hope that Seychelles' smooth transition to multi-party politics as well as the country's future progress would “serve as an example and a spur to other Commonwealth countries” which had not yet moved to democratic politics (On the right track – Anyaoku 1994: 1). He adds that he is aware of the problems that exist in the country but that, after talking with various leaders, he is confident that Seychelles is “on the right track” and that these problems will be overcome with time (On the right track – Anyaoku 1994: 1). By making the transition to multi-party politics, Seychelles, it would seem, had

attained a relatively 'high-regard status' possibly within the Commonwealth, but certainly within the Secretariat. Nonetheless, the Commonwealth Observers for the 1993 elections had clearly reported on how an earlier group of observers had been inundated with complaints from the opposition parties that "the Government had not done enough to create a climate in which multi-party politics could prosper" (Commonwealth Secretariat 1993:5).

At least one of the opposition parties, the Seychelles National Party (SNP), commented on the fact that the Commonwealth, while pronouncing the 1993 elections free and fair, had also made statements regarding changes that needed to be made to ensure that the democratic system became firmly rooted (Chief Emeka's visit: Assessing Democracy? 1994: 2). Bratton and van de Walle (1997: 206) note that in three of the countries undergoing political transition at the time, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Seychelles, the incumbent had been returned to power and "the losers did not question the fairness of the election". But a year after the elections, the SNP was at pains to point out that many of the expectations for democratic change remained unfulfilled (Chief Emeka's visit: Assessing Democracy? 1994: 2). They clearly stated their belief that the Commonwealth, as the main "guarantor of the electoral process", was morally bound to continue to use its influence to "prod the Seychelles government onto the path of an open democracy and good governance". They listed a number of areas where, in their view, the SPPF party was still functioning as it was during the one-party state era: i) at district government level - where there were no openings for other political parties; ii) in the use of executive control to support party activities and aims, iii) in the refusal to relinquish control of the trade union movement and putting obstacles to the formation of independent workers organizations, and iv) by manipulating the media - through editorial control of the only broadcasting station (Chief Emeka's visit: Assessing Democracy? 1994: 2).

These complaints echo some of the findings of Brown's (2005) study on foreign aid and democracy promotion in Africa. This report states that when pressure was applied on authoritarian regimes to move to democratic politics in the late 1980s and in the 1990s, "many African governments quickly learned how to make the minimum necessary reforms to retain their levels of aid: allowing opposition parties to compete, but not win; permitting an independent press to operate, but not freely;

allowing civic groups to function, but not effectively; and consenting that elections be held, but not replace the ruling party” (2005: 184). Bratton and Van de Walle (1994: 454) put forward the idea that authoritarian leaders who have been in power for long periods of time “establish rules about who may participate in public decisions and the amount of political competition allowed. Taken together, these rules constitute a political regime... [which] determines whether elites and masses can arrive at new rules of political interaction, that is, whether transition will be democratic”. As recently as 2011, an article entitled Democracy without Freedom in AfricaThinkPress commented that the dominance of the media, the strong media presence of the current leader of the country, and the dearth of communication facilities available to the opposition, denied “the possibility of debate to the electorate – a fundamental requirement for democracy”, and the fact that competing points of view were not visible meant that no effective choice could be made (Carson 2011).

There is no evidence that the Commonwealth had either the means, the interest, or at that point in time, the mandate, to deal with such multi-layered situations, if they did exist in Seychelles. Instead, the Secretariat continued to ‘encourage’ the establishment of democratic principles through various direct and indirect means, for example, by actively supporting the training and development of the whole National Assembly, including the Speaker, the Clerk and the Members (see Figure 5.4).

In May 1994, it was reported in the paper of the SPPF party, that a seminar had been organised for the members of the Seychelles National Assembly and that representatives of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), an organization which had evolved with the Commonwealth and which had established an independent secretariat in 1948 (CPA website 2012), were attending the seminar. At this very opportune event, the re-entry of Seychelles into the CPA had been voted – and one of the foreign CPA delegates attending the meeting had made a strong statement to the effect that an elected member of parliament represented more than just his party – that he, in fact, represented the nation (MP represents a nation more than his party, says CPA delegate 1994: 3). This was the first of a series of collaborative efforts between the CPA and the Seychelles National Assembly over the subsequent years (see Figure 5.4).



#### **5.7.4 Commonwealth involvement in the evolution of the Seychelles multi-party system**

Three years after the first multiparty elections in 1993, the SG was invited to attend the country's National Day celebration during which a change of flag, a new national anthem and other new national symbols were meant to complete the transition from the second republic (one party system) to a third republic based on democratic principles. The SG stated that the Commonwealth viewed Seychelles transition to multi-party democracy with 'a great deal of admiration' as the process had been completed with 'not many headaches'. He added that he was 'pleased with his organization's involvement in the Seychelles transition process and "equally happy with Seychelles contribution to other countries transition process" (Commonwealth views process with admiration 1996: 1). The comments made by the SG about Seychelles performance were reported in the country extensively (High praise from Commonwealth 1996: 1; Chief Anyaoku thanks Seychelles 1996: 1; Commonwealth views process with admiration 1996: 1; Chief Anyaoku moved by events 1996: 3) but it was not possible to find records of public declarations made by Seychellois government leaders and officials commenting on the support provided by the Commonwealth during the process of transition.

At the following elections, in 1998, the Commonwealth once more sends observers. These elections had earlier been described by Chief Anyaoku as the 'most important ones' because according to him, it was only at the second elections after the return of democracy that it would be possible to assess whether the new political institutions were functioning properly (The next general elections are the most important ones 1996: 1).

According to a report in the press, the leader of the United Opposition, Mr. W. Ramkalawan had visited the SG in December 1997 to reiterate the necessity of having Commonwealth observers at the elections, pointing out some factors which, from his point of view, could be a 'setback to the process of democratization', listing political victimisation, lack of consultation and threats to the free press (Commonwealth observers at next year elections 1997: 1). It is also reported that State House had confirmed that the current president, who was a running candidate at the coming elections, would eventually step down in favour of

the Vice-President (State House confirms President René will soon step down in favour of James Michel 1997: 1). This was in line with a 1995 Constitutional amendment which stated that the Vice-President “discharges the duties of the President when the President is temporarily absent or leaves office” (Constitutional Amendments – the details 1996: 3). The opposition party’s concern, as reported, was that while all the steps in the handover process were in line with constitutional requirements, the arrangements for the handover of power had already been made and announced prior to elections and final knowledge of the people’s choice. As it was, the handing over of power did not take place until 2004, three years after early elections were called in 2001.

On the ground, and despite the rhetoric, the situation regarding democracy in Seychelles has changed little as evidenced by the fate of the electoral reform report recently submitted to the executive. A commitment was made by Government, after the 2011 elections, to start work on electoral reforms. This researcher was also informed by one of the elite interviewees that the Commonwealth had provided the services of an expert for a year to work with a locally appointed commission to draft a report recommending possible reforms. In January 2014, it was announced in the public media that the report had been received and that the Government had made amendments to the recommendations – as they felt were necessary. The Attorney-General appeared on the news during the second week of that month to confirm that it was the right of the executive to make such amendments. The amendments themselves caused great consternation in various quarters. One newspaper had this to say about the matter “brilliant brains toiled and the recommendations were handed over... but [the government] had other plans” (James Michel slams door shut on reconciliation 2014: 5). One of the major changes deplored by the opposition parties, for example, was the fact that the Public Order Act as amended by Government had suppressed even more basic rights than in the past, giving, for example, new powers of search and confiscation to customs, the police, the drug enforcement agency and immigration officers, in a way that “opposes all the recommendations proposed by the Electoral Reform Commission” (Opposition parties deplore the POA 2014: 3). Two opposition leaders jointly appeared on the news to formally voice their disagreement with the government’s decisions. They

further stated that they would take a case to the Constitutional Court to challenge the constitutionality of the new POA (Opposition parties deplore the POA 2014: 3).

## **5.8 SEYCHELLES AND THE COMMONWEALTH DURING THE FIRST DECADE OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Some problems arose in the middle of the first decade of the new century, when it became apparent that Seychelles had made no pledges to the Commonwealth for four years and was deemed to be in breach of the Abuja guidelines (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009f: 19) which stipulate that when a country is in arrears for more than one year, excluding the current year, the member can be disqualified from receiving assistance (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009f:19). A payment plan for the Commonwealth Secretariat arrears was eventually agreed upon and Seychelles continued to have access to full membership and benefits rights. There was later a lapse in making payments according to the agreed plan and Seychelles was informed that it would be disqualified from receiving assistance if payment was not made by 30 June 2006 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2008: 19). These problems did not seem to have had a very negative impact on cooperation between Seychelles and the Commonwealth. Figure 5.5, which gives details of some of the Commonwealth assistance activities, shows continued growth in the number and range of activities.

In 2008 as a result of serious economic problems, broad reforms were introduced to “primarily address serious balance of payments and external debts difficulties” under a two-year IMF programme of economic and governance restructuring (See also section 3.4.5 in Chapter 3). This included strengthening financial management, institutionalising higher governance standards, downsizing the public sector, reforming the taxation system, increasing support to the financial system, and improving the business environment (Macroeconomic Reform Programme, 2011: 1). In February 2012 a workshop, organised jointly by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Government of Seychelles, was held in Seychelles on Debt Sustainability Analysis. The workshop, which brought together 16 senior and executive government officials from the Ministry of Finance, the Central Bank of Seychelles and the National Bureau of Statistics, “centred on exposing participants to the Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) framework used by

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank in determining the debt situation of their member countries” (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012d). The CFTC reports on Seychelles’ use of the CS-DRMS200+ debt management and recording programme (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008: 12), a reportedly very successful Commonwealth Debt Management software launched in 2005 and used in 60 countries, including non-Commonwealth countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Afghanistan (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009e), but not a single senior official in the Ministry of Finance who was either contacted during the preparation of the research proposal, or who agreed to be respondents in the survey for this study, mentions the existence or use of the programme, nor do they mention the fact that support was received from the Commonwealth in this area. It is therefore not possible to gauge the value of this software to the managers of the country’s finances.

In 2011 a decision was made to reform crucial aspects of the political process in the country through the establishment of an Electoral Commission, thus implementing a recommendation made by several Commonwealth Observer groups who attended elections in the Seychelles. (Commonwealth Secretariat 2011b)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs states that Seychelles had received the equivalent of GBP 400,000 worth of benefits through the CFTC from 2001 to 2012.<sup>17</sup> The document also claims that this amount was 14 times the country’s contribution to CFTC during that same period of time (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012: no page number). Technical assistance activities undertaken by the Commonwealth during the last 10 to 12 years in favour of Seychelles are numerous, as are examples of Seychelles participation in Commonwealth funded meetings or training overseas. The list presented in Figure 5.5 offers, in summary form, examples of such activities under categories which indicate areas of focus. A more detailed list can be found in Annex 3.

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<sup>17</sup> It should be noted that the Commonwealth Secretariat-Seychelles Technical Co-operation Framework quotes a figure of GBP 423,476 for the period 2000/01 to 2005/06 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009f:9).

**Figure 5.5: Commonwealth support 2000 - 2012 and ongoing (list is non-exhaustive)**



Sources: Commonwealth Secretariat; Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs

It should be noted that this Figure does not include Commonwealth support which may have been provided through regional organizations of which Seychelles is a member, such as the African Union (AU), the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), nor does it include the attendance of Commonwealth observers at elections in 2006 and 2011. In view of the fact that several major Commonwealth assistance projects implemented during the last decade can potentially have a strong impact on overall development in Seychelles, they are described more fully in section 5.10.

## **5.9 SEYCHELLES CHAMPIONING THE CAUSE OF SMALL ISLAND STATES FROM THE COMMONWEALTH PLATFORM**

### **5.9.1 Commonwealth's special responsibilities to small island states**

The involvement of Seychelles in the work which aimed at putting the plight of small island states on the global agenda started in the mid- to late-1970s and has continued throughout the years.

In April 1979 the Secretariat organised a meeting of Commonwealth officials on the association's 'special responsibilities to small states' at Marlborough House. The record of the meeting states that "the Commonwealth had placed first priority on assisting dependencies to attain independence but now the time had come for a shift in focus from pre-independence to post-independence assistance" (Commonwealth Secretariat Archives 1979a: 170/150/01) although no attempt is made to distinguish between the two types of assistance. Seychelles was represented at the officials' meeting by an economist from the Department of Economic Development and Housing whose contribution to the meeting focussed on the need to put "special emphasis" on small remote island states (Commonwealth Secretariat 1979a: 170/150/01). Meeting discussions, which included an attempt to define what the term 'small states' should mean, provided background information for a memorandum presented by the SG to the Heads of Government later in the year (Commonwealth Secretariat 1979a: 170/150/01).

The memorandum presented at the August 1979 CHOGM in Lusaka – ‘A programme of action to assist the island developing and other specially disadvantaged countries of the Commonwealth’ (Commonwealth Secretariat 1979b: 170/02) – includes most of the issues that the Seychelles had raised at earlier Commonwealth meetings on the special needs of small island states (see Section 5.3.2). The momentum created by the Lusaka CHOGM led to a conference organised with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat on ‘The Island States of the Pacific and Indian Oceans: Anatomy of Development’. Representatives attending the conference considered the possibility of establishing an association of small island states, and a small committee was set up to formulate proposals and to commission various studies. The representative of Seychelles is elected as one of the four member states representatives in the committee, which also included three members from the Commonwealth Secretariat and two representatives from UN bodies (Commonwealth Secretariat 1979c: 2). In an email exchange with the researcher this (now retired) representative stated that not much came out of the work of the committee and that there was little follow-up because of other priorities and the cost involved in follow up (Grandcourt 2012).

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) was eventually set up about 12 years later (in 1991), hosted by the UN and operating through countries’ resident missions. The association has neither a secretariat nor a Charter (AOSIS website: About AOSIS). The Commonwealth Secretariat works closely with the association – as reported in the project examples page of the Commonwealth website (Commonwealth Secretariat 2013a).

### **5.9.2 Seychelles continued efforts to bring attention to the plight of SIDS**

After the 1987 CHOGM in Canada, it is reported that the President of Seychelles had expressed the hope that larger Commonwealth countries had, over time, become ‘more appreciative’ of small states’ problems (Commonwealth summit ends with Britain isolated over sanctions 1987: 1). The article quotes the head of state as saying that the Seychelles “have continuously argued abroad that the needs and problems of small states just cannot be equated with those of large countries” (Commonwealth summit ends with Britain isolated over sanctions 1987:

1). He adds that the financial support needed to develop a small state should not be measured in proportion to its size or the size of its population. He also states his belief that the Commonwealth SG and the heads of Government at the summit have fully understood “what we are trying to say” and that “we have achieved success for our cause” (Commonwealth summit ends with Britain isolated over sanctions 1987: 1).

This way of thinking is reflected in the work later done by Commonwealth scholars on the development of a vulnerability index for small and vulnerable states. The proposed index “was intended to measure the precariousness of states, arising from their economic exposure, lack of protection and peripherality” (Briguglio undated: 2). Professor Lino Briguglio who pioneered some of the work in this area provides the following justification: “In spite of [acknowledged constraints of SIDS], many small states register relatively high GNP per capita, when compared to other developing countries, giving the impression of economic strength, when in reality these economies tend to be very fragile and their success dependent to a very high degree on conditions outside their control” (Briguglio undated: 2). He confirms that the main objective of the index was to “highlight the reality that economic success of many small states often hides their underlying economic fragility” (Briguglio undated: 2). A national report prepared in 2013 states that there is still the need for a Vulnerability Index to be finalised and accepted, implying that this is still work in progress and that no index has yet been accepted and adopted for use internationally (Republic of Seychelles 2013: 25).

At the 1995 CHOGM held in New Zealand, Seychelles is represented by the Minister for Foreign Affairs who reports that she had “pushed for the inclusion of three important points where small island states were concerned” and that these were later included in the formal CHOGM communiqué. The Minister had also called on the Commonwealth to complete the work being done on the Vulnerability Index so that the new measures could be formalised and established (Seychelles agrees to general consensus on Nigeria issue 1995: 1). She comments that it was Seychelles who had taken the initiative to push forward the plight of small island states in international forums, and that “for this, Seychelles [is] now regarded as the spokesperson” (Seychelles agrees to general consensus on Nigeria issue 1995: 1).



More recent examples of Seychelles voicing the concerns of SIDS include Mr James Michel's (President of the Seychelles) address at the 2005 Small Islands Developing States meeting in Mauritius convened by the UN. He acknowledged the work being done by the UN, the World Bank and the Commonwealth, adding that nonetheless, there was still a long way to go before workable mechanisms were in place to support the development of SIDS (President calls for new approach to foreign aid 2005: 1). After the more recent 2011 CHOGM, Mr. Michel commented that Commonwealth leaders have recognised the inherent vulnerabilities of SIDS and their need for specific development mechanisms, but he concluded by saying that "as we approach Rio 2012... SIDS are more in debt, more vulnerable and with less finance than in 1992" (Leaders recognise vulnerabilities of small island states 2011: 1). This sentiment was also expressed by the UN when the five-year review of the Mauritius Strategy "concluded that small island developing states have made less progress than most other groupings, or even regressed, in economic terms of poverty reduction and debt sustainability" (UN 2014d: Item 178), indicating that the efforts of international agencies to improve the lot of SIDS have not yielded the expected results.

#### **5.10 MEDIUM TERM AND LONG TERM COMMONWEALTH SUPPORT TO SOME KEY DEVELOPMENT AREAS IN SEYCHELLES**

As can be seen from the foregoing, Commonwealth support to the Republic of Seychelles has been varied but constant. In view of the fact that, according to Commonwealth operating principles, most of the actions and interventions were responses to requests from the country itself, these reflect ongoing concerns as well as areas of priority of the government during particular periods of time.

It is clearly apparent that the level of assistance has increased over the years, possibly according to the development needs of Seychelles, although it could be noted that a considerable proportion of the assistance tended to be of the one-off variety with relatively narrow areas of focus and maybe, correspondingly limited impact. On the other hand, some of it was long-term, sustained over a number of years, and producing rather remarkable results. Examples of the latter category are highlighted below.

### 5.10.1 Delimitation of maritime boundaries

The Commonwealth has assisted Seychelles over the years in the area of delimitation of maritime boundaries. A request was first made in 1996 to the Commonwealth Secretariat for assistance regarding maritime boundary matters. A workshop was organized by ComSec in March 1997 for senior officials in Seychelles, and the services of a hydrographic expert were made available (Commonwealth Secretariat 2000: Table 1, Seychelles Country Specific Projects). There is also a reference to a course of study leading to an MA International Boundaries being offered to a Seychellois national for the year 2000-2001 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002: Table 11(a)<sup>18</sup>. Another reference to Commonwealth involvement shows that in the 2000/2001 financial year, slightly over four and a half thousand British pounds had been allocated to an item with the name 'Maritime Boundary Delimitation' and that the following year (2001/2002) seven thousand four hundred and thirty eight pounds had been spent on another workshop on Maritime Boundary in Seychelles (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009f: 24).

In 2009 a joint Seychelles and Mauritius Submission of the Extended Shelf of the Mascarene Plateau Region was made to the UN Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012: no page number). The submission would make it possible for the two countries to have exclusive access to additional areas of seabed resources such as minerals, oil and gas, among others (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009h). This event was described by a Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth as ground breaking, as it was the first such submission "to be lodged by any country in the African or Indian Ocean regions ... it was also the first submission to be developed collaboratively by two Small Island States" (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009h). On the same occasion, a representative from the Seychelles stated that developing and lodging the submission had been made possible through support given by the Commonwealth Secretariat (Commonwealth Secretariat 2009h). The United Nations endorsed the joint submission in April 2011 (Mauritius and Seychelles sign Treaty 2012: 1).

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<sup>18</sup> One of the survey respondents stated in his completed questionnaire that he was sponsored by the Commonwealth for a course of study leading to an MA in International Boundaries at the University of Durham during the stated period of time.

In March 2012, the President of Seychelles and the Prime Minister of Mauritius signed a treaty which provided for the joint management of a vast area of seabed in the western part of the Indian Ocean, described by a Commonwealth officer as ‘the largest area of maritime space to be jointly managed anywhere in the world’ (Mauritius and Seychelles sign Treaty 2012: 1). It was confirmed that the Commonwealth was (at the time of writing) “trying to help Mauritius and Seychelles to jointly manage the area” and that this was quite a complicated process (Brien 2012).

In addition to the above and partly as a result of the support provided by the Commonwealth, the Seychelles, independently, was able to present a second submission to the UN on the limits of the Continental shelf concerning the Northern Plateau. The Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs explains that jurisdiction over an extended continental shelf makes it possible for the country to explore and exploit resources in that area and to preserve that environment, independent of other matters associated to an extended continental shelf (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012: section 4.1.13). The Commonwealth is also currently providing assistance for the development of the Aldabra Region extended continental shelf submission (Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012: section 4.1.13).

All of the above point to a national policy approach geared towards the expansion of the Seychelles maritime area of control and, therefore, access to resources that can be exploited within that territory. It seems clear that the long-term support of the Commonwealth was an essential determining factor in the success of these various national decisions and actions.

### **5.10.2 Public Administration**

The Commonwealth has provided assistance towards policy development, institution- and capacity-building within the Seychelles public sector throughout the years, from 1976 onwards.

As seen earlier (see Section 6.1), it was a Commonwealth advisor who, on being appointed Principal Secretary of the Department of Administration and Information (subsequently the Ministry of Administration and Political Organization), implemented the restructuring of the Seychelles public service and introduced new Terms and Conditions of Service and a Staff Performance Appraisal Review in the late 70s and early 80s. He also worked on the setting up of a Staff Development Division whose main objective was to carry out manpower planning and training at national level (State House 1980: 2). In the mid-1980s, another Commonwealth consultant spent time within the Department of Administration in Seychelles to write the first Seychelles Public Service Orders (Personal observation – as a young employee of the department who shared an office with the consultant in question).

Some years later, the Commonwealth sent a specialist in Human Resource Development (HRD) to assist the Manpower Division in the preparation of a National Human Resource Development Plan, a project being implemented with the help of the UNDP. This plan, which was completed in 1994, has been updated and revised a few times, and in 2005, the Commonwealth again provided technical assistance in this area, in order to help with the formulation of the National HRD Policy (Confait 2009).

As from 2005, the Commonwealth was also involved in a two-tier project for a review of the public sector salary structure. The first phase of the project started in February 2005 and ended in March 2006. Its aim was to assess the situation of wages in the public sector. At the end of that assessment period it was found that there were a number of systemic weaknesses that had caused salary administration in this sector to become less transparent and less equitable (Republic of Seychelles, undated: 1). Phase 2 of the salary review project started in February 2008 and was completed in 2010. The approach taken was to attempt to involve as many of the stakeholders as possible in the process. A project implementation unit (PIU) was set up and received training that would enable them to discharge their duty. Members of Cabinet received briefings, as did the administrative heads of ministries and parastatals - Principal Secretaries and CEOs. In addition, 110 HR directors and officers from the public sector were trained with the expectation that they would act as change agents in their

respective organizations. The work done during the second phase included job analysis and documentation, job evaluation, job classification and re-grading, off-loading of job holders on to the new 20 grade salary structure and re-drafting of human resource management policies (Republic of Seychelles, undated: 2). The second phase of the project was being carried out when the government launched the economic reform programme at the end of 2008. The project is mentioned in the 2009 Budget address made by the Minister of Finance on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2008, under the caption "Wage Grid". The address stated that among other benefits that would result from the salary review, "a more flexible and transparent wage grid will be adopted. It will provide for an average salary increase of 4.3% within the public sector. Some 77% of workers will get a pay rise, depending on their base salary and policies to be established on how the increases are to be administered" (Minister of Finance Danny Faure 2008: 16).

### **5.10.3 Education**

The Seychelles education sector has benefitted from Commonwealth assistance in a wide range of areas. Two of the most notable assisted projects are the School Improvement Programme and the Open Schooling Project.

#### **5.10.3.1 The School Improvement Programme**

The School Improvement Programme was launched in Seychelles' primary and secondary schools in 1995. According to Purvis (2007: 17) this was done with the "support and assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat which, through its Donors to African Education Programme, contributes to the work of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)". Purvis points out that the Development of Education in Africa (DEA) concept originated in 1988 when the Commonwealth Secretariat brought together a 'loose consortium of international agencies and representatives of African ministries of education". The DEA established nine working groups composed of DEA representatives and African education professionals. One of these worked on initiatives aimed at improving teacher morale and motivation, as well as the professionalization of, and support to, teachers. In a colloquium held in 1993, this working group set up a programme called Teacher Management and Support (TMS). This approach

included the setting up of country working groups to develop action plans, and it was “through the TMS programme that the Seychelles School Improvement Programme (SIP) was born” (Purvis 2007: 62/63).

In the late 1990s the DEA evolved into the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), an organization with a broader mandate. The ADEA co-ordinates the work of ten working groups one of which is Teacher Education and Management Support (TEMS), an expanded version of TMS, whose work is led by the Commonwealth Secretariat. Purvis (2007: 65) notes that the activities promoting networking and professional exchange, among others, have given rise to various synergies with other Commonwealth Secretariat projects.

An evaluation of the Seychelles SIP was carried out in 2001 by the Seychelles Ministry of Education and the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) of South Africa, in primary schools. It found a number of successes, especially in terms of providing a common vision for the school community, greater staff involvement in school improvement activities, and increased collaboration among and within schools (Purvis 2007: 10) although the author quoted does point out that some aspects could not be evaluated because previous data that could be used as a benchmark did not exist.

Purvis’s own assessment is that “ten years on, the Programme has become fully integrated into the state school system and, in the views of most teachers, senior management team members and Ministry-based SIP leaders, it has brought about certain far reaching and long term changes in the schools” (Purvis 2007: 318).

#### 5.10.3.2 Open Schooling Project

Another Commonwealth-led project which seems to have had positive results for Seychelles is the Open Schooling Project initiated and coordinated by the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), in 2009. It involved the development of Open and Distance Learning (ODL) materials for secondary schools in 20 subjects in 6 countries. Seychelles was given the task of coordinating the development of modules for the science topics and Social and Life Skills education. There were 54 modules to be done but even though Seychelles had originally agreed to do 18

of those, only 10 modules had been completed by mid-2012 even though the project had ended in March 2012. The project, which was under the responsibility of the National Institute for Education (NIE), was meant to build capacity in curriculum development. Due to re-organization during the same period to time, the NIE which was part of the Ministry of Education in the public sector was moved to the University of Seychelles whose legal nature is that of a 'foundation'. As a consequence of this change of status staff levels went down and the Seychelles team was unable to complete the work on time. The Seychelles was still completing its part (Souffe 2012) when an interview with the national team leader took place in August 2012.

The Commonwealth helped through the provision of two consultants from Namibia who each visited Seychelles for two weeks. The Commonwealth also provided internet access for those working on the project by paying for a home-based internet account for a number of months. Local staff were given one day per week to work on the project and used local facilities. External costs, such as those covering attendance at meetings overseas, were met by the Commonwealth. It is possible that these arrangements were meant to encourage cost-sharing with the intention of creating a greater sense of ownership of the project by the participants – something which, according to the comments made during the interview, seems to have worked.

There was a steering committee from participating countries, and a local team in each country. All teams were directly responsible to the Commonwealth Coordinator. The work was copied (by email) to everyone participating in the project, and there were telephone conferences when necessary. According to the Seychelles team leader, the arrangements worked because they included both 'support and pressure', an indication that a clear structure for operating and for communicating created a positive work environment. A monitoring mechanism was also in place with set targets and deadlines, and the work was edited by experts.

The project gave a group of nine Seychellois educators and curriculum developers the opportunity to learn how to develop and write ODL materials. The project also helped to develop IT skills for those involved. Additionally it made it possible for

some to attend meetings with other curriculum developers from the region in meetings held in Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Lesotho, thus allowing a wider sharing of information and the possibility to network. These meetings were especially useful for participants because, according to the Seychellois representative, the COL organisers helped to create a supportive environment “with all contributing and supporting a meeting of peers” (Souffe 2012). The emphasis on the kind of supportive environment that was created showed that this particular factor was greatly valued by participants.

This project was considered very worthwhile overall with the Seychelles country team leader stating that he would not hesitate to participate in a similar project again. It was also felt that there was now a need to conduct appropriate training for teachers so as to enable them to use the ODL material to complement the conventional system in place.

#### **5.10.4 Petroleum sector – an area of great potential for the Seychelles**

One of the areas to receive what can be described as long-term Commonwealth assistance, is the petroleum sector. The earliest mention of assistance to Seychelles in this area dates back to 1977 (Commonwealth Secretariat 1977: 2009/070). The 1985 report of the SG states that the Commonwealth Secretariat had provided advice on petroleum development to Seychelles – ‘over the past two years’ (Commonwealth Secretariat 1985: 83), although an archival document dating from 1981 indicates that the Secretariat had also provided advice on Petroleum Activities to Seychelles during the period 1979 – 1981 (Commonwealth Secretariat 1981: 16). An internal report dated 2000 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2000: Table 1, Seychelles Country Specific Projects) indicates that there was at the time an on-going project which had started in January 1990, providing assistance to Seychelles for the updating of petroleum regulations. A subsequent report prepared in 2002 (Commonwealth Secretariat 2002: Table 1, Seychelles Country Specific Projects) mentions another on-going project of assistance on the exploration and development of petroleum resources, which had started in September 1992.



A specialist at the Commonwealth Secretariat states that, to this day, the Seychelles receives assistance from the Commonwealth in the area of offshore performance in the petroleum sector. The assistance covers exploration, the legal implications of such activities as well as the economic factors linked to such activities (Brien 2012). This is confirmed in an article dated March 2013, by the head of PetroSeychelles who states that the government had sought the help of several organizations in order to modernise some aspects of its model petroleum agreement, quoting the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat, which “has been assisting us for many years...” (Seychelles to invite oil firm bids soon 2013). According to the same source, two oil exploration companies are already carrying out exploration and one of them has a drilling commitment. After the month of April 2013, it will be possible for other oil companies to make proposals to explore and exploit areas within the Seychelles maritime territory. The head of PetroSeychelles added that “after the promising oil and gas discoveries in eastern Africa, the Seychelles potential became more attractive prompting us to go back to the drawing board for better gains if we find oil” (Seychelles to invite oil firm bids soon 2013). It is clear that finding petroleum in Seychelles territorial waters would be a boon to the economy of the country, it is just as clear that Seychelles is eager to continue prospecting and that the Commonwealth has been supportive of this effort.

## **5.11 SUMMARY**

The evidence presented in this chapter clearly indicates that the Commonwealth, in its various guises, has been a close and responsive collaborator in many of the Seychelles development efforts, although the collaboration has not always satisfied the expectations of various stakeholders – particularly in the political arena. The provision of support and assistance from the association which started just prior to independence in 1976 has continued and grown over time, with adjustments being made to changing circumstances.

When the collaboration first started, it seemed to attract much public attention and most of the relevant activities carried out by the Commonwealth were widely reported in the media. This was also the case for the period of transition back to multi-party politics in the early to mid-1990s. Collaboration also seems to have

worked best when there were relatively close 'personal' links between specific individuals in the Seychelles government and individuals in the various Commonwealth organizations.

The Commonwealth has, inter alia, assisted in the drafting of two constitutions as well as in the drafting and setting up of the country's legal framework; it has actively assisted in the setting-up of various administrative structures in the newly independent country's public sector; it has, very recently, been involved in the drafting of recommendations for electoral reforms; it has also responded to the request of the Seychelles government to provide expert assistance to develop key sectors of the economy and to realise possibilities that exist to expand Seychelles territorial control of marine territory for the dual purpose of exploitation and preservation.

In the area of people development, the Commonwealth has assisted by regularly offering short-term or longer-term scholarships and study tours to employees of the Seychelles public sector especially, but also to other influential groups such as members of the National Assembly. The evidence indicates that the opportunity for decision-makers to attend regional or international Commonwealth meetings and participate in multi-country Commonwealth projects allowed networking and offered a platform to put forward specific areas of concern for small island states.

The records show that the Commonwealth has been an active and involved actor in the development of the Seychelles, and there are numerous reports, formal and informal, which provide lists of assistance activities, on-going or completed, using them as a measure of the success of the support provided.

Interestingly, none of the documents encountered during this research evaluate or document this collaboration from the point of view of any of the groups of recipients of Commonwealth support in the country. In an attempt to assess the collaboration between Seychelles and the Commonwealth, an important group of recipients, seen as the direct interlocutors of the Commonwealth, was targeted for this study, and their opinion was sought through a survey targeting a representative sample of past and current senior officials heading key organizations and functions in the Seychelles government.

The following chapter will present the views of this group, in terms of their perception of the nature of the Commonwealth and the usefulness of the assistance that it provides to the country – 35 years after Seychelles joined the association.

## CHAPTER 6

### STAKEHOLDERS VIEW OF COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE TO SEYCHELLES: FINDINGS OF A FIELD SURVEY

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

It is often stated that the Commonwealth invests a considerable proportion of its resources to support and promote development in small member states, including small island developing states (McKinnon 2003:7; Sharma 2012:1; McIntyre 2007: 101). The preceding chapter gave a description of the type and amount of technical assistance (TA) and development support given to Seychelles by, and through, Commonwealth bodies since the country's independence.

Based on the understanding that country ownership of development interventions is a key factor in the effectiveness and success of assistance provided by a development organization (Morgan 2002:16), and that wider ownership of TA objectives determine the success of assistance efforts through stakeholder participation, involvement and consensus (Singh: 2002: 48), this chapter presents the findings of a survey of two categories of respondents on their perception of Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles. The first category includes Seychellois current and past government officials as well as leaders from civil society (including non-governmental organizations), the second category comprises officers from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Commonwealth of Learning.<sup>19</sup> Respondents from Seychelles, as described in Chapter 4, were selected for their seniority in terms of both the level, and tenure of posts held. The group of Commonwealth officers who participated in the survey were technical staff with responsibilities for the development and implementation of assistance programmes to member countries.

The survey's aims for Seychelles respondents were to: i) assess respondents' familiarity with the nature of the Commonwealth and the work being done by the

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<sup>19</sup> Representatives of the Commonwealth Foundation were also targeted, but no responses were received from the individuals who were approached.

association in Seychelles, ii) gauge their views regarding the usefulness and effectiveness of Commonwealth actions in Seychelles (wide-ranging benefits), as well as respondents' opinions about having benefitted from Commonwealth assistance, either personally or at work (specific benefits), iii) ascertain whether or not respondents felt a sense of ownership of the Commonwealth-led or Commonwealth-sponsored interventions in and for Seychelles, and iv) investigate respondents' perception of the effectiveness of the mechanisms that exist for cooperation with the Commonwealth. Overall, 31 respondents formally participated in the survey in Seychelles. It should nonetheless be noted, that some Seychellois who have worked for the Commonwealth or have held a position of leadership within a Commonwealth organ, either could not be reached or did not respond to the invitation to participate in the field survey.

The survey's aims for Commonwealth respondents were to i) assess respondents' familiarity with the Seychelles and with the association's work in Seychelles, ii) assess to what extent Commonwealth officers are aware of the effectiveness and usefulness of Commonwealth assistance to the country, iii) gauge officers' awareness of the participation of Seychelles, as a member state, in Commonwealth functioning, and iv) identify factors that, from their point of view, would allow Seychelles to maximize benefits from membership of the association. The total number of individuals from Commonwealth bodies who agreed to take part in the survey was small (n=5), moreover this sample was not uniform, in that it comprised past and current officers of the Commonwealth as well as Seychellois and non-Seychellois respondents. While it is possible that the views of this small group may actually represent the views of the wider group of Commonwealth officers, it does not seem reasonable to make that assumption based on such a small sample, where both size and representativeness may be problematic. Nonetheless, the data collected from this group is presented in this chapter – as a counterpoint to data collected from Seychellois respondents.

The analysis of the survey data collected is meant to indicate whether the approach currently used for communicating with, and for providing technical assistance and other forms of support to Seychelles actually fulfils the Commonwealth's general stated intentions, as well as the expectations of recipients in the country.

## **6.2 FINDINGS**

### **6.2.1 Knowledge of the Commonwealth by Seychelles respondents**

#### **6.2.1.1 Familiarity of Seychelles respondents with the Commonwealth as an organization**

In response to a question which asked respondents to assess their familiarity with the Commonwealth in general, about twelve per cent (11.5%) of respondents in Seychelles said that they were very familiar with the organization, about 58% said that they were reasonably familiar, 27% said they were not very familiar, and 4% did not give a response. No one chose the 'not familiar at all' option. This is a clear indication that the Commonwealth is generally well known by officials in the public sector and by leaders in civil society organizations/NGOs in Seychelles, and that most of them feel that they have a sense of 'familiarity' regarding the organization although only a small group feel that they know the organization really well. As shown in the previous chapter, the Commonwealth, under its varied guises, often appears in the public media in Seychelles.

It should be noted that two respondents whose work requires that they act as intermediaries between the government of Seychelles and the Commonwealth stated that they were only 'reasonably familiar with the Commonwealth'. The same applies to several respondents who are leaders in the civil society/NGO sector. The few who said they were very familiar with the Commonwealth were long-term civil servants who had spent a minimum of 10 years in senior management positions – albeit in very different fields of operation.

#### **6.2.1.2 Defining the Commonwealth**

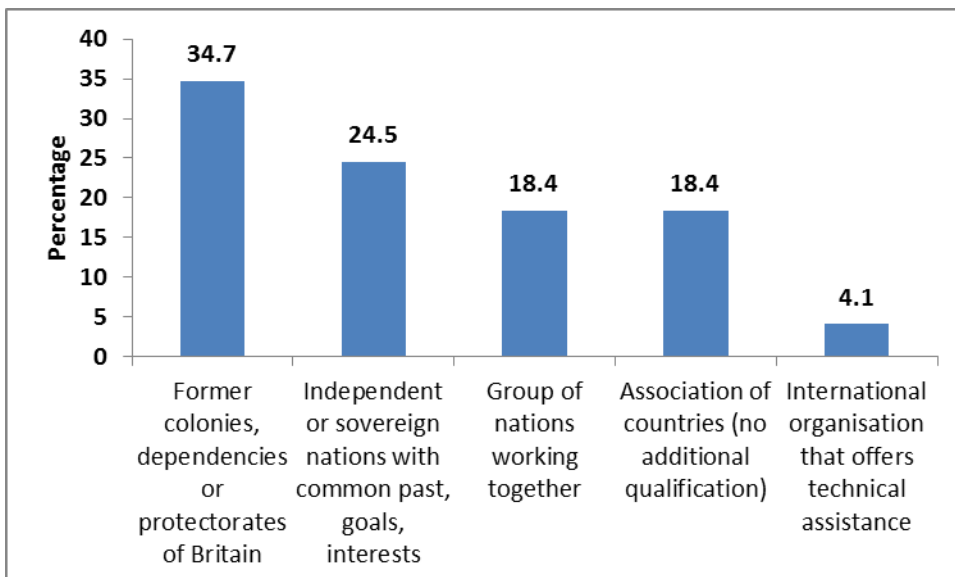
When respondents in Seychelles were asked to define the Commonwealth in their own words, about 65% percent stated that they saw the Commonwealth as an organization whose members had either previously been colonies of Britain or had otherwise been part of the former 'British Empire'. Eight percent (8%), did not mention Britain or the British Empire but described the Commonwealth as an association of 'English-speaking countries'. For a large majority of respondents

therefore, the past connection with Britain (and the English language) was considered as the defining characteristic of the relationship with the Commonwealth.

The remaining 27% of respondents did not refer to Britain or the British Empire or the English language but used terms such as ‘international organization’ or ‘group of nations’ or ‘voluntary association of sovereign countries’. Only one respondent mentioned a member state which had joined the Commonwealth despite having no previous links to Britain, in this case – Rwanda.

When the descriptions were grouped in categories of definitions, the result showed that there was a total of forty-nine responses – as most of the respondents provided descriptions which included a range of elements which could be grouped in five broad categories: former dependencies or colonies, independent states/countries with similar goals, group of countries working together, an association of states, and an international organization which provides technical assistance. These categories are shown in Figure 6.1, in descending order. Once more we note that the connection with Britain is the leading characteristic, followed by the concept of an association of sovereign nations with a common past.

**Figure 6.1: Seychelles respondents' definitions of the Commonwealth**



### 6.2.1.3 Purpose of the Commonwealth

In terms of the purpose assigned to the Commonwealth in the descriptions provided, nearly half of the responses (45%) indicated that the Commonwealth was essentially a platform giving member states the possibility of achieving 'common' objectives or interests; or having 'shared goals' for the development of their nations and the wellbeing of humanity. A number of responses referred to the fact that the Commonwealth makes it possible for states to 'work together', 'cooperate' or 'collaborate' on issues. The findings indicate that while many see a strong connection between membership of the association and being a former British colony or part of the former British Empire,<sup>20</sup> they also see the Commonwealth as an association of 'like-minded' nations which can work together towards the same goals because they share many characteristics, including language. One particular response sums up this point of view by stating that the Commonwealth is "an organization of countries, mostly former British colonies, with defined goals and objectives to create better understanding among those nations, to help each other and to work on common areas of interest."

This clearly reflects a certain belief regarding the purpose of such an association of states, which, as defined by Keck and Sikkink, (1998: 34), exists because members, having become 'conscious of certain common interests and common values ... share in the working of common institutions'. Such a perspective also seems to agree with Ockenden's general comment that "it is international institutions that provide the channels through which ... governmental co-operation takes place" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2009a:1). This perception of the respondents also echoes a description of the early Commonwealth which, according to Armstrong (2001:45), was a group of effectively sovereign equal states who "forged a series of strong economic, political, security and cultural links based not primarily on clear perceptions of each member's national interests, but on a sense that they constituted a community bonded together by ethnic, normative, cultural and historical ties".

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<sup>20</sup> As pointed out earlier, Seychelles became independent from Britain in 1976, a relatively recent historical event and within living memory.

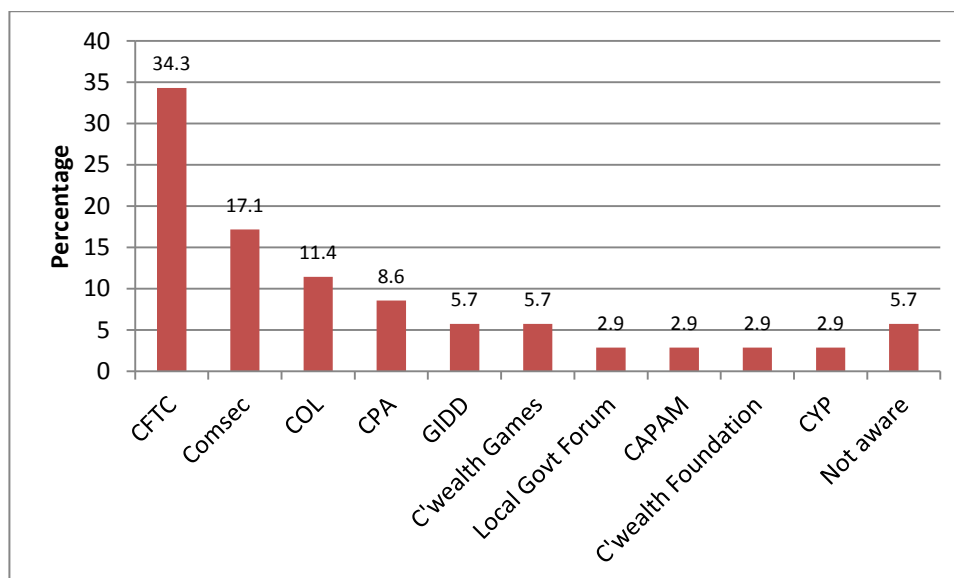


## 6.2.2 Knowledge of Commonwealth organs which have been active in Seychelles

### 6.2.2.1 Commonwealth organs which have been most active

Nearly half of Seychelles respondents think that the CFTC is the 'arm' of the Commonwealth that has been the most active in Seychelles. Divisions in the Commonwealth Secretariat or to the Secretariat itself generally, are the next most frequently mentioned, followed by the Commonwealth of Learning. A number of Commonwealth related associations are also mentioned, the most prominent one being the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Figure 6.2 shows the range of responses. A few 'organs' mentioned by respondents were not in any way linked to the Commonwealth formal organs or relevant networks, therefore such responses are included under the 'Not aware' category.

**Figure 6.2: Commonwealth organs that have been most active in Seychelles**



It is clear that the range of 'most active' organs mentioned by this group of respondents is quite wide. This could be indicative of several things: a) that many respondents are not able to clearly identify and name the 'organs' through which the Commonwealth association has done most work in Seychelles, b) that respondents are only aware of the organs that have been active in their area of

work, or c) that there are many Commonwealth-related organizations that carry out activities in Seychelles, making it difficult to identify a particularly active one.

Respondents from Commonwealth organs, on the other hand, all mentioned three main organizations which had been very active in Seychelles: the CFTC, the COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat, although one respondent did not provide a response. It should also be noted that Commonwealth respondents who participated in the survey stated that they were either very familiar or reasonably familiar with the case of Seychelles as a SIDS member of the Commonwealth, and that they had all been involved in programmes that have included or targeted Seychelles.

#### 6.2.2.2 Commonwealth organs which have been least active

Respondents were also asked to name the Commonwealth 'organ' which had been the least active in the country. Thirty five per cent (35%) of Seychelles respondents said that they were not sure and did not name any organ, followed by 31% who said that they did not know, and a relatively high 19% who did not respond. The total for those who either chose not to, or were unable to, name an organ was 85%. Seven per cent (7%) thought that the Commonwealth Foundation had been the least active organ; nearly 4% thought that it was the Gender section and another 4% thought it was the Commonwealth Volunteer Programme. Regarding the Commonwealth Foundation, there were comments made to the effect that there was "potential for the Commonwealth Foundation to do more with respect to civil society enhancement" and that "they had provided very little in terms of real support". Another respondent stated that it might be useful for the Foundation to "create a network for amateur writers, rather than just having competitions" or possibly, "set up a platform where established writers can partner with others, and where writers can publish their work".

Only one respondent from the Commonwealth bodies provided a response to this question stating that the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) had been the least active organ in Seychelles. The other Commonwealth respondents did not enter a response.

The above results for most and least active Commonwealth organs may indicate that Seychelles respondents a) have some difficulty in identifying which 'organs' have been very active in Seychelles, and b) are essentially unable to identify 'organs' which have not been very active in Seychelles. It is reasonable to conclude that even though these respondents are generally familiar with the Commonwealth as one 'global' entity, as shown in section 2.1 above, they are not familiar with the parts of the Commonwealth that carry out development support activities.

Commonwealth respondents had no difficulty in identifying Commonwealth organs which had been most active in Seychelles, and their answers targeted similar organs. The lack of response to identify the least active organ is probably due to a number of factors which cannot be determined with any certainty from the data collected, although the pattern of responses from this group, throughout the questionnaire, showed that questions which could possibly elicit negative responses tended to remain unanswered.

### **6.2.3 Knowledge of organizations in Seychelles and within the Commonwealth which have working links**

#### **6.2.3.1 Organizations in Seychelles which have close links with the Commonwealth**

When asked about organizations in Seychelles which liaise with the Commonwealth, about 50% of Seychelles respondents mentioned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education. About 20% mentioned the Electoral Commission, the Department of Administration, the National Assembly and the Ministry of Local Government, Youth and Sports, while 15% mentioned the Ministry of Health and the National Human Resource Development Council (NHRDC). About 8% mentioned the Ministry of Finance and the Seychelles National Youth Council, and less than 4% mentioned the following: the Attorney General's Office, the Judiciary, the Seychelles Institute of Management (SIM),<sup>21</sup> the President's Office, the Vice-President's Office, the National Sports Council, the

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<sup>21</sup> In early 2013, the SIM became part of the University of Seychelles. It was an independent institution when this survey took place.

Department of Environment, the Department of Information and Communication Technology, and civil society. In view of the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hosts the Principal Contact Point (PCP) for the Commonwealth and the Ministry of Education was, for a very long time<sup>22</sup>, the main Point of Contact (POC) for scholarships and training offered by the Commonwealth, responses show a good awareness of the organizations in Seychelles which liaise with the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth respondents mentioned the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs most frequently, followed by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Environment. The following Seychelles organizations and institutions were also mentioned: the Ministry of Administration, the Ministry of Health, Political Parties, the Office of the Ombudsman, the Seychelles High Commission in London, the University of Seychelles, the Seychelles press and the Seychelles legal system.

Both groups of respondents gave the names of the same Ministries as major contact points for the Commonwealth, but there were nonetheless a few discrepancies. Unlike Commonwealth respondents, no mention was made by Seychelles respondents of the following as having close links with the Commonwealth: the Office of the Ombudsman, Political parties or the University of Seychelles,<sup>23</sup> and there was only one reference to the Seychelles High Commission in London.

#### 6.2.3.2 Organizations and Divisions within the Commonwealth which have close links with Seychelles

When respondents were asked to name the organizations and departments or divisions of the Commonwealth which have close links with Seychelles, they mentioned the Social Transformation Programmes Division most frequently (mentioned by 11 respondents but only 2 respondents used the name of the division, the others referred to 'Health' or 'Education' or 'Gender'), followed by the CFTC and the 'Commonwealth Secretariat' generally. The following were also

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<sup>22</sup> This role has now shifted to the NHRDC.

<sup>23</sup> Despite the fact that the survey, when conducted, included one past staff member and one current staff member of the University.

mentioned by three respondents each: the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA), the Governance and Institutional Development Division (GIDD), the 'Unit for Democracy and Human Rights' and the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP). The Commonwealth Foundation, the Commonwealth Games, the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association were mentioned once each.

About 12% of respondents also said they did not know anything about such departments and 12% did not provide a response. This shows that nearly a quarter of Seychelles respondents were unable to name at least one organ or department/division of the Commonwealth association which could be considered as having close links with Seychelles.

Responses from Commonwealth respondents were more focussed in that they mentioned the Secretariat (or divisions of the Secretariat) and the COL most frequently. The Commonwealth Foundation was also referred to once.

#### **6.2.4 Benefits received from the Commonwealth – as perceived by respondents in Seychelles**

##### **6.2.4.1 Direct personal benefits**

A little over sixty five per cent (65.4%) of respondents stated that they had received scholarships from the Commonwealth in the form of long or short term training overseas. Further examination reveals that the majority of those (69%) were tertiary level qualifications ranging from advanced diplomas to doctorates. The countries and locations where respondents studied or trained include Canada, Zimbabwe, the 'West Indies', the UK, Malta, 'East Africa', India, Singapore and New Zealand, and one respondent stated that the training was received 'online'. Most of the scholarships received were part of the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP). The CSFP, which was established at the first Commonwealth education conference in 1959 to provide a framework through which any Commonwealth government could offer scholarships or career development opportunities to citizens of other Commonwealth countries, operates under the Commonwealth umbrella and is reviewed by Commonwealth education

ministers at their triennial meetings. In 2012, there were 16 Commonwealth countries offering scholarships at tertiary level education (CSFP website 2012). The CSFP, which has 'mutual cooperation' as one of its basic principles (CSFP website 2012) is a clear example of Commonwealth countries working together. The fact that so many respondents benefited from the scheme may have also contributed to their perception of the general purpose of the association as described earlier.

Responses indicate that advanced education scholarships offered under this plan are not differentiated from shorter term training and study programmes organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat or by other formal Commonwealth bodies. Regardless of the respondents' knowledge of the specific origin of the 'Commonwealth' scholarships, 58% of those who received them stated that they were currently working in an area which allows them to directly utilise the knowledge and experience gained from the course of study or training.

The findings described above clearly show that a significant percentage of individuals holding influential positions in government and in civil society in Seychelles have received higher education, professional as well as executive training through Commonwealth scholarships and it can thus be said that the Commonwealth has been instrumental in developing national skills for the governance of the country.

It should also be noted that in the 1970s already, a report from the UK Ministry of Overseas Development had stated that university entrance and higher professional training were made available to Seychellois through three major agencies, namely, Britain's technical cooperation programme, Commonwealth scholarships and French government scholarships. (Ministry of Overseas Development, 1977:8 - as quoted by Campling et al, p. 48).

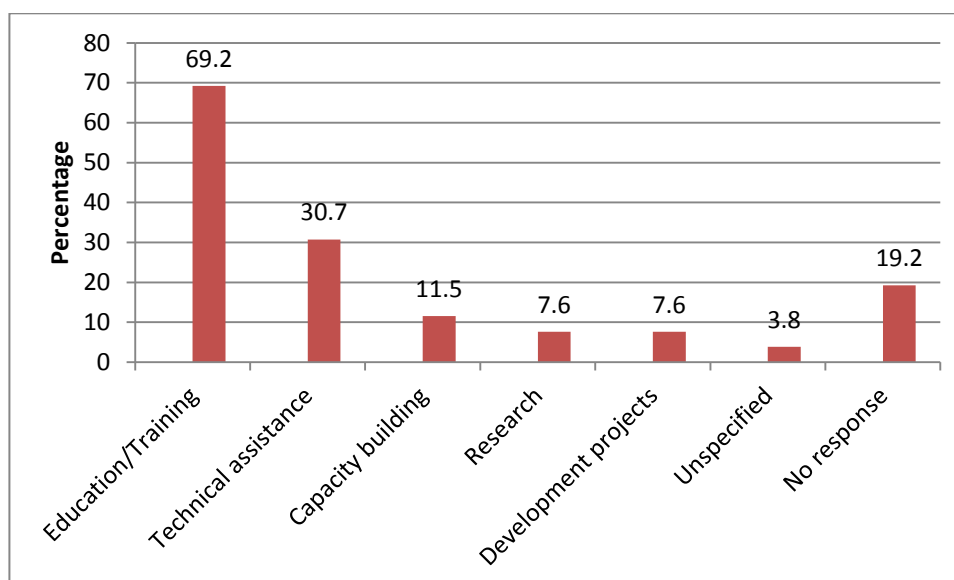
Dates provided by respondents who received scholarships for formal qualifications show that 33% received scholarships in the 1980s, 50% received scholarships in the 1990s and 17% after the year 2000. This could be related to any of the following factors: a) the age distribution of the survey target group (mostly senior and very senior officials); b) growing interest for the acquisition of formal

qualifications – as fostered by the National Development Plans of the 80s and 90s (Republic of Seychelles 1990: 28) and encouraged by the public sector schemes of service where career progression often requires additional qualifications; but it could also be c) a confirmation that Seychelles classification as a middle income country, as from 1989 when the country's GNI was reported to be at USD 4,550 (Worldbank website 2012), meant that for many donor countries and organizations, Seychelles no longer qualified for international support in several areas. As highlighted in the 2006-2008 Common Country Assessment (UNDP, undated: 14), official development assistance (ODA) including scholarships provided to Seychelles showed a gradual decline of more than 50% between 1990 and 2000.

#### 6.2.4.2 Benefits to organizations

A very large majority of Seychelles respondents (84%) stated that they had worked in departments or organizations which had received assistance from the Commonwealth projects, scholarships, training opportunities, technical assistance in the form of experts, or through other means. Eleven per cent said they had not and 4% did not give a response. The great majority of respondents therefore have first-hand knowledge and experience of Commonwealth assistance to organizations in Seychelles. Figure 6.3 gives an indication of respondents' knowledge of the type/area of assistance provided by the Commonwealth.

**Figure 6.3: Type of assistance provided by the Commonwealth, according to Seychelles respondents**



*(Note: percentages do not add up to 100 since many respondents mentioned several areas)*

Respondents are knowledgeable about scholarships and training opportunities that have been offered over the years - nearly 70% referred to this area. About one third also referred to various forms of technical assistance. Knowledge of other Commonwealth activities in the country seems restricted although there is some reference to various activities such as support for drafting legal documents, ‘development projects’, research projects, capacity building and ‘technical assistance’. It is also evident that most of those who have worked in departments that have received some form of support from the Commonwealth, know about these particular activities only, and are not aware of other Commonwealth activities in-country. Despite the small size of the Seychelles public sector and the seniority of the respondents, none showed awareness of the wide range of areas where the Commonwealth has provided help to the Seychelles as described in Chapter 5. Only one respondent refers to “capacity building, management development, gender, education for girls etc” and states that the Commonwealth has been involved in “a mix of various types of projects”. It is also pointed out that because of the size of Seychelles, there were no large projects in any of these areas. Nearly one fifth do not provide responses.

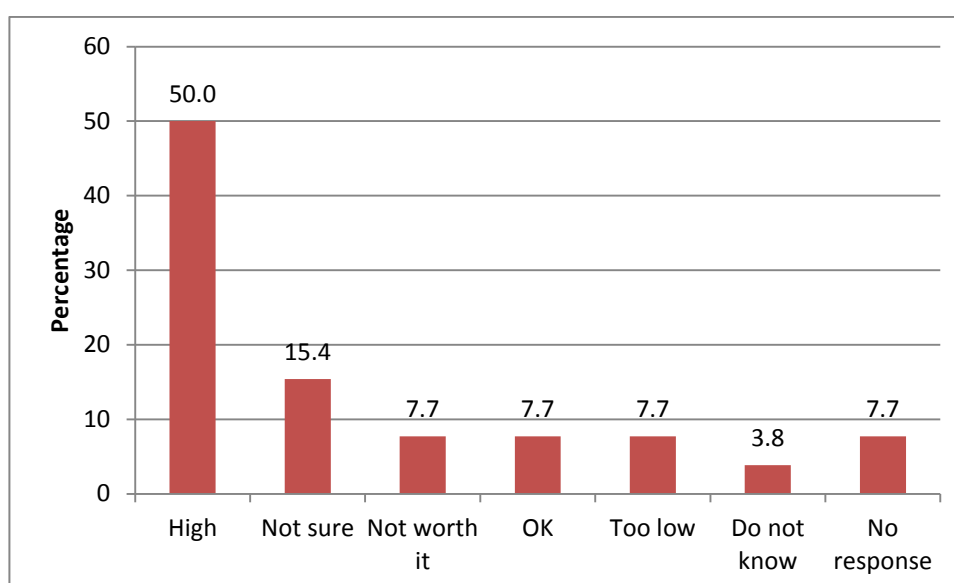


Responses from Seychelles also indicated that most thought that the Commonwealth had made some positive contribution to their areas of work and one respondent stated “so far no, but we have approached them for technical assistance ... and it has been agreed that they will assist”.

#### 6.2.4.3 Perceived value of benefits received from Commonwealth when compared to annual fees paid by Seychelles to the Secretariat

Respondents were asked to state their opinion regarding the annual fee<sup>24</sup> that is paid to the Commonwealth Secretariat based on some examples of figures. Monetary commitments to other organs of the Commonwealth such as the CFTC and CYP, were not included in the given examples of amounts paid to the association. Analysis of responses is shown in Figure 6.4.

**Figure 6.4: Seychelles respondents' perception of membership fee paid to the Commonwealth Secretariat**



Half of the respondents (50%) thought that the fee was high and nearly 8% thought that the fee was ‘not worth it’. About 15% said that they did not have enough information to form an opinion (=not sure). On the other hand nearly 8% thought that the fee level was ‘OK’ while another 8% thought that it was probably

<sup>24</sup> The sum paid by member states towards the expenses of the Secretariat is called the ‘Rate of Contribution’ in Commonwealth documentation. As pointed out in Chapter 5, failure to make these payments can lead to suspension of membership.

too low. The remaining 11% either said that they did not know or did not provide a response.

Some of the terms used by those who thought the fee was high or not worth it, were 'exorbitant', 'huge sum', 'ridiculous', 'very expensive', 'punitive', 'excessive', among others. To explain their position regarding this, respondents referred to three main factors: the small size of the Seychelles population, the current financial situation in the country, and the fact that the fee had increased four-fold over a few decades. One respondent commented: "we have always struggled to pay it, I would say it is burdensome...". Those who said that they were 'not sure' also mentioned that they did not know enough about the 'value of the services' or 'benefits' that Seychelles got in exchange for the fee paid; they wondered whether the fee was the same for all countries and whether Seychelles was sufficiently proactive to derive the most benefits possible from this investment.

A small group of respondents felt that the fee was 'reasonable', while a few felt that the benefits outweighed the costs. There was even a suggestion made by a respondent who regularly attends Commonwealth meetings of POCs and PCPs that the fee should be increased because costs had 'gone up everywhere', but clearly referring to the specific contribution for GIDD. Overall, it is clear that the majority of respondents felt that the contributions paid to the Commonwealth far outweighed any benefits that the country received. This tallies with McIntyre's (2007:101) finding that while small states may have been the main beneficiaries of Commonwealth programmes in the 1990s and the start of the century, "contributions per head of population by these countries to the Secretariat's budget was actually higher than those of other countries". He lists Antigua, the Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Maldives, Nauru, St. Kitts, St. Vincent, Seychelles, Tonga and Tuvalu as paying more than 50 pence per capita while 11 states, including the largest, paid less than 10 pence per capita.

It is to be noted that the internal document prepared by the Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2012: sections 2.0 and 4.1.13) evaluating the benefits of Commonwealth membership reports that the Commonwealth has "provided a broad and diverse programme of development assistance to the country, consisting mainly of training courses, workshops, technical assistance expertise

and advisory support”. They state that Seychelles has benefitted “from over 400,000 pounds of CFTC assistance since 2001” which is “14 times its contribution to CFTC during that time”. It was not possible to verify these figures using the documentation available.

### **6.2.5 Perceived usefulness of Commonwealth-led interventions and their significance to the development of the country**

In order to ensure that respondents’ assessment of various types of Commonwealth assistance was thoroughly covered, several questions interspersed in the various sub-sections of the questionnaire, asked about ‘usefulness’, ‘significance’, ‘helpfulness’ and how generally ‘beneficial’ Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles had been in their view.

#### **6.2.5.1 Interventions seen by Seychelles respondents as most useful and beneficial to Seychelles**

In regard to the usefulness of the assistance received by the organizations and departments where respondents worked, Table 6.1 shows that 54% of Seychelles respondents thought that it was very useful, 31% thought that it was reasonably useful while 15% did not provide a response. No one chose either the ‘Not very useful’ or the ‘Not useful at all’ options. In commenting on the usefulness of the assistance, a few respondents also referred to the Commonwealth scholarships they had received through their employing organizations, acknowledging that on the whole, many Seychellois “have benefitted from tertiary education that probably, the government of Seychelles may not have been able to fund”. It was also stated that while many other programmes may have been useful, it was difficult, even for a POC/PCP, to evaluate the assistance being received because they are not always involved in the process of assistance provision, as in the past.

**Table 6.1: Usefulness of Commonwealth assistance**

Levels	%
Very useful	53.8
Reasonably useful	30.8
Not very useful	0.0
Not useful at all	0.0
No response	15.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

When the same respondents had to rate the assistance of any kind provided by the Commonwealth to Seychelles, later on in the questionnaire, in terms of how significant that assistance had been to Seychelles overall, Table 2 shows that 15% thought that it was very significant while 62% thought that it was reasonably significant. Fifteen percent thought that the assistance was not very significant while 8% did not provide a response.

**Table 6.2: Assistance (of any kind) provided to Seychelles by the Commonwealth**

Levels	%
Very significant	15.4
Reasonably significant	61.5
Not very significant	15.4
Not significant at all	0.0
No response	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

There is a discrepancy in terms of perceived usefulness and perceived significance, with well over 80% stating that the assistance was useful or very useful, while 75% of the same group felt that the same assistance was only moderately significant or not very significant. It is not possible, with the data available, to define the reasons for this discrepancy, but one of the factors could be respondents' intimate knowledge of technical assistance offered to their organization, as opposed to limited or non-existent knowledge of interventions that

occur elsewhere in the country, excluding the area of training and scholarships. One respondent commented: “the programmes may have been useful but [we] cannot always quantify or evaluate the assistance being received”. Another respondent, who coordinates a project being done with the CYP pointed out: “I know of only one programme”. Yet another factor for the discrepancy could be that projects and interventions are deemed useful when they are being implemented, but their effects may not be as perceptible as recipients may have expected – as expressed in the following comment: “There are many initiatives but they do not stand out, especially in terms of final outcome”.

To gather some information about the effects of Commonwealth programmes/projects/ interventions at a ‘practical’ level, respondents were asked whether these had been of help to Seychelles. A large majority (88%) thought that they had been reasonably helpful or very helpful, although a number of answers were ‘qualified’, as in ‘from an education perspective only’ or ‘where sports is concerned’. Overall, respondents had no hesitation evaluating programmes they knew about because they were involved in the projects, or because there was information about the project in the public media, but their limited or non-existent knowledge of work being done in other areas, meant that they felt Commonwealth interventions were not really significant.

Seychelles respondents were then asked to name the programmes/projects/interventions which they felt had been the most beneficial to the country, and to explain why these had been beneficial. About 77% provided valid responses, 12% were ‘not sure’ and the remainder either said that did not know or they did not provide an answer. Responses were often quite unspecific, referring to “technical cooperation’ or other broad and general areas such as ‘Youth’ or ‘Exchange programme’. There was a total of 26 (not related to the number of respondents) items mentioned. They are shown in Table 6.3 and are arranged in order of how frequently they were mentioned.

**Table 6.3: Commonwealth programmes/projects/interventions that have been most beneficial to Seychelles - according to Seychelles respondents**

<b>Category of programme</b>	<b>Frequency of response</b>
Education/Training/Scholarships	10
Technical Cooperation	5
Salary review	3
CFTC projects	1
Elections	1
Exchange Programme	1
Youth	1
Legal drafting	1
Research	1
National Assembly	1
Maritime Boundaries	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

General actions that had a direct impact on individuals, such as training and scholarships, were mentioned most frequently by Seychelles respondents as being most beneficial to the country although ‘technical assistance’ was also seen as having benefitted the country, especially when projects such as the public sector salary review (which was described as having provided ‘some benefit’) or legal drafting are included in this category. It is interesting to note that only 35% of respondents who provided valid answers were able to name a specific programme or project, indicating once more that aside from education and training, many respondents are unable to clearly identify Commonwealth programmes/interventions that have had positive results.

Only half of the Commonwealth respondents gave answers to the question regarding the most beneficial Commonwealth projects/programmes for Seychelles – in their view. These included the pilot project in Vulnerability and Resilience Profiling, the online training course on the International Architecture for Environment and Sustainable Development (which ‘assisted in preparing the

country for Rio +20') and the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). One respondent did not mention a project or programme stating that this was 'a matter for the country to express', implying (in that respondent's opinion) that the organization did not view such an assessment of the assistance it was providing as appropriate.

Commonwealth respondents were also asked how well generic or country-specific Commonwealth programmes responded to the development needs of Seychelles. All respondents thought that the generic programmes (usually designed for categories of countries) responded very well or reasonably well to the development needs of Seychelles as a SIDS. It was pointed out, for example, that the work of the Economic Affairs Division "has a strong focus on the concerns of small states, and is instrumental in highlighting these within wider international debates" and that the participation of officials from SIDS made it possible for the "views and concerns of this group to come to the fore". Most of these respondents also thought that the country-specific Commonwealth programmes/projects for Seychelles responded 'reasonably well' to the development needs of the country. One respondent disagreed, stating that "interventions are not always followed up with specific strategic actions by either the country or Commonwealth agencies/units. For example, CFTC short-term or long-term interventions, whilst useful, do not always have positive results in alleviating manpower shortages; sometimes there are lengthy periods for the follow-up either because the Commonwealth partner agencies have time-lags, funding or staff issues or the country has other priorities or there is lack of political will or manpower for the necessary follow-up; in some cases it is a lack of information or a lack of understanding of the processes for Commonwealth support... The Commonwealth's principle of non-intervention in national sovereign issues have meant, for example, that issues of democracy and transparency and freedom of information, etc. are not dealt with in a forceful manner, and repeated Commonwealth's election observer missions over the years have issued the same recommendation but there is little political will... and in my view this defeats the process".

Overall, Commonwealth respondents felt that the most relevant expression for describing the effect of Commonwealth assistance of any kind to Seychelles was

'reasonably significant'. One respondent felt that since the assistance to the country was very diverse, therefore the range of effectiveness was "likely to be equally diverse".

#### 6.2.5.2 Commonwealth actions and interventions seen as least useful to Seychelles

Almost 75% of respondents in Seychelles did not provide names of Commonwealth programmes/projects or interventions when they were asked to name those which had been the least beneficial to the country: 35% said they did not know, 23% said they were not sure and a little over 19% did not enter a valid response. The remaining respondents, all of whom had held senior positions for rather long periods of time, mentioned the following (once each) with some comments: a) action research such as the gender study; b) the Interface programme between Principal Secretaries (PS) and Ministers – "which was essentially between government and the ruling party – this programme ran during the 1-party state period... it was a waste of time"; c) local training; d) the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) project – "the development of the COL programmes has increased the expertise of teachers but it is not locally beneficial for end users as the use of technology in the classroom is not there yet"; e) the Tourism Master Plan – "it was never really used, some said it was already obsolete by the time it was finalised". The area of sports was also listed with the following comment: "apart from participating in the Commonwealth Games, which is quite a cost for the country, there is not much assistance given to Seychellois sportsmen".

Only one Commonwealth respondent provided an answer regarding the 'least' beneficial Commonwealth projects/programmes/interventions for Seychelles and this, according to the respondent, was the 'Commonwealth election observer missions' which "whilst important in their own right... may be seen as endorsing cosmetic changes whilst the more strategic, democratic principles (e.g. freedom of information, separation of the judiciary, legislative and executive, as well as mechanisms for dealing with corruption) are still not in place despite many years of Commonwealth support in this area".



### 6.2.5.3 Evaluations of Commonwealth programmes/projects and follow-up actions

When asked about evaluations of projects or programmes carried out by the Commonwealth, 65% of Seychelles respondents state that they either are 'not aware' or don't know of any evaluations being carried out; 27% state that they are aware that there are, or there used to be, such evaluations and nearly 8% do not provide a response. A few comment that there may be evaluations done at times, "but there is no follow-up after workshops are organised by Comsec – even though participants are asked to do action plans ... Short term training has little impact. It is just theory and then not enough of it. Good in giving basic knowledge, but there are no 'tools' to carry this forward." In answer to the query about follow-up of evaluations, another respondent stated: "Not sure. There is so much that comes out in terms of environment, development, democracy or human rights but I do not see any of it integrated in actions carried out [by the Commonwealth] in-country."

Commonwealth respondents were asked whether the 'lessons learnt' from small states were incorporated in the design and development of programmes/projects and interventions for Seychelles. One respondent felt that this was always done while the other respondents felt that this happened only occasionally. These respondents were further asked to describe the approach used for developing a programme or project aimed at or involving the country. They described a process that involved 'liaising with country officials' for the development of programmes and 'obtaining information from country officials' for finalising the programmes. One respondent also referred to the use of local consultants to assist with the delivery of programmes organized in-country by the COL. Another pointed out the necessity of assisting existing Commonwealth programmes in terms of Seychelles national priorities and needs, thus implying that this might not be happening. It was also stated that it was important for the country itself to establish and nurture informal as well as formal contacts at the Commonwealth headquarters, in order to push for national requests. This, it should be noted, was not a strong feature of responses from Seychelles respondents, although it was mentioned by some of them.

## **6.2.6 Factors that maximise or handicap the use of Commonwealth resources**

### **6.2.6.1 Factors that allow Seychelles to maximise the benefits of Commonwealth membership**

The SIDS status of the Seychelles was seen by Seychelles respondents as one of two major factors that allow Seychelles to maximise the benefits of Commonwealth membership – the country being small and therefore able to respond to issues more quickly. According to respondents, it also has, as a SIDS, a positive image among Commonwealth countries. The other major factor was ‘well-utilised assistance’ in that Seychelles had made ‘good use of previous assistance’. Next in order of importance, responses were a) the fact that the country is ‘forward-looking’, b) having personal contacts at the Commonwealth Secretariat, c) having information about projects, d) the presence of the British High Commission in Seychelles, e) an international desk in each ministry, f) the stability and peace that exist in Seychelles, and g) the strengthening of democracy.

For Commonwealth respondents, the factors that would allow Seychelles to maximize benefits from Commonwealth membership, were a) the willingness of country officials to be engaged with the Commonwealth and their ability to be ‘proactive’, b) “a strong sense of internal direction which enables the country to direct its requests effectively and to influence Commonwealth dialogue”, and c) a strong civil service with good technical capabilities.

### **6.2.6.2 Handicaps to Seychelles ability to fully benefit from Commonwealth membership**

Respondents in Seychelles thought that the biggest handicap to being able to fully benefit from Commonwealth membership was the fact that Seychelles was ‘not proactive’ enough, and that there was no information readily available about the work of the Commonwealth – these two factors being seen as co-dependent. Comments are made to the effect that “the local set-up and focal points are not well publicised, the Commonwealth programmes are not well known and plans of

action and evaluations are not available”. One respondent, a Director General, adds: “The impression I get is that only higher level persons know about the Commonwealth”. A number of comments are also made about local focal points: that there is a lack of them, that they receive information but do not disseminate it, that there is a high turnover of such staff, that their approach is merely procedural, that they are not knowledgeable, that they are doing the ‘absolute minimum’ or that they are incompetent.

The second biggest handicap mentioned by respondents in Seychelles is the high GDP of the country: since Seychelles has good ratings as a middle income country, “assistance tends to be channelled to least developing countries”. The next biggest handicaps are seen as a ‘lack of coordination’ as well as the high cost of membership. These are followed by a range of factors such as the ‘lack of local capacity’, the inability to identify the right projects for requests to the Commonwealth, and the fact that the democratic system in Seychelles ‘is not well developed enough’. About 10% of the Seychelles respondents did not provide a response.

Only two Commonwealth respondents provided answers to this query. One respondent thought that “distance and lack of information or [the existence of] information gaps” were the biggest handicaps to Seychelles being able to fully benefit from Commonwealth membership. Another respondent thought that sometimes it was difficult to work with people in various ministries in Seychelles since “many officials are not skilled”; furthermore some ministries were seen as “not particularly open” and there were cases where essential information was not passed on to the Ministry which acts as the primary contact point for the Commonwealth – making it difficult for a project to progress.

## **6.2.7 Seychelles participation in, and contribution to, the Commonwealth**

### **6.2.7.1 Influencing decision-making within the Commonwealth**

Respondents were asked whether Seychelles had any influence on Commonwealth decision-making to ensure that outcomes were useful to the country. Nearly 54% of Seychelles respondents thought that Seychelles had

some influence while 19% said that it had hardly any influence; 4% thought that Seychelles had great influence and 4% that it had no influence at all. The remaining 19% either did not know or did not provide a response.

Commonwealth respondents were asked to describe the presence and involvement of Seychelles in Commonwealth functioning and activities generally, and they all felt that Seychelles was either fully involved or reasonably involved. On the other hand, when asked to what extent they thought that Seychelles participated in Commonwealth decision-making processes, only one respondent thought that Seychelles participated fully in Commonwealth decision-making processes. A few thought that Seychelles participated 'to some extent' and one respondent thought that Seychelles 'hardly participates' in Commonwealth decision-making processes.

#### 6.2.7.2 Mechanisms through which Seychelles can communicate its needs and/or wishes to the Commonwealth

The mechanism most frequently mentioned by both categories of respondents is 'meetings': CHOGMs, small islands states meetings, Ministers meetings, technical meetings, meetings of focal points, conferences for government officials or NGOs/civil society, and the presence of the Seychelles London High Commissioner at Commonwealth Board Meetings. The second most frequently mentioned approach by Seychelles respondents was greater engagement locally with local focal points. They also provided a variety of methods and approaches, these being mentioned once or twice by respondents. The proposed approaches were grouped in categories which are presented in Tables 6.4 and 6.5. All Commonwealth respondents provided responses, as well as 88% of Seychelles respondents.

**Table 6.4: Suggestions by Seychelles respondents for improved participation**

Categories	Frequency	%
Attend Commonwealth meetings (regional and international)	10	30.3
Nominate local Focal Points (for each area of operation of Commonwealth)	4	12.1
More Seychellois staff in Commonwealth	2	6.1
Use Seychelles as lab for Commonwealth pilot projects for SIDS (climate change/ICT)	2	6.1
Set up special interest groups	2	6.1
Need for Seychelles to be proactive	1	3.0
Greater participation in Commonwealth activities	1	3.0
More local direction	1	3.0
More opportunities for linking up with Commonwealth (e.g. meeting with CFTC experts when they visit)	1	3.0
More training opportunities	1	3.0
More information about the Commonwealth generally and the role of member states	1	3.0
Team up with other SIDS	1	3.0
Use CW funds appropriately	1	3.0
Contribute to publications	1	3.0
Not aware/Not my area	2	6.0
No response	2	6.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 6.5: Suggestions by Commonwealth respondents for improved participation**

Categories	Frequency	%
Meetings	3	30.0
Direct influence on senior officials of the Commonwealth Secretariat	2	20.0
Attendance of Seychelles High Commissioner at Commonwealth Board meetings	2	20.0
Strategic networking at key meetings on key issues	1	10.0
More Seychellois working in key positions in Commonwealth organizations	1	10.0
Increased activity at level of Seychelles' Ministry of Foreign Affairs	1	10.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

When we compare the lists above, we note that there are four areas which emerge as 'useful approaches' and which are proposed by both categories of respondents: 1) attendance at Commonwealth meetings (of all kinds) and using them to network - referred to by 30% in both groups, 2) improving performance of Commonwealth focal points and the linkages that exist locally, 3) more Seychellois staff in Commonwealth organizations, and 4) closer links with officials in the Commonwealth.

Despite the fact that a majority of Seychelles respondents listed 'meetings' as the preferred mechanisms for Seychelles to get its 'voice' heard within the Commonwealth, one very high level respondent commented: "Who really represents us at such meetings? When do they listen to our voice? It is usually an Ambassador or High Commissioner who does this but such individuals receive no briefs [from home] for meetings." Another very senior public servant suggested that it might be necessary to involve more influential people in such meetings so that they can "voice Seychelles concerns ... we need to choose appropriately the representatives we send to meetings".

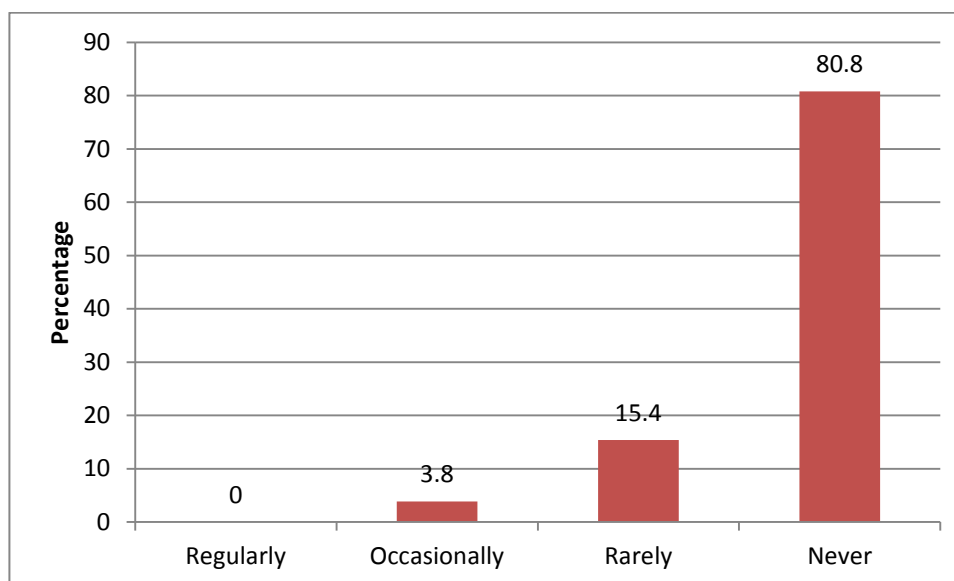
When asked whether Seychelles was making use of mechanisms that already existed, 35% of Seychelles respondents said that it was not, 27% said that it was, and 12% thought that it did so, but only to a limited extent. About 27% did not provide a response. Further comments highlight problems around the performance of focal points (FPs), as in “we need to be proactive and reach out ... some FPs do not even know they are FPs” or “I don’t think we try to create linkages”. Those who thought Seychelles did make use of existing mechanisms comment that the country participates in Commonwealth meetings and activities as best as it can, “conditional to financial ability to participate”. Half of the Commonwealth respondents chose not to answer this question, the other half thought that “those who coordinate the Commonwealth programmes on the Seychelles side are neither very active, nor very effective” adding that “people in such roles are sometimes too complacent”, clearly indicating that their perception of the performance of focal points in Seychelles was similar to those of Seychelles’ respondents.

## **6.2.8 Accessing and using information from the Commonwealth**

### **6.2.8.1 Familiarity with a Commonwealth publication targeting SIDS**

In order to gauge the extent to which individuals holding senior positions in the public sector and in NGO/civil society use Commonwealth material which targets development issues for SIDS, Seychelles respondents were asked whether they read the Small States Digest and how often. Responses are shown in Figure 6.5.

**Figure 6.5: How often Seychelles respondents read the Small States Digest**



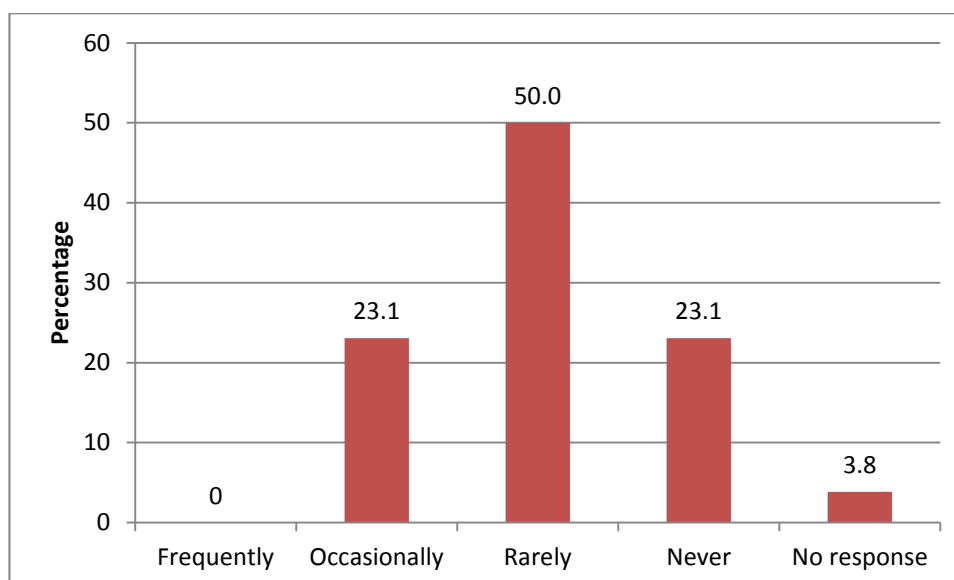
It is clear that most respondents had never read the Small States Digest – since they represent over 80% of the group. The rest of the respondents state that they read the publication occasionally or rarely. No one stated that they read the publication regularly. A number of respondents, after entering their responses, added comments such as: “Do not know of its existence”; “Never... seen a copy!” or “No information on this publication... will check the net for such”, indicating that apart from not reading the publication, they also have no knowledge of its existence.

#### 6.2.8.2 Accessing information from other Commonwealth publications or from the Commonwealth website

Respondents from Seychelles were also asked how often they accessed information from other Commonwealth sources, including the association’s website. Their responses are shown in Figure 6.6.



**Figure 6.6: How frequently Seychelles respondents access information from Commonwealth sources other than the Small States Digest**



None of the respondents stated that they accessed information from Commonwealth sources frequently but overall 73% stated that they did sometimes access information – 23% occasionally and 50% rarely. About 23% stated that they never accessed such information and almost 4% did not provide a response. One respondent who accesses information rarely, also added: "especially when I get a chance to stop in London ... I normally go to the Commonwealth Secretariat to obtain some documents".

### **6.2.9 The perceived effectiveness of the current communication channels and modes of operating**

Respondents were asked several questions about their perception of the effectiveness of the formal communication system that is currently in place for organizations in Seychelles to liaise with Commonwealth bodies.

#### 6.2.9.1 Effectiveness of relevant organizations in Seychelles in communicating needs of Seychelles to the Commonwealth and Commonwealth values and principles in-country

About 39% of the Seychelles respondents thought that the organizations in Seychelles that have links with the Commonwealth are generally effective in communicating the needs of Seychelles to the Commonwealth, 23% think that they are not effective, 19% think that maybe they are effective, 11% say that they are not sure and 8% say that they don't know. Overall therefore, while nearly 40% believe the organizations are effective, nearly 53% either don't think so or are unsure of whether they are effective.

Comments provide additional insights to these responses. Respondents who believe that the organizations are effective add that, "They seem to be effective given that issues relevant to Seychelles were on the agenda at the last meeting in Australia [CHOGM 2011]", or "Yes, the country normally benefits from some sort of assistance on a yearly basis". Respondents who do not believe that the local organizations are effective tend to see them as being "weak at putting forward the Seychelles case" and that there is a "general lack of sharing of information – I believe the majority of people are not even aware of which person/body is the Commonwealth Focal Point" – implying that such organizations may not be effective in passing on information about their role locally. On the other hand, respondents who represented organizations which host points of contact (POCs) put forward two main areas of concern: a) they felt unable to liaise properly with the Commonwealth since they no longer knew who their Commonwealth counterparts were (at the Secretariat in particular); and b) they felt that, as POCs, they were not receiving enough support from the local system – especially since they also had a number of other duties to perform as government employees.

Commonwealth respondents felt that organizations in Seychelles that they had listed (see Section 2.3.1, paragraph 2) were effective in linking up with Commonwealth organs as shown by the following comment: "These organizations fully contribute to Commonwealth work. The Ministry of Finance contributed to the successful development of the Commonwealth framework for vulnerability and resilience profiling. The University of Seychelles contributed to the successful

launching of the online course on the international architecture on environment and sustainable development. The Ministry of Education contributed to the success of the Commonwealth Teacher Recruitment Protocol”. One respondent replied “I don’t know” to this question.

Regarding the effectiveness of relevant organizations in Seychelles in communicating Commonwealth values and principles in-country, responses show approximately the same spread as for the question about communicating needs of Seychelles to the Commonwealth: 35% say that the organizations are effective, 11% that the organizations are effective ‘to some extent’, 23% say that they are not, and 27% say they don’t really know or are not sure whether the organizations are effective, 4% did not provide an answer. Overall therefore, 46% believe that the organizations are effective or partly effective in communicating Commonwealth values and principles, while 50% either think that they are not, or are unsure as to their effectiveness. Comments provided by those who think that the organizations are effective include: “The media is often used to communicate these values whenever an activity is organised”, “Yes, because we are a member of the Commonwealth and we have a British diplomatic mission in the country”, or “They are effective for certain target groups such as school children”. Those who do not think that the organizations are effective in communicating Commonwealth values state: “There is publicity only on Commonwealth Day – that’s about it. So, no – because there is no real visibility of the Commonwealth and its activities in the country”; “There is publicity to all sponsored events: not impressed with communication of values/principles”, or “we just participate in trainings and get straight back to work...”

#### 6.2.9.2 Effectiveness of Commonwealth organs in linking up with Seychelles and communicating Commonwealth values and principles through activities organised in-country

When asked whether they thought that Commonwealth organizations were effective in linking up with national organizations in Seychelles on Commonwealth matters, 31% of Seychelles respondents said that they were effective, 23% thought that they were not, 12% were not sure, 19% did not know and 15% did not provide a response. It is interesting to note that several of those who said that

they did not know also added comments explaining that their inability to form an opinion was due to a lack of information, as in the following comment: “No idea. Why? No information”. Those who felt that the organizations were effective had a tendency to qualify their response as shown in the following examples of comments: “From an education perspective, as far as I am aware, the links are effective” or “The linkage seems to work but it is not clear if this is based on offers from the Commonwealth side or demands from local institutions”. Those who felt that Commonwealth bodies were not effective remarked that “A coordinating aspect is missing”, or that “Their work is rather confined ... they come to Seychelles, do something and leave, they do not reach out and there is little follow-up. Most of the time it seems that the mandate for the activity does not include follow-up, therefore the work does not include permanence”.

Only one Commonwealth respondent felt that the Commonwealth had had ‘dynamic engagement with government departments in the organization of Commonwealth activities’. The others thought that Commonwealth organs were effective only ‘to a certain extent’ in communicating Commonwealth values and principles through activities organised in Seychelles. One respondent commented that sometimes there were problems in the communication flow between the Commonwealth Secretariat and governments of member states.

#### 6.2.9.3 Commonwealth/Seychelles information channels

When asked about the means through which they access any Commonwealth-related information, respondents indicate three major pathways: publications, the Commonwealth website and formal correspondence which reaches them through the official contact points in the local ministries. The only ‘publication’ that is mentioned by its title is the Commonwealth of Learning newsletter. All responses, grouped in categories, are shown in Table 6.6 - in descending order.

**Table 6.6: Sources of information about the Commonwealth**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Publications (4 mention the COL newsletter, 3 are unspecified)	7	22.6
Website	7	22.6
Formal correspondence –printed or electronic (through Ministries)	6	19.4
Public media	4	12.9
Personal reading	1	3.2
CW intranet	1	3.2
Documentaries	1	3.2
Accidentally	1	3.2
None now	1	3.2
No response	2	6.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100</b>

While the above may seem to indicate that respondents do have access to information in various ways, the short comments made help to put these responses in context: “Accidentally”, “Very irregularly”, “Not frequently” or “through local news and international news”. These comments show that access to information is relatively haphazard and that respondents cannot identify a ‘working’ system that is in place to give or receive information related to the Commonwealth, except for those who receive the COL newsletter.

One respondent commented that the greatest difficulty of being a POC was to be able to link up with the Commonwealth, although it was admitted that it was now possible for POCs to get onto the Comsec intranet, although it had taken several years to get the code that would allow them to access it.

#### 6.2.9.4 Seychelles respondents' comments on administrative arrangements for Commonwealth programmes or projects

Some respondents who were directly involved in Commonwealth programmes and projects were asked about administrative arrangements for the projects and whether or not they felt that such arrangements worked.

Levels of satisfaction ranged from quite high to very low. Satisfaction was highest with arrangements that included clearly defined structures and responsibilities (e.g. a regional or national steering committee, a team leader, etc.) and where there was direct contact with the Commonwealth coordinator. This perception of high satisfaction was further enhanced when communication between parties was open and frequent, and included all stakeholders – often through electronic means. Level of satisfaction was low when it was necessary to liaise with a third party (“sub-contracted agency”) because of either the difficulty of establishing links, or the difficulty of negotiating more acceptable terms. Level of satisfaction was lowest when Commonwealth staff bypassed structures in place and liaised directly, and only, with the final recipients of assistance. One respondent representing a ministry which hosts a POC stated “the contact is no longer as good as it used to be. Seychelles hardly gets any country visits and when the Commonwealth representative comes to facilitate a workshop for example, this is not considered a country visit – sometimes we only hear about the activity over the news. In the past all experts coming to Seychelles for a particular programme would contact the relevant POC, or at least make a courtesy call, but not anymore. Basically there are now very few interactions. On our side we do not know who the people at Comsec are or who is where and who does what.”

#### **6.2.10 Seychelles respondents' reaction to a public statement by the Secretariat about Commonwealth assistance to SIDS**

Respondents in Seychelles were asked whether they agreed with a statement by a very senior representative of the Commonwealth regarding the work being done by one of the major organs of the Commonwealth for SIDS. The statement was as follows: “The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, for example, responds to requests – especially from small states – relatively swiftly and flexibly,

while also respecting the need for cost-effectiveness and for demonstrable results ... The small states and least developed countries consider Commonwealth development assistance to be the bread and butter issue for them.” (Banerji 2010:1).

Nearly 54% said that they did not agree with the statement. Of these, a few admitted that the statement might have been true in the past but that it was no longer applicable for Seychelles. Nearly 35% said that they agreed in part and 11% did not provide an answer.

It was also found that about one third of those who entered substantive responses felt that the statement was generally not true for the country; that it was a “generalization that may reflect the plight of a minority of small states; it definitely does not apply accurately to Seychelles”. About one fifth of that group also stated that since Seychelles has other sources of support, they did not see Commonwealth assistance as being a ‘bread and butter’ issue for the country.

One respondent felt that the quote was an overstatement, because “assistance has not been significantly forthcoming for Seychelles”. Another stated “I am not too sure about ‘demonstrable results’, I can’t really see any projects that stand out, i.e. having concrete results as a follow-up of Commonwealth support”. Some respondents also thought that responses to requests were ‘not swift’ although it was admitted that this could be due to non-proactive local focal points. A few thought that the Commonwealth was quick in sending experts, but was “very slow with project development, implementation and follow-up”. It is to be noted that in response to an earlier query about the approach used in developing a programme or project for a country, a Commonwealth respondent had mentioned that it could take 12 to 24 months for a request to be funded.

Some of the Commonwealth respondents felt that this statement was true ‘to a certain extent’. Two other, and somewhat opposite, points of view were also put forward by different respondents: a) that the statement is in fact applicable in the case of Seychelles because of the country’s participation in pan-Commonwealth programmes, and b) that the statement is not entirely true and that CFTC does

not respond quickly to small states needs because of its 'terrible bureaucracy' and because the organization's focus is rather narrow.

### **6.3 SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This chapter which has presented the findings of a field survey of two categories of respondents, on Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles shows that a significant number of government officials and leaders in civil society in Seychelles see the Commonwealth association of states in positive terms – as a group of countries working together to achieve common goals.

The Commonwealth is also a relatively 'familiar' organization to most Seychelles respondents although a substantial majority of them think that they do not have enough information about the Commonwealth generally. Most respondents have difficulty in identifying the various parts of the Commonwealth that have been active in Seychelles, and are unable to identify the organs that have not been active in the country, seemingly confirming Ingram's (2007: 557) lament that the Commonwealth has suffered from poor PR over decades.

A high proportion of government officials and leaders in civil society in Seychelles have received scholarships or career development opportunities from the Commonwealth and many see this area of support as having been the most useful for the country, and most of them are using the skills and knowledge acquired from these scholarships and training opportunities in their current jobs. Reactions to the usefulness and significance of other forms of Commonwealth assistance are mixed. Despite such assistance being seen as having been quite useful, it is also perceived as not remarkably significant in helping Seychelles reach its development goals. Greater levels of 'significance' and benefits are attributed to projects which are more intimately known by respondents, but only relatively few of the Commonwealth projects are well known to any of the respondents. A number of important areas of cooperation between Seychelles and the Commonwealth, identified during the desk review in particular (see chapter 5) seem not to be known by respondents generally, despite the fact that these projects were based on long-term and involved working partnerships. Referring to longer-term projects such as the Seychelles Maritime Boundary or the Joint



Mauritius/Seychelles submission to the UN, one of the Commonwealth respondents stated, “much of what happens in these areas tends to be under the radar”. Projects which were considered to have had little or no impact were more easily identified by government officials with greater seniority and tenure than by the other respondents.

There is little knowledge of existing evaluations of programmes or projects – indicating that many of the stakeholders (in some cases direct recipients of assistance) are not involved in assessing whether or not the assistance provided by the Commonwealth had achieved what it was meant to do, and to what extent.

The Seychelles annual contribution to the Secretariat is generally perceived as high by Seychelles respondents because of factors such as the size of the country and its population, as well as the country’s current economic problems – this perception is supported by McIntyre’s (2007:101) finding that a number of small member states of the Commonwealth, such as the Seychelles, contribute far more per capita than larger members of the association.

It is felt that one of the main factors preventing Seychelles from getting maximum benefits from its membership of the Commonwealth is the inability of local contact points to establish personal working relationships within the Commonwealth. On the other hand, those who represent contact points felt that they themselves were not familiar with the people or functions of various Commonwealth organs. Both groups feel ‘cut off’ from what the Commonwealth does and from the representatives of the Commonwealth who come to Seychelles, although some acknowledge that members of the Executive branch of the Seychelles Government may know more about the Commonwealth.

Despite the fact that Seychelles has been a member of the Commonwealth since 1976, there is no general sense of ‘ownership’ of what the association is or does, on the Seychelles side. Seychelles respondents think that the country’s ability to contribute to and influence the working of the Commonwealth is moderate to non-existent. On the other hand Commonwealth respondents tend to think that the country is either fully or reasonably able to influence Commonwealth functioning and activities. Regardless of the differences that exist, both categories of

respondents believe that attendance at Commonwealth meetings is the most important way of ensuring that the country's 'voice' is heard.

It is clear that only a small group of people in positions of responsibility in Seychelles have access to information about the Commonwealth on a regular basis, either through its publications or otherwise, and most have never heard of the Small States Digest despite the statement by the Secretariat that "publications produced by the Secretariat have been influential in informing international policy making with regards to small states, providing an effective format for advocating their concerns to the international community. Seminal publications include the annual Small States Economic Review and the quarterly Small States Digest." (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010a: 40).

The operating and communication system currently in place for dealing with Commonwealth matters is seen as only partly effective. Moreover Seychelles respondents do not feel that the values and principles of the Commonwealth are very visible through the Commonwealth activities carried out in-country, and many think that a major drawback to Commonwealth assistance is the lack of follow-up and continuity of projects and programmes.

Overall, Commonwealth development assistance to Seychelles as a SIDS, while assessed somewhat positively by Commonwealth respondents, is perceived differently by Seychelles respondents who feel that, aside the from benefits derived from scholarships and training offers, there is little evidence that current Commonwealth assistance is making much of a difference to the country's development.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 7.1 SUMMARY OF STUDY

This chapter presents a summary of the overall findings of the study. It also looks at how the interpretation of these findings have provided responses to the research questions formulated in the first chapter, as well as how this information relates to the existing literature. It concludes with recommendations based on the analysis of the data collected.

In view of the absence of a comprehensive assessment of the assistance provided by the Commonwealth to the Seychelles, this study's main objective was to gauge whether the provision of Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles has been useful and valuable to the country – as seen through the eyes of recipients and through documentary evidence. It focussed on finding out whether the assistance was seen as effective in helping the newly independent country towards the fulfilment of national development goals, and whether the approaches used by the Commonwealth to assess and respond to the needs of SIDS members were appropriate and effective.

Inter-state cooperation occurs when states agree to associate in order to fulfill agreed-upon agendas, and act through a common agency, for instance, an international governmental organization. Such agencies, which can be forum or service organizations can also be categorized as universal, regional or selective in terms of their constituencies. They are also seen as being durable.

International organizations and the way they function, as well as the reasons why they exist, are perceived differently by various schools of thought in international relations theory. Realists, for example, do not consider IOs to be serious political entities since they only reflect individual states' preferences and national interests. Moreover, they tend to see states as vying for power in their interactions with other

states. Institutionalists, on the other hand, believe that the establishment of rules and norms allow states to cooperate in order to achieve common goals. The main alternative to the two paradigms just mentioned is Liberalism which believes that the way states operate internationally reflects the way society functions within those states, and that the national and the international are closely linked.

The Seychelles archipelago became independent in 1976 after having been first a French, then a British, colony. The decades as from the early 1960s saw the emergence in the country of ideological struggles which caused bitter divisions in the small population. The country's major sources of revenue are: the services sector which includes tourism, offshore services, communications; and fisheries. The country as a SIDS faces many economic problems which make it difficult to maintain and increase development gains. Despite these problems, the country has excellent human development indicators and a high GDP per capita.

States, such as SIDS which have few resources, often cannot achieve development goals on their own and many, on becoming independent, tend to join international governmental organizations which provide forms of inter-state cooperation which make it possible to fulfill joint agreed-upon agendas. The Commonwealth which describes itself as "a voluntary association of 54 countries that support each other and work together towards shared goals in democracy and development" (Commonwealth Secretariat 2010: back cover), is difficult to categorize but it has acquired over time, all of the hallmarks of an international organization. In view of the fact that nearly 60% of its members are small states (including SIDS), the association has focused much of its attention on the plight of small states and has committed itself to supporting such states through international advocacy, research, publications, projects and direct technical assistance – although the assistance provided by the Commonwealth to Seychelles is not very visible in the national reports prepared in-country.

A survey, which included respondents from the Seychelles and from Commonwealth organs, was carried out to gather information on the nature of the relationship between the Commonwealth and the Seychelles, as well as the perception of individuals in positions of responsibility in Seychelles regarding this

relationship's usefulness and significance to the country. The study also looked at documentary evidence of Commonwealth support throughout the years.

The documentary evidence clearly indicates that the Commonwealth, in its various guises, has been a close and responsive collaborator in many of the Seychelles development efforts. The provision of support and assistance, which started just prior to independence in 1976, has continued and grown through the years although the attention generated in-country by these actions seems to have dwindled over of time. It also appears that collaboration worked best when there were relatively close personal links between specific individuals in the higher echelons of the Seychelles government and similarly placed individuals within Commonwealth organs. Commonwealth assistance in the first decade of Seychelles membership of the association closely matched the country's general development strategy. There was a shift in terms of giving attention to more specific areas later on, such as human resource development through training and scholarships, capacity building for the public sector, and specialized services related to maritime resources. The Commonwealth, as an international organization, also offered Seychelles an unmatched opportunity for putting forward the concerns of a small island developing state in the international arena.

Government officials and leaders in civil society in Seychelles generally see the role of the association in positive terms, despite their understanding that the Commonwealth is a body that is strongly connected to Great Britain, the country's former colonial power. Many of these officials have been recipients of Commonwealth scholarships and training awards, and it is through this form of assistance that they best know the organization, and where they attribute its greatest usefulness. Their knowledge of the other type of work done by the Commonwealth is rather limited, and they do not perceive that kind of assistance as very significant. Moreover, there is no general sense of 'ownership' of what the association is or does, despite the fact that Seychelles has been a member of the Commonwealth for over 35 years. On the other hand, Commonwealth assistance to SIDS, and to Seychelles in particular, is assessed somewhat positively by Commonwealth respondents, as is their perception of Seychelles participation in the affairs of the Commonwealth.

## **7.2 DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS IN RELATION TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main research question for the study asked what effects, real and perceived, the support provided by the Commonwealth through its major organs has had on the development record of Seychelles as a SIDS. Subsidiary questions asked why the assistance from the Commonwealth had not always been specifically responsive to, and clearly focussed on, the needs of Seychelles; what were the factors that had contributed to Seychelles seeming inability to maintain access to the kind of assistance it needed from the Commonwealth; and whether the current approaches used to assess needs for the provision of technical assistance, and other forms of support to SIDS members, were appropriate and effective. In order to respond to these questions, a documentary review looked at historical and recent records of Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles, and a field survey attempted to assess various aspects of the Seychelles/Commonwealth working relationship. This included knowledge of the Commonwealth and its work by Seychellois senior government officials and leaders in civil society and the NGO sector; their assessment of Commonwealth activities; their perception of the overall effectiveness and significance of Commonwealth activities in Seychelles; and their sense of closeness to, and ownership of, these activities. This section discusses the main findings in relation to these questions.

### **7.2.1 Overall perception of the role of the Commonwealth**

There is a sense of familiarity with the Commonwealth within the targeted segment of the population in Seychelles. As an international organization it is generally known and recognized by them. This could be due to the fact that the name of the organization appears regularly in the Seychelles media, whether in reports of visits by Commonwealth officials and elections observer groups, reports of Commonwealth activities organised in the country, announcements of various Commonwealth competitions or reports of international Commonwealth meetings being attended by Seychellois officials and dignitaries – as shown in Chapter 5. Statements suggesting that the Commonwealth suffers from poor public relations (Ingram 2007: 557) or a 'limited media profile' (Mole 2004: 544) may therefore not be applicable to the situation in the Seychelles.

In addition, this general sense of familiarity by Seychelles respondents may also lend support to the belief that there exists within the Commonwealth a “we feeling” or a “sense of family” that is often referred to, and possibly encouraged, in Commonwealth public statements and literature (inter alia, Groom 1988: 185; McKinnon 2003: 4; Ramphal 2009: 6; Commonwealth Secretariat 2012f: 1), indicating that the Commonwealth’s PR may not be so defective after all.

Attempts to ‘define’ the Commonwealth are decried by some because it is felt that “anyone seeking to define the Commonwealth will miss its uniqueness” as it is a system of networks which includes such a wide variety of groups from the ‘highest levels to the humblest’ (Chief Anyaoku as reported by Armstrong 2001:44), nevertheless definitions provided by survey participants in Seychelles reflected, sometimes in textbook replications, some of the oldest and loftiest ideals justifying and supporting the existence of the Commonwealth, although these definitions may not represent the points of view of all members of the association. Two main definitions were put forward: firstly, that it is a voluntary grouping of former colonies, dependencies or protectorates of Britain and secondly, that it is a shared space where like-minded nations with a common vision and heritage work together to achieve common goals. The first definition closely parallels part of Zimmern’s view of the Commonwealth during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, prior to the demise of the British Empire, when he claimed (or hoped) that the “British Commonwealth was, essentially, a voluntary association of free and equal nations” (Morefield 2005: 109), the emphasis, according to Morefield being on ‘voluntary’. Definitions given by Seychelles respondents also mirror the Commonwealth Secretariat’s view of itself as “a voluntary association of sovereign independent states whose pursuit of common principles continues to influence international society to the benefit of all” (Commonwealth Secretariat 1991:1 and 2009b: 1). This shows that information of a general nature, about the Commonwealth, is readily available to senior officials and civil society leaders in Seychelles.

Moreover, when we look at the perceived effectiveness of local organizations in communicating Commonwealth values, a number of respondents say essentially that “they are effective for certain target groups such as school children”. Since it can be assumed that most of the Seychelles target group attended primary and/or

secondary school in Seychelles (some, possibly, prior to independence) it could also be inferred that, in addition to information gathered in the media, respondents may have acquired their understanding of the nature of the Commonwealth as schoolchildren – and might not have been sufficiently exposed to broader information about the Commonwealth to eventually modify their point of view - although confirmation of this would require further study. Regardless of the source of their information, it is abundantly clear that responsible individuals in Seychelles think that, in principle, the Commonwealth is a useful potential ally for development, a source of technical expertise and a means of linking up with other countries with similar characteristics and objectives.

### **7.2.2 Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles**

The assistance provided to the Seychelles by the Commonwealth underpinned much of the development work that the new Republic launched as from the mid-1970s. There is overwhelming evidence that the newly independent country saw the Commonwealth as a major, and possibly its main, partner in development at least in the first decade after Seychelles joined the association. It is also clear Commonwealth support to the Seychelles, according to the documentary review as well as the survey results, was more noticeable in the 70s, 80s and early 90s.

The few reports prepared both by the Seychelles and the Secretariat, assessing Commonwealth technical and development assistance provided to the country over the years, agree that the assistance has been varied as well as considerable. It would seem that the main approach taken for providing assistance during those decades was based on the strategic gap filling approach. Both Seychelles respondents and Secretariat respondents mentioned the need for 'requests' to be made in order for assistance to be provided, confirming the use of the strategic gap-filling approach described as "a form of free-standing, demand-led technical assistance" (Baser, Morgan and Zinke 2007: 1).

More recent reports show that while assistance to Seychelles has remained consistently high in the last 15 years, it has shifted towards an increased offer of short term or specialised training opportunities for nationals as well as advisory, technical, and expert support for longer-term projects such as the Delimitation of



Maritime Boundaries, the Public Sector Salary Review or the Electoral Reform. This shift seems to have had the effect of causing respondents to think that Commonwealth assistance generally has been reduced over the last 10 to 15 years. The evaluation of the Strategic Gap Filling Programme of the Commonwealth Secretariat carried out in 2007 also showed that some of the changes that were made in the earlier part of the decade in terms of approach (for example, when technical assistance and training were merged under one sub-programme), had reduced the visibility of technical assistance as a stand-alone unit, and caused a 'loss of legitimacy' for this mode of assistance. The report added "An outsider looking at the organization Figure [of the Secretariat] could easily conclude that the organization does not see itself as having a key role to play in either analysing experience with technical assistance or thinking about improvements to it" (Baser et al 2007: 34).

The Seychelles survey also indicated that there was no known evaluation mechanism for the work being done by the Commonwealth in Seychelles although some referred to evaluations that were done 'in the past'. Furthermore, existing assessments for Commonwealth Secretariat support to Seychelles have focussed on the number and range of activities carried out, the levels of money expended, and the numbers of people trained (among others: MFA 2012; Commonwealth Secretariat 2009f). There currently seems to be no formal attempt to assess or evaluate the extent to which joint and agreed upon development objectives, if/when they exist, have been reached through assistance provided, or whether the activities and interventions have satisfied either Seychelles' expectations for development-related support or the Commonwealth stated objectives as described in its mandate, declarations and strategic plans. This agrees with one of the many findings of a relatively recent evaluation of the CFTC which states that "current CFTC reports to member states emphasise output and resource control over reporting on the attainment of development objectives" (Universalialia 2010:63).

Baser et al (2007:37) comment that "the Secretariat aims to ensure that all of its programmes are responsive", although in some cases 'responsive' is used to mean 'demand-led'. These authors argue that the two terms are not synonymous, and put forward a definition of responsiveness as "the marriage of well-articulated demand with appropriate supply in a way that meets the needs of the user",

adding that it is possible to be demand-led without being responsive (Baser et al 2007:38). Information received from informants at the Secretariat indicates that decision-making processes regarding the provision of assistance by staff are semi-autonomous and quite flexible, they also cut across the rather clearly demarcated administrative and thematic divisions – reflecting a type of approach which according to Berg (2000: 9) is precisely what is called for in this area. Despite this, the average senior official or civil society leader in Seychelles seems, on the whole, quite unaware of either the administrative structures, or operational approaches, that determine the functioning of the Commonwealth Secretariat and related organs, making it difficult for them to fully understand how the organization works and how to access potential benefits.

In addition to this, there are indications that the Commonwealth's perception of its role and mandate in regard to small states has not really evolved over time. A quote from a 2010 Commonwealth official's speech which was used in the questionnaires for the field survey said, "The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, for example, responds to requests – especially from small states – relatively swiftly and flexibly, while also respecting the need for cost-effectiveness and for demonstrable results..." A letter from the Secretariat, written thirty years earlier, and addressed to all heads of government of island developing and specially disadvantaged countries, states: "the CFTC, for instance, has been particularly concerned to ensure that appropriate technical assistance can be speedily made available to smaller and specially disadvantaged members by responding expeditiously to requests for personnel and experts' services" (Commonwealth Secretariat 1981:2). These virtually identical statements suggest that for the Secretariat at least, the perception of the CFTC's role in terms of assistance to small states has remained essentially unchanged over the last three decades.

### **7.2.3 Usefulness and significance of Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles**

There is a discrepancy in the perception of the usefulness of Commonwealth assistance to Seychelles when compared to its overall significance to the country – a large majority think that it has been useful, but a similarly large majority think

that it has not really been significant. When seen in the light of the many Commonwealth interventions and activities, this result indicates that the assistance is assessed as having had a positive effect, but not one that is sufficiently large to warrant being described as significant. This is confirmed by the view that work done by the Commonwealth Secretariat in particular, is 'rather confined'. The perception is tersely summed up by one of the respondents' in a comment about Commonwealth Secretariat staff: "They come to Seychelles, do something and leave. They do not reach out and there is little follow-up."

Apart from the Commonwealth Secretariat and the CFTC, there is little mention of assistance from other known Commonwealth bodies, despite the fact that some of their activities are recurrent, and are regularly presented in the public media. The Commonwealth Foundation for example has annual writing competitions for the general public, but this is mentioned by only one respondent, and in a way that refers to these competitions' limitations rather than their potential. One of the possible reasons for this lack of connection to this type of activity of the Foundation could be that Seychelles has not developed a strong anglo-centered 'literary' culture as most of the recent published works of Seychellois authors tend to have been written in Kreol. Other Commonwealth related agencies which have been very present in Seychelles are the COL, the CPA and the Commonwealth Games, but because they operate in very clearly defined areas such as education, or the legislative arm of government, or sports, their interventions, as can be expected, usually reach a specific range of people only.

It is clear that for the provision of technical assistance the Commonwealth formal organs are meant to operate through a clearly defined mechanism which requires communicating through PCPs and POC (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012a) in relevant ministries in member states. At the same time it is also clear that the perception of the national significance of the work being done would be enhanced as a result of Commonwealth staff being in touch with a wider range of national stakeholders – some of the Seychelles respondents, including government officials, actually asked about how they could arrange to meet Commonwealth staff who are visiting Seychelles.

Based on data collected, there are various other explanations for the assessment of Commonwealth assistance as not being very significant to Seychelles generally. One of them could be the lack of awareness of even senior government officials and leaders in civil society of the number, or range, of areas where Seychelles has received or is receiving assistance. As pointed out by one of them about the way things are in many sectors, “people tend to operate in silos”. This probably makes information sharing difficult, but more importantly, it may prevent a coordination of efforts between stakeholders. Moreover, it would seem that this is a characteristic that applies not just to Commonwealth technical assistance. The Capacity Development Plan for Seychelles claims that the “bases on which planning, budgeting and monitoring of projects are done at sector levels do not seem to be clear to the people who are implementing them”, and that it is evident that there is a “completely uncoordinated approach to planning across sectors, although it [planning] is viewed as important” (UNDP 2011: 23, 25). It could be claimed that the wide range of areas in which the Commonwealth has ‘responded’ to requests and provided assistance to Seychelles over the last few decades may simply have reflected an existing fragmentation. Morgan (2002: 9) does point out that the traditional approach to technical assistance has relied on projects, described as “those privileged particles of development”, that have often “chopped up the development process”. Nonetheless, the data gathered (and as described in Chapter 5) suggests that the situation was different during the first decade of collaboration. Assistance provided then was clearly focussed on achieving objectives as found in the National Development Plans of the day.

The evaluation of the CFTC done in 2010 found that a large proportion of the benefits of CFTC technical cooperation seems to have been at the level of units, departments, or ministries of the countries surveyed, and therefore, that CFTC activities, have supported the building and strengthening of institutions (Universalia 2010:21). The findings of this study for Seychelles, on the other hand, show that the perceived area of greatest benefit is at the level of the individual and most of the ‘useful’ interventions identified are related to scholarships for formal qualifications, training opportunities and sensitization activities. Another finding of the Universalia report for a large member country, was that CFTC “training activities have more impact on individual capacity than on the organization” (Universalia 2010:107). The fact that 88% of those who received

scholarships and training through the Commonwealth are currently working in areas where they are using the knowledge and skills acquired through their scholarships and training, shows that in Seychelles, the personal benefits are being used for, and within, the organizations where the recipients are employed thus translating these into some form of organizational capacity. This situation could be related to the SIDS status of the country – which usually implies limited employment possibilities, or the fact that actions of responsible individuals in any national sector will also have some sort of national impact because of size of any of the sectors, but this is an area that requires further investigation.

It is also felt in Seychelles that the Commonwealth is just one of the many development partners that the country has, and that it does not have a special or preferred partner status despite the fact that it was probably the closest development agency for some years after the country's independence. Moreover, reports in the media indicate that the Seychelles tend to receive small assistance inputs from a very wide range of development partners. Regarding the effect of having such a plurality of development partners and donors, each with its own approaches and strategic objectives – a recent EU report (2011: 15) states that "excessive fragmentation of aid at the global, country or sector level impairs aid effectiveness". The report also adds that the reason fragmentation is considered a problem is that "its costs have been shown to be very large for recipients, to the point that it significantly reduces aid efficiency. Having to deal with a plethora of donor missions, reporting requirements and consultants considerably reduces the value of aid for recipients. It forces the use of a great deal of administrative resources in countries where these are often scarce and would be better employed elsewhere" (EU 2011:15). Commonwealth staff working on projects in Seychelles may have already faced this problem, as reflected in a comment about how the variety of international organizations 'helping out' in a project area had complicated the work to be done (these complications included, for example, a limited understanding by some organizations of the country's legal system) although it was eventually possible to find ways to collaborate. It was also pointed out that one of the sources of this problem could have been a lack of knowledge of the officials concerned as to where to access the most effective forms of support.

#### **7.2.4 Knowledge of the Commonwealth**

General knowledge about the Commonwealth seems quite abundant among individuals in positions of seniority in Seychelles, but the 'working' knowledge needed to fully collaborate, and interact, with the organization is very limited confirming Auplat's (2007:52) comments that "it is often difficult to grasp" who and what such intergovernmental organizations really stand for and "that they usually appear as fuzzy structures". An extreme example of these limitations is the fact that a number of the listed Commonwealth 'organs' with whom respondents said they had had contacts turned out not to be part of the Commonwealth family of networks at all. Many also knew of only one 'division' of the Secretariat, or one particular programme. The working knowledge of respondents representing ministries and departments hosting PCPs/POCs was only marginally better. In such circumstances it is difficult for such officials to clearly identify areas of potential support from the Commonwealth. To remedy this situation, one of the Seychellois informants suggested that the Commonwealth should have national workshops to introduce what it does, adding that "many, specially in ministries, do not know what the Commonwealth can do. They should invite all stakeholders, such as the ministries, the statutory bodies, the major representatives of the private sector and NGOs – so that these stakeholders can tap into the facilities available. When we need help we already go to SADC, the PMU, the ACP, the TMSA, UNCTAD, we could also go to the Commonwealth in the same way and see it as a full partner in development". This comment indicates that possibilities which exist for working with the Commonwealth are not maximized because of a lack of awareness, and because the channels and processes for accessing Commonwealth support may not be fully known, and understood by many senior officials in Seychelles.

The Commonwealth website has a considerable amount of information in its many pages but few senior officials access the website, for various reasons. It should be noted though that the COL Newsletter which is sent by email seems to reach all of the education officials concerned as well as a few more.

### **7.2.5 Communication channels between Seychelles and the Commonwealth**

A large number of respondents in Seychelles commented that the existing lack of knowledge regarding the Commonwealth is due to the inability of local focal points to disseminate information appropriately. On the other hand, it is clear that there are other issues at stake, the PCP position for Seychelles for the last 5 years for example, while remaining constant within one ministry, has been held by at least three different individuals as a result of “a high turnover of such staff”. This means that there is little time for the officials to build up a strong knowledge base of the organization, or to develop strong links with their Commonwealth counterparts, especially if these officials are relatively new recruits in the system. In addition, there is the fact that the PCPs and POCs liaising role regarding the Commonwealth is only one aspect of these individuals’ official responsibilities. It is interesting to note that Baser et al (2007:98) had pointed out that “there are limitations to what can be expected of the principal contact point/point of contact (PCP/POC) system” since most of them were government staff with many other responsibilities whose function was largely to process request documents, and that once this was done, they had little involvement with projects. They add: “it is probably unrealistic to expect more from these individuals under the circumstances” (Baser et al 2007: 98).

There are hints that the people who really ‘know’ the Commonwealth are those who hold ‘higher’ positions – by deduction, individuals who hold ministerial positions and above, and who are essentially in ‘political’ posts. Data collected did show that at the start of the relationship between Seychelles and the Commonwealth, discussions regarding support at strategic and often operational levels, occurred between the President (or Prime Minister) of the country and the Secretary General of the Commonwealth. The country has grown and evolved since then, and issues such as the rule of Law, protection of the environment, Human Rights, the notion of Democracy, are increasingly being discussed at national level not just within government circles, but also in the business community or within groups of concerned citizens. There is, for example, a budding civil society/NGO sector that is increasingly trying to establish a name for itself, and a role within society (LUNGOS changes name to reflect new role 2013:1). Therefore there seems to be a sense of frustration relating to the

perception that the Commonwealth (as a whole) “only talks to government” regarding important aspects of the country’s development. Some feel that “communicating the availability of [Commonwealth] programmes should not remain the domain of government only”. The activities of the Commonwealth Foundation, which is the Commonwealth organ for dealing with civil society generally, are hardly known, and there is not a single reference made to the participation of members of Seychelles civil society in any of the Foundation’s activities, despite the electronic platforms made available by the Foundation for average citizens to interact<sup>25</sup>. Interestingly enough, Facebook Seychelles, is an extremely popular media in Seychelles, and hardly anything happens in the country that is not commented on by a wide range of individuals on this site. It would be reasonable to ask, in such circumstances, why the Commonwealth platforms have so little appeal for the people of Seychelles.

According to many, offers for possibilities of assistance “go to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs but this information is then not communicated to everyone”, and there is a suggestion that “it may be necessary to insist that they [the Commonwealth organizations] should follow the example of the UN and advertise for activities, maybe also send information through LUNGOS (Liaison Unit for Non-Governmental Organizations)”. No mention was made, by anyone, of the parallel civil society gatherings that usually take place at the same time, and usually in the same geographical location as the CHOGMs (Mayall 2001:20), neither were there records available showing the participation of Seychellois representatives at these meetings.

It should be noted that the Commonwealth Secretariat-Seychelles Technical Cooperation Framework (2009: 11) had commented on the fact that the PCP/POC system in Seychelles was not working well and that there would be a change of PCP, as well as an improved mechanism for coordinating CFTC assistance. The field survey for this study showed that in 2011/2012, the situation was still unsatisfactory and that, in fact, there might have been a further deterioration in the system – as reflected by the level of staff turnover in the PCP position and in respondents comments. In view of the crucial role of the PCP/POCs system in

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<sup>25</sup> As mentioned in the introduction to Chapter 6, it was not possible to get any survey participant who may have had close links with this Commonwealth organ.



accessing and maximizing assistance from the Commonwealth, existing weaknesses in this area are a strong contributing factor to the 'inability' of the country from fully benefitting from the association.

Seychellois officials think that the country would benefit more from the Commonwealth if there were a greater number of Seychellois working within the various organs of the association, indicating that nationals within the Commonwealth system might generally show more interest in their own country, and might also be more accessible to national stakeholders.

#### **7.2.6 Sense of participation in the Commonwealth and sense of ownership of Commonwealth development activities**

While most officials in Seychelles feel that the country has generally some say in decision-making within the Commonwealth, it is clear that they did not feel that Seychelles' influence is of great note. Overall, this position is not very different from that of Commonwealth respondents. This assessment of Seychelles participation in Commonwealth functioning seems rather surprising, especially when the number of Commonwealth meetings attended by Seychellois officials annually are taken into account, together with the very favourable reports available in the local press, or on the Commonwealth website, about Seychelles' participation in Commonwealth activities (see Chapter 5; Commonwealth Secretariat website 2013b). This could be attributed, in part, and for the Seychellois group, to lack of information. There is also the issue of what some have described as "the kind of representation" that Seychelles has tended to have in such fora. Despite the fact that the Commonwealth Secretariat has a general rule that 'political projects' (identified by Prime Ministers and other high-level government officials) receive about 10% of allocated funds while 15% go to stand alone projects and 75% go to inputs of specialists and interventions to advance the Secretariat's Strategic Plan (Baser et al 2007: 30), media focus in member countries, and indeed the Commonwealth Secretariat's focus, is often on the participation of political actors (for example, appointees who hold ministerial posts), as opposed to the work of the specialists in development-related areas. There are close contacts between the Commonwealth and a few people "higher

up” – in the words of respondents – but there is clearly a need to include more of the decision-makers, and other stakeholders, in the communication system.

The survey results show that, on the whole, Commonwealth staff is perceived as distant and inaccessible<sup>26</sup> while national counterparts such as the PCP/POCs are seen as ineffective and lacking in competence. The overall findings of the study indicate that, in fact, the problem may simply be one of a lack of understanding of each other’s mode of operating, work objectives and the constraints faced in the respective environments.

### **7.3 IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS**

This study is different from the few other studies of its kind (Morgan and Singh, UNDP 2002, ODI 2007) in that it focusses on the relationship between a multilateral international organization, the Commonwealth, and a SIDS member, the Seychelles, in an attempt to understand how the dynamics of the link have influenced the effectiveness of the assistance provided by the international organization (IO) to the SIDS member state, as well as how major country stakeholders perceive this assistance.

Results show that while the assistance to Seychelles has been plentiful and varied, its responsiveness to the development needs of the country may have become less significant over the years. This, according to findings, is due to a range of factors which include changes in the country’s needs, changes at leadership level both in-country and within the IGO, changes in the Commonwealth strategic areas of focus, but especially, what could best be described as the incremental changes in the Commonwealth governance structure and recognition of ownership – as can be seen in the various declarations and the new Charter of the organization. Adaptation to these ongoing changes and the ability to use them to greatest advantage might have been held back by a general assumption, by the IGO and the member state, that roles have remained the same over the years.

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<sup>26</sup> Although a few remember Commonwealth representatives who reached out to them and were very supportive during the implementation of projects.

Seychelles ability to maximize the assistance offered by the Commonwealth has also been increasingly hampered by a communication system, and information flows, that are sluggish at best and dysfunctional at worst, leading to a low perception of participation in the decision-making and functioning of the Commonwealth – despite the best efforts of the Commonwealth organs to also use publications, and electronic platforms, to disseminate information and communicate with stakeholders in member states, on a limited range of activities. The study shows that there is, among responsible individuals in a SIDS, a low sense of ownership of what the Commonwealth is and does – thus possibly leading to a lower effectiveness rating than the documentary evidence of assistance provided would justify. This confirms one of the findings of a pilot project by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) on stakeholder perception of multilateral ‘donors’: that “perception of ownership of the institution and its policies can trump perceptions about its effectiveness” (Burall 2007: 3). The ODI study, described as the first systematic study seeking the views of “stakeholders who interact with donors in-country and are responsible for implementing donor programmes” (Burall 2007: 3), found, among other things, that there was “clear consensus that ownership of the development process is critical to aid effectiveness”, and that “understanding stakeholder perceptions must be a critical element of any overall assessment of donor effectiveness” (Burall 2007: 3). Moreover, it is useful to remember that assessments of effectiveness are usually made difficult by the fact that most of the dialogue is with “captured institutions and officials” (Berg 2000: 7).

It is possible to invoke the SIDS status of Seychelles and issues such as remoteness and smallness (and all of their related effects) as part of the explanation for the perceptions of the respondents in the country, but there are a number of other factors that seem to be contributing to the inability of many decision-makers involved in the implementation of country development policies, to establish a strong connection either with the work of the Commonwealth or with the people who represent the Commonwealth. Factors preventing stronger connections and better communication seem to include the type of work environment where the country officials and civil society leaders operate. These are clearly very different from the work environment of staff in the various Commonwealth bodies, especially the formal organs, most of which are located in

developed countries where there is a long tradition of systematic storing of information which is also readily available (thus making information of any kind an important resource), with advanced and usually dependable communications infrastructure, and where, as a result, access to information sources is relatively easy. This may not apply to a SIDS such as the Seychelles<sup>27</sup>, therefore expectations, for all stakeholders, need to be adjusted accordingly.

Another important element is that the majority of 'clients' of Commonwealth organs are organizations and institutions in relatively distant locations while the 'clients' of officials in national governments in SIDS are groups or individuals who are, sometimes claustrophobically, close to them in every sense of the word, consequently putting a very different perspective on the work that they do and the manner in which they approach it. Essentially, this means that the people working in development assistance in international organizations/networks such as the Commonwealth and the people who are meant to be their direct 'interlocutors' or counterparts at national level, operate in two very different 'worlds' and may often have very different perspectives on the same things.

This study shows that the establishment of useful working arrangements between an IO and a SIDS member state need to go well beyond simply understanding national, cultural or political differences. It needs to incorporate aspects of technological, social, administrative and information-related factors that impact on levels of knowledge, the ability to receive information and understand its context, and the ability to act. It also ought to take into account the importance of the human element, and the need to establish real relationships between cooperating partners, in order to facilitate communication and create a sense of ownership. Above all, there is a need to incorporate in the design of assistance provision, the possibility to reach a greater range of stakeholders during all phases of planning and implementation of activities done with, or for, a country.

The ODI project mentioned earlier also found that "country context is important", and that while these vary across countries, they "could include the history of the organization in that country, the visibility of its activities, the type of activities it

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<sup>27</sup> This researcher found considerably more archival information available in London about instances of Seychelles working with the Commonwealth, than in Seychelles. This is probably not an exceptional case.

undertakes, as well as personal factors such as the performance of the head of the agency in the country” (Burall 2007: 3). The results of this study suggest that understanding context may influence, and in some cases determine, the eventual success, real and perceived, of technical cooperation and other collaborative development efforts. An important pre-requisite for improving effectiveness is an understanding, and acceptance, of differences that exist – an understanding that is often assumed, or taken for granted, in interactions between international and national partners. Such understanding, and acceptance, could lead to the development of approaches that would minimise or overcome the hurdles that arise from differences in context. Studies focussing on this particular aspect of international relations could provide alternative, and improved, approaches to the provision of assistance to developing states with particular needs.

Many believe in the value and continuity of the work done by the Commonwealth (Doxey 1989: 146, 147; Groom 1988: 190; Armstrong 2001: 46, 47; Auplat 2007: 55, 56) and its multiple networks – which for some could even serve as a blueprint for global governance (Shaw and Ashworth 2010: 1; Lord Howell as reported in Armstrong 2001:43). A greater understanding of the contextual issues involved in work done by the IO for/with its SIDS members, and the subsequent development or modification of relevant liaison and assistance approaches, might increase the perceived worth of the IO within its wider membership.

#### **7.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THESIS**

As a result of the research carried out, this thesis makes original contributions in the following key areas:

a) *Evidence of Seychelles historical relationship with the Commonwealth*

In view of the fact that there is no known publication that systematically and coherently documents the historical relationship between Seychelles and the Commonwealth, this study, which has researched the area as extensively as was possible, documents and presents the information in a single publication and should prove a useful resource to future researchers seeking to access such

information. The information can also be used to advantage by government officials as well as NGO and civil society officers who are involved in development cooperation, in order to critically reflect on their practice and to improve their engagement with donors.

*b) Authentic insights into the unique nature of the development needs of Seychelles as a SIDS*

The study provides authentic insights into the unique nature of the development needs of Seychelles as well as the challenges that it faces as a small island developing state. It is probable that many of the findings are also applicable to other SIDS and could therefore be used to improve existing, or establish new and effective, collaborative frameworks for SIDS to engage with international organizations.

*c) Understanding the role of Points of Contact in SIDS*

The study highlights the lack of effective PCP/POC engagement with the Commonwealth Secretariat and other Commonwealth organizations, as a result of the lack of visibility of officers in these positions as well as the functional limitations imposed on them by the multiplicity of roles and other work related factors. This is clearly a typical issue in small countries with limited human and financial resources and may help explain some of the disparities between small and bigger countries' access to development resources from development organizations, including influence.

## **7.5 RECOMMENDATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **7.5.1 Approaches for maximising the effects of Commonwealth development aid and technical support to Seychelles and to SIDS generally**

It is clear from the foregoing that the Commonwealth can and does play a role in the development of its SIDS member states, but it is also clear that there are aspects of technical cooperation, and development assistance, to these states that could be improved. The following recommendations have been derived from the results of this study.

- a. At the country level, member states ought to determine what they want from the association, and organise themselves so that they are more involved in the functioning of the association in order to influence its agenda to their advantage. This might require having a small group, representative of all national sectors, working together to determine how best to use the potential advantages offered by the association. However, in view of the fact that national governance and access to any form of external resources in most developing countries, is very contested territory at the political level, it is difficult to envisage who would push for such an approach, and if such a group would actually have any influence.
- b. In order to help achieve the above, the Commonwealth Secretariat could investigate and propose ways of working together that do not create a dichotomy between the government sector and civil society. This approach would go beyond merely including non-governmental players in surveys, or paying them the odd courtesy call during an official visit to the country.
- c. Small island developing states need to look at ways of operating within the association that do not attempt to emulate the approach of larger countries. Their context, their resources and their geography are very different – and as stated by a former President of the Republic of Seychelles (see Chapter 5, Section 5.9.2): “the needs and problems of small states just cannot be equated with those of large countries”. Too much ‘mainstreaming’ of SIDS issues, as has been the case so far, means that essentially the same approaches for assistance are used for all member states and only the content changes to suit the needs of smaller states. At the other extreme, there is the risk of ‘ghettoizing’ SIDS issues in visible but ineffective sub-groups. Finding an approach that is appropriate for SIDS while giving them the “equal voice” promised by membership of the Commonwealth (Ramphal 2009: 13) seems an entirely justifiable expectation.
- d. The Secretariat in consultation with national partners ought to review the communication channels/systems presently in place for liaison between the international organization and national counterparts, with the aim of

ultimately reaching and involving a wider range of stakeholders. This might include actually working with tri-partite groups as one of the forms of collaboration recommended under b. above.

- e. Investigate ways to make the complex and rather 'nebulous' Commonwealth networks easier to understand, reach and appreciate – for the average national official in member states and specially for those in SIDS. For example, at a basic level, the lists already provided on the Secretariat website (Commonwealth Secretariat website 2011b) could be expanded to include short descriptions of what these organizations do and how to contact them, including embedded links. At a more complex level, networks which are 'affiliated' to the Secretariat, and which may at times receive support from the organization, could be actively encouraged to reach out to member states through relevant activities carried out by the Secretariat and other major Commonwealth organs. This recommendation might require re-looking at the relationships that exist between various Commonwealth major organs themselves in order to improve them, if and where necessary.
  
- f. In the long-term, re-assess the overall role of the Commonwealth Secretariat in the area of 'technical cooperation' as a form of development support. Member states, and SIDS in particular, seem to derive greater benefits from 'facilitation' efforts, as shown in some of the cases discussed in Chapter 5, rather than from direct interventions – especially when the latter are short-term or one-off in-country activities. The Commonwealth could use its considerable advantages as a network of networks to focus on i) providing access (to resources, specialist services, participation in important forums, etc) as opposed to getting directly involved in service provision and technical assistance; ii) wide-scale information sharing using various media (as applicable in different settings) as opposed to only focussing on publications (which admittedly do generate funds) and the internet; and iii) intensifying work on establishing multi-lateral links and channels for greater south-south cooperation and building on the work already being done for SIDS.



### **7.5.2 Areas for further research**

There are extremely few studies on stakeholder perception of international organizations that provide development assistance either in the form of monetary disbursements, or in the form of technical assistance and other types of development support. The few that could be identified (Morgan, Singh and others for the 2002 UNDP study; Burall for the 2007 ODI pilot project), all stated that they were essentially ground-breaking exercises. This study which has looked at a hitherto untouched area, the relationship and perceived usefulness, and significance, of development assistance from the Commonwealth to the Seychelles, a SIDS member, has in some ways, raised as many questions as it has answered.

There is clearly a need to better understand how the much talked about 'specificities' of small island developing states impact on the general effectiveness of assistance, and how various stakeholders in these states perceive the provision of assistance from multilateral organizations (or networks), such as the Commonwealth.. This study has also confirmed that the tendency to evaluate the effects of development assistance based only on, either the provider's perception, or the perception of a small select group of national interlocutors, may be doing a disservice to all concerned, and that evaluations of assistance ought to include as many national stakeholders as possible.

Furthermore, in more general terms, research needs to be done to understand whether 'real' effectiveness of development assistance – as shown by 'outputs' or results such as number of meetings organized, or people trained, etc. – can be divorced from recipients perceptions of effectiveness. The latter also usually becomes more evident when an impact study is carried out some years after the implementation of technical cooperation, but as Berg (2000: 8) points out, such studies are scarce and "very few impact studies can be found ... which look at outcomes, expected and unexpected".

While this study is, and remains, empirical in nature, there is much scope for further research that would add to the theoretical debate on the applicability of

constructivist perspectives in understanding SIDS within the broader context of multilateral assistance, international relations and global development.

The findings of such studies would enrich the existing body of knowledge on development, especially in regard to SIDS; contribute to a better understanding of international relations; and in practical terms, allow improvements to be made to development assistance which, inevitably, occurs in environments that are constantly evolving.

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## ANNEX 1

Annex 1a: Questionnaire for Respondents in Seychelles

### **Commonwealth Support to a Small Island Developing State – The Case of Seychelles**

Questionnaire No: *(will be inserted by researcher)*

Note to respondents:

Information being collected through this questionnaire will be used to complete a doctoral thesis (DLitt et Phil) on the relationship between the Commonwealth and one of its SIDS members, namely, the Seychelles. This work is being done within the Department of Development Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of South Africa.

The questionnaire is meant to tap into your personal knowledge and experience. Completing it does not require researching material to find information of which you have no previous knowledge.

Names (and titles) of contributors will be included in the list of sources unless contributors request anonymity – in which case the respondent's name or title will not appear on any published material.

In responding to questions which present a choice of options, please underline the correct response from the options found next to or below the question. For the other questions, simply type in your comments.

**Name and Job Title:**

**My name and title can be included in the list of sources** *(please underline your chosen response)* YES / NO

**QUESTIONS: Please underline the response you choose**

**A. Background knowledge of the Commonwealth**



1. How familiar are you with the Commonwealth generally? (*Please underline one expression*)
  - a. Very familiar
  - b. Reasonably familiar
  - c. Not very familiar
  - d. Not familiar at all
  
2. How would you define the Commonwealth – in a few words?

**B. Direct knowledge of Commonwealth programmes and projects**

3. Have you personally benefitted from a Commonwealth scholarship (short or long term training in Seychelles or elsewhere? YES / NO  
(*If yes, could you provide area/s of training and approximate dates*)
  
4. Are you currently working in an area which allows you to utilize the knowledge and experience gained from the scholarship? YES / NO
  
5. a) Have you worked in departments which received the assistance of the Commonwealth – through funding of projects or experts or scholarships, etc? YES / NO  
  
b) If yes, could you list the areas and type of assistance - whenever possible (*e.g title, approximate dates, type of activity, funding arrangements, any other relevant information*)?  
  
c) How useful was the assistance generally? (*Please underline one expression*)
  - a. Very useful
  - b. Reasonably useful
  - c. Not very useful
  - d. Not useful at all

6. According to your knowledge, which 'organ' of the Commonwealth has been the most active in Seychelles?
7. According to your knowledge, which 'organ' of the Commonwealth has been the least active in Seychelles?

**C. Mechanisms that exist to channel interactions between the Commonwealth and the Seychelles**

8. a) Can you name the organizations/departments/units in Seychelles that, according to you, have links with the Commonwealth?
  - b) Are these organizations/departments generally effective in communicating the needs of Seychelles to the Commonwealth? Why?
  - c) Are these organizations/departments/units effective in communicating Commonwealth values and principles through the Commonwealth-linked activities that they organize in-country? Why?
9. a) According to you, which are the organizations/departments/units within the Commonwealth which have close links with the Seychelles?
  - b) Are these organizations/departments/units effective in linking up with national organizations and institutions in Seychelles? Why?

**D. Perception of Commonwealth programmes/projects and other interventions**

10. In your view, have Commonwealth programmes/projects/interventions been of help to Seychelles? *(Please underline one expression)*
  - a. Very helpful
  - b. Reasonably helpful
  - c. Not very helpful

d. Not helpful at all

11. According to you, which Commonwealth programmes/projects/interventions in Seychelles or for Seychelles, have been the most beneficial to the country? Why?

12. According to you, which Commonwealth programmes/projects/interventions in Seychelles or for Seychelles, have been the least beneficial to the country? Why?

13. Is there an evaluation of Commonwealth programmes/projects/interventions carried out after implementation of the activities? Please comment.

14. In your view, what are the biggest handicaps to Seychelles being able to fully benefit from Commonwealth membership?

15. In your view, what are the general factors that allow Seychelles to maximize the benefits of Commonwealth membership?

16. Please underline the most relevant expression for describing the assistance (of any kind) provided to Seychelles by the Commonwealth: *(Please underline one expression)*

- a. Very significant
- b. Reasonably significant
- c. Not very significant
- d. Not significant at all

17. According to you, to what extent does Seychelles help to shape relevant decisions in various fora within the Commonwealth so that final outcomes are useful to the country? *(Please underline one expression)*

- a. Great influence
- b. Some influence
- c. Hardly any influence

d. No influence at all

18. What are the methods or mechanisms through which Seychelles can make its voice heard in the Commonwealth? Could you list a few - in order of priority.

19. If these mechanisms already exist, is Seychelles taking advantage of them? Please comment.

20. What is your opinion regarding the annual membership fee that Seychelles is meant to pay to the Commonwealth (sums ranging from GBP 13,571 in 1977 to 55,497 in 2009<sup>28</sup>)?

21. Do you read the Small States Digest published by the Commonwealth?  
*(Please underline one expression)*

- a. Very regularly
- b. Occasionally
- c. Rarely
- d. Never

22. How frequently do you access other information from Commonwealth publications or the Commonwealth website? *(Please underline one expression)*

- a. Very frequently
- b. Occasionally
- c. Rarely
- d. Never

23. How does information about the Commonwealth reach you?

24. In a speech given in 2010<sup>29</sup>, a deputy secretary-general of the Commonwealth says the following: *"The Commonwealth Fund for Technical*

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<sup>28</sup> SG reports. Available at [http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Document/181889/34293/35144/152092/reports\\_of\\_the\\_commonwealth\\_secretarygeneral/](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Document/181889/34293/35144/152092/reports_of_the_commonwealth_secretarygeneral/)

*Cooperation, for example, responds to requests – especially from small states – relatively swiftly and flexibly, while also respecting the need for cost-effectiveness and for demonstrable results... The small states and least developed countries consider Commonwealth development assistance to be the bread and butter issue for them.*

Do you agree with the above statement? (*Please underline*) YES / NO

Do you wish to comment?

**Thank you for your kind participation in this study!**

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<sup>29</sup> A. Banerjee.  
[http://www.thecommonwealth.org/document/221975/amitav\\_\\_modern\\_commonwealth.htm](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/document/221975/amitav__modern_commonwealth.htm)

## Annex 1b: Questionnaire for Commonwealth respondents

### Commonwealth Support to a Small Island Developing State – The Case of Seychelles

Questionnaire No. *(will be inserted by researcher)*

#### Notes:

Information collected through this questionnaire will be used to complete a doctoral thesis on the relationship between the Commonwealth and one of its SIDS members, namely, the Seychelles. This work is being done within the Department of Development Studies; School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Theology; University of South Africa.

The word 'Commonwealth' as used in the questionnaire refers essentially the Commonwealth's major formal organs/agencies, namely the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC), the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL).

Names (and job titles) of contributors will be included in the list of sources unless contributors request anonymity – in which case the names or titles will not appear on published material.

#### Name and Job Title:

**My name and title can be included in the list of sources** *(Please click on appropriate ).* **YES**  **NO**

QUESTIONS: *(If clicking on the boxes does not work, please underline or highlight your chosen answer)*

#### E. The Commonwealth and the Seychelles – general

25. How familiar are you with the case of the Seychelles as a member state of the Commonwealth? *(Please click on the appropriate box.)*

Very familiar  Reasonably familiar  Not very familiar   
Not familiar at all

26. From your point of view, which 'organ' of the Commonwealth has been the most active in Seychelles? *(Please name only one)*

27. From your point of view, which 'organ' of the Commonwealth has been the least active in Seychelles? *(Please name only one)*

28. How would you describe the participation (presence and involvement) of Seychelles as a member state in Commonwealth functioning and activities? *(Please click on the appropriate box.)*

Fully involved  Reasonably involved  Not very involved  
 Not involved at all

**F. Mechanisms that exist to channel interactions between the Commonwealth and the Seychelles**

29. a) According to your knowledge, what are the organizations/departments/units in Seychelles which have links with the Commonwealth?

b) In your opinion, are these organizations/departments/units effective in linking up with the various Commonwealth organs and agencies? Why?

30. a) Can you name the major Commonwealth organs/units that, according to you, have links with the Seychelles?

b) Are these organs/units effective in communicating Commonwealth values and principles through the activities they organize with, or in, the Seychelles? Please explain.

**G. Perception of usefulness of Commonwealth programmes/projects/interventions**

31. From your point of view, how well do the generic Commonwealth projects/programmes respond to the development needs of the Seychelles - a small island state? *(Please click on the appropriate box and add comments to explain your choice.)*

Very well  Reasonably well  Not too well  Not well at all

32. From your point of view, how well do the country-specific Commonwealth programmes/projects/interventions respond to the development needs of Seychelles? *(Please click on the appropriate box and add comments to explain your choice.)*

Very well  Reasonably well  Not too well  Not well at all

33. In your view, what is the role (in general terms) of the Small Island States desk/office/function when it comes to SIDS members such as Seychelles?

34. Are the lessons learnt - which are presented in the literature produced by the Small Islands 'desk' at the Secretariat - incorporated in the design and development of programmes/projects/interventions for the Seychelles?

Always  Quite frequently  Occasionally  Almost never

35. From your point of view which Commonwealth programmes/projects/interventions in or for Seychelles, may have been the most beneficial to the country? Why?



36. From your point of view which Commonwealth programmes/projects/interventions in or for Seychelles, may have proved to be the least beneficial to the country? Why?

**H. Direct involvement in programmes that have targeted/included Seychelles**

37. Have you been directly involved in programmes that have included or targeted Seychelles? Yes  No

38. If yes, could you briefly describe the approach that is/was used for developing a programme or project aimed at or involving the country?

**I. Benefits from membership of the association**

39. According to you, what are the factors that would allow Seychelles to maximize the benefits of Commonwealth membership?

40. According to you, what are the biggest handicaps to Seychelles being able to fully benefit from Commonwealth membership?

41. Please circle the most relevant expression for describing the effect of the assistance (of any kind) provided to Seychelles by the Commonwealth:

Very significant  Reasonably significant  Not very significant   
Not significant

42. According to you, to what extent does the Seychelles as a member state participate in Commonwealth decision-making process?

Fully  To some extent  Hardly participates  Does not participate at all

43. What are the methods or mechanisms through which Seychelles can make its voice heard in the Commonwealth? Please list a few in order of priority.

44. If these mechanisms already exist, is Seychelles taking advantage of them? Why? (*from your point of view*)

45. In a speech given in 2010<sup>30</sup>, a deputy secretary-general of the Commonwealth says the following: *“The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation, for example, responds to requests – especially from small states – relatively swiftly and flexibly, while also respecting the need for cost-effectiveness and for demonstrable results... The small states and least developed countries consider Commonwealth development assistance to be the bread and butter issue for them.”*

Do you feel that the above statement is applicable in the case of the Seychelles? Do you have comments?

**Thank you for your kind participation in this study!**

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<sup>30</sup> A. Banerji. Available at [http://www.thecommonwealth.org/document/221975/amitav\\_\\_modern\\_commonwealth.htm](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/document/221975/amitav__modern_commonwealth.htm)

## Annex 1c: Guidelines for Semi-guided Interviews for Elite Interviewees

Name: ..... (or)

Anonymous:.....

Organization:.....

Date:.....

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1. Do you feel that the Commonwealth has made or is making a positive contribution to your area of work?
2. Please comment on any programme that may be offered through Commonwealth assistance. Please also describe administrative arrangements and how well they work.
3. Do you feel that you have ever been made aware of the full range of help that can be provided by the Commonwealth?
4. In your opinion, what more should an organization such as the Commonwealth do to help SIDS like the Seychelles?
5. Do you represent Seychelles at regional/international or Commonwealth meetings? What is the major focus of these meetings?
6. What are the difficulties you encounter as a participant at the regional/international meetings where you must represent Seychelles' interests?
7. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

## ANNEX 2

### Annex 2a: List of Respondents and Contributors – Seychelles

Note: This information is applicable, as appropriate, for the period leading to the research design (March 2008 to March 2010) and for the time of the survey (August 2011 to April 2012). Names are given in alphabetical order.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Ahmed Afif	Principal Secretary	Ministry of Finance
Anonymous	-----	University of Seychelles
Noellie Alexander	Former Minister Former Ambassador	Ministry of Administration
Sheryl Alphonse	Officer	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Marie Nella Azemia	Chairperson	National Gender Commission
Micole Bistoquet	Senior Officer	Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre (ALDEC)
Marie Josee Bonne	Special Advisor	Department of Social Development
Christian Cafrine	Advisor (Former CEO - NHRDC)	Ministry of Education
Barbara Carolus	Project Manager	Government of Seychelles/European Union Human Rights Project
Bishop French ChangHim		Anglican Church of Seychelles
Raymond ChangTave	Advisor	Ministry of Housing and Habitat
Marina Confait	Vice-Chancellor (Former CEO - NHRDC)	University of Seychelles
Cecily Derjacques	Principal Management Officer	Department of Administration
Selby Dora	Advisor	Ministry of Education

Bernard Elizabeth	Chairperson	LUNGOS*
Anne Gabriel	Chief Medical Officer	Ministry of Health
Hendrick Gappy	Electoral Commissioner	Electoral Commission of Seychelles
Antonio Gopal	Chairperson	SOGCGA**
Marie Reine Hoareau	Advisor Technical Cooperation & International Relations	Ministry of Education
Wendy Isnard	Third Secretary	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Flavien Joubert	Director General	Department of Environment
Marja Karjalainen	Former Principal Secretary	Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs Ministry of Health
Daniella Larue	Consultant Public Enterprise	Department of Finance and Trade
Rebecca Lalanne	First Secretary	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Andre Leste	Former Advisor	Ministry of Education
Pat Matyot	Training Coordinator	Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation
Michel Mellie	Principal Statistician	Seychelles Bureau of Statistics
Anonymous	-----	Seychelles Revenue Commission
Raymonde Onezime	Principal Secretary	Department of Culture
Mike Padayachy	Businessman	Private sector
Marookh Pardiwalla	Independent Consultant	(Gender, Education)
Margaret Pillay	CEO	NHRDC
Selby Pillay	Director General Multilateral Affairs	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Marie Therese Purvis	Independent Consultant	NGO – Sustainable Seychelles
Egbert Rosalie	Director Human Resource Planning & Research	NHRDC
Alex Souffe	Head of Department	University of Seychelles

	(formerly head of the National Institute of Education)	
Linda William Melanie	Principal Secretary	Department of Social Development

\* LUNGOS- Liaison Unit of Non-Governmental Organizations Seychelles (name valid when study was carried out)

\*\*SOGCGA – Seychelles Olympic Games and Commonwealth Games Association

## Annex 2b: List of Respondents and Contributors – Commonwealth

<b>Name</b>	<b>Organization</b>
John Lesperance	Commonwealth of Learning
Anonymous	Commonwealth Secretariat
Joshua Brien	Special Advisory Services, Commonwealth Secretariat
Janet Strachan	Adviser & Head, Small States, Environment & Economic Management, Economic Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat
Constance Vigilance	Economic Adviser, Small States, Economic Affairs Division

## ANNEX 3

### List of Commonwealth projects and activities in Seychelles, 1975 to date (in chronological order and non-exhaustive)

Year	Project/Activity	Description
1975/76	Economic Survey of the Seychelles	Drafting/consultant
1975/76	Aid Planning and Preparation of an Economic Development Plan	Advisory/consultant
1975/76	Constitutional Conference (prior to independence)	Advisory/consultant
1975/76	Economic Advice (six months interim measure)	Advisory/consultant
1975/76	Constitutional Lectures	Training of government officials
1975/76	Legislative Drafting (long term)	Drafting/consultant
1975/76	Tourism and Aviation	Provision of qualified individual for post of Permanent Secretary (PS)
1975/76	Licensing and Air Agreements (3-phase project)	Consultant
1975/76	Transport (2-phase project)	Drafting TOR and provision of consultants to undertake study
1975/76	Gaming Policies Adviser	Advisory
1975/76	Financial Institutions	Consultant
1975/76	Establishment of a development bank	Feasibility study/consultancy
1975/76	Judiciary	Provision of acting judge
1975/76	Training – Ministry of Finance	Study visit for PS Finance to Bahamas and Barbados to study offshore banking operations
1975/76	Training – Ministry of Education	Study visit/attachments for lecturer at Teacher Training



<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
		College
1975/76	Training/travel grant	Study visit for Marketing Officer and Registrar of Cooperative to study processing and marketing of agricultural produce
1975/76	CFTC Award – public sector staff	9-month Course in Statistics for a Statistical Assistant
1975/76	Commonwealth Medical Conference	Participation by Seychelles Director of Medical Services
1975/76	Regional health activities	Establishment of working links
1979	Scholarships	Course in statistics for 2 individuals
1979	Participation in CHOGM	President attends Lusaka CHOGM
1979	Participation in meeting	Government representative attends Asia/Pacific rural technology programme review meeting
1979 to 1981	Consultancy	Advice on Petroleum activities (TAG)
1979 to 1981	Participation in meeting	Seminar on Adjustment Policies
1979 to 1981	Consultancy	Training and Manpower expert
1979 to 1981	Staff support	Senior Auditor/Manpower and Training Coordinator
1979 to 1981	Staff support	Chief Justice
1979 to 1981	Staff support	Statistician
1980/81	Consultancy study	Economic impact of Tourism
1981	Participation in meeting	Workshop – Training of Trainers
1981	Meeting organised in Seychelles	3 <sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Regional Workshop for Women in Small Island States

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
1981	Participation in CHOGM	Minister for Foreign Affairs attends Melbourne CHOGM
1982	Study on Tourism	A specialist prepares a report on the Economic Impact of Tourism in Seychelles
1982	Workshop	Representative of government attends workshop focussing on meteorological data for solar and wind energy
1983	Participation CHOGM	Minister for Planning and External Relations attends New Delhi CHOGM
1985	Colloquium organised in Seychelles	African and Indian Ocean meeting on the special needs of small states
1987	Workshop held in Seychelles	Training for better public management
1987	Participation in CHOGM	Head of State attends meeting held in Vancouver, Canada
1987	2 week visit by head of Industrial Development Unit	Small projects on use of cassava and seaweed and manufacture of cardboard boxes. Studies planned on production of vinegar from toddy; chutney and pickle bottling unit, timber industry to increase revenue generated by small business.
1987	Participation in Commonwealth Small States Exposition in Canada	Trade Show and Investment workshop to build visibility as a tourism destination
1987	Attendance at regional meeting – Health	Meeting of Commonwealth Health Ministers (Region)
1988	Opening of Small State Office in	Accommodation for permanent

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
	New York – initiative of Australia through the Commonwealth	missions for nine member states at the UN, including the Seychelles – to maintain presence at UN despite escalating costs of overseas missions
1988	Workshop held in Seychelles	Promotion of Child Mental Health
1988	Deputy SG Anyaoku visits Seychelles	Preparations for a meeting for Commonwealth Senior Officials to be held in Seychelles. Focus is on modernisation and Management of Foreign Relations
1988	SG and representatives from 35 Commonwealth Countries attend Meeting of Senior Officials	As above
1988	Senior Officials Meeting	Meeting to review developments post-Vancouver and prepare for the Kuala Lumpur summit
1989	No records available	
1990	Chief Justice attends 3 <sup>rd</sup> Commonwealth Africa Judicial Conference in Zambia	Conference: “The Judiciary as an integral part of the community”. Review of the enjoyment of human rights , the relationship between the judiciary and the government, the accountability of the judiciary and the role of the judiciary in Commonwealth Africa
1990	Minister for Education attends meeting of Commonwealth	6 <sup>th</sup> Biennial meeting of Commonwealth Youth Affairs,

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
	ministers for youth and visits education and other training institutions in Zimbabwe	governing body of CYP. Minister also meets 6 Seychellois students studying medicine at University of Zimbabwe. Meeting's focus is on the effects of drugs and contribution of youth in environmental protection
1990	Minister for Education attends Commonwealth meeting in Barbados	11 <sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers. Examination of the major factors affecting the quality of basic education. (On the sidelines: contacts are also made for Seychellois students to received scholarships from a number of universities in other Commonwealth countries.)
1991	Workshop held in Seychelles	Senior Executive Development Programme
1991	Attendance at CHOGM	The head of state attends the Harare CHOGM
1992	Consultations to prepare for multi-party system	
1992	Ministry of Health seminar attended by scientists and research officers from countries of Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.	Follow-up: Joint 4- country Commonwealth research project on teenage reproductive health - funded by the Rockefeller Foundation, coordinated by Seychelles
1992	Commonwealth observers team in Seychelles	To observe elections of political parties to be part of the constitutional commission
1992	Seychellois chosen for	Conference brings together

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
	Commonwealth study conference	individuals identified as likely future decision makers in country
1992	Meeting with SG in Seychelles	Head of official opposition meets with SG Anyaoku.
1992	Observer group arrives for referendum on new constitution	At end of referendum, the process is deemed free and fair by Commonwealth observers. Constitution proposed does not go through.
1993	Commonwealth responds to Seychelles request to provide legal professional to assist constitutional commission in the drafting of the new constitution	Secretariat consults with Mauritius Attorney-General office
1993	Visit	Head of Commonwealth Foundation visits Seychelles
1993	Commonwealth observers team	Two Commonwealth observers arrive in Seychelles to observe the referendum on the re-drafted constitution
1993	Commonwealth observers team	Observers team attends general elections
1993	International meeting – Women’s Affairs	Two government officials attend the Commonwealth meeting of Ministers responsible for women’s affairs
1993	Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting	Minister for Finance, Information and Defence attends Commonwealth Finance Ministers meeting in the Bahamas
1993	Invitation to address	The head of state is asked to

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
	Commonwealth meeting	make lead statement at Commonwealth summit on Women and Development
1993	Building of links	Seychelles and South Africa establish diplomatic relations based on the Commonwealth approval of events in that country
1994	Seychelles representative (Director of Management and Information Systems) sent by Commonwealth to to work with the Commonwealth electoral team in South Africa	This is a 3-month assignment. The team is meant to train and support SA officials who will be involved in the first democratic elections in that country
1994	Member of observers team	Seychelles former director of elections participates in Commonwealth Observer group for elections in South Africa
1994	International meeting	Ombudsman attends meeting of electoral commissioners in Mozambique
1994	Participation in Commonwealth workshop on environment impact assessment in Mauritius	
1994	Visit	The Commonwealth Consultative Group on Technology Management visits Seychelles
1994	Seychelles formally joins Commonwealth Parliamentary Association	A parallel organization which has been evolving with the Commonwealth - as its own website acknowledges. It also refers to decisions of heads of

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
		states at the CHOGMS
1994	International meeting	Seychelles participates in Commonwealth Senior Officials meeting in Pakistan
1995	International meeting	Seychelles participates in CPA meeting in Swaziland – specifically for clerks of the assembly/parliament. This is a first for Seychelles.
1995	International meeting	The speaker of the Seychelles assembly and one of the members attend CPA regional conference in Tanzania
1995	Youth Ministers meeting	Minister for Local Government, Youth and Sports attends Commonwealth Triennial Youth Ministers Meeting in Trinidad
1995	Assessment	A CFTC officer visits Seychelles to identify training needs
1995	International meeting	The speaker of the Seychelles assembly attends CPA Africa region meeting in Malawi
1995	Visit	Three British MPs arrive in Seychelles on an exchange visit, by invitation
1995	Seychelles part of a Commonwealth expert group meeting	Aims of meeting are to refine reports of former workshops on human resource development (HRD), identify areas for Commonwealth assistance and act as a steering group to advise secretariat on future HRD initiatives

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
1995	Attendance at CHOGM	The Minister for Foreign Affairs attends the CHOGM in New Zealand where Seychelles agrees to consensus aiming at suspending Nigeria
1995	Meeting of Health Ministers	Minister for Health attends Commonwealth Health ministers meeting in South Africa
1996	International meeting -the speaker and the clerk of the National Assembly attend a Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding officers meeting in Cyprus	Meeting to focus on the role of the Speaker in the legislative process, the neutrality of the presiding officer, the relationship between parliament and the executive, etc
1996	International meeting	3 members of the assembly attend a CPA regional meeting in Lesotho
1996	The Secretary of the Seychelles Commonwealth Games Association receives a 3-month scholarship in England and Canada from the Commonwealth Foundation	Aims of the scholarship: promote a deeper understanding of Commonwealth affairs and foster a greater commitment to Commonwealth ideals
1997	International meeting	Opposition member of the National Assembly attends CPA seminar in London
1997	International meeting	Seychelles is represented at Commonwealth symposium for women parliamentarians in London
2000/2001	Advice	Maritime Boundary Delimitation
2001/2002	Advisor on flood coastal management	Project is meant to develop flood forecast system; a GIS-



<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
		based system for flood management; and the development of a flood disaster management plan.
2001/2002	Training/software	Support for the recording of and sustainable management of debt
2001/2002	Study	Assessment of e-commerce usage in Seychelles economy
2002	Consultancy	Evaluation of National School Improvement programmes
2002	Staff support	Occupational therapist. Specialized services for the Rehabilitation Centre
2001/2006	Training	120 nationals trained in priority areas
2004	Visit	SG visits Seychelles
2004	Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers of Education from small states, held in Seychelles	Review of the Commonwealth Teacher Protocol
2004	Training	One Seychellois participant attends the Commonwealth Foundation's induction programme for young diplomats
2004	Visit	Deputy Secretary-General visits Seychelles
2004	International meeting	Commonwealth Tourism Meeting held in Malaysia
2004	Meeting of Ministers for Women's Affairs	Principals Secretary for Social Affairs attends meeting in Fiji
2004	Meeting	Commonwealth Consultative meeting (NEPAD) held in London

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
2005	Meeting Minsters of Finance	Ambassador attends meeting held in Barbados
2005	International meeting	Commonwealth Youth Forum held in Malta
2006	Seychelles launches CYP Diploma in Youth Development Work	COL designed programme geared towards youth workers, youth and health, and community workers
2006	International meeting	Meeting in Malta: Banking and Finance in Small States: Issues and Policies
2006	Observers team	Attend presidential elections
2007	International meeting	International Conference on Small States and Resilience Building held in Malta
2007	Seychelles hosts CYP regional advisory board meeting	
2007	Training	One Seychellois participant attends the Commonwealth Foundation's induction programme for young diplomats
2007	Training	One Seychellois participates in Commonwealth Third Country Programme in Port Operations and Management
2007	International meeting/Training	6 <sup>th</sup> Annual Commonwealth-Indis Small Business Competitiveness Programme
2007	Meeting of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Senior Officials	Meeting held in St. Lucia
2007	Visit	SG on working visit to Seychelles

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
2007/2008	Long-term Consultancy	Salary review to develop new public service salary scheme with the aim of attracting and retaining 'young talent', 'technical' and 'professional' staff
2007/2008	Study (Seychelles Trade Facilitation)	Port benchmarking – to develop a strategic plan and investment programme for Port Victoria, to comply with international standards
2008	Training	One Seychellois participant attends course in Malaysia : How to Successfully Plan and Manage Coastal and Island Tourism
2008	Meeting of Commonwealth Sports Ministers	Meeting held in Beijing
2008/2009	COL funded pilot project	Action Research – Closing the Gap between the performance of boys and girls in school
2009 and ongoing	Joint Seychelles/Mauritius submission to UN for extended continental shelf	Special Advisory services of Comsec provided support through legal, strategic and technical experts to finalise documents
2009	Meeting of C'W Education ministers	Meeting held in Kuala Lumpur on 'Education in the Commonwealth – Towards and Beyond Global Goals and Targets'
2009	2 <sup>nd</sup> submission by Seychelles for extending continental shelf – Northern Plateau	As above

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
2009	Staff support	Hydrologist
2009	Meeting of C'W Foreign Ministers	Meeting on Terrorism held in New York
2009	Training	Meeting in Malta: Banking and Finance in Small States: Issues and Policies
2009	Training	One Seychellois participant attends the Commonwealth Foundation's induction programme for young diplomats
2009	Meeting of Finance Ministers and Senior Officials	Meeting held in Cyprus
2009	Workshop held in Seychelles for judiciary and legal practitioners	Human Rights
2009	International meeting	Meeting of Commonwealth National International Humanitarian Law in Delhi
2010	Mascarene Plateau Region – governance and administration	Legal and technical assistance
2010	Training	One Seychellois participant attends the Commonwealth Foundation's induction programme for young diplomats
2010	Training	Regional Workshop in Uganda on Performance Management in the Public Service which aims at facilitating the introduction and institutionalisation of integrated performance management systems
2010	International meeting	Meeting in Botswana - State of Public Sector Reforms in Commonwealth Africa

<b>Year</b>	<b>Project/Activity</b>	<b>Description</b>
2010	Training	Workshop in Malta on Competitiveness Strategies in Small States
2010	Visit	SG attends 17 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 3 <sup>rd</sup> Republic
2011	Seminar for judiciary/legal professionals	Civil case management
2011	International meeting	For the first time, Seychellois youths (2) attend Commonwealth Youth Parliament Conference organised by CPA
2011	Training	One Seychellois participant attends the Commonwealth Foundation's induction programme for young diplomats
2011	Consultancy/seminar	Joint in-country seminar GOS/Commonwealth on the implementation of the information technology service management (ITSM)
2011	Observers team	Attends presidential elections
2012	Seychelles attends CGPMG meetings	Seychelles become a member of the Commonwealth Gender Plan of Action Monitoring Group
Not dated	Aldabra Island – limits of continental shelf	Legal, technical and scientific assistance
Ongoing	Training	2 annual workshops for permanent youth caucus representative

Note: The documents reporting on the activities for 1975 and 1976 do not give the precise year during which the activity was undertaken.

Sources: Seychelles National Archives 1975 to 1977, (no local records 1978 to 1986) and 1987 to 1997; Commonwealth Secretariat Archival Records 1975 to 1981; Commonwealth Secretary-General Reports 1977 to date; Seychelles Nation online 2004 to date; Seychelles Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2012