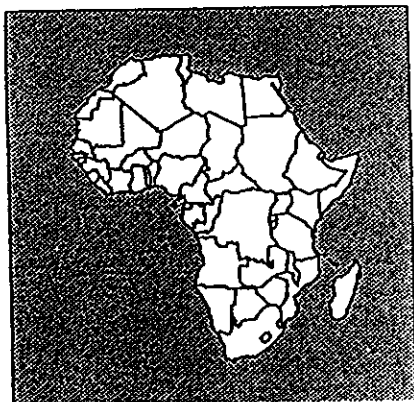


**EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL AND  
MANAGEMENT CAPACITY-BUILDING IN AFRICA:  
PAST TRENDS AND EMERGING PRIORITIES  
THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT EXPERIENCE**

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A Paper presented at the

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**EXTERNAL SUPPORT FOR INSTITUTIONAL AND MANAGEMENT**

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**PAST TRENDS AND EMERGING PRIORITIES**

**THE COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT EXPERIENCE**

By Olu Fadahunsi

1. **INTRODUCTION**

I would like to assume the possibility that a few of us in this audience may not be sufficiently familiar with the Commonwealth Secretariat (ComSec) and of course these days you also read about the Commonwealth Independent States (CIS) of the old Russian Federation. It will, therefore, be useful to provide some background information on the Commonwealth Governments and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Commonwealth Secretariat, organised in July 1965 by the Heads of Governments, is the principal inter-governmental organisation of the Commonwealth whose membership currently stands at 50 independent countries, all of which accept Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as the symbol of their free association and as Head of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is made up of 28 republics and 22 monarchies, 17 of the monarchies acknowledge the Queen as Head of State and five monarchies have their own Sovereigns. Its current population of 1.4 billion people spans a quarter of the World's population and make up nearly one-third of the United Nations. It also includes 19 dependencies associated with member-countries with a population of about six million including a voluntary category of "Special Members" for very small countries like Nauru and Tuvalu.

It is important to note that members are not in any way bound

together by a formal charter but by shared legacies and experience, some common guiding principles adopted unanimously over the years, and a deeply-held belief in consensus and consultations as the best ways to achieve goals and resolve differences.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General (current holder of the post is H.E. Chief Emeka Anyaoku) has overall management responsibility over the Secretariat whose primary function is to facilitate consultations and exchange of information among member-governments, and assist in the promotion of socio-economic development of member-countries through various technical assistance programmes executed by its various divisions. The Secretariat which is currently undergoing a major restructuring exercise, is posed to play an even more effective role in strengthening the link between dialogue and cooperative action in four major areas that have become the pre-occupation of the Commonwealth Governments and the focus of the Secretariat's work viz. in the areas of politics, of development, of promotion of good governance, and of human resource development.<sup>1</sup> The main organ for technical assistance is the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) and that organ is the subject-matter of this paper.

Following on this Introduction, the paper will highlight some of the challenges facing technical assistance in Africa today, trace the evolution of the CFTC, discuss the arrangement for managing the Fund and present an outline of the Fund's activities including its involvement in the African Region of the Commonwealth and the major functions that accompanied major policy changes that were introduced since its inception. The paper then presents an assessment of the CFTC approach to technical assistance management and concludes by examining some of the emerging challenges facing the CFTC in the 1990's and beyond.

## 2. THE CHALLENGE

The debate on the management of technical assistance in recent times has centred on the impact of the projects on the overall development of the recipient country and the sustainability of whatever success is attributable to assistance from foreign donors. A recent study on the subject has defined technical-cooperation in Africa from content viewpoint as "any activity aimed at enhancing human and institutional capabilities through the transfer, adaptation and utilization of knowledge, skills and technology"<sup>2</sup>. The study also found that most technical cooperation in Africa entailed a combination of long-term resident adviser, short-term consultants, studies, training (seminars, study tours, fellowships) plus small amounts of funding for equipment (vehicles, computers and office equipment). By and large, technical assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat deals exclusively on institutional and capacity building, and falls within the definition of the study.

Some of the key features of technical cooperation highlight some of the key challenges facing donor agencies today including the following<sup>1</sup> which were cited in the ECPDM study:

- (a) Majority of technical cooperation seems to consist of long-term resident advisers;
- (b) Relatively few of the experts, especially from bilateral donors, originate from other developing countries;
- (c) The use of local experts is limited (no more than 5%);
- (d) Few TC programmes include funds for the recipient countries to meet recruitment costs;
- (e) Some indications of shift from long to short term experts;<sup>3</sup>

Other related issues that should challenge the donors are:

- (a) Lack of clarity of objectives especially the clear definition of assistance in terms of capacity building and self-reliance instead of inputs or resources to be provided which are usually copiously stated;
- (b) In-built devices by donors and their experts to perpetuate aid and dependence syndrome;
- (c) Suitability or otherwise of the policy environment in which technical cooperation operate;
- (d) Availability of institutional framework to facilitate the smooth functioning of technical assistance projects;
- (e) Brain drain (total withdrawal of skill by nationals for a period) and Brain cycle (transfer of skill from public to private sector). A UN Report estimated that between 50,000 and 60,000 middle and high-level African managers were estimated to have emigrated between 1986 and 1990;<sup>4</sup>
- (f) The high risk of diverting technical cooperation funds from capacity-building and self-reliance objectives towards ameliorating incipient socio-economic problems of the host countries;
- (g) Preference to adopt a short term project implementation strategy instead of long-term institutional building that calls for establishment of a genuine partnership;
- (h) The failure of the expert-counterpart system;
- (i) The relatively low priority accorded education and training, which according to J Bossut et al shared only about 15 - 20% of TC budgets;

- (j) Poor or weak coordination mechanisms for technical cooperation in recipient countries;
- (k) Burdensome procedure and documentation for aid management by some donors.<sup>5</sup>

These and other challenges face bilateral and multi-lateral agencies in assisting countries to overcome their development problems.

### 3. EVOLUTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH FUND FOR TECHNICAL COOPERATION (CFTC)

The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC) is the main operational arm of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the principal sources of financial support for the Secretariat's developmental activities. It was established in 1971 by the Heads of Commonwealth meeting in Singapore as an instrument for working towards the achievement of the Declaration of Commonwealth Principles adopted in the same meeting whereby Commonwealth members committed themselves to work towards a new, more just and harmonious world-order and member sought to mobilise their efforts to overcome poverty, ignorance and disease and to raise living standards. It is a multi-lateral technical assistance agency through which various experts, advisers and consultants are sent to assist developing countries of the Commonwealth. The Fund also provides opportunities for nationals of these countries to receive training outside their environments, mainly in other developing countries.

As a multi-lateral agency, the CFTC is responsible to Commonwealth Governments collectively, not individually and it is financed by the voluntary contributions of all member-governments with the industrialised countries topping the list of donors. Its charter is a Memorandum of Understanding agreed by all Commonwealth governments at the Senior Officials Meeting in Cyprus in 1970 as amended in 1976 and 1980. The charter spelt out clearly the purpose of the Fund:

"to take advantage of shared experiences and similarities to promote development in the Commonwealth, thereby demonstrating in a practical way the ideals of cooperation and mutual assistance and strengthening the multi-lateral Links among Commonwealth countries and peoples"<sup>6</sup>.

It is the Fund's policy to draw its expertise from Commonwealth countries and it undertakes virtually all its training in Commonwealth countries. The Fund cherishes this distinctive feature of its operations which enables it to make available training resources and expertise from developing countries for other developing countries. It also prides itself as a pioneer in promoting technical cooperation among developing countries and a credible agent of South-South cooperation.

The Fund's field of operations is spelt out in its Memorandum of Understanding:

- (a) Planning (including manpower and education planning and sectoral analysis) and plan implementation;
- (b) the preparation, appraisal, execution and evaluation of development projects;
- (c) statistics, finance, tourism, transport, and public administration;
- (d) the taxation and development of resource-based industries;
- (e) regional and sub-regional co-operation in a variety of fields; and
- (f) activities related to the foregoing (Sect. 2.2).

The Fund is also authorised to provide further technical assistance as may be agreed by participating governments.



#### 4. THE MANAGEMENT OF THE FUND

The Fund's general policies are set by a Board of Representatives (BOR) consisting of a representative of each participating government with an elected member as Chairman and one or more elected members as Vice-Chairman. The Secretary-General attends as an ex-officio member. The Board meets twice a year - once in London, normally in June to review operations and approve a Plan of Expenditure for the following financial year starting on 1 July. The second meeting in September, which is held in conjunction with the annual meeting of Finance Ministers, considers broad policy issues and the annual evaluation report.

A Committee of Management (COM) under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General and comprising the five major donors and five other members selected to reflect a wide geographical representation of the regions of the Commonwealth, meets between the meetings of the BOR to give general operational direction within the broad guidelines laid down by the BOR. The Chairman of the BOR is also a member unless the country which he or she represents on the Board is already represented on the Committee.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General is responsible for conducting the operations of the Fund in accordance with the decisions of the BOR and COM. The Fund's Managing Director, now re-designated as Deputy-Secretary General (Development Cooperation) is responsible to the Secretary-General for its day-to-day management and operations.

As at February 1993, the Fund's headquarters staff numbered 128 out of a total Secretariat establishment of 421 positions; and comprised nationals from 34 Commonwealth countries. Its budget in 1971/72 when it started was £400,000 only out of which £0.2 million was disbursed and the budget remained under £10 million for the next seven years of its existence. In 1978/79, the budget rose to £11.3 million but dipped down to

£9.4 million in 1979/80 reflecting the voluntary nature of the Fund's system of contribution. However, the fund expenditure had steadily climbed up reaching a level of £30 million in 1990/91. Its long-term and short-term experts increased from 2,785 in 1986/87 to about 5000 in 1989/90. The scope of the CFTC's activities also reflect its modest size.

## 5. MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF THE CFTC

The prime focus of the CFTC is to pass on skills and improve institutions. In recent years, governments have asked the Fund to pay particular attention to environmental issues and the role of women in development. Also, the Fund's activities are increasingly reflecting Commonwealth involvement in helping member countries to strengthen their democracies. We shall return to this important point later on.

The work of the CFTC is done principally through four divisions, viz the General Technical Assistance Services, the Management and Training Services, the Export and Industrial Development, the Economic and Legal Assistance Services (these reflect the consolidation of the five existing divisions into four divisions recently approved under the restructuring of the Secretariat). In addition, there are Secretariat Functional Divisions which utilise about 7% of the CFTC's funds for their activities. These include the following Divisions: Human Resource Development, Women's and Youth Affairs, Economic Affairs, as well as Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

These divisions provide every year:

- \* Specialist expertise - some 350 qualified specialists working in critical developmental areas

- \* Training - specialised training for nearly 5000 officials and technical staff
- \* Exporting - some 60 marketing projects, nearly 50 exporting advisers leading to million dollar new export earnings
- \* Industry - help to set up, improve or resuscitate over 100 industries
- \* Consultancy services - confidential and expert advice in economic and financial management, developing mineral and other natural resources and in other areas.
- \* Southern Africa - special, separately funded programmes to help strengthen the region through technical support for Namibia and Mozambique and training for South African disadvantaged by apartheid.

The CFTC is not a capital Fund. It provides hands-on expertise, advice and training but does not supply capital equipment. But, where necessary, it helps governments to obtain finance or equipment from other sources.

## 6. CFTC AND THE AFRICAN REGION

The African region of the Commonwealth has benefitted substantially from the activities of the CFTC during the last two decades. Programme expenditure for the Region amounted to £7.942 million in 1988/89 (or 44.8% of the total), £9.005 million in 1989/90 (or 42% of the total), £10.507 million (or 46.9% of the total) and £9.860 million in 1991/92 or 43.6% of the total. (See Appendices I and II). The current year Plan of Expenditures calls for a total budget of £25.5 million (compared

with £30 million in 1990/91) but expenditures per region will not be known until the year ends. It should be mentioned that, for programme expenditure analysis, developing Commonwealth countries are classified into the following regions: Africa, Asia, Caribbean and Atlantic, Mediterranean, Pacific and Commonwealth General. All regions share in Commonwealth-wide activities which in the last four years accounted for 10.9%, 12.1%, 8.8% and 11.5% of total programme expenditure respectively.

In terms of size, the Fund's expenditure in the African Region during the last five years had averaged 44.3% of total expenditure, not counting the participation of African countries in Commonwealth-wide activities. The activities are classified into seventeen sectors for purposes of expenditure analysis in 1991/92 and these include: Public Administration (13.4%), Industry (15.1%), Agriculture and Rural Development (10.24%), Finance and Taxation (12.14%), Commerce and Trade (9.06%) and Education (8.5%). (See Appendix III). These sectors reflect the main focus of the CFTC's activities since CFTC responds primarily to priority requests from member-governments. Fund allocation to the sectors are not necessarily fixed, except that fairly substantial fund expenditures may suggest areas of concerns to most of the member-governments since these sectors have not been broken down into regions. For instance, in 1989/90, Public Administration sector expenditure was 16.4%, Industry 22.8%, Finance 9.7%, Agriculture 7.5% and Education 8% <sup>7</sup>, while comparative figures for 1985/86 were 15.5%, 26.4%, 8%, 9.6% and 9.7%. A substantial proportion of the key activities which were brought about by various policies of the governments were in the African Region and a review of the policy changes is undertaken hereunder.

## 7. MAJOR POLICY CHANGES

Technical assistance at the Commonwealth Secretariat responds directly to the expressed need of the member-countries. These needs, from time to time, are reflected in major policy decisions taken by the Governments as recommended by the BOR and the COM. The changes which have been introduced during the last two decades demonstrate the Fund's flexibility in its operations, the relevance of the programmes to the practical developmental problems of the recipient countries and the pragmatism with which the Fund carried out its work.

It is instructive to emphasise that these priorities are set by member governments, individually or collectively, and not by the Management. In as much as the Fund remains primarily responsive to individual government's requests, it may be rightly assumed that its projects reflect their priorities. However, the direction of CFTC programmes in terms of their scope, spread and content have changed significantly over the years to take account of Commonwealth priorities as enunciated at the Meetings of Heads of Government, Ministers, Senior Officials and Board of Representatives.

### (a) Export Promotion and Industrial Development

In 1972 and 1980, the CFTC's activities were increased by adding export promotion and industrial development respectively. While the former helps governments to increase export earnings by buyer-seller meets, and product development and marketing programmes among others, the latter assists governments and regional organisations to plan, Commission, upgrade and rehabilitate industrial enterprises, and helps in adapting technologies using indigenous resources wherever possible. The Industrial Development Unit came into being following the recommendations made by the Ministers of Industry in Bangalore in 1979.

(b) Commonwealth Youth Programme and Management Development

Further expansion was brought about in 1973 by the establishment of Commonwealth Youth Programme which is guided by the Commonwealth Youth Affairs Council to promote the involvement of youth in development. It operates through its four regional centres one of which is Africa. In 1975, the Commonwealth Studies in Applied Government (re-named Management Development Programme) was established to help governments strengthen their administrative and managerial capacities through training, research, consulting and information dissemination. In the same year, the Commonwealth Science Council was integrated into the Secretariat.

(c) Mozambique Development

In January 1988, the Special Commonwealth Fund for Mozambique (SFCM) was established primarily to provide technical assistance to Mozambique with a target of £10 million over three to five years. Assured resources during the first 18 months amounted to £2.02 million. Eighteen Commonwealth countries have so far pledged £5.96 million and by mid 1991, £4.11 million had been disbursed on 170 projects. The Mozambique Government has indicated transport, communications and agriculture as priority areas for Commonwealth assistance together with institutional and human resource development<sup>8</sup>. During the period 1976-1986, a similar Fund raised a little over £1 million to aid Mozambique consequent to the country's decision to apply sanctions against Southern Rhodesia.

(d) Training Zimbabweans

Southern Africa has been a major concern to the Commonwealth and major policy changes have been aimed at redressing the educational disadvantages arising from racial discrimination and to reduce the economic dependence of the countries in the region on South Africa. The Fund coordinated a special Commonwealth

Programme for Zimbabweans assisting over 4500 Zimbabwean refugees including providing over 1000 awards to study in 25 Commonwealth countries in preparation for Zimbabwe's independence, which was achieved in 1980.

(e) Skill Development in Namibia

In 1975, Commonwealth governments began a programme of assistance for Namibia primarily to assist her create a stock of skilled personnel for the new state. By independence in 1990, the Commonwealth Namibian Programme had assisted about 10,000 people with full time study in other Commonwealth countries and through distance education provided by the Namibian Extension Unit in exile settlements which have now been transferred to Windhoek as part of the country's distance education system. By mid-1991, CFTC had sent 36 experts from 12 Commonwealth countries to Namibia while arrangements for additional 20 experts were being made. The Fund currently is also providing awards for about 600 Namibians to develop their skills in over 20 countries.

(f) Facing Apartheid in South Africa

Ending apartheid peacefully has been a major Commonwealth concern for over 30 years. The provision of technical programmes has been accompanied with intense political pressure so much so that some observers of the Commonwealth activities believed that the organisation existed for that issue only.

The South African Extension unit was begun in exile in Tanzania in 1984 and by mid-1991 had about 3000 students in various settlements located in six Southern African countries. About half were studying basic English, mathematics and agriculture, the rest studying 'O' and 'A' level courses by correspondence.

The Nassau Fellowships Scheme, created in 1985 enabled South Africans to study in Commonwealth Universities and Colleges and by mid-1991, over 600 fellowships had been awarded to students. This figure will be substantially higher if account is taken of those who received awards under bilateral arrangements to enable South Africans to study in donor countries.

In recent times, CFTC has also supported the activities of the "Skills for South Africa" programme, the Commonwealth-wide network of NGOs.

A major policy decision was taken in Harare in October 1991 by the Heads of Government to prepare the black South Africans to assume key responsibilities in post apartheid South Africa. The Secretariat is exploring with the UN the possibility of a donor's conference on human resource development in post-apartheid South Africa.

(g) Priority for Small States

Over half of the Commonwealth member countries have around a million people or less and some of these are from the African continent. The Commonwealth had agreed on major policy changes designed to cater for the needs of the small states and CFTC has responded by allocating to them a substantial share of the resources in expertise. In recent years, for instance, two-thirds of its experts have worked in small states. Approximately half of the fellowship awards for training is made to small states.

(h) Protecting the Environment

The challenges of the environment has been met by major policy decisions aimed at tackling critical environmental problems. The Lankagwi Declaration on environment in 1989 by Heads of Government including a sixteen-point programme of action stated



that "the need to protect the environment should be viewed in a balanced perspective and due emphasis be accorded to promoting economic growth and sustainable development including eradication of poverty, meeting basic needs and enhancing the quality of life". The Secretariat, in the last two years, has been very active in key environmental areas such as climate change, sea-level rise, disaster prevention and management, the Management of Exclusive Economic Zones and their resources, toxic or hazardous waste management etc. A multi-disciplinary group within the Secretariat coordinates environment-related activities in all divisions. An Expert Group on Environmental Concerns and the Commonwealth was set up in 1991 to examine a number of issues on the agenda of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). Heads of Government had pledged their full support for the outcome of the UNCED meeting which was held in Brazil in June 1992.

During the past three years, CFTC's Fellowships and Training Programme had awarded a large number of Fellowships on environment-related training courses while the General Technical Assistance Division had provided short-term specialists to help run training workshops in environmental broadcasting and education. The environmental content of the Secretariat-funded training in education, economics, industry and health has been increased.

The Secretariat is also preparing a directory of institutions - some of them in Commonwealth African countries - offering training in environment-related fields. Also, with British support, it has begun a project, Institutional Development for Environmental Action to help planners adopt a comprehensive approach to environmental management. It has arranged exchange visits including nine officials from the SADD region to tour soil and water research and training institutions in India. In return, seven senior Indian scientists including the directors of three research institutes visited Kenya, Malawi and Zimbabwe in September 1990 to discuss training opportunities and other matters. This led to the design of a special course which was held in India in 1992.

(i) Advancing Regional Cooperation

A feature of the Fund's work is the recognition of regional cooperation as a valuable means of accelerating development, and in Africa, SADDG, ADB, PTA, ESAMI and the two sub-regional health Secretariats operating from Nigeria and Tanzania have been assisted. Two regional management associations, with memberships drawn from management Development Institutes and Tertiary Institutions were established, with substantial assistance from ComSec, in Eastern and Southern Africa (AMTIESA) and in West Africa (WAMDEVIN). Also, arrangements have been concluded to launch a Commonwealth-wide management association to work with the regional associations. The Secretariat had also responded positively to cooperation arrangements with the ACBF in Zimbabwe.

8. AN ASSESSMENT OF THE CFTC APPROACH

It is generally agreed that the success of the work of a technical assistance agency may not necessarily be measured in terms of resources provided and the number of projects managed or executed. A mere catalogue of completed projects or funds disbursement does not in themselves translate to the development of human and institutional capacities which is what technical assistance is all about. Commonwealth Secretariat and its technical assistance arm, the CFTC is in no illusion about this. However, the formulation and implementation of the technical assistance system of the ComSec have taken into account, over the past several years, the more common problems that face technical assistance management. Undoubtedly, the success of the Commonwealth Governments in this area appears to have arisen from the way the Government and the Secretariat play their role.

In preceding sections of this paper some of these key factors have been mentioned. We shall pull together these features that make a difference in the handling of technical assistance at ComSec. The key to success is the clarity of technical assistance objectives and the criteria for funding requests from individual governments and other qualified organisations. The Memorandum of Understanding and the Financial Regulations and Rules of the Fund spell out these terms of reference in detail. The key features which have contributed to the success of CFTC are:

- (a) Priority requests through Points of Contacts (POCs) The Fund provides assistance in response to priority request from governments, inter-governmental organisations and regional institutions submitted through POCs officially designated by recipients. This is particularly important to the receiving governments because it ensures that CFTC funds are disbursed only on priority projects in the country consistent with their overall development plan and strategy.
- (b) Development-centred objective: The assistance provided should promote the economic and social development of the recipient countries. CFTC funds, for instance, cannot be used to promote arts for which the Commonwealth Foundation was established.
- (c) Clear identification of beneficiaries: The Fund can provide assistance only to Commonwealth developing member countries, states associated with member-countries and inter-governmental organisations and regional institutions in the Commonwealth. Recipients of Training Fellowships, for instance, are normally expected to be placed in institutions in the developing countries to make transfer of skill, knowledge and attitudes easier and lessen the

impact of cultural shock. Only in exceptional cases where the course of study are not available in the developing countries or where the benefits of such attendance in a developed Commonwealth country have been clearly identified are trainees sent to developed areas. Also, only in exceptional cases are trainees sent to non-Commonwealth countries and in such cases, the benefits accruing to Commonwealth governments are clear e.g.: Village due Benin for French language study in Togo.

- (d) No capital aid: The Fund cannot provide capital aid except that a limited provision is made for project-related items like equipment, reference books and visual aids especially if such provisions are required for the expert to perform effectively.

In addition to these key funding criteria entrenched in the Memorandum of Understanding, the Fund has other special features which have made it perform so successfully during these last two decades. These include:

- (e) Mutual Assistance. This is a unique feature which characterizes CFTC's operations. Training resources and expertise come from developing countries for the development of other developing countries, thereby avoiding the one-way flow of assistance from North to South with all its complications. While the developed countries have important role to play, the Fund provides ample chance for developing countries to help themselves. In 1989/90, for instance, 64% of all CFTC experts came from developing countries while 36% came from the developed countries. All of them worked in the developing countries including 39% who worked in the African region. Training is more effective the closer the environment is to the conditions in which the trainee will eventually work. There is therefore a guaranteed commitment to South-South cooperation in the way the Fund operates.

- (f) Gap-filling A Traditional and valuable role of the Fund is to fill the gap in technical assistance packages of requesting member-governments. Sufficient care is taken to avoid duplicating programmes which are better executed by other agencies.
- (g) Simple Procedures: The relative simplicity of the procedures involved in obtaining assistance and the absence of lengthy and complicated project documents and agreements ensure speed and timeliness. Except for Fellowships and Training Programme which uses a form, most of the requests can be initiated by discussion, followed by a letter.
- (h) Intimate Relationship: The Fund enjoys a sort of intimate family relationship with requesting governments which is devoid of the traditional donor/recipient relationship. There is a considerable degree of confidentiality between the CFTC and the governments and this enables CFTC to be involved in sensitive projects which governments, for one reason or the other, might not wish to submit to bilateral donors or to large multi-lateral agencies.
- (1) Cost Effectiveness: The technical assistance and training provided by the Fund is among the World's most cost-effective and costs per person-month for experts and training are below comparable figures for other international agencies some of which according to the ECPDM study (p.10) cost between USD 100,000 to USD 150,000. The reasons for this situation are that high level experts from the Commonwealth are able to accept the relatively modest terms offered by the Fund and training facilities are heavily subsidized. Receiving governments are usually willing to contribute in kind to the Fund's resources.

(j) Flexibility and Speed: An outstanding characteristics of the Funds is its capacity for flexibility and high responsiveness. A related feature is its speed of operation e.g. Following the hurricane in Swaziland and other disasters in the region, a workshop on Disaster Management was organised for the African region in 1988 at the Mananga Agricultural Management Centre.

(n) The Block Grant System

A few institutions are selected for block grants by the Fund's Fellowships and Training Programme. Roughly 1000 trainees benefit from the courses annually. The institutions and courses are selected, collaboration with governments, to suit the priorities of governments. The programme are required to be regional in nature and innovative in content. The system allows CFTC to train at relatively low cost and helps strengthen the relationships between governments and regional national training institutions for the mutual benefit of all concerned. Roughly £0.5 million of FTP's allocation to the African Region have been set aside between 1986/87 and 1992/93 for Block Grant allocation. This is complemented with an Academic Exchange Programme which has made an annual award of 40 roughly fellowships to deserving faculty and other individuals to enable them gain exposure and expertise in other Commonwealth Environments.

(l) Evaluation System

CFTC programmes are systematically evaluated with the overall aim of improving their quality and assessing their effectiveness. Project Completion Reports and in-depth

Evaluation Studies introduced in 1985 form the basis of the evaluation system which made the Fund not only responsive but accountable to member-governments for their performance.

#### 9. EMERGING CHALLENGES IN THE 1990s AND BEYOND

As indicated earlier on in this paper, ComSec and its technical assistance arm, the CFTC are under-going a major restructuring which will probably become operational from 1 July 1993. Essentially, the organisational structures and the work programmes have been tidied up and made even fitter than before.

In addition to its representation function in global meetings and consensus building and policy development on key political issues, the Secretariat will be expected to emphasize the promotion of fundamental political values of the Commonwealth, the establishment of a democratic government in South Africa including assistance to South Africans. Other areas that will have priority attention include: Economic management, Administrative and Managerial Reform, Human Resource Development, Environment and Science and Technology.<sup>9</sup>

Perhaps the most visible area of the Secretariat's management and capacity-building work is in the area of democratic and political institutions including monitoring and observing elections, strengthening election machineries and supporting training of election officials. In Africa, Seychelles, Ghana and Kenya among others have benefited from this new programme emphasis. In these days when technical assistance is linked with the practice of democratic principles and the rule of law, the role of the Secretariat in this regard cannot be over-emphasised. It is, in a sense, a gap-filling role and in another sense, a catalytic role.

Another area that will receive greater attention is Strategic Planning and Evaluation. It is envisaged that the Secretariat will strengthen its capacity in this area to ensure on-time delivery of information and to tighten up performance evaluation procedures and processes.

As should be expected, demand for the Secretariat services from governments far out-strips the resources - financial and human - available to the Secretariat. This reason explains the need to adhere to priority areas decided by governments. There is therefore the temptation for the divisions to spread themselves too thin in order to cope with the volume of requests. The Secretariat will be expected to concentrate on those areas where the Commonwealth has a comparative advantage and where it can have maximum impact. For instance, while the Secretariat will be expected to pay attention to environmental concerns because of the importance attached to the subject by the governments, it is likely to do so within the limited resources it can muster and in the light of the global strategy already developed by major international organisations which have far larger resources to tackle environmental problems.

One of the major activities of the CFTC's Technical Assistance Group (in-house consultancy) is the development of a computer software for debt management - the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System - (CS - DRMS). The system, which has been acclaimed by Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth governments, enables governments to obtain a clear picture of their country's overall commitments and to make sound financial judgement about managing them. Thirty (including 18 from Africa) have installed the software and compilation of debt data has been completed in most of them. The new version 5 of CS-DRMS incorporates sophisticated and specially designed management tools which allow the users to evaluate different loan offers and proposals for refinancing and re-scheduling of



loan as well as monitors exchange rate gains and losses in multi-currency loans.

At a time when Africa's debt burden in 1992, according to UN sources grew by two and a half times since 1980 to around US\$290 billion, (equivalent to 90% of the continent's GNP), and at a time when it paid its creditors US\$26 billion which was over four times more than it spent on health services for the continent's 600 million people<sup>10</sup>, the importance of the development of this tool cannot be over-emphasized. It would appear therefore that the use of this instrument will be expanded considerably in the future. Training is provided on-site to users and skills are developed ready to use where they are needed. Where necessary, special courses are organised e.g. in Nigeria and Mozambique, in addition to regional debt management courses which are regularly organised. It is one of the most effective ways of building institutional and management capacity and an experience worth sharing among international agencies. A Newsletter the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Recording and Management System - CS-DRMS-was started in February 1993.

#### 10. CONCLUSION

The CFTC demonstrates, in a practical way, the spirit of voluntary partnership. Its prime focus is to build capacity through passing on skills in priority areas of need and improving or upgrading institutions where needed. It plays a leading role in the ideals of a family concept which the Commonwealth represents and works closely with the Commonwealth network of governmental and voluntary organisations.

Small is beautiful! CFTC has used to advantage its historical evolution and size. It has successfully managed hundreds of technical cooperation projects which are "owned" by member governments collectively at policy level and individually at the

project level. As a result of its special approach to technical cooperation, it has managed to avoid some of the key pitfalls that often render donor's activities ineffective in African countries. It has also taken steps to re-structure itself so as to become even more effective and efficient than at present.

In his report to the Twenty-second Meeting of the Board of Representatives in Bermuda in 1980, the Secretary-General stated:

"The CFTC was born out of a sense that family means sharing as well as caring and that a family must, together, have the means to help members in need. If the CFTC proves that aid with a human face can respond effectively to expressed need - and this has been the consistent testimony of Governments at Official, Ministerial, and Heads of Government level over the years - then the Fund must be seen as an integral element of the Commonwealth association and its future a matter of relevance to the quality of that association and indeed to its validity".

The CFTC was a pioneer in technical cooperation among developing countries. We have reviewed some of the features of the organisation and how these have influenced its performance as a technical assistance agency. We have also highlighted some of the priority areas where the Fund will be expected to concentrate its activities in the 1990s and may be into the twenty-first century. The successful implementation of these programmes which will further improve institutional and management capacity building will depend on the continued support, voluntarily given, by the governments. In the words of the current Secretary General: "Ultimately, what the Commonwealth is and what it does depend on political will" of the member countries.<sup>11</sup>

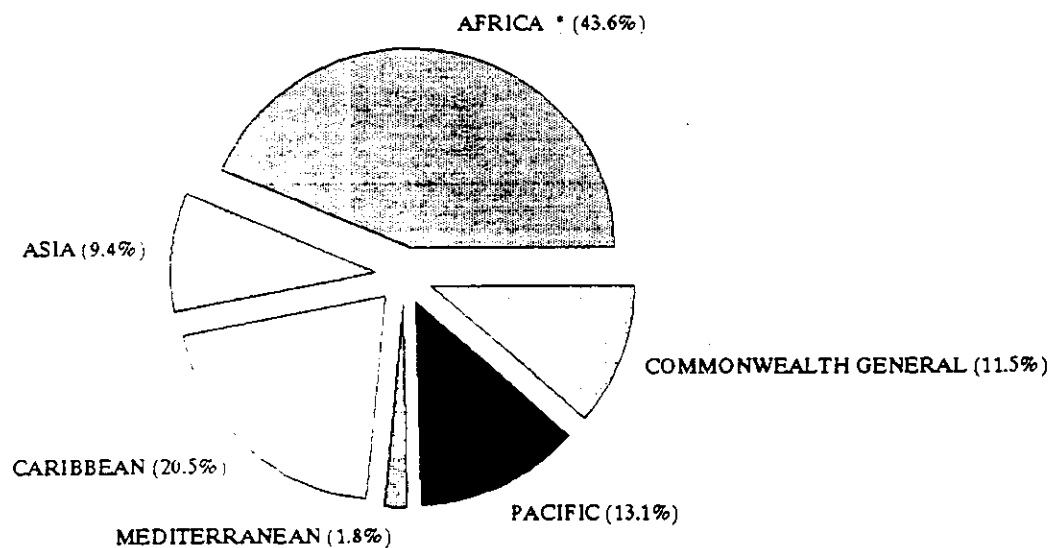
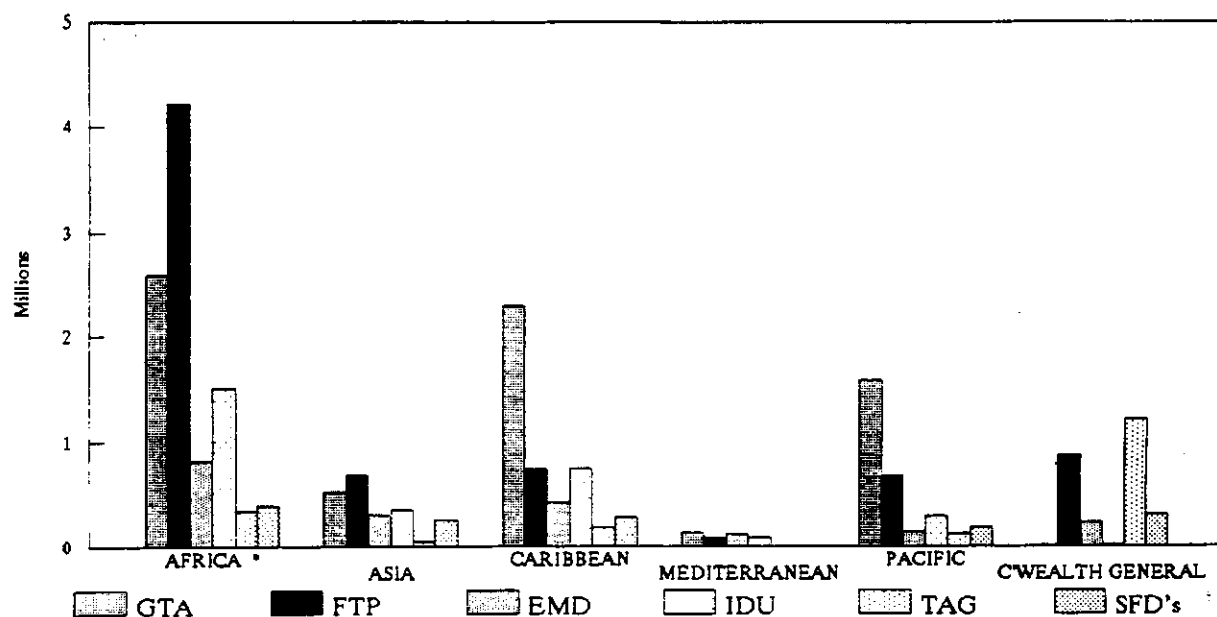
COMMONWEALTH FUND FOR TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION

SUMMARY OF PROGRAMME EXPENDITURE BY REGION AND SECTOR FOR THE PERIODS: 1988/89, 1989/90 AND 1990/91

REGION SECTOR	1988/89					1989/90					1990/91				
	AFRICA	ASIA	CARIBBEAN & ATLANTIC	MEDITERRANEAN	PACIFIC	COMMONWEALTH GENERAL	TOTAL	PERCENTAGE	AFRICA	ASIA	CARIBBEAN & ATLANTIC	MEDITERRANEAN	PACIFIC	COMMONWEALTH GENERAL	TOTAL
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	%	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
ADMIN	1,473	200	572	3	416	323	2,987	16.8	1,665	249	567	59	549	434	3,523
EDU	529	126	369	21	196	154	1,395	7.8	687	125	328	26	283	290	1,719
FFM	770	107	212	16	246	422	1,723	9.7	669	64	527	6	218	607	2,091
HLT	449	124	260	46	85	86	1,050	5.9	534	159	376	51	108	130	1,358
IND	2,340	701	768	4	502	159	4,474	25.2	2,503	770	1,074	12	277	255	4,891
LEG	219	-	321	1	149	118	808	4.6	301	16	417	16	204	88	1,042
AGR	850	68	170	4	222	60	1,374	7.7	980	64	218	13	284	51	1,610
TRN	242	78	221	15	209	52	817	4.6	235	120	249	12	213	30	859
ENV	89	44	71	-	93	43	340	2.0	112	1	26	11	91	1	242
COM	763	224	376	184	11	367	1,925	10.8	952	335	579	140	124	447	2,577
WHE	51	68	17	-	30	74	240	1.3	55	53	21	-	28	98	255
WIS	217	99	146	33	69	84	648	3.6	312	392	270	10	148	167	1,299
APS	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
CPT	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
ENV	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SCI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
SOC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
WNO	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	7,942	1,839	3,503	327	2,228	1,942	17,781	100.0	9,005	2,348	4,652	356	2,507	2,598	21,466
PERCENT	44.8	10.3	19.7	1.8	12.5	10.9	100.0		42.0	10.9	21.7	1.7	11.7	12.1	100.0
									46.9	8.6	23.2	1.3	11.2	8.8	100.0

## EXPENDITURE BY REGION AND PROGRAMME: 1991/92

REGION	GTA	FTP	EMD	IDU	TAG	SFD's	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
AFRICA *	2,585,000	4,225,000	813,000	1,509,000	339,000	389,000	9,860,000
ASIA	518,000	676,000	302,000	345,000	44,000	250,000	2,135,000
CARIBBEAN	2,281,000	734,000	424,000	738,000	180,000	274,000	4,631,000
MEDITERRANEAN	126,000	79,000	116,000	86,000	0	0	407,000
PACIFIC	1,582,000	672,000	138,000	292,000	113,000	174,000	2,971,000
COMMONWEALTH GENERAL	6,000	859,000	224,000	10,000	1,206,000	295,000	2,600,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£7,098,000</b>	<b>£7,245,000</b>	<b>£2,017,000</b>	<b>£2,980,000</b>	<b>£1,882,000</b>	<b>£1,382,000</b>	<b>£22,604,000</b>



\* Includes Enhanced Namibia Programme. Excludes Special Commonwealth Fund for Mozambique and Nassau Fellowships Scheme.