The State of the Commonwealth Report 2026

Resilience through Diversity

The Commonwealth

The State of the Commonwealth Report 2026

Resilience through Diversity



The Commonwealth

Suggested citation: Commonwealth Secretariat (2026) *The State of the Commonwealth Report 2026: Resilience through Diversity*. https://doi.org/10.14217/hcpk2451

Authors:

Professor Nicholas Cheeseman
Professor of Democracy and International Development
University of Birmingham

and

Dr Helena Varkkey
Associate Professor of Political Ecology
Department of International and Strategic Studies
University of Malaya

© Commonwealth Secretariat 2026

All rights reserved. This publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or otherwise provided it is used only for educational purposes and is not for resale, and provided full acknowledgement is given to the Commonwealth Secretariat as the original publisher.

Views and opinions expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the author and should in no way be attributed to the institutions to which they are affiliated or to the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Wherever possible, the Commonwealth Secretariat uses paper sourced from responsible forests or from sources that minimise a destructive impact on the environment.

Published by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Contents

Acknowledgments v

Acronyms and Abbreviations vi

Executive Summary ix

Democratic resilience ix

Economic resilience x

Environmental resilience xi

Turning Commonwealth strengths into greater resilience xii

Part I: Understanding the Resilience Challenge 1

1. Introduction 3

1.1 The challenge: A world in flux 4

1.2 The solution: Democratic, economic and environmental resilience 6

1.3 The structure and findings of this report 7

Part II: Striving for Resilience 9

2. Democratic Resilience 11

2.1 Global pressures on democratic resilience 12

2.2 Implications for democratic resilience in Commonwealth countries 13

2.3 Striving for resilience: How Commonwealth countries are strengthening democracy 14

2.4 Opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation on democratic resilience 16

3. Economic Resilience 19

3.1 Global pressures on economic resilience 20

3.2 Implications for economic resilience in Commonwealth countries 21

3.3 Striving for resilience: How Commonwealth countries are strengthening their economies 24

3.4 Opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation on economic resilience 26

4. Environmental Resilience 29

4.1 Global pressures on environmental resilience 29

4.2 Implications for environmental resilience in Commonwealth countries 30

4.3 Striving for resilience: How Commonwealth countries are strengthening environmental resilience 32

4.4 Opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation on environmental resilience 34

Part III: The Future of Commonwealth Co-operation 39

5. Towards a More Resilient Commonwealth 41

5.1 Resilience and the changing global order 41

5.2 The Commonwealth's comparative advantage and future role 43

References 46

Acknowledgments

The *State of the Commonwealth Report 2026* was prepared under the overall guidance of Ambassador Kwabena Osei-Danquah, Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary-General and Tanmaya Lal, Deputy Secretary-General Programmes at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The preparation of the report was led by Jennifer Namgyal, Acting Senior Director of the Social Development, Youth and Gender Directorate, and Dr Neil Balchin, Economic Adviser, International Trade Policy, Economic Development, Trade and Investment Directorate at the Commonwealth Secretariat.

The report was co-authored by Professor Nicholas Cheeseman, Professor of Democracy and International Development, University of Birmingham and Dr Helena Varkkey, Associate Professor of Political Ecology, Department of International and Strategic Studies, University of Malaya.

The Commonwealth Secretariat gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, which drew on its extensive network of member universities to identify and facilitate the engagement of the academic experts commissioned to author this report. Particular thanks are extended to Fariba Soetan and Beth Button for their role in co-ordinating this process and supporting the report's development.

The publication benefited from initial framing and valuable input from a core Commonwealth Secretariat Drafting Committee, led by Dr Neil Balchin and comprising Katherine Marshall Kissoon, Monika Pindel, Raymond Prasad, Elaine Tan and Angela Thomas, with support from Mithika D'Cruz, Terri-Ann Gilbert-Roberts, Dominic Goggins and Erin Tunks. Many other staff members from across the Secretariat provided valuable feedback on various drafts.

The production of this publication was managed by Hugh Gulland and Ross Fulton. The copyediting was undertaken by Roo Griffiths.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACOD	Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AI	artificial intelligence
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BBNJ	Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CCFAH	Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub
CLLC	Commonwealth Living Lands Charter
CMAG	Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group
CPTPP	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership
FDI	foreign direct investment
G20	Group of 20 countries
GDP	gross domestic product
ICT	information and communication technology
IEA	International Energy Agency
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IDEA	(International) Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
LDC	least developed country
MVI	Multidimensional Vulnerability Index
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SIDS	small island developing states
UK	United Kingdom

UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organization

Executive Summary

The Commonwealth is entering a decisive decade. Conflict is increasing, geopolitical competition is intensifying, the global economy is fragmenting and the international institutions designed to manage shared problems are under growing strain. At the same time, rapid technological change and mounting environmental pressures are transforming economies and societies. Simply responding to crises as they arise keeps governments on the defensive. If they are to thrive in a world in flux, Commonwealth countries need the resilience to anticipate change, withstand shocks, adapt successfully and seize new opportunities.

Countries differ greatly in their capacity to respond to these pressures. Those with more limited financial resources often have less room to absorb shocks and adapt; meanwhile, inequalities within countries shape who is able to cope and recover. An effective response requires strengthening three inter-related dimensions of resilience at the same time: economic, democratic and environmental. Strong economies provide the resources countries need to prepare and adapt, strong institutions support better decisions and healthy natural systems protect livelihoods and prosperity.

In building this resilience, the Commonwealth has a significant comparative advantage. Its 56 member countries combine extraordinary diversity with common goals, shared commitments and commonalities in language, culture and related legal and institutional traditions. These common foundations, reinforced by strong professional, civil society and people-to-people networks, make co-operation and the exchange of experiences easier.

Meanwhile, and crucially, differences in resources do not imply differences in the quality of ideas or experience. Smaller and more vulnerable states have pioneered important approaches to climate adaptation, ocean governance and managing vulnerability, just as larger members possess financial, technological and diplomatic capabilities that can benefit others. Commonwealth countries also face similar challenges from very different starting points, bringing a wide range of ideas, innovations and experience to bear.

This **combination of diversity and common ground** is particularly valuable in a fragmented world. The Commonwealth can act as a bridge, enabling ideas and expertise to travel in all directions while connecting regions and income groups and spanning traditional North–South divides.

Diversity *within* countries is equally important. Reflecting the emphasis in the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 on gender equality and youth inclusion as cross-cutting priorities, evidence reviewed in this report shows that more inclusive societies are more resilient. Democratic resilience is strengthened when women, young people, people living with disabilities, minorities and other under-represented groups participate meaningfully in political life, which reduces grievances and increases legitimacy. Economic resilience is heightened when barriers to education, employment, finance and technology are reduced, enabling countries to make fuller use of their human capital. Environmental resilience is enhanced by drawing on the knowledge and leadership of women, young people, Indigenous Peoples and local communities in adaptation and natural resource management. Genuine inclusion therefore strengthens the institutions, capabilities and knowledge on which resilience depends.

Democratic resilience

Democracy is becoming harder to sustain. Authoritarian rule is spreading, while authoritarian states are increasingly working together to weaken or reshape the international institutions and norms designed to protect democracy, human rights and the rule of law. At the same time, some established

democracies are seeing growing pressure on constitutional safeguards, checks and balances, and civic freedoms. Economic insecurity, corruption, declining trust and new digital threats add to these challenges.

Overall, Commonwealth countries have proved more resilient than global trends might suggest, even if experiences vary considerably between countries and regions. Important weaknesses remain, however, particularly around political inclusion: women, young people and other marginalised groups are still poorly represented. Strengthening democratic resilience is therefore critical not only to protecting rights and freedoms but also to long-term stability and prosperity.

Commonwealth countries are already responding to the context in ways that provide a solid foundation for further action. Countries are strengthening electoral, parliamentary and oversight institutions, improving public services and government accountability, developing responses to digital threats and widening opportunities for political participation.

These national efforts are supported by the wider Commonwealth family. Commonwealth election observation teams, the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) and the Secretary-General's Good Offices sit alongside networks of parliamentarians, judges, election officials, civil servants, professional bodies and civil society organisations. Together, these efforts show that democratic resilience depends not on any single reform but on strong institutions, effective and accountable government, meaningful participation and the ability to adapt to new challenges.

The report identifies six opportunities to build on these foundations.

1. **Enhance Commonwealth co-operation on political inclusion.** Greater participation by women, young people, people living with disabilities and minority groups can bring wider skills and perspectives into decision-making, help institutions respond better to citizens' needs and reduce grievances and the risk of conflict. Commonwealth member countries can share diverse approaches to achieving meaningful inclusion in different contexts.
2. **Build a democratic learning network.** Stronger connections between countries and institutions facing similar challenges can make it possible to share successful reforms and innovations and adapt them to different contexts.
3. **Pool capability for digital democracy.** Shared expertise can expand access to scarce capabilities in artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, election security, online campaigning, data protection and disinformation. This is particularly valuable where individual countries cannot maintain such capacity alone.
4. **Strengthen democratic institutions through professional networks.** Deeper links between election officials, judges, legislators, auditors, anti-corruption bodies and public servants can support institutional reform and connect election observation more strongly to support across the electoral cycle.
5. **Connect prevention to democratic recovery.** Closer connections between early warning, the Secretary-General's Good Offices, CMAG and sustained institutional support can strengthen both the prevention of democratic erosion and institutional recovery where erosion has occurred.
6. **Foster international coalitions for democracy.** The Commonwealth's global reach provides opportunities to build wider support for election integrity, civic space, media freedom, human rights and the rule of law through international and regional organisations.

Economic resilience

It is becoming increasingly challenging to navigate the global economy. Slower growth, rising debt and borrowing costs, geopolitical competition, the advance of AI and the green transition are disrupting established patterns of trade, investment, finance and growth. **At the same time, the development model is changing.** Development assistance is declining sharply, leaving traditional donor–recipient relationships less able to meet the scale and range of challenges countries face. Trade, investment, technology, domestic resources, South–South co-operation and new forms of development finance are consequently becoming more important. These changes create opportunities, but they are unevenly distributed and can lead to new dependencies.

Economic resilience therefore means building the financial room, skills, infrastructure and diverse economic relationships needed to not simply withstand shocks but also adapt and prosper as the world changes. Inclusion is central: barriers to education, finance, technology and productive work prevent economies from making full use of their human resources, including women, youth and people living with disabilities. Domestic reform can also only go so far when borrowing costs, access to finance and technology, and international economic rules are shaped by systems over which many countries have limited influence.

Commonwealth countries are already adapting in different ways. Governments are strengthening public finances and debt management while seeking new sources of investment and development finance. They are investing in skills, digital infrastructure and wider access to economic opportunities, while making climate and energy resilience a greater part of economic planning. Countries are also pioneering the use of innovative approaches in areas ranging from digital public infrastructure and mobile finance to climate-resilient debt arrangements, renewable energy and the blue economy. Here, their different strengths are often complementary. Growing economies offer expanding markets and workforces, ageing economies possess capital and technology but need skills and productivity gains, and resource-rich members have assets central to the green transition.

Smaller states may have fewer financial and administrative resources but often possess valuable experience and innovative approaches to managing vulnerability. **This creates an opportunity for more reciprocal forms of co-operation**, connecting capital, technology, markets, resources and expertise while enabling experience to travel in all directions.

The report identifies four opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation to strengthen economic resilience.

1. **Build stronger and more inclusive economic partnerships.** Greater and more diverse trade and investment can reduce excessive dependence and widen opportunities across the Commonwealth. Inclusion within countries is equally important: reducing the barriers facing women, young people, people living with disabilities and other excluded groups can expand entrepreneurship, labour force participation and productivity, enabling economies to make fuller use of their human and economic potential.
2. **Reform and diversify development finance.** Pooled expertise on debt and finance can be combined with the Commonwealth's international influence to support fairer access to affordable finance, more effective debt restructuring and financing rules that better recognise the needs and vulnerabilities of small and developing states.
3. **Turn Commonwealth experience into a shared resource.** Stronger connections between governments, institutions and innovators can help member countries identify, adapt and apply successful approaches developed elsewhere in the Commonwealth.
4. **Build green and digital partnerships.** Partnerships can connect capital, technology and expertise with growing markets, critical minerals and other resources, helping more member countries develop the skills, businesses and jobs needed to capture the benefits of the green and digital transitions rather than becoming dependent on technologies and industries developed elsewhere.

Environmental resilience

Environmental pressures are becoming harder to contain. Climate change is bringing more severe heatwaves, storms, floods and droughts. At the same time, sea-level rise, biodiversity loss, pollution and damage to ecosystems are weakening the natural systems on which societies depend. These pressures reinforce one another and create compound risks that increasingly threaten food and water security, livelihoods, infrastructure, public finances and long-term economic growth.

Countries differ greatly in their capacity to respond. Many of the countries that are facing the greatest environmental risks have the least fiscal space and the weakest access to affordable finance and technology. Within countries, poorer and marginalised communities are often the most vulnerable and have the fewest resources to adapt.

Environmental resilience therefore involves protecting and restoring natural systems, adapting infrastructure and economies, and investing before shocks occur. It also requires international systems that better recognise vulnerability when determining access to finance and other resources.

Commonwealth countries are already making this shift in different ways. They are bringing adaptation into development planning, investing in climate-proof infrastructure and disaster preparedness, restoring ecosystems, supporting cleaner energy and strengthening the institutions and data needed to turn plans into action. Small island states have been particularly innovative, developing approaches that combine early warning, local knowledge, resilient infrastructure and new forms of climate diplomacy and finance.

Indigenous Peoples and local communities hold knowledge that can strengthen environmental stewardship. Women and youth are agents of resilience, driving innovation for adaptation and sustainable livelihoods. Wealthier member countries bring different financial, technological and institutional capabilities. Existing initiatives, including the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH), the Commonwealth Living Lands Charter (CLLC) and the Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration, demonstrate the potential to connect these different forms of experience and expertise.

The report identifies five opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation to enhance environmental resilience.

1. **Accelerate adaptation through shared experience.** Greater exchange of approaches to climate-proofing, disaster preparedness, early warning and ecosystem restoration can enable successful solutions to travel more quickly between countries, supported by shared tools, data and technical expertise.
2. **Increase climate finance access for adaptation.** Adaptation capacity depends on access to affordable finance. CCFAH provides a foundation, but it could be strengthened by expanding access to grants and concessional finance for highly vulnerable states and by exploring debt-for-nature swaps to prevent vulnerable states from becoming trapped in cycles of debt-financed adaptation.
3. **Co-ordinate inclusive natural resource governance**. The CLLC supports the pursuit of global land management targets. Commonwealth co-operation could build on this by promoting adaptive governance that draws on the knowledge, leadership and experience of women, young people, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, while ensuring meaningful participation in decision-making and benefit-sharing.
4. **Build partnerships on oceans, food and water security.** Existing Commonwealth connections provide a basis for stronger co-operation around shared oceans, river basins and food systems, reducing risks that individual countries cannot manage alone.
5. **Leverage Commonwealth influence globally.** The Commonwealth brings together some of the world's most climate-vulnerable countries with member countries that possess significant international influence. This creates opportunities to translate the leadership, experience and priorities of vulnerable states into broader coalitions on climate finance, loss and damage, ocean governance and other international environmental rules.

Turning Commonwealth strengths into greater resilience

The reforms required across the domains of democracy, the economy and the environment are necessarily different, reflecting the varied challenges, needs and capabilities of Commonwealth member countries. Taken together, this report's findings and recommendations highlight three interconnected levels at which resilience can be built.

- **Within countries**, stronger institutions and capabilities are needed to anticipate, absorb and adapt to change.
- **Between countries**, multidirectional learning can spread ideas, pool expertise and connect complementary resources.
- **Through the international system**, wider coalitions can help secure reforms that individual countries cannot achieve alone.

Progress at only one or two of these levels will leave important vulnerabilities unresolved. Strong national institutions can still be constrained by weak

cross-border co-operation or an unsupportive international environment, while international reform will have limited impact if capacity to take advantage of it does not exist at the domestic level. The greatest gains come from strengthening all three levels together, so that improvements at one reinforce progress at the others.

Five broader strategies can help the Commonwealth generate these mutually reinforcing gains.

1. **Turn diversity into multidirectional learning and resilience partnerships.** Sustained partnerships can connect member countries facing similar challenges with those possessing complementary experience, resources and capabilities. This can connect the ideas, innovation and experience found across the Commonwealth with the different resources and capabilities needed to put them into practice at scale.
2. **Strengthen networks, pool capabilities and improve implementation.** The wider Commonwealth family includes civil society, universities, professional associations, businesses and public institutions. Connecting and pooling these resources can provide capabilities that individual governments may struggle to maintain alone and help translate commitments into implementation. It can also draw more fully on the knowledge and experience of women, young people, people living with disabilities, minorities and other under-represented groups.
3. **Harness inclusion as a source of resilience.** Commonwealth networks and programmes can help member countries identify and adapt effective approaches to removing barriers facing women, young people, people living with disabilities, minorities and other under-represented groups. Doing so would draw more fully on their skills, experience and perspectives; widen participation and leadership; and strengthen governance, economic performance and environmental resilience.
4. **Anticipate and adapt to change.** Shared foresight and resilience assessments can identify emerging risks and opportunities earlier, build expertise around challenges affecting many member countries and strengthen the Commonwealth's collective capacity to navigate technological, demographic, economic and environmental change.
5. **Bridge divides to build coalitions for international reform.** Many of the inequalities that weaken resilience cannot be addressed within individual countries because access to finance and technology, borrowing costs, trade rules and responses to climate change are shaped internationally. **The Commonwealth's distinctive strength is its ability to bridge these divides.** By bringing together different forms of expertise, networks and international influence, and spanning both regions and traditional North–South divides, it can turn members countries' priorities into practical proposals, building wider coalitions for reform.

The Commonwealth's future relevance will depend on its ability to translate its advantages into tangible results. Its distinctive value lies in enabling countries with different needs, resources and experience to achieve more together than they can alone. Greater co-operation can also reinforce the Commonwealth's own strengths. Deeper networks create new capabilities, successful partnerships make further co-operation easier and effective coalitions increase collective influence. In a more fragmented and unequal world, the Commonwealth's ability to act as a bridge may become more important, not less. Strengthening resilience can therefore strengthen the Commonwealth itself, creating an association better equipped to help its members navigate change, seize new opportunities and shape a fairer and more resilient world.

Part I
Understanding the Resilience Challenge

1. Introduction

Across the world, governments and societies are operating in an increasingly uncertain and rapidly changing environment. Geopolitical competition is intensifying, the global economy is fragmenting and conflict is straining international institutions and established patterns of co-operation. Compounding this, a growing number of countries are scaling back funding to multilateral institutions such as the United Nations (UN), further eroding the capacity for co-ordinated global action. At the same time, technological change, demographic shifts, climate change and the loss and degradation of the natural world are rapidly transforming economies and societies.

These pressures increasingly interact: economic shocks affect political stability, climate change strains public finances and livelihoods, and new technologies create both opportunities and vulnerabilities. While the capacity of Commonwealth member countries to respond varies markedly depending on their economic strength, political history and geographic location, all face the same fundamental challenge: how to sustain democratic governance, economic prosperity and environmental security in a world in flux.

These trends have exposed inherent weaknesses in international political, economic and climate systems, but also create fresh opportunities to develop new forms of Commonwealth co-operation to generate innovative solutions by enhancing democratic, economic and environmental resilience. For this to be effective, resilience must be understood not simply as the capacity to withstand shocks and return to previous conditions, but also as the ability to anticipate change, adapt institutions and policies, and respond effectively to new realities. This means managing new pressures while seizing the opportunities that change creates: a more plural international order allows diversified partnerships, new technologies can strengthen productivity and public services, and the green transition opens up new economic opportunities.

Effective responses must recognise that these challenges and opportunities span multiple spaces and increasingly blur the boundaries between the local, national, regional and global (Cheeseman et al., 2024; Cianetti et al., 2026). Economic shocks, democratic pressures and environmental risks are shaped by actors and processes that cut across these boundaries, meaning that national action alone is insufficient. Addressing these pressures therefore requires greater co-ordinated action, from the local to the global level.

The Commonwealth is distinctly well placed to support such a response because it brings together countries facing very different contexts and challenges but with common goals, shared commitments and longstanding ties. These shared foundations include commitments to democracy, human rights and the rule of law; commonalities in language, culture and institutions; and extensive professional, civil society and people-to-people networks. Together, they facilitate co-operation, knowledge-sharing and pooled capabilities, and make it easier for experience and successful approaches to travel between countries.

At the same time, the Commonwealth's diversity connects growing markets with sources of capital and technology, resource-rich economies with countries seeking more secure green supply chains and states with different forms of experience, expertise and influence in bodies such as the UN and the World Trade Organization (WTO). This

creates opportunities to pool influence and build coalitions on trade, climate and development finance, environmental and technology governance, and democratic norms. Spanning regions, income groups and levels of vulnerability, such coalitions can command wider legitimacy than initiatives associated primarily with what is often referred to as the 'Global North' and the 'Global South'.[1] The challenge for the coming decade is to use this combination of common purpose, strong connections and diverse experience both to strengthen member countries' resilience and to help create a fairer and more resilient international system.

1.1 The challenge: A world in flux

Moving forward, Commonwealth countries must navigate a world undergoing rapid and interconnected changes. Geopolitical, economic, technological, demographic and environmental shifts are reshaping both the challenges and the opportunities facing governments. Managing these challenges successfully will increasingly require anticipating and adapting to them rather than assuming previous conditions will return.

Geopolitically, the international system is becoming more plural and less predictable. The US remains enormously influential, but the rise of China, the growing importance of middle powers and the relative decline of traditional European powers have created a more dispersed distribution of power (Nisar, 2026). International alignments are consequently becoming more fluid, with countries pursuing multiple partnerships rather than relying on fixed alliances (Desrosiers and Cheeseman, 2026). For Commonwealth member countries, a more plural international order creates opportunities to diversify partnerships, retain strategic flexibility and pursue practical co-operation across different centres of economic and political power.

At the same time, greater geopolitical competition can place additional strains on member countries, requiring them to navigate competing interests and pressures while protecting their own priorities and room for manoeuvre. For example, one consequence of this process is that some governments are increasingly unwilling to be constrained by international norms and law – including the need to respect the sovereignty and interests of others.

Competition also extends beyond traditional questions of security. Trade, investment, infrastructure, development finance, technology and critical minerals have become important instruments of geopolitical influence, requiring governments to navigate competing economic, regulatory and technological systems (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024a; UNCTAD, 2025). Growing conflict has already had a significant impact on fuel availability and food prices, and this trend is likely to continue. For larger Commonwealth countries, including Canada, India, South Africa and the UK, these changes complicate efforts to balance competing strategic and economic relationships. Smaller states may gain greater agency as competition between external powers expands their choice of partners and strengthens their bargaining position, but may also face greater pressure to navigate rival interests and avoid new forms of dependence.

These changes are taking place as the global economy becomes more constrained, fragmented and volatile. Slower growth and high levels of public debt are reducing the fiscal space available to many governments (IMF, 2025). Changing political attitudes towards aid in major donor countries are also driving a sharp contraction in development assistance: net official development assistance (ODA) fell by 23.3 per cent in 2025 and is projected to decline by a further 6.9 per cent in 2026 (OECD, 2026). Geopolitical conflict, trade barriers, supply chain disruption and climate shocks create additional uncertainty.

These constraints are especially significant for small and vulnerable states with narrow economic bases and high dependence on trade, and for lower-income countries where debt servicing can compete directly with investment in infrastructure, education, health and climate adaptation. The impacts of slower growth, high debt and tighter fiscal conditions are also unevenly distributed within societies. Constrained public spending, weak job creation and changing labour markets can fall particularly heavily on those who already

1 Although the terms 'Global North' and 'Global South' can obscure considerable diversity within and overlap between the countries they describe, they are used here for want of widely accepted alternatives that capture these broad differences more effectively.

face barriers to employment, finance and essential services, including women, young people, people with disabilities and ethnic minorities.

The changing global economy also creates opportunities. Supply chains are being reorganised, South–South and regional trade offer opportunities to diversify markets, digital trade and services are becoming more important, sources of development finance are diversifying and growing demand for critical minerals and renewable energy is creating new possibilities for resource-rich economies (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024a; UNCTAD, 2025). The central economic challenge is therefore one of adaptation: diversifying markets, finance, energy, suppliers and productive activity while investing in the institutions, infrastructure and skills required to take advantage of emerging opportunities.

Technological change adds another dimension to this transformation. Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies have the potential to raise productivity, expand access to expertise and transform health care, education, agriculture and public administration, while digital identification, interoperable payments and connected government services can reduce transaction costs and expand financial inclusion (Alonso et al., 2023; World Bank, 2025a). These benefits may be particularly important for smaller and lower-capacity states, where digital technologies can help overcome shortages of specialist skills and some disadvantages created by geography and scale. But the benefits will not be distributed equitably because deep digital divides exist both within and between countries. Around 2.2 billion people remained offline in 2025, overwhelmingly in low- and middle-income countries (ITU, 2025). Countries without reliable electricity, affordable connectivity, digital skills, effective data systems and capable regulatory institutions therefore risk falling further behind.

At the same time, the concentration of AI infrastructure and digital platforms in a relatively small number of countries and firms creates new forms of dependence as well as new environmental challenges, including huge demands on water, energy, minerals and land (World Bank, 2025a). Competing technological standards are also intertwined with wider geopolitical competition. Cybersecurity threats, AI-enabled disinformation and manipulated content can undermine economic activity, public trust and democratic institutions, while digital surveillance and AI are expanding the instruments available for political monitoring and manipulation (Firmin et al., 2026). Meanwhile, digital transformation also creates fresh risks for women and other groups that are disproportionately targeted by online abuse. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including the use of AI to generate abusive or sexualised content, can discourage participation in public life, restrict economic opportunities and make it harder for women to exercise their political and civic rights. The challenge is consequently not simply to accelerate technological adoption, but to build the infrastructure, skills and institutions required to ensure that technological change strengthens rather than undermines resilience.

'AI and digital technologies can help smaller and lower-capacity states overcome shortages of specialist skills and disadvantages of geography and scale – but deep digital divides within and between countries mean their benefits are not being distributed equitably.'

Demographic change is producing equally significant but sharply divergent pressures. Nearly 60 per cent of the Commonwealth's population is under 30 years of age (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a), and population growth is increasingly concentrated in Africa and parts of South Asia. Sub-Saharan Africa's population alone is projected to increase by around 79 per cent between 2024 and 2054 (UN, 2024). This creates enormous potential if expanding working-age populations can be matched by improvements in education, skills and productive employment, but considerable risks if job creation and public services fail to keep pace: globally, around one in five young people were not in employment, education or training in 2023, with young women more than twice as likely as young men to be in this position (ILO, 2024). Rapid urbanisation will intensify these pressures, placing growing demands on housing, transport, water, energy and other infrastructure.

Meanwhile, countries including Australia and New Zealand face ageing populations, slower workforce growth and increasing health care,

pension and care costs (UN, 2024). Migration can play a critical role in mediating these contrasting demographic trajectories. Far from being simply a source of pressure, well-managed migration can benefit both labour-surplus and labour-short economies, although it can also create risks of skills shortages and brain drain (World Bank, 2023). Demographic divergence therefore represents not only a challenge but also a potential source of complementarity, particularly if countries can develop more effective approaches to education, skills recognition, labour mobility, workforce planning and gender-responsive labour policies that unlock opportunities for women and youth.

Climate change and environmental degradation are important determinants of economic and social outcomes. Extreme heat, zoonotic diseases, droughts, floods, storms and wildfires are becoming more frequent and severe, while changes such as sea-level rise, desertification, ocean acidification and biodiversity loss threaten livelihoods and development over much longer periods (Adil et al., 2025; Global Center on Adaptation, 2025). These pressures are particularly acute for small island developing states (SIDS), where climate change poses an increasingly systemic threat to economic security, public finances and, in some cases, long-term habitability (Gomez, 2021), as well as mainland states with high climate vulnerability in parts of Africa – but no Commonwealth country will be insulated from its consequences. African and South Asian members also face significant risks where climate pressures interact with poverty, agricultural dependence, rapid urbanisation and more limited capacity to adapt (Douglas, 2021).

Biodiversity loss, pollution, declining fisheries, water insecurity and the degradation of forests, wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs further weaken the natural systems on which economies and communities depend. Environmental pressures therefore cannot be treated as a separate policy challenge: they affect food and energy security, infrastructure, health, migration, public finances, economic growth and political stability. Without adaptation, water scarcity alone could reduce gross domestic product (GDP) by between 6 and 12 per cent in some countries in South Asia and Africa by 2050 (Global Commission on Adaptation, 2019). Thus, countries should shift approaches from repeatedly responding to disasters to integrating adaptation, preparedness, ecosystem management and sustainable resource governance into development planning and investment.

Taken together, these changes are creating a more plural and less predictable international environment, generating new opportunities alongside new risks and vulnerabilities. The challenge is not simply to strengthen national institutions and capabilities, but also to connect action across countries and the international system in ways that manage emerging risks and seize new opportunities. This changing environment increases the value of Commonwealth co-operation. Its combination of shared commitments, institutional commonalities and diverse experience creates scope for countries to learn from one another, pool complementary capabilities and enable innovation to flow between regions rather than simply from richer to poorer countries.

Drawing on the knowledge, experience and capabilities of different groups within societies will also be critical to building inclusive resilience. In an increasingly fragmented international system, the Commonwealth can provide a bridge between regions and countries occupying different positions in the global order, helping member countries develop practical responses to shared problems and build wider coalitions around common interests. The question is therefore how the Commonwealth can use these strengths to build the resilience required not merely to withstand change, but also to adapt successfully and make the most of the opportunities it creates.

1.2 The solution: Democratic, economic and environmental resilience

In a world characterised by greater uncertainty and frequent disruption, governments need not only to withstand shocks but also to adapt as circumstances change. This is why researchers and practitioners have increasingly focused on the imperative of strengthening resilience – that is, the capacity of countries and their institutions and societies to maintain essential functions while absorbing pressures, learning from disruption and reducing vulnerability to future change (OECD, 2022).

The three dimensions of resilience examined in this report apply this idea in different ways. Democratic resilience (chapter 2) involves resisting erosion and enabling recovery while deepening democracy by enhancing participation and accountability to give the political system stronger roots (Merkel, 2026). Economic resilience (chapter 3) refers to the capacity to adapt to shocks while sustaining inclusive and environmentally sustainable prosperity to reduce the likelihood of future shocks (IMF, 2025; OECD, 2025). Environmental resilience (chapter 4) concerns the capacity of ecosystems, communities and institutions to withstand and adapt to environmental pressures while sustaining livelihoods and economic activity in order to build support for green policies (Anandhi, 2025).

Crucially, these dimensions cannot be strengthened in isolation. Economic insecurity can constrain investment in adaptation and undermine political trust, while weak institutions make both economic adjustment and environmental threats harder to manage. Environmental shocks can similarly damage livelihoods, infrastructure, economic growth and public finances, placing political institutions under strain and reducing resources for future adaptation; poor emergency responses can further undermine governance and public trust (Auer Frege, 2025; Global Center on Adaptation, 2025). Conversely, capable and accountable institutions improve economic and environmental decision-making; diversified and inclusive economies provide greater resources to withstand shocks; and effective adaptation protects livelihoods, productive assets, public finances and development gains while supporting sustainable growth (Global Commission on Adaptation, 2019).

True resilience also requires an inclusive approach, reflecting the emphasis in the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 on gender equality and youth inclusion (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a) – because societies are stronger when they can draw on the skills, knowledge, experience and capabilities of the whole population. Democratic resilience is strengthened when women, young people, ethnic minorities, people living with disabilities and other groups can participate meaningfully in political life. Women's participation in peace processes, for example, has been associated with more durable agreements (Krause et al., 2018), while the political inclusion of ethnic minorities can reduce grievances and conflict risks (Cederman et al., 2022). Economic resilience similarly depends on making full use of a country's human capital. Greater women's political empowerment has been associated with stronger economic growth and technological advancement (Jayasuriya and Burke, 2013; Dahlum et al., 2022), while enabling young people to develop and use their skills through education and employment can help countries realise a demographic dividend (Woldegiorgis, 2023).

Environmental resilience also benefits from drawing on a wider range of knowledge and experience in managing natural resources and designing adaptation. Greater women's political representation has been associated with stronger climate policies and lower emissions (Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi, 2019), while recognition of Indigenous land rights has been shown to reduce deforestation (Blackman et al., 2017). Inclusion is therefore not simply about ensuring that the benefits of resilience are widely shared: it strengthens resilience itself by enabling societies to make fuller use of their human potential.

Resilience should therefore be understood as a continuous process that requires countries to build the institutions, capabilities and relationships needed to anticipate and prepare for disruption across all three policy areas.

1.3 The structure and findings of this report

Building on this approach, the *State of the Commonwealth Report* 2026 examines how the Commonwealth can help its members strengthen democratic, economic and environmental resilience in a world in flux. It assesses how the pressures and opportunities identified above affect different kinds of member countries; identifies emerging evidence on the institutions, capabilities and relationships that strengthen resilience across all three dimensions; and considers how these can be developed through national action and Commonwealth co-operation across different scales.

The report does not seek to prescribe a single response or strategy. Commonwealth countries differ enormously in their institutions, economies, resources, vulnerabilities and development trajectories, and approaches that work in one

context may not be appropriate in another. Yet shared Commonwealth values provide a foundation for co-operation, collective action and learning. The report presents a menu of practical options. Particular attention is given to areas in which the Commonwealth has a comparative advantage: sharing experience between countries facing similar challenges; connecting members with complementary capabilities and resources; supporting practical co-operation; and using its diverse membership and convening power to bridge regions and build wider coalitions.

The remainder of the report is structured as follows.

Chapter 2 examines democratic resilience, assessing pressures on democratic institutions and political trust while identifying approaches that can strengthen institutions, accountability and meaningful political participation, including among under-represented groups, and support democratic renewal.

Chapter 3 examines economic resilience, focusing on the capacity of Commonwealth economies to navigate slower and more volatile growth, debt and financing constraints, changing patterns of trade and investment, and opportunities created by greater economic diversification, inclusion and co-operation.

Chapter 4 examines environmental resilience, assessing the consequences of climate change and environmental degradation and the scope for stronger adaptation, sustainable resource governance, gender equality and inclusion, climate finance and co-operation to protect development gains.

Chapter 5 draws these findings together and considers what they mean for strengthening inclusive resilience across the Commonwealth, identifying practical options for action by individual countries and through Commonwealth co-operation.

Reflecting the interconnections between these three dimensions, the report concludes by considering how the Commonwealth can strengthen resilience at three levels: within countries, between countries and through the international system. Within countries, Commonwealth co-operation can help strengthen the institutions and capabilities needed to anticipate, absorb and adapt to change. Between countries, it can enable multidirectional learning, pool capabilities and connect complementary resources and expertise across a highly diverse membership. Internationally, the Commonwealth can use its networks, convening power and ability to bridge regions and income groups to build wider coalitions around reforms that individual members cannot secure alone. These three roles provide a basis for a more focused model of Commonwealth co-operation that strengthens national resilience while helping create a more supportive international environment.

Part II
Striving for Resilience

2. Democratic Resilience

Democracy is becoming harder to sustain. Democratic institutions face a less supportive international environment alongside economic pressures, technological and demographic change, and intensifying climate shocks. Yet Commonwealth countries have proved more resilient than global trends might suggest, highlighting the importance of institutions capable not only of resisting erosion but also of adapting democratic governance to changing circumstances.

This matters beyond democracy itself. While the relationship between democracy, authoritarianism and economic growth is complex, there is considerable evidence that, overall, democracies improve public services and achieve higher levels of sustainable economic growth (Acemoglu et al., 2019; Eberhardt, 2022). One reason for this may be that established democracies tend to experience lower levels of corruption over the long run (Treisman, 2000). At the same time, accountable and non-corrupt institutions, the rule of law and predictable transfers of power can reduce uncertainty and support investment and the expansion of trade. Resilient democracies also provide mechanisms for resolving political conflict and grievances, including through inclusive responses to climate change, reducing the risk of prolonged instability. Strengthening democracy can therefore support the achievement of wider national priorities across the Commonwealth.

Democratic resilience combines the capacity to withstand and contain pressures with the ability to remain effective, representative and accountable, and to recover from erosion while preserving political competition, accountability, rights and freedoms (Merkel, 2026). This places a particular premium on prevention: strengthening institutions before significant erosion occurs is generally easier than rebuilding them afterwards. Recent evidence also suggests that, while institutional safeguards remain essential, they are not sufficient to prevent autocratisation (Riedl et al., 2025). Courts, legislatures, electoral bodies and independent media constrain political power, but resilience also depends on the meaningful participation of a wide range of citizens and society (Cheeseman et al., 2026), including women and young people. New pressures also demand fresh responses, including governing AI and digital platforms, protecting elections from disinformation and responding to economic and environmental shocks without undermining accountability. Resilience is strongest when institutional safeguards, capable government, participation and adaptation reinforce one another.

Commonwealth co-operation can strengthen these foundations by connecting countries facing similar challenges, enabling multidirectional learning, pooling specialist capabilities and supporting prevention and recovery. Although member countries are at different points on their democratic journeys, they share a common commitment to the Commonwealth Charter (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2013). This is particularly significant because key Charter commitments include democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, the separation of powers, the rule of law and good governance – the very areas discussed above as facing growing international pressures. The Charter's emphasis on political participation, equality and public accountability therefore provides practical common ground for co-operation. Beyond co-operation among its members, the Commonwealth's global reach also enables countries to work collectively through the UN and other international and regional organisations to defend democratic and human rights norms. Resilience therefore depends both

'New pressures demand fresh responses, including governing AI and digital platforms, protecting elections from disinformation and responding to economic and environmental shocks without undermining accountability.'

on strengthening democracy within states and on sustaining an international environment in which democratic institutions can endure.

2.1 Global pressures on democratic resilience

The global environment for democratic resilience has become more challenging and uncertain, creating an important context for the Commonwealth's commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The UN Secretary-General's 'A New Agenda for Peace' describes growing geopolitical competition, declining trust, rising inequalities and rapid technological change, alongside increasing pressures on human rights and civic space (UN, 2023). The international environment has also become more plural, as the growing influence of emerging and middle powers has contributed to more fluid alignments and a wider range of economic and diplomatic partnerships. Meanwhile, slower growth, high public debt, cost-of-living pressures and inequality have increased demands on governments. These developments do not necessarily weaken democracy, but they do create a more complex environment in which democratic institutions must respond to changing economic conditions, international relationships and public expectations.

Social and technological change is also reshaping political participation. Younger, more urban and digitally connected populations are developing new ways of engaging with politics, while established institutions adapt to changing expectations around voice, inclusion and accountability. Recent youth-led protests across Africa, Asia and Europe have often combined concerns about corruption and accountability with frustration over economic opportunities and public services (Firmin et al., 2026). Dissatisfaction with established institutions has also contributed to growing support for populist, anti-establishment and other parties challenging traditional political alignments in many parts of the world.

At the same time, research documents growing pressures on civic space and organised opposition to gender equality and women's rights, including legal and administrative measures that can constrain civil society and freedoms of association, expression and peaceful assembly (Cheeseman and Dodsworth, 2023; UN Women, 2025; Chaudhry, 2026). Digital technologies can widen access to information and participation, but can also accelerate misinformation and disinformation, enable surveillance and allow for technology-facilitated gender-based violence that can silence women and constrain their political participation (Firmin et al., 2026).

Corruption is another important part of this changing environment. Transparency International's 2025 Corruption Perceptions Index finds that perceived public sector corruption has worsened globally, with the global average falling to 42 out of 100 – its lowest level in more than a decade – and 50 countries deteriorating significantly since 2012, compared with 31 that improved (Transparency International, 2026).

This matters for democratic resilience because corruption can weaken public trust, distort political competition and undermine confidence in institutions, while weak checks and balances can themselves create opportunities for corruption. UN reporting on Sustainable Development Goal 16 similarly emphasises the relationship between controlling corruption and building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions (OHCHR et al., 2025). Together with geopolitical, demographic, technological and climate-related change, these trends make the Commonwealth's longstanding emphasis on democratic institutions, accountable government, human rights and the rule of law especially relevant to contemporary global challenges. The following section examines how far Commonwealth countries have proved resilient in this changing environment.

Table 2.1: Changes in Freedom House scores across the Commonwealth, 1999–2025

Region	1999	2025	Change
Africa	4.02	3.90	−0.12
Asia	4.63	4.25	−0.38
Caribbean & Americas	1.54	1.50	−0.04
Europe	1.17	1.33	+0.16
Pacific	1.86	1.95	+0.09
Commonwealth – 56 countries	2.96	2.88	−0.08

Source: Freedom House (2026)
Note: Numbers are rounded, and calculation is based on comparing current members over this time period.

2.2 Implications for democratic resilience in Commonwealth countries

Given the scale of the global democratic recession, the Commonwealth has proved relatively resilient. Overall levels of political rights and civil liberties have actually improved slightly since 1999 – although this trend masks substantial differences between regions and countries. Global pressures produce different outcomes depending on institutional maturity, state capacity, economic resources, political competition, geography and demographic structure.

One way to measure democratic trends is through Freedom House's long-running index, which provides 1–7 ratings for political rights and civil liberties, averaged here to produce an overall country rating, with lower scores indicating greater freedom.[2] Although there are limitations to all indices, such as the reliance on the assessments of experts to generate the scores, Freedom House data is useful as it is one of the only sources that measures the quality of democracy for every Commonwealth member country. As Table 2.1 shows, between 1999 and 2025 the Commonwealth average improved slightly (from 2.96 to 2.88, with lower scores representing greater freedom).

Improvements were recorded in Africa, Asia and to a lesser extent the Caribbean and Americas. Where the latter region is concerned, comparatively stable democratic institutions are particularly notable given the significant democratic challenges experienced in nearby states. A number of Commonwealth countries maintained competitive political systems despite the challenges that small, climate-exposed economies can face in sustaining effective governance, including vulnerability to external economic shocks, natural disasters and limited state capacity. Meanwhile, the Pacific and Europe experienced a modest fall in the level of freedom. The overall picture is therefore one of resilience as much as decline.

Different parts of the Commonwealth nevertheless face distinct vulnerabilities. African and South Asian members confront particularly intense combinations of youth unemployment, rapid urbanisation, constrained public finances and geopolitical competition; many Caribbean and Pacific states face limited administrative capacity, external economic dependence and exceptional climate exposure; advanced democracies face declining institutional trust, political fragmentation, ageing populations, housing shortages, disinformation and polarisation. More broadly, the variation revealed in Table 2.1 suggests that institutional and administrative capacity does not insulate democracies from changing economic and social pressures.

Small and vulnerable states face a different problem: shocks that larger countries may be able to absorb can have system-wide consequences. Small administrations often depend on relatively few specialist personnel, making outward migration or the loss of expertise particularly consequential. They can also face greater difficulties regulating

2 Although Freedom House stopped presenting these ratings separately in published reports from 2020, they remain available in its underlying data (Freedom House, 2026).

'Formal political equality can coexist with substantial inequalities in whose voices are heard, whose interests are represented and who is able to influence political decisions.'

new technologies, negotiating with multinational companies and maintaining specialist oversight institutions. Smallness can nevertheless be an advantage, facilitating closer relationships between citizens and government and creating greater scope for responsiveness and policy innovation (Sanches et al., 2022).

Political inclusion remains a significant challenge across the Commonwealth, not only in terms of who is represented in elected office but also in whether citizens can choose their representatives, influence policy, participate in decision-making, assess government performance and hold decision-makers to account. People under 30 constitute less than 3.5 per cent of representatives in Commonwealth unicameral legislatures and less than 3 per cent in the lower houses of bicameral parliaments (based on 14 and 12 reporting countries, respectively), and most of them are men. Women hold 22 per cent of seats in national parliaments, up just 1 percentage point since 2024 (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2026a).

Yet political exclusion extends considerably further. People living in poverty; ethnic, racial and religious minorities; Indigenous Peoples; people living with disabilities; and other marginalised communities can face significant barriers to political representation and participation (International IDEA, 2026). Inequalities in income, education, digital access and access to political networks can compound these disadvantages, while different forms of exclusion frequently intersect – for example among poorer women, young people living with disabilities or economically marginalised members of minority communities (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021b). As a result, formal political equality can coexist with substantial inequalities in whose voices are heard, whose interests are represented and who is able to influence political decisions.

Young people are underrepresented in politics, and their trust in political systems is declining (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a). This should not be read as a rejection of democracy, however: it may reflect frustration with how institutions perform rather than opposition to democratic principles. Many young people still seek a stronger political voice, from Nigeria's Not Too Young To Run campaign, which helped lower age requirements for elected office, to Malaysia's Undi18 movement, which secured a voting age of 18.

Different pressures, but shared values

Taken together, these patterns show that democratic resilience across the Commonwealth cannot be reduced to a single trajectory or challenge. Member countries face different combinations of demographic and economic change, limited administrative capacity, external shocks, declining trust and political fragmentation. Across these contexts, a common challenge is ensuring that political institutions remain representative, responsive and adaptable, including to groups whose voices may be weakly represented. Democratic resilience also depends not only on governments, but also on wider networks connecting citizens to political life, including civil society, professional associations, universities, the media and community organisations. It therefore requires an inclusive and connected democratic system capable of adapting as circumstances change.

2.3 Striving for resilience: How Commonwealth countries are strengthening democracy

Commonwealth countries are responding to democratic pressures through five main approaches: strengthening institutions, improving government performance, governing digital politics, broadening participation and mobilising the wider Commonwealth, including Commonwealth Accredited Organisations and civil society groups. Approaches vary across countries, but resilience generally appears strongest when institutional safeguards, effective government and meaningful citizen participation reinforce one another.

Strengthening institutions before democratic crises emerge

A first set of responses focuses on strengthening institutions before democratic erosion takes hold. Across the Commonwealth, this includes the Commonwealth Expert Team's assessment of Barbados' February 2026 general election, and constitutional reform processes in Jamaica (Constitutional Reform Committee, 2024). Ghana has continued to strengthen its electoral administration (Electoral Commission of Ghana, no date), while in Botswana a Commonwealth Expert Team assessment on the 2024 elections highlighted both the resilience of the electoral process and continuing gaps in electoral preparedness (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025c). Pacific states have focused on strengthening their parliaments, and South Africa has worked to reinforce institutional oversight following the Zondo Commission (Presidency of the Republic of South Africa, 2025).[3]

Commonwealth countries have also strengthened anti-corruption bodies, public audit institutions and access to information frameworks. Reforms introduced gradually during periods of stability are generally more likely to become embedded than emergency measures introduced after safeguards have weakened. This is consistent with the Commonwealth Charter's emphasis on democracy, the rule of law, separation of powers and good governance and the preventive roles of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) and the Secretary-General's Good Offices in supporting dialogue and constructive engagement.

Improving democratic performance and rebuilding public trust

A second approach focuses less on constitutional reform than on improving the quality of democratic government. Digital public services in Singapore (Government of Singapore, 2026) and efforts to strengthen local government in The Gambia (Guillot de la Puente and Senghore, 2025) illustrate attempts to make public institutions more effective and responsive, while open government initiatives, greater budget transparency and improvements in public financial management pursue similar objectives. The purpose is not simply administrative efficiency: effective and transparent institutions can demonstrate that democratic government delivers, while accountability can itself improve performance. This is especially important where fiscal constraints and rising expectations threaten public confidence.

Responding to digital threats to democracy

Commonwealth countries are also developing institutions capable of governing digital politics. Canada's chief electoral officer has proposed further safeguards against foreign interference, alongside measures to strengthen transparency and public confidence in electoral processes (Elections Canada, 2024), and the UK has introduced the Online Safety Act, now moving through phased implementation, which makes foreign interference a priority offence for platforms to tackle (Ofcom, 2025). South Africa's electoral authorities have also expanded efforts to address online misinformation and campaigning during elections (Electoral Commission of South Africa, 2025). These initiatives illustrate difficult trade-offs: measures intended to tackle misinformation and online harms can themselves threaten freedom of expression if executive discretion is too broad. The most democratically resilient approaches are therefore likely to combine stronger digital governance with independent regulation, judicial oversight, transparency and safeguards for fundamental rights.

Broadening participation and renewing democratic legitimacy

A fourth set of responses seeks to broaden participation beyond periodic elections. Civil society organisations, community groups and youth-led movements provide alternative channels for political engagement, while civic education and youth development programmes can give young people the knowledge, skills and opportunities needed to participate effectively. Trinidad and Tobago's National Youth Parliament, for example, combines training in research, public speaking and parliamentary procedure with opportunities to debate public policy (Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago, 2025).

Other initiatives address specific barriers to representation: Malawi discounted nomination fees by 50 per cent for women, young people and persons with disabilities for its 2025 elections

3 Officially the Judicial Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture, Corruption and Fraud in the Public Sector including Organs of State.

(Oyenekan and Corby, 2025), while reserved seats have significantly expanded women's participation in local government in India. Three Commonwealth countries also have formal youth quotas or reserved parliamentary seats (IPU, 2026). Such measures recognise that exclusion often reflects systemic barriers, including discriminatory norms, unequal access to resources and violence against women.

Mobilising the wider Commonwealth to strengthen democracy

Democratic resilience has also been supported by actors beyond governments, drawing on the Commonwealth's wider network of parliamentary and professional associations, civil society organisations and other groups. Since 2018, 40 Commonwealth legislatures have undertaken self-assessments against the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association's Recommended Benchmarks for Democratic Legislatures, identifying institutional weaknesses and priorities for reform (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, no date). Commonwealth legal, judicial and other professional associations have similarly provided networks through which expertise and good practice can be shared across countries.

Civil society organisations have complemented this work by monitoring government performance and public spending, advocating for stronger legal protections and access to information, defending freedom of expression and helping communities engage policy-makers. The Commonwealth Foundation has supported such work through grants and by creating opportunities for civil society to engage decision-makers and influence policy (Commonwealth Foundation, 2025). Together, these activities demonstrate the contribution of the wider Commonwealth family: strengthening institutions and accountability; widening participation; and connecting reformers, citizens and expertise across countries.

Across these experiences, no single reform is sufficient: resilience depends on combining different approaches and sustaining them over time with broad political and social support.

2.4 Opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation on democratic resilience

Many of the pressures now undermining democratic resilience cross national borders. Disinformation, foreign political interference, cyber threats, organised corruption and illicit finance operate across countries, while governing AI and digital platforms increasingly requires international co-operation (Cheeseman et al., 2024; Cianetti, 2026). This creates opportunities for the Commonwealth, which combines diverse experience with shared commitments, institutional traditions and professional networks. The strongest opportunities lie in six areas: enhancing Commonwealth co-operation on political inclusion, building a democratic learning network, pooling capability for digital democracy, strengthening institutions through professional networks, connecting prevention to democratic recovery and fostering international coalitions for democracy. These approaches align with the Commonwealth Secretariat's emphasis on trusted partnerships, peer learning and context-specific support (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a).

Enhance Commonwealth co-operation on political inclusion

Women's political inclusion can strengthen democratic resilience by bringing a wider range of skills, experiences and priorities into decision-making and by improving how institutions respond to citizens' needs. Meanwhile, women's meaningful participation in peace processes is associated with more durable agreements and stronger implementation (Krause et al., 2018), and greater representation of women in parliament has been linked to improved social outcomes, including higher health spending and better child health (Quamruzzaman and Lange, 2016; Dodsworth and Cheeseman, 2019). Young people can make a similar contribution by widening the range of perspectives represented in political debate, strengthening engagement with democratic institutions and helping governments respond more effectively to the priorities of younger generations. People living with disabilities also bring important experience and perspectives that are

often poorly represented in political institutions and policy-making. Inclusion therefore needs to extend beyond representation in elected office. Women, young people, people living with disabilities and other under-represented groups need meaningful opportunities to shape policy, hold governments to account and participate through civic and community organisations.

Civic education and youth development programmes can strengthen these forms of engagement, while growing opposition to gender equality and technology-facilitated gender-based violence can restrict participation and silence women. More broadly, research shows that broader governing coalitions can contribute to political stability (Arriola, 2009), while the inclusion of marginalised and minority groups can reduce grievances and conflict risks. Commonwealth member countries can share diverse approaches to widening meaningful inclusion and overcoming these barriers in different political and institutional contexts.

Build a democratic learning network

Commonwealth member countries share commitments to democracy, human rights, the rule of law and accountable government, but have considerable experience of pursuing these principles under different political and institutional conditions. This creates opportunities for constructive peer learning in areas including electoral management, constitutional reform, decentralisation, judicial independence, anti-corruption institutions and parliamentary oversight. Rather than promoting a single model, the Commonwealth can help its members identify approaches that have worked elsewhere and adapt them to local circumstances. This builds on the Secretariat's trusted relationships, contextual knowledge and technical expertise, as well as its growing emphasis on peer learning and targeted support (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a). A more systematic democratic learning network could go further by identifying reforms that have produced demonstrable results; maintaining a practical repository of these experiences; and matching electoral commissions, parliaments, courts and oversight bodies facing similar challenges for sustained peer-to-peer exchange. This would turn existing networks and episodic exchanges into a more continuous mechanism for identifying, adapting and supporting democratic innovation across the Commonwealth.

Pool capability for digital democracy

Digital governance offers a particularly strong case for peer learning and shared Commonwealth capability. AI governance, online political campaigning, data protection, election security, platform accountability, cybersecurity and countering disinformation all require specialist expertise that is expensive to develop and rapidly becomes outdated. Shared technical capacity, regulatory exchange and professional networks could reduce duplication and give smaller and lower-capacity members access to expertise difficult to sustain nationally. This complements the commitment in the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 to harness AI and digital tools and provide technical assistance on access to digital technologies (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a), while helping ensure that digital transformation strengthens government effectiveness without weakening accountability.

Strengthen democratic institutions through professional networks

Many institutions underpinning democratic resilience depend on specialised expertise that takes time to develop. Stronger professional networks could enable election administrators, judges, legislators, auditors, anti-corruption officials and public servants to learn directly from counterparts confronting similar challenges. Commonwealth election observation should remain a particularly important part of this architecture. Commonwealth Observer Groups provide independent and impartial assessments of electoral processes, reinforce agreed democratic standards and generate recommendations that can support subsequent reform.

Maintaining and investing in this capacity is becoming more important as international support for election integrity weakens, as demonstrated, for example, by the decision by the US to restrict official commentary on the fairness and integrity of elections overseas (Pamuk, 2025). Connecting observation more systematically to engagement across the electoral cycle could further increase its value by helping electoral commissions and other institutions implement recommendations between

elections. This would combine professional networks and technical assistance with existing Commonwealth strengths in political access, diplomacy and consensus-building, consistent with the emphasis in the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 on long-term interventions that strengthen institutional resilience (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a).

Connect prevention to democratic recovery

Commonwealth co-operation can help countries at different stages of democratic pressure. The Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 proposes an intergovernmental early warning system to identify risks to governance and democratic integrity, alongside preventive diplomacy and mediation through the Secretary-General's Good Offices and CMAG (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a). Linking early warning mechanisms more systematically to peer learning and sustained institutional support could help prevent erosion from becoming entrenched. Where erosion has already occurred, the Commonwealth's move towards a whole-of-electoral-cycle approach provides an important foundation, but recovery requires engagement well beyond elections. Commonwealth networks could therefore accompany countries through longer periods of institutional renewal (ibid.).

Foster international coalitions for democracy

Co-operation within the Commonwealth can be complemented by collective engagement to support democracy globally. The 56 member countries span most of the world's major geographic regions and participate in the UN and other international organisations, such as regional bodies and the G20. As geopolitical fragmentation makes democracy harder to sustain, member countries could partner more systematically to defend election integrity, civic space, media freedom, the rule of law and wider democratic and human rights norms. Commonwealth networks and expertise could also reinforce the work of the UN, the African Union and other regional organisations, helping sustain an international environment supportive of democracy.

This approach could include developing common positions and coalitions, sharing expertise, supporting election observation and providing political and financial backing to civil society, independent media and human rights institutions, alongside co-ordinated responses to transnational threats such as disinformation, spyware and illicit political finance. The Commonwealth's geographic diversity creates particular opportunities to build broad coalitions around democratic principles, drawing on its strengths in convening and consensus-building and the call in the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025-2030 for stronger strategic partnerships (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a), while reinforcing rather than duplicating the international system.

Taken together, these forms of co-operation could help member countries strengthen democratic institutions and capabilities at home, draw more systematically on the experience of countries confronting similar challenges and co-ordinate more effectively in defence of democratic and human rights norms internationally. This would allow Commonwealth co-operation to support responses that are politically feasible, institutionally credible and adapted to local circumstances, while reinforcing the wider environment in which democratic resilience can be sustained.

3. Economic Resilience

The international economic environment is becoming increasingly complex and challenging to navigate. Supply chain disruption, higher debt-servicing costs, declining development assistance, geopolitical competition, technological change and climate shocks are challenging established sources of growth, finance and comparative advantage. For Commonwealth countries, the implications vary considerably, but the central challenge is increasingly one of adaptation: how to sustain and expand prosperity when the conditions that support it are becoming less predictable and more challenging. Effective economic resilience therefore involves the capacity to absorb shocks and adapt to changing circumstances while sustaining inclusive and environmentally sustainable prosperity. This means not simply recovering from crises, but also developing stronger institutions and productive capabilities, greater diversification and the flexibility to take advantage of new business, trade and investment opportunities while reducing vulnerability to future shocks.

Domestic capacity is only part of the challenge, however. For many small states, least developed countries (LDCs) and other vulnerable Commonwealth countries, high borrowing costs, limited access to concessional and climate finance, and eligibility criteria based heavily on income per capita constrain the ability to respond to external shocks. The contraction of ODA further increases the importance of domestic resource mobilisation and the shift from traditional donor-recipient relationships towards more reciprocal partnerships based on trade, investment, technology, regional and South–South co-operation, and new forms of development finance. This means building effective national revenue systems, improving debt management and drawing on diaspora investment, while strengthening international collaboration on asset recovery, beneficial ownership transparency, tax co-operation and efforts to combat illicit financial flows. Economic resilience therefore requires operating at multiple levels to build both stronger domestic capabilities and international financial and economic arrangements that better recognise structural vulnerability.

Resilience also requires a better balance between efficiency, openness and risk. Greater global integration encouraged specialisation, but growth can coexist with vulnerability where economies depend heavily on a few suppliers, markets, commodities, sectors or sources of finance. Resilience therefore depends on economic structure as well as performance. Fiscal space, reliable infrastructure, skills, digital connectivity, capable institutions and diversified economic relationships increase the capacity to respond to change. Inclusion is also important: economies that exclude large sections of the population from education, finance, technology or productive employment make less effective use of their productive potential.

Yet many of these capabilities and relationships cannot be strengthened through national action alone. The Commonwealth's diversity creates opportunities to connect complementary capabilities, diversify economic relationships and build collective influence over the international rules that shape member countries' room for manoeuvre. Economic resilience therefore depends both on stronger capabilities at home and on an international economic environment that gives countries sufficient space to adjust and prosper.

3.1 Global pressures on economic resilience

The international economic environment has become more constrained, contested and unpredictable, creating new challenges for the Commonwealth's longstanding emphasis on expanding trade, investment and shared prosperity. Slower growth, rising debt and contracting development assistance are reducing governments' room for manoeuvre at a time when economic, geopolitical and environmental shocks are becoming more frequent. These pressures are also unevenly distributed within countries: cuts to public spending and weaker job creation can fall particularly heavily on women, young people and other groups that already face barriers to employment, finance and essential services. The Middle East conflict and the de facto closure of the Strait of Hormuz have disrupted a major artery of global energy trade. Before the disruption, the Strait carried around 25 per cent of world seaborne oil trade and almost 20 per cent of global liquified natural gas trade (IEA, 2026). With only about a dozen net energy exporters among them, most Commonwealth countries are exposed to fuel price spikes that raise the cost of electricity, transport and food and add to fiscal pressure, particularly in small and vulnerable economies.

Global public debt exceeded US$100 trillion in 2024 and is expected to approach 100 per cent of global GDP by the end of the decade, while net ODA fell sharply in 2024 and 2025 and is projected to decline further in 2026 (IMF, 2025; OECD, 2026). These shifts are increasing the importance of domestic resource mobilisation, investment, regional and South–South co-operation, and alternative forms of development finance. They also reinforce the importance of protecting investment in education, skills, health and care, which shapes whether women and young people can participate fully in economic life.

Trade and investment are being reshaped by growing geo-economic fragmentation. Governments are making greater use of tariffs, subsidies, export restrictions and industrial policy, while geopolitical competition is encouraging the restructuring of global value chains. Recent US tariff increases illustrate the potential disruption to established trading relationships, while China–US competition over semiconductors and telecommunications and growing competition for critical minerals are further influencing investment and supply chains (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025d). These shifts create both risks and opportunities as firms diversify production, regional and South–South trade expands, and countries seek to capture more value from natural resources. AI and digitalisation are simultaneously changing comparative advantage, offering potentially large productivity gains while increasing the importance of reliable electricity, connectivity, skills, data and computing capacity. With over two billion people still offline, access to these opportunities remains highly unequal (ITU, 2025). Women also account for only 32 per cent of tertiary information and communication technology (ICT) graduates across the Commonwealth (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2026a), highlighting the risk that existing inequalities are reproduced in the sectors driving future growth.

'Enabling women, young people, people living with disabilities and other excluded groups to participate in the labour market more fully can expand entrepreneurship and productivity as well as improving distributional outcomes.'

Demographic and environmental change add further pressures and opportunities. Young and rapidly growing populations can expand labour forces, entrepreneurship and domestic markets, but realising a demographic dividend depends on creating sufficient productive employment and removing barriers to participation. The scale of the opportunity is substantial: estimates suggest that greater gender equality in labour force participation and pay could raise global GDP by around 20 per cent (World Bank, 2025c), while the gender entrepreneurship gap has been valued at roughly US$6 trillion (Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative, 2022). Enabling women, young people, people living with disabilities and other excluded groups to participate more fully can therefore expand entrepreneurship, labour supply and productivity rather than just improving distributional outcomes. Ageing economies, meanwhile, face slower labour force growth and increasing pension, health care and social care costs (ILO, 2024; UN, 2024).

Climate change can damage infrastructure, agriculture and tourism and increase reconstruction costs, while the green transition is generating investment in renewable energy, grids, storage and critical minerals and creating new sources of employment and comparative advantage. Taken together, these trends are making established sources of finance, trade and growth less dependable while increasing the value of the trade, investment, connectivity and inclusive economic co-operation that the Commonwealth seeks to promote.

3.2 Implications for economic resilience in Commonwealth countries

These pressures have six important implications for Commonwealth countries. Growth is slowing from very different starting points; debt and declining external finance are narrowing development choices; trade fragmentation is creating winners, losers and new dependencies; technological and demographic change is generating sharply different adjustment pressures; and different economic structures leave small economies facing concentrated vulnerabilities, while advanced and emerging economies face different pressures of adjustment. These differences reflect variations in fiscal space, geography, demographics and institutional capacity, but also create potential complementarities between member countries. New evidence on intra-Commonwealth trade and investment reinforces this picture: substantial economic relationships already exist but remain highly concentrated among a relatively small number of countries.

Growth is slowing, but from very different starting points

The Commonwealth remains economically significant, with combined GDP of US$15.9 trillion in 2025, around 13 per cent of global output, projected to reach $16.9 trillion in 2026. Yet, as Table 3.1 shows, average growth across the 56 members is projected to fall from 4.9 per cent in 2021–2025 to 3.5 per cent in 2026–2030, though this remains above the 2016–2020 average of 1.7 per cent, and above it in four of the five Commonwealth regions. Growth prospects also vary considerably across regions, reflecting different economic structures and exposure to recent shocks (IMF, 2026). Africa and Asia are projected to be the fastest-growing Commonwealth regions, at 4.1 per cent and 4.2 per cent, respectively, in 2026–2030, compared with 3.3 per cent in the Caribbean and Americas, 2.8 per cent in Europe and 2.5 per cent in the Pacific. In the Caribbean and Americas, strong growth in 2021–2025 partly reflects Guyana's oil-driven expansion and the post-COVID rebound of tourism-dependent economies, with growth now returning towards more normal rates. In Africa, it reflects demographic trends and several fast-growing economies, although considerable variation remains.

Debt and declining external finance are narrowing development choices

Combined public debt across the Commonwealth has risen and is projected to reach US$18.2 trillion by 2030, as set out in Table 3.2 (IMF, 2026). These figures are dominated by the largest economies and should be read alongside the Commonwealth's median debt-to-GDP ratio, which peaked at 67.8 per cent in 2020, eased to 64.6 per cent in 2025, and is projected to fall to 60.6 per cent by 2030, though only if fiscal

Table 3.1: Economic growth prospects in the Commonwealth (%, average)

Commonwealth region	2016–2020	2021–2025 (p)	2026–2030 (f)
Africa	2.4	4.3	4.1
Asia	2.5	5.2	4.2
Caribbean & Americas	-0.5	7.3	3.3
Europe	2.9	5.6	2.8
Pacific	2.1	2.8	2.5
Commonwealth average	1.7	4.9	3.5

Source: IMF (2026).
Notes: Real GDP, % change; (p) preliminary, (f) forecast.

Table 3.2: Gross general government debt in the Commonwealth, 2015–2030 (US$ billion)

Region	2015	2020	2025	2030
Africa	420.7	675.5	829.3	1,123.8
Asia	2,248.8	3,570.1	5,159.8	7,061.5
Caribbean & Americas	1,486.3	2,011.9	2,707.3	3,252.1
Europe	2,601.7	2,893.4	4,131.4	5,337.2
Pacific	535.6	884.5	1,103.9	1,439.3
Commonwealth total	**7,293.1**	**10,035.4**	**13,931.7**	**18,213.9**
(excl. Australia, Canada, NZ, UK)	2,757.6	4,355.4	6,122.1	8,335.5

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat, based on IMF (2026).

consolidation holds. High debt-servicing costs can be especially consequential for developing member countries, where they compete with investment in infrastructure, education, health care and climate adaptation. Countries including Ghana, Sri Lanka and Zambia have already experienced sovereign debt defaults, while many other African states remain at high risk of debt distress. Caribbean small states such as Antigua and Barbuda, Grenada and Saint Lucia have modest debt stocks in absolute terms but high debt-to-GDP ratios, creating significant fiscal pressures and limiting their capacity to respond to shocks.

High debt-service costs can create a reinforcing cycle in which constrained investment weakens future growth and fiscal sustainability. As Table 3.3 demonstrates, even before the latest cuts, ODA to Commonwealth developing countries had fallen from its 2021 peak of US$64 billion to an estimated $54 billion in 2024. Foreign direct investment (FDI) to Commonwealth developing countries has remained substantial but fluctuated, while remittances have become an increasingly important and relatively consistent source of external finance.

The consequences of declining aid and constrained finance are highly uneven. Countries where ODA finances a significant share of public services and development investment face greater adjustment than those with large domestic tax bases or ready access to capital. Alternative sources of finance are also unevenly distributed. Intra-Commonwealth FDI inflows increased from US$54.4 billion in 2020 and $62.6 billion in 2021 to $114.4 billion in 2022, before falling to $73.4 billion in 2023 and $61.2 billion in 2024.[4] These flows are also concentrated among a relatively small number of member countries. Declining aid and unequal access to alternative finance could therefore widen differences between Commonwealth countries.

Trade fragmentation creates winners, losers and new dependencies

The effects similarly depend on economic structure. Export-oriented members are particularly exposed

Table 3.3: External financing flows to Commonwealth developing countries (US$ billion)

Year	ODA	FDI	Remittances	Other	Total
2020	58	52	68	12	190
2021	64	74	76	34	248
2022	60	86	84	18	248
2023	56	80	88	22	246
2024e	54	84	92	20	250

Source: OECD, UNCTAD and World Bank estimates.
Note: (e) estimated.

4 Figures reflect an updated calculation using United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) bilateral FDI data through 2024. Earlier Secretariat publications, based on data available at the time, may show different estimates for overlapping years.

Table 3.4: Intra-Commonwealth trade in goods and services, 2019–2024 (US$ billion)

Year	Total	Goods	Services	Year-on-year change
2019	651	423	228	-0.3%
2020	547	362	184	-16.0%
2021	671	457	214	+22.8%
2022	816	546	270	+21.6%
2023	821	512	309	+0.6%
2024	874	542	332	+6.5%

Source: Commonwealth Secretariat using ITC TradeMap, based on WTO Stats and UN Comtrade data 2026.
Note: The total trade values in column 2 may not equal the sum of goods and services trade due to rounding.

to tariffs and supply chain restructuring, but may benefit as firms seek alternative production locations; small open economies are vulnerable to disruptions in shipping and external demand; commodity exporters remain exposed to price movements; and tourism-dependent economies need to respond to changes in international travel. Regional, South–South and intra-Commonwealth trade provide opportunities for diversification. Intra-Commonwealth trade in goods and services reached US$874 billion in 2024, comprising $542 billion in goods and $332 billion in services, as set out in Table 3.4. Goods still dominate in absolute terms, but trade remains highly concentrated: five members – Australia, Canada, India, Singapore and the UK – accounted for 76.7 per cent of intra-Commonwealth services trade in 2024. This demonstrates both the scale of existing Commonwealth economic relationships and how unevenly members currently participate in them.

'Intra-Commonwealth trade in goods and services reached US$874 billion in 2024: $542 billion in goods and $332 billion in services.'

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) provides another route to market diversification for African Commonwealth member countries, alongside initiatives elsewhere such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Single Market and Economy, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Free Trade Area and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).[5] These arrangements can help Commonwealth economies diversify export markets and deepen regional and cross-regional trade, while mineral-rich members may benefit from rising demand if they can develop processing and downstream industries.

Technology and demographic change create different adjustment pressures

Access to digital opportunities remains highly unequal and concentrated in wealthier countries (ITU, 2024). Lower-capacity Commonwealth member countries consequently face greater obstacles to capturing the benefits of AI and digital trade and greater risks of dependence on foreign platforms and infrastructure, although digital technologies may help small and geographically dispersed states overcome some disadvantages of distance and scale.

These differences intersect with sharply divergent demographics. Although people under 30 make up a majority of the Commonwealth's population, between 2016 and 2025 an average of 26 per cent of those aged 15–24 were not in employment, education or training, rising to 29 per cent among young women and 55 per cent among young people with disabilities.[6] Rapidly growing African and South Asian economies therefore face simultaneous pressures to create employment and develop skills for increasingly technology-intensive labour markets. Member countries with ageing populations face the opposite challenge,

5 The CPTPP is a major free trade agreement among 12 economies in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. Participating countries include seven Commonwealth member countries: Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and the UK.

6 Commonwealth Secretariat calculations based on International Labour Organization (ILO) (2026) data.

with slower labour force growth and rising social expenditure increasing the importance of productivity-enhancing technology and higher labour-force participation.

Small states face concentrated economic and climate exposure

Small states such as Barbados, Fiji, Maldives, Mauritius, Samoa and Vanuatu face particularly concentrated risks because their narrow economic bases and dependence on imported food, fuel and manufactured goods mean external shocks affect a large share of national output. Tourism-dependent Maldives and many Caribbean and Pacific economies are especially exposed to changes in international travel, while Samoa and Vanuatu face high transport and import costs alongside severe climate vulnerability. Debt is a particular concern for SIDS: nearly 40 per cent are already in or at high risk of debt distress (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a). Renewable energy, digital services, sustainable tourism and the blue economy nevertheless offer potential routes to reduce some vulnerabilities.

Advanced and emerging economies face adjustment of established models

Larger and more diversified Commonwealth economies possess greater buffers but face significant adjustment as ageing, AI and automation, industrial restructuring and the low-carbon transition reshape economic activity. Advanced economies have advantages in finance, research and technology but still face concentrated adjustment costs, while emerging economies such as India, Malaysia and South Africa combine substantial domestic markets and productive capabilities with growing opportunities from regional and South–South economic relationships.

Commonwealth economies therefore face different and often overlapping vulnerabilities, but these differences also create important complementarities. Rapidly growing economies require capital, technology and markets, while ageing economies need skills and productivity gains. Resource-rich members possess inputs required by the green transition, and small states have developed valuable expertise in areas such as climate adaptation and the blue economy. Substantial intra-Commonwealth trade and investment flows demonstrate that such connections already exist, although their concentration among a relatively small number of members suggests considerable unrealised potential.

3.3 Striving for resilience: How Commonwealth countries are strengthening their economies

Across the Commonwealth, governments are responding to growing economic uncertainty and vulnerability in three broad ways: creating greater fiscal space and diversifying development finance; investing in people, technological capability and productive capacity while widening economic participation; and integrating climate and energy resilience into economic strategy. These responses reflect different national circumstances but point towards a common conclusion: resilience depends on combining stronger domestic capabilities with greater room for manoeuvre in an international system where borrowing costs, access to finance and technology, and exposure to external shocks remain beyond the control of individual governments.

Strengthening fiscal resilience and securing development finance

A first response is to create greater fiscal space without sacrificing the investment required for long-term development. Governments are strengthening debt management, domestic revenue mobilisation, public financial management and fiscal transparency. The Gambia and Guyana, for example, are using digital revenue administration systems to improve collection and broaden the tax base, while resource-rich countries are using stabilisation and sovereign wealth funds to manage volatile revenues. Yet the challenge is not simply to reduce debt: rapid fiscal consolidation can itself weaken resilience if it cuts investment in infrastructure, health, education and skills.

The contraction of aid has increased efforts to diversify finance through multilateral and regional development banks, private investment and blended finance, alongside instruments such as climate-resilient debt clauses and debt-for-climate or nature swaps. Caribbean and Indian

Ocean member countries have been particularly innovative: Barbados has championed reform of international development finance through the Bridgetown Initiative and completed debt-for-nature and debt-for-climate swaps, while Belize has used a debt-for-nature conversion and Seychelles a debt swap to support marine conservation and climate adaptation, with these arrangements and instruments helping create greater fiscal space for resilience. These mechanisms are not straightforward substitutes for concessional resources: private capital is generally more expensive and complex arrangements can create currency risks and contingent liabilities. Governments are therefore strengthening debt management capacity and their ability to prepare projects, compare financing offers and negotiate contracts. For small and vulnerable states in particular, resilience requires greater access to concessional and climate finance and eligibility criteria that better reflect multidimensional vulnerability rather than income per capita alone.

Investing in people, technological capability and productive capacity

A second response is to strengthen the human and technological capabilities required to benefit from structural change. With large numbers of young people entering labour markets across much of the Commonwealth, and women and people with disabilities still facing significant barriers to education, finance, technology and productive employment, widening participation is a question not only of equity but also of economic resilience. Governments are investing in vocational and digital skills, digital infrastructure, innovation, financial inclusion and support for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, including women- and youth-led businesses. India demonstrates the potential of digital public infrastructure, while African countries have pioneered the expansion of mobile finance. Digital identification, interoperable payments and connected government systems can reduce transaction costs, strengthen tax administration and extend services, while investment in skills, domestic technological capacity and productive capabilities can help countries capture more of the value generated by digitalisation and emerging technologies.

Widening participation forms part of the same strategy. Thirty-nine Commonwealth countries have introduced legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment, while most have removed legal restrictions preventing women from owning land (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024e, 2026a). Financial inclusion in developing economies has grown quickly: account ownership in low- and middle-income economies rose from around 69 per cent in 2021 to 75 per cent in 2024, and 67 per cent of Commonwealth youth aged 15–24 report having a bank account or using mobile money (World Bank, 2025b). India has piloted community- and industry-based child care models, Malaysia has sought to strengthen recognition of the care economy and Samoa has used time-use evidence to improve understanding of unpaid care (UNDP, 2023b, 2024a). In Kenya, a 2024 assessment of 1,093 clean energy entrepreneurs across 32 counties found that 65 per cent were young people and 44 per cent were women (Kingiri et al., 2025). These examples illustrate how greater participation can widen the productive and entrepreneurial base on which economic resilience depends.

Integrating climate, energy and economic resilience

A third way to strengthen economic and environmental resilience is to make climate and energy resilience part of economic strategy. Member countries are investing in resilient infrastructure, renewable generation, grids, storage and decentralised energy systems that are capable of supporting sustainable economic development. Countries such as Zambia participate in regional power pools to strengthen cross-border electricity trade, while SIDS are developing renewable and decentralised systems to reduce dependence on imported fossil fuels. Caribbean Commonwealth member countries illustrate both the opportunities and the risks: Dominica is developing geothermal energy, while Antigua and Barbuda has invested in more resilient solar and electricity infrastructure. Yet Hurricane Beryl's impact on Grenada has demonstrated that energy infrastructure can itself be vulnerable to climate shocks. Energy resilience therefore requires robust and diversified systems combining renewables with resilient grids, storage and reliable backup generation.

Countries are also seeking to use the green transition to support diversification. South Africa and Zambia, for example, have developed partnerships with the UK intended to connect critical minerals and the green transition to

investment, technology, skills and greater domestic value addition. More broadly, resource-rich members are modernising mining legislation and licensing, strengthening transparency and contract management, and promoting local content and processing and downstream industries. These approaches seek to avoid repeating patterns in which resource extraction generates limited domestic productive capacity.

For small and climate-vulnerable economies, resilience also involves exploiting areas of comparative advantage. Pacific states have placed the blue economy at the centre of regional development strategies, while Caribbean countries have developed approaches combining tourism, renewable energy, climate adaptation and innovative finance. Such strategies demonstrate how environmental resilience can support diversification and employment. For highly climate-vulnerable states, however, domestic investment needs to be complemented by greater access to affordable climate and development finance.

Across these experiences, no single response is sufficient: economic resilience depends on preserving fiscal space and productive investment; diversifying finance and productive activities; investing in people, technology and infrastructure; strengthening governance institutions; widening economic participation; and integrating climate and energy resilience into development strategies. But even combining these approaches cannot fully address vulnerabilities that originate beyond national borders. National action alone is therefore not enough. Borrowing costs, access to concessional and climate finance, debt restructuring, technological standards and access to technology are shaped by international institutions and markets over which many Commonwealth member countries individually exercise little influence. Stronger domestic capabilities need to be matched by an international environment that gives countries sufficient room to adapt. Where existing arrangements systematically disadvantage small and vulnerable economies, reform is itself part of building resilience.

Taken together, Commonwealth experience suggests that economic resilience is strongest when countries combine sound public finances with continued productive investment, build the capabilities needed to adapt to technological and environmental change, and ensure that more people can participate in emerging economic opportunities. Resilience ultimately depends on strengthening the capacity to adapt at home while creating the international conditions that enable countries to do so.

3.4 Opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation on economic resilience

The Commonwealth's economic diversity creates opportunities for co-operation that are becoming more valuable as traditional development assistance contracts and established economic relationships become less predictable. Its numerous economies include major sources of capital, rapidly growing markets, critical mineral producers, financial and technology centres and some of the world's most climate-vulnerable states.

These capabilities are unevenly distributed, while many constraints on resilience – from borrowing costs and access to finance to trade rules and technology – cannot be addressed effectively by countries acting alone. Inclusion matters at both levels: between countries, by widening access to markets, finance and technology, and within them, by enabling women, young people, people living with disabilities and other excluded groups to contribute more fully to economic activity. Four areas offer particular scope for effective co-operation: building stronger and more inclusive economic partnerships, diversifying development finance, sharing specialist expertise and building green and digital partnerships. Together, these can support a more reciprocal and inclusive model of economic co-operation while strengthening member countries' influence over the international arrangements that shape their ability to build resilience.

Building stronger and more inclusive economic partnerships

The most immediate opportunity is to make greater use of existing economic relationships while broadening participation in them. Intra-Commonwealth exports of goods and services reached nearly US$874 billion in 2024 (see

Table 3.4), while bilateral trade costs between Commonwealth member countries were previously estimated to be around 21 per cent lower than when Commonwealth countries trade with non-Commonwealth partners (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2021a, 2024a). Yet these flows are highly concentrated among a relatively small number of members, while intra-Commonwealth trade accounts for only a small share of global trade, at around 2.7 per cent. Reducing non-tariff barriers; improving mutual recognition of standards; simplifying customs procedures; and strengthening trade finance, transport and digital connectivity could therefore both expand trade and enable more members to benefit. Greater inclusion within countries is equally important.

Reducing barriers facing women, young people, people living with disabilities and other excluded groups can unlock substantial gains in entrepreneurship, labour force participation and productivity. Estimates suggest that greater gender equality in labour force participation and pay alone could raise global GDP by around 20 per cent, while better recognising and supporting unpaid care work could remove an important constraint on economic participation (World Bank, 2025c). Particular attention should therefore be given to women- and youth-led enterprises and to ensuring that digitalisation narrows rather than reinforces existing inequalities. Digital trade itself offers considerable potential: digitally deliverable services already account for a large share of Commonwealth services exports (65 per cent in 2022), while continued efforts by Commonwealth countries to implement cross-border paperless trade measures could generate an estimated US$183 billion in additional exports by 2030 (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2026b).

There is potential to strengthen connections across Commonwealth regions. The growing economic weight of India and other Asian members, alongside expanding African markets and the AfCFTA, creates opportunities for stronger South–South relationships. Intra-Commonwealth investment is more limited and highly concentrated. Existing mechanisms, including the Commonwealth Working Group on Trade and Investment and its Sub-Action Group on Investment as well as the Commonwealth Investment Network, can help address barriers and connect capital and expertise with productive opportunities, while the Commonwealth Model Law on Digital Trade can support greater digital integration.

Greater intra-Commonwealth trade should complement rather than substitute for an inclusive and effective global trading system. Commonwealth member countries can use their collective influence, including through the Commonwealth WTO Caucus, to support an open, transparent and rules-based multilateral trading system while pressing for rules that better reflect the constraints facing developing, small and vulnerable economies. The objective is to expand the range of markets, suppliers and investors available to member countries rather than replace one form of dependence with another.

Reforming and diversifying development finance

The Commonwealth has already developed valuable mechanisms to help member countries strengthen financial resilience. Networks connecting finance ministries and debt management offices can pool expertise on domestic resource mobilisation, sovereign debt, restructuring, transparency and access to multilateral, blended and climate finance. This is particularly valuable for smaller administrations unable to maintain specialist capacity across every area. Commonwealth Meridian, the Secretariat's debt-management system, helps governments record and analyse public debt, while experience with climate-resilient debt clauses (which allow for the suspension of repayments following major shocks) and debt-for-climate and debt-for-nature swaps (which exchange debt relief for investment in environmental priorities) provides practical knowledge that can be shared across members.

The Commonwealth can go further, however, by using its collective influence to challenge features of the international financial system that systematically disadvantage smaller and more vulnerable economies. Countries can face high borrowing costs despite sound economic management, while access to concessional finance is often determined primarily by income per capita rather than exposure to climate and other external shocks. The Commonwealth has already helped develop the Multidimensional Vulnerability Index (MVI) used by the UN, as well as its own Universal Vulnerability Index,[7] to provide

7 For more information see Commonwealth Secretariat (2021c).

broader measures of vulnerability. It can build on this work by advocating faster, fairer and more shock-responsive debt restructuring and relief, wider use of climate-resilient debt clauses and debt swaps and greater access to affordable development and climate finance. Commonwealth member countries can pursue these reforms directly through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and other international financial institutions, as well as through forums such as the G20, while using their influence in the WTO to challenge multilateral trade rules that constrain vulnerable economies. The Commonwealth has the potential not only to help its members navigate the existing system but also to make that system more inclusive.

Turning Commonwealth experience into a shared resource

The considerable policy experience accumulated across Commonwealth countries can itself strengthen resilience. Such exchange should be multidirectional rather than based on expertise flowing from richer to poorer countries. India's experience with digital public infrastructure; Malaysia's industrial development; African innovation in mobile finance; Caribbean expertise in tourism, debt innovation and small state economic management; and Pacific experience in the blue economy all offer potentially valuable lessons.

Networks connecting finance ministries, trade and investment agencies, central banks, regulators and skills development agencies could support staff exchanges, joint training, comparative evaluation and access to specialist expertise. This would enable governments to assess not simply whether policies have worked elsewhere, but also the institutional, financial and political conditions required to adapt them successfully. Member countries could consequently act as both providers and recipients of expertise according to their particular capabilities and experience.

Building green and digital partnerships

The green and digital transitions offer particular scope to connect complementary capabilities across Commonwealth economies. Critical mineral producers seeking to expand processing and downstream industries require investment, technology, skills and markets, while other members possess capital, research capacity and technological expertise. The UK–South Africa critical minerals partnership and the Zambia-UK Green Growth Compact provide emerging examples of efforts to connect these capabilities while increasing domestic value creation.

Similar opportunities exist in renewable energy and digital transformation. Co-operation on grids, storage, decentralised energy and regulation, including through affordable finance, technology transfer and capacity-building, can support more resilient energy systems, while collaboration on digital public infrastructure, interoperable payments, digital trade, AI readiness, data governance and cybersecurity can give smaller and lower-capacity member countries access to expertise that would be expensive to develop independently. In both areas, the objective should extend beyond adopting new technologies to enabling more Commonwealth economies to capture their value through domestic skills, firms and employment.

Taken together, these opportunities point towards a more reciprocal model of Commonwealth economic co-operation. Traditional development assistance will remain important, particularly for the poorest states, but resilience will increasingly depend on strengthening member countries' capacity to mobilise finance, technology and expertise; building more diverse trade, investment and knowledge relationships across the Commonwealth; and acting collectively to shape international rules governing debt, development finance, trade and climate finance. In this way, Commonwealth co-operation can help countries adapt more effectively at home, widen the economic options available to them and strengthen their ability to influence the wider international environment in which resilience is built.

4. Environmental Resilience

Climate change and environmental degradation are creating more frequent, interconnected and costly pressures across the Commonwealth. These pressures reinforce one another and interact with existing economic and social vulnerabilities, creating compound risks that reduce the capacity of natural and human systems to absorb shocks, adapt and recover. Environmental resilience is therefore increasingly important to long-term economic, social and political stability. It can be understood as the capacity of environmental systems to respond effectively to risk or adversity (Anandhi, 2025).

The concept has evolved beyond an earlier conservation focus on reducing human pressures so that ecosystems can return to equilibrium (Folke, 2006). Human and natural systems are deeply interconnected: societies depend on functioning ecosystems for food, water, livelihoods and protection from environmental hazards, while patterns of production, energy use and resource extraction shape their condition. Building environmental resilience therefore requires protecting and restoring natural systems while enabling communities, economies and institutions to adapt to change.

Commonwealth countries are pursuing this challenge in different ways, including integrating adaptation into development planning, climate-proofing infrastructure, improving disaster preparedness, restoring ecosystems and strengthening implementation. Yet environmental processes rarely respect political boundaries: rivers cross borders; oceans and ecosystems are shared; and climate shocks can disrupt food systems, migration, trade and infrastructure far beyond their immediate effects. At the same time, adaptation depends heavily on international flows of finance and technology. This makes **environmental resilience a critical area for Commonwealth co-operation**. With around two-thirds of all SIDS alongside some of the world's largest economies among its members, the Commonwealth brings together countries at opposite ends of the climate vulnerability and financial capacity spectrum. This creates scope to exchange adaptation approaches, mobilise finance and expertise, and develop common positions on international environmental governance. The challenge is to translate this diversity into practical co-operation that enables vulnerable members to adapt more effectively while increasing their influence over international decisions that shape their environmental futures.

4.1 Global pressures on environmental resilience

The global environment is under growing pressure from interconnected processes including climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, pollution and declining ocean health. Climate change is increasing the frequency of rapid shocks, such as floods, droughts, heatwaves and wildfires, and amplifying slower changes, including rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, sea-level rise and ocean acidification. Meanwhile, deforestation, soil and wetland degradation, plastics and chemical pollution, overfishing and biodiversity loss are weakening ecosystems and the services they provide (UNEP, 2025).

These processes reinforce one another: degraded forests, wetlands and marine ecosystems store less carbon and provide weaker protection

against environmental shocks, while climate change further pressures vulnerable ecosystems (Anandhi, 2025). This is particularly significant for the Commonwealth, which includes many megadiverse nations, including Australia, India, Malaysia, South Africa and Papua New Guinea. Commonwealth member countries collectively steward globally important forests, biodiversity and marine ecosystems that support livelihoods, food security, tourism and wider economic development. Indigenous Peoples and local communities are important custodians of this natural capital, making their knowledge and participation central to effective environmental stewardship.

Environmental degradation increasingly has wider economic and social consequences. Climate change, biodiversity loss, declining fisheries, land degradation and water scarcity can reduce agricultural production and incomes, disrupt livelihoods and supply chains, damage infrastructure and increase pressure on public finances. Sea-level rise illustrates the breadth of these effects: alongside impacts on tourism, it can increase flooding and coastal erosion; damage homes, roads and drainage systems; cause saltwater intrusion into aquifers and agricultural land; and ultimately require communities to relocate. Environmental shocks can also strain political and social institutions, particularly when displacement or growing competition over land, food and water intensifies existing pressures. Environmental resilience is therefore not simply an ecological concern: degrading natural systems can weaken economic resilience, increase fiscal pressures and create new challenges for social and political stability.

The gap between environmental ambition and implementation is also widening. Mitigation remains essential to limiting future climate change, while adaptation has become increasingly urgent because many impacts can no longer be avoided. Governments have also made significant commitments on biodiversity and ocean protection, including conserving 30 per cent of land and ocean by 2030 and multilateral co-ordination for the sustainable use of international waters through the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (the BBNJ Agreement), which entered into force in 2026 (Dalaker and Lothian, 2026). Yet financial, technological and administrative capacity remain major constraints to implementation, extending beyond climate finance to the resources needed to protect biodiversity, restore degraded ecosystems and improve ocean health.

The scale of the climate adaptation gap illustrates the problem: developing countries require an estimated US$310–365 billion annually for adaptation by 2035, and international public adaptation finance flows totalled only $26 billion in 2023 (UNEP, 2025). For ocean protection, only $1.2 billion of the $15.8 billion needed annually currently flows to protecting and conserving at least 30 per cent of the ocean by 2030 (Philips et al., 2026). Vulnerable economies must borrow to invest in resilience, and high debt can further constrain action, creating a cycle in which inadequate investment increases exposure to future shocks and their economic costs. Together, these pressures make protecting natural capital, strengthening implementation capacity and securing adequate environmental finance increasingly important to long-term resilience.

4.2 Implications for environmental resilience in Commonwealth countries

Coping capacity and resilience vary considerably across Commonwealth countries owing to differences in geography and levels of development. Four aspects of this challenge are particularly important: the systemic environmental vulnerability of small island states; the impacts of climate change on development across Africa and Asia; the different adaptation challenges facing advanced and resource-rich economies; and the greater risks faced by vulnerable populations across the Commonwealth. Together, these demonstrate that, although developing countries – especially LDCs, small states and SIDS, which make up a large share of the Commonwealth membership – tend to be the most vulnerable, wealthier members also face significant pressures.

Small island states face systemic environmental vulnerability

SIDS are among the most climate-vulnerable states in the world, and 25 of the 56 Commonwealth countries are SIDS (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024b). With large coastal populations, they are

particularly exposed to rapid-onset events such as hurricanes and typhoons. They also face an existential challenge: sea-level rise raises the possibility of homeland loss, displacement and forced migration (Gomez, 2021). Environmental shocks can also become economy-wide crises because these states often depend heavily on climate-sensitive sectors, and natural disasters often destroy or severely impair critical economic infrastructure. Approximately 61 per cent of the population in Pacific SIDS depend on subsistence agriculture and fisheries. Tropical

'There is a widening gap between environmental ambition and implementation, which is constrained by financial, technological and administrative capacity.'

Cyclone Pam caused total damage and losses of US$449.4 million in Vanuatu in 2015, equivalent to 64.1 per cent of the country's GDP. Under a high-emissions climate scenario, ocean acidification and coral bleaching are expected to leave 75 per cent of Pacific Island communities unable to meet their food security needs by 2030. Many SIDS are also highly dependent on tourism. In 2023, tourism accounted for 12.6 per cent of SIDS GDP, around three times the average in developed economies. Severe storms can destroy critical tourism infrastructure such as ports and hotels, as well as natural assets such as coral reefs. Under the worst-case climate scenario, the disappearance of sandy beaches in Mauritius could cost the country $100 million per year in lost tourism revenue by 2060 (Global Center on Adaptation, 2025).

Climate change is reshaping development across Africa and Asia

Commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia face interconnected threats to food security and urban resilience (Gomez, 2021). In African states such as South Africa (UNEP, 2025), Kenya and Mozambique (Douglas, 2021), prolonged droughts are reducing crop yields, raising food prices and undermining human security. Coastal populations in Asian countries such as Bangladesh, Malaysia and Maldives face risks from rising temperatures, storms, droughts and water insecurity. Rapid population growth and urbanisation also mean that more people living in poverty in African and Asian cities are exposed to climate risks. In Dhaka, Bangladesh, for example, more than 33 per cent of the urban population live in unsafe housing too weak to withstand natural disasters (Rashid et al., 2013 in Douglas, 2021).

Developing countries generally find it more difficult to manage the multidimensional impacts of climate shocks, including on education and health. Without adequate climate-proofing, natural disasters can damage schools and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. During severe flooding in 2022, Trinidad and Tobago had to close schools in affected areas, while The Gambia experienced spikes in malaria and diarrhoea (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024c).

Advanced and resource-rich economies face different adaptation challenges

High-income Commonwealth members (including Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the UK) face different but significant pressures. For example, ageing infrastructure was often not designed to cope with increasingly extreme temperatures. Thousands of people, particularly among elderly and vulnerable groups, died during the intense 2003 European heatwave, illustrating the risks posed by extreme heat, including in the UK (Global Commission on Adaptation, 2019). Wealthier Commonwealth member countries also face substantial adaptation costs despite their greater institutional and financial capacity. Larger economies, higher standards of living and stricter regulatory requirements can make adaptation costly and complex to implement.

Greater risks faced by vulnerable populations

Although Commonwealth members experience climate change differently, vulnerable populations face greater risks across countries. Strengthening the resilience of vulnerable communities, particularly women and youth, is a cross-cutting outcome of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025-2030 (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a). The poorest quartile of the global population would suffer damages under all predicted future climate change scenarios (Mendelsohn, 2006, in Douglas, 2021), an amplifying concern as global inequality widens and this vulnerable group expands.

The Commonwealth is home to around 1.35 billion women and girls (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a). Women comprise 80 per cent of climate-displaced individuals and are 14 times more likely to perish in climate-related disasters (Parditey, 2025). Displaced women face heightened risks of sexual violence and exploitation, while assistance providers can overlook their specific safety and sanitary needs (Global Commission on Adaptation, 2019). A UN study found that, for every 1°C increase in global temperatures, there is a 4.7 per cent increase in intimate partner violence (Spotlight Initiative, 2025). Women are also over-represented in climate-sensitive sectors like tourism. Yet women's roles in agriculture and Indigenous knowledge systems position them as critical actors in adaptation. However, women remain under-represented in climate decision-making. In 2024, women held only 39 per cent of positions in United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change-(UNFCCC-) constituted bodies on average, and only 20 per cent of Nationally Determined Contributions meaningfully engage women's perspectives (UNFCCC Secretariat, 2024; CARE International Climate Justice Center, 2025).

Young people also have distinctive needs. Heatwaves can compromise students' ability to concentrate in class, affecting educational quality (Global Center on Adaptation, 2025). Young people also face a significant intergenerational burden, as climate change compounds existing challenges, including unemployment and educational inequality, and threatens future opportunities (Global Commission on Adaptation, 2019; Global Center on Adaptation, 2025) Yet, youth-led climate movements and innovation in green technologies demonstrate their critical role in building resilience.

Overall, Commonwealth countries face very different environmental pressures and capacities to respond, but these differences are increasingly interconnected. Small island states confront acute exposure to sea-level rise and extreme weather; many African and Asian members face growing risks to food security and rapidly expanding cities; and wealthier economies face costly adaptation challenges of their own. Across all regions, poorer and more vulnerable groups are disproportionately exposed. These differences also create opportunities for co-operation, as member countries bring different experiences, resources and capabilities to the shared challenge of strengthening environmental resilience.

4.3 Striving for resilience: How Commonwealth countries are strengthening environmental resilience

Commonwealth governments are increasingly moving beyond reactive disaster response towards more integrated approaches to climate resilience. While progress remains uneven, four common trends are emerging: mainstreaming adaptation across government, investing in climate-proofed infrastructure and disaster preparedness, restoring ecosystems and supporting the green transition, and strengthening implementation capacity. Together, these approaches reflect a broader shift towards anticipating environmental risks and embedding resilience into development decisions before shocks occur.

Mainstreaming climate adaptation

Mainstreaming integrates climate risks and adaptation objectives into established government policies and practices. This approach is particularly advanced among Commonwealth SIDS and increasingly extends beyond traditionally climate-sensitive sectors. Kiribati's Development Plan 2024–2027, for example, includes working with communities to safeguard cultural and historical sites and war relics from climate change. In the Caribbean, Dominica's National Resilience Development Strategy 2030 incorporates climate resilience into skills training, business ethics and financial support to help rural enterprises withstand climatic shocks (UNEP, 2025). Such approaches can strengthen resilience by making adaptation part of routine development planning rather than a separate response to environmental crises.

Investing in preparedness and risk reduction

Commonwealth member countries are pursuing two complementary approaches: climate-proofing infrastructure against long-term environmental

change and strengthening short-term disaster preparedness. Ports, roads, utilities and communication systems need to keep functioning during and after climate shocks, and investing before disasters can be far cheaper than repeated reconstruction. The Global Commission on Adaptation (2019) estimates that climate-proofing infrastructure delivers benefits that outweigh costs by four to one, on average. Samoa, for example, is climate-proofing its West Coast Road, which connects the capital, Apia, to its airport and ferry wharf. At the same time, The Bahamas, Fiji, Seychelles, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu have implemented measures to protect community and tourism infrastructure against worsening flooding (Global Commission on Adaptation, 2019; Global Center on Adaptation, 2025).

Disaster preparedness can similarly reduce the human and economic costs of climate shocks. Solomon Islands uses Indigenous knowledge to reinforce houses against cyclones and floods. Vanuatu installs weather-monitoring equipment for early warning and conducts emergency response drills in tourist areas (Global Center on Adaptation, 2025). Bangladesh combines community mobilisation and early warning systems with livelihood diversification and targeted support for vulnerable groups (Auer Frege, 2025). These experiences demonstrate the value of combining infrastructure investment, effective warning systems and local knowledge to prevent environmental hazards from becoming wider social and economic crises.

Restoring ecosystems and supporting the green transition

Nature-based solutions can strengthen resilience by restoring ecosystems that protect communities while also supporting mitigation. The UN has recognised their importance through the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030. Such approaches can also be more cost-effective than engineered alternatives. Restoring upland forests and watersheds could save water utilities in the world's largest cities an estimated US$890 million annually, while restoring mangrove forests to protect against sea-level rise and storms can be two to five times cheaper than engineered structures (Global Commission on Adaptation, 2019).

Commonwealth countries are increasingly experimenting with these approaches. Women and youth are increasingly recognised as agents of resilience. Youth groups in Papua New Guinea have used education and sustainable business to support mangrove conservation (Global Commission on Adaptation, 2019). Tonga established women's groups to run community farms providing essentials to displaced people after disasters. Nature-based and engineered solutions can also be combined. Fiji is developing hybrid sea walls that combine mangroves and vetiver plants with rock structures (Global Center on Adaptation, 2025), while Canada is restoring salt marshes alongside human-made dykes along the Bay of Fundy in Nova Scotia to reduce coastal flooding and protect heritage sites, Indigenous communities and more than 20,000 hectares of farmland (Global Commission on Adaptation, 2019).

Strengthening implementation and long-term planning

Ambitious policies do not strengthen resilience without the institutional, technological and human capacity to implement them. Key requirements include access to technology and data, capable institutions and integration into long-term planning (UNEP, 2025). Several Commonwealth SIDS are investing directly in these capabilities despite significant financing constraints. Kiribati's Outer Islands Transport Infrastructure Investment Project, for example, includes institutional and technical strengthening to manage a spatial database supporting climate-informed maritime operations. In Tonga, the Climate Resilient Transport Project combines institutional reform with improvements in technology and human resources to support preventive road maintenance and reduce long-term costs (Global Center on Adaptation, 2025).

Reliable data is particularly important for anticipating and responding to environmental risks. The World Meteorological Organization (in Global Center on Adaptation, 2025) found that only around 62 per cent of SIDS had meteorological data at a basic or essential level. Maldives has sought to address this gap: its updated Nationally Determined Contributions to the UNFCCC identified data scarcity as a constraint and committed to improving forecasting tools and early warning systems (ibid.).

Taken together, these approaches suggest that environmental resilience is strongest when adaptation is embedded across government and development planning rather than treated as a separate climate policy. Mainstreaming climate risk, investing before disasters occur, protecting natural systems and strengthening implementation capacity can reduce vulnerability while supporting wider development. Yet the countries with the greatest need to pursue these strategies often face the most significant financial, technological and institutional constraints, increasing the importance of international and Commonwealth co-operation.

4.4 Opportunities for Commonwealth co-operation on environmental resilience

Environmental resilience is inherently complex and requires co-ordinated action across local, national and international spaces. Communities, infrastructure and national institutions implement adaptation, while ecosystems, oceans and water systems cross political boundaries, and international actors shape access to climate finance and technology. These connections create an important role for Commonwealth co-operation. Commonwealth member countries combine extensive adaptation experience with considerable differences in vulnerability, financial capacity and international influence, creating opportunities to share practical solutions, pool capabilities and build wider coalitions.

Five opportunities are particularly important: accelerating adaptation through shared experience, strengthening climate finance access for adaptation, co-ordinating inclusive natural resource governance, building partnerships around shared environmental challenges and leveraging Commonwealth influence internationally. Inclusion is central to all five because different groups often bring distinctive knowledge and experience to environmental resilience. Women can contribute expertise rooted in agriculture, household resource management and community adaptation; young people can bring innovation and new approaches to climate action; and Indigenous Peoples and local communities hold knowledge of ecosystems and natural resource management built over generations. Environmental resilience is therefore strengthened when these groups have meaningful roles in decision-making and equitable access to finance and resources.

Accelerating adaptation through shared experience

Commonwealth countries are already developing a wide range of adaptation approaches, from climate-proofed infrastructure and early warning systems to ecosystem restoration and climate-informed development planning. Commonwealth co-operation can help successful approaches travel more quickly between countries facing comparable problems. Existing initiatives provide a foundation, including the SIDS Clean Energy Toolkit for investment-grade clean energy strategies under the Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition Agenda and the Commonwealth Critical Minerals Alliance (Commonwealth Secretariat, no date, a). South–South co-operation is particularly valuable for connecting countries facing similar vulnerabilities and constraints, enabling solutions developed in one setting to be adapted to another.

Shared tools and technical capacity could deepen this exchange. Open-source systems and common protocols can reduce the cost of developing capabilities independently, particularly for smaller administrations. Forecasting is one area with clear potential: the Commonwealth Secretariat's Geospatial Programme for SIDS could strengthen co-ordination with regional initiatives such as the Caribbean Institute for Meteorology and Hydrology and the Pacific Islands Climate Prediction Project to improve the sharing of seasonal outlooks and disaster alerts (Global Center on Adaptation, 2025). The Commonwealth could also develop common taxonomies for climate finance, investment criteria and resilience metrics, drawing on regional models such as ASEAN's Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance (ASEAN, 2025). Existing Commonwealth mechanisms for educational exchange, building on shared Commonwealth academic values and heritage, offer another opportunity: Queen Elizabeth Commonwealth Scholarships could

include dedicated 'green exchanges' to strengthen and circulate environmental expertise among members. Such initiatives would be most effective as horizontal learning between members rather than one-way technical assistance, allowing knowledge and innovation to flow between countries with different forms of expertise. This exchange could also involve women-led community organisations, youth groups and other local actors whose knowledge and experience can improve the design and implementation of adaptation and environmental programmes.

Increasing climate finance access for adaptation

Adaptation capacity depends heavily on access to affordable finance, as well as capacity and technology. This creates a particular challenge for climate-vulnerable and highly indebted states, which often face the greatest adaptation needs but have the least fiscal space to meet them. Supporting resilience in small states is a cross-cutting outcome of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a). More sustainable access to finance, especially for small states, is therefore a key goal of the Strategic Plan's environmental resilience ambition for 2030. The Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (CCFAH), established in 2015 and operational since 2016, provides an important foundation by helping recipient countries build the capacity needed to access international climate finance (Commonwealth Secretariat, no date, b). It has helped mobilise US$644.7 million for projects across 19 countries and through two regional initiatives in Africa and the Asia-Pacific.[8] This model could be strengthened by building members' capacity to prepare investment-ready projects and advocating greater access to grants and concessional finance for highly vulnerable states.

Globally, 70 per cent of international public adaptation finance is provided through concessional loans, although non-concessional lending continues to increase (UNEP, 2025). The Commonwealth could go further by advocating a transition towards 100 per cent concessional loans and grants for the most climate-vulnerable states. Building on the experience of Belize (Bala et al., 2022; UNDP, 2023a) and Barbados (Central Bank of Barbados, 2025), it could also explore formalising debt-for-nature and debt-for-climate swap arrangements among interested members, informed by the guidance provided in the *Commonwealth Guide to Blue Bond Issuance*, which helps countries make informed and practical decisions to balance sustainability goals with fiscal realities (Siddons et al., 2025). These approaches could help prevent climate-vulnerable states from becoming trapped in a cycle in which borrowing to finance adaptation itself increases their economic vulnerability.

'The Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub has helped mobilise US$644.7 million for projects across 19 countries and two regional initiatives in Africa and the Asia-Pacific, and can do more through greater capacity building and advocacy.'

Co-ordinating inclusive natural resource governance

Natural resource governance provides another area for co-operation. The Commonwealth Living Lands Charter (CLLC), established in 2022, helps member countries pursue global land-management targets under the Rio conventions and supports access to finance, technical and institutional capacity development, knowledge exchange and collective advocacy (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2022a). Projects developed through the Charter include nature-based solutions funded through the Climate Investment Fund in the Zambezi Basin Investment Plan; support to Global Environment Facility operational focal points in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia, Maldives and Sri Lanka; and the integration of nature-based solutions into adaptation and biodiversity policies (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024d). The CLLC could build on this work by promoting adaptive governance that draws more systematically on the distinctive knowledge, leadership and experience of women, young people, Indigenous Peoples and local communities. Ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making and benefit-sharing can improve the design, legitimacy and effectiveness of natural resource management. Linking inclusive governance

8 Commonwealth Secretariat data, as at 31 August 2026.

with improved access to finance and stronger implementation capacity could help address both sides of the adaptation gap.

Building partnerships on oceans, food and water security

Many of the environmental systems on which Commonwealth economies depend extend across national borders, making co-operation particularly important for oceans, water and food security. Almost half of Commonwealth members are SIDS, while many others have large coastal populations dependent on oceans for livelihoods and food. Ocean health is declining, as shown by rising sea levels, increased coastal erosion, ocean warming and acidification, marine pollution leading to deoxygenation and algal blooms, overfishing, reduced marine biodiversity and increased alien species invasions (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024b). Strengthening ocean resilience is therefore a key outcome of the environmental resilience ambition for 2030 in the Commonwealth Secretariat's Strategic Plan (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a). The Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration (ACOD), adopted in 2024 (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024b), and the Commonwealth Blue Charter provide an existing framework through which members can co-operate on the restoration and sustainable use of oceans. Furthermore, the Commonwealth Ocean Ministers Roundtable's support for the rapid implementation of the BBNJ Agreement can translate into initiatives for member countries to work together to establish area-based management tools, including Marine Protected Areas, on the high seas (Dalaker and Lothian, 2026).

Similar approaches could be developed around other shared resources. CCFAH and the CLLC have collaborated to mobilise more than US$60 million for the Nature, People and Climate Programme in the Zambezi River Basin, five of whose eight countries are Commonwealth members (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025b). This is vital as water security remains fragmented across the Commonwealth, despite the potential for shared river basins to become an important focus for regional co-operation. Food security is another area in which greater co-ordination could add value. More than two-thirds of Commonwealth members are net importers of essential food products, while intra-Commonwealth food trade benefits from comparatively strong trading relationships and lower bilateral trade costs (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2024a). The Commonwealth Trade Review 2024 proposes a phased Commonwealth Food Supply Arrangement to maintain access to essential foods during crises. Together, these initiatives suggest that the Commonwealth could use co-operation around shared environmental systems not only to reduce vulnerability but also to strengthen food, water and economic resilience.

Leveraging Commonwealth influence globally

Many of the conditions shaping environmental resilience cannot be determined by Commonwealth member countries acting individually. Climate finance, loss and damage, ocean governance and other international environmental rules are negotiated through wider institutions and processes. The Commonwealth can therefore complement practical co-operation among members by helping them develop common positions and build wider coalitions for international reform. This aligns with the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan's environmental resilience objective of enabling members to advance international climate frameworks (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2025a).

'The Commonwealth can complement practical co-operation among member countries by helping them develop common positions and build wider coalitions for international reform.'

Examples of this potential already exist. The Commonwealth Secretariat, alongside member countries like the UK, Singapore and many SIDS, strongly advocated for the BBNJ Agreement (Caribbean News Global, 2025), calling for it within the ACOD. The Agreement entered into force on 17 January 2026. The ACOD's support for maintaining maritime zones despite sea-level rise (Commonwealth Lawyers Association, 2026) demonstrates how Commonwealth co-operation can help vulnerable states develop shared positions on emerging challenges in the international law of the sea. Building on the Commonwealth's common legal heritage, members could similarly

co-ordinate on negotiations on plastic pollution, access to climate finance and implementation of the Loss and Damage Fund. Based on the ACOD model, Commonwealth member countries could also develop joint proposals for reform where environmental change is exposing gaps in existing international migration and trade law. The Commonwealth's mix of climate-vulnerable states and countries with significant influence in international institutions creates potential to turn the experiences of those exposed to environmental change into proposals that can attract wider support.

Climate finance provides an especially important opportunity. As high-income states reduce development assistance, Commonwealth member countries could work together to advocate a more accessible and responsive international financial architecture, including greater flexibility in financing eligibility, lower bureaucratic barriers and stronger recognition of vulnerability. The existing CCFAH platform provides practical experience of the barriers countries face in accessing finance. At the same time, Commonwealth countries can work together to advance reform through the UN climate process, international financial institutions and other global forums, combining their different forms of experience, expertise, networks and influence. CCFAH could also provide a platform for co-ordinating member positions on these reforms, including reducing bureaucratic barriers to climate finance and improving the operation and accessibility of the Loss and Damage Fund. Climate-related displacement also offers an opportunity for innovation. Interested members could explore a Commonwealth 'green mobility visa', creating new mobility pathways between participating countries for people displaced or placed under severe pressure by climate change. Such a scheme could provide an immediate practical response while generating experience that Commonwealth member countries could use to promote wider reform of international approaches to climate-related mobility and displacement.

Taken together, these opportunities allow the Commonwealth to add greatest value across three complementary dimensions: practical co-operation through shared expertise, finance and technical capacity; regional co-operation through peer learning and Commonwealth networks; and international influence by building coalitions around environmental reform. This integrated approach demonstrates that vulnerability and resilience are not mutually exclusive, and that Commonwealth co-operation has already mobilised substantial resources while reducing transaction costs. By enabling small and vulnerable states to help shape, rather than simply respond to, the international systems that affect their futures, the Commonwealth can turn environmental resilience from an emergency imperative into a source of collective strength.

Part III
The Future of Commonwealth Co-operation

5. Towards a More Resilient Commonwealth

The Commonwealth enters the coming decade at a moment of profound global change. Geopolitical fragmentation, economic uncertainty, technological disruption and accelerating climate change are placing growing pressure on democratic institutions, economies and societies, while weakening the international frameworks designed to help countries respond.

Challenges to democratic, economic and environmental resilience increasingly cut across local, national and international spaces and therefore require co-ordinated responses that connect action across them simultaneously (Cheeseman et al., 2024; Cianetti et al., 2026). Effective responses must combine stronger national capabilities with more effective regional and international co-operation.

The Commonwealth is uniquely placed to contribute because it combines diverse experience with shared commitments, a common inheritance and extensive networks connecting governments, civil society, professional associations and other actors. These commonalities make it possible for experience to travel across very different contexts, while the Commonwealth's diversity enables it to bridge regions, income groups and geopolitical divides. The Commonwealth can add greatest value by using these strengths to help member countries build inclusive resilience at home while working together to shape a more supportive international environment.

5.1 Resilience and the changing global order

The global environment in which Commonwealth countries operate has fundamentally changed. Governments will operate under persistent uncertainty as economic, political, technological and environmental pressures increasingly interact. Slower growth and high debt constrain investment; economic insecurity undermines political trust; and environmental shocks damage infrastructure, livelihoods and public finances. Meanwhile, AI, digitalisation, demographic change and the green transition are disrupting established patterns of growth even as they create new opportunities. Democratic, economic and environmental resilience therefore increasingly depend upon one another, making the capacity to manage change as important as the capacity to withstand shocks.

How countries experience and respond to these pressures varies considerably. Across all three dimensions of resilience, institutions matter. Democracies are stronger where safeguards, effective government and meaningful participation reinforce one another. Economies are better positioned where governments maintain fiscal

space, invest in productive capabilities and avoid excessive dependence on individual markets, suppliers or sources of finance. Environmental resilience similarly improves where adaptation is integrated across development planning, infrastructure, agriculture, water, energy and public finance.

A second, broader lesson is the importance of prevention, preparedness and adaptation. It is easier to protect democratic institutions than to reconstruct them after serious erosion, while Bangladesh's experience with cyclone preparedness demonstrates how investment before disasters can dramatically reduce their human costs. Economically, governments need buffers and diversified relationships before supply chains, commodity prices or sources of finance are disrupted. Adaptation should not be thought of simply as a defensive step: technological and environmental change can create new industries, markets and sources of comparative advantage. Resilience therefore means developing institutions and economies capable of evolving rather than simply restoring previous conditions.

Managing fiscal pressures without undermining long-term investment is therefore critical. Although many governments need to strengthen public finances, cuts that undermine investment in infrastructure, health, education, skills or climate adaptation can increase future vulnerability. Fiscal consolidation therefore needs to be balanced against maintaining the capabilities required to adapt.

Resilience also depends on inclusion and legitimacy. Societies are stronger when they can draw on the skills, knowledge, experience and capabilities of the whole population, including women, young people, minorities, people living with disabilities and economically marginalised groups. Greater inclusion can improve decision-making, widen the range of ideas and experience available to institutions and help governments respond more effectively to citizens' needs. Economies that exclude substantial sections of society from education, technology and productive employment make less effective use of their human resources, while environmental adaptation is stronger when it draws on local and Indigenous knowledge and involves affected communities. Resilience therefore depends on institutions that mobilise broad human capabilities and retain public confidence by managing adjustment effectively and fairly.

Given this, it is important to note that Commonwealth countries have demonstrated a degree of democratic resilience. Overall levels of political rights and civil liberties have remained relatively stable since 1999, although this aggregate picture masks substantial differences between countries and regions and growing pressures on civic space, institutional checks and political trust.

A further finding is the importance of economic diversification without disengagement. Greater uncertainty cannot be managed simply by retreating from the global economy. Countries instead need to reduce excessive dependence on individual markets, suppliers, technologies, sources of finance and energy while continuing to benefit from trade, investment and innovation. As geopolitical competition, AI, changing supply chains and the green transition reshape economic activity, resilience means the capacity to adapt without exchanging old dependencies for new ones.

Technological change presents a similar challenge. AI and digitalisation can improve productivity, public services and access to information, but can also deepen digital divides, create new dependencies and generate risks through cybersecurity threats and disinformation. Realising these benefits therefore requires investment in connectivity, skills and effective governance alongside technological adoption. There is no 'leapfrogging' basic state capacity and public services.

These pressures are particularly acute for small and vulnerable states, where limited fiscal and administrative capacity can turn external shocks into system-wide pressures. Small administrations can also struggle to maintain the specialist expertise required to respond to increasingly complex economic, technological and environmental challenges. Resilience therefore depends not only on governments, but also on drawing on wider capabilities in civil society, universities, professional associations and business, as well as pooling expertise internationally. National reform remains necessary but cannot be sufficient. Borrowing costs, access to finance and trade opportunities are partly shaped internationally; cyber threats, disinformation, illicit finance and

foreign political interference cross borders; and no country can manage climate change alone. Democratic resilience likewise depends partly on international support for election integrity, civic space, media freedom, human rights and the rule of law. Strengthening the international environment is therefore itself part of building resilience.

Resilience must therefore be built across three interconnected spaces: within countries, between countries and through the international system. At home, societies need capable institutions, productive and diversified economies, investment, inclusion and the capacity to adapt, drawing on the capabilities of both state and non-state actors. Between countries, co-operation can spread successful approaches, diversify relationships and pool capabilities. Internationally, countries need rules and institutions that provide sufficient room to adapt and support co-operation on challenges that cross borders. The Commonwealth's potential lies in connecting these spaces, helping member countries strengthen one another while contributing to an international environment in which shared resilience and prosperity are possible.

5.2 The Commonwealth's comparative advantage and future role

This raises the question of where the Commonwealth can add value. It is neither a major source of development finance nor a geopolitical alliance, and it cannot match the resources of international financial institutions or large economic blocs. Its comparative advantage lies instead in combining countries occupying very different positions in the international system with shared commitments, a common inheritance and longstanding institutional and societal connections. The Commonwealth includes advanced and developing economies, large and small states, rapidly growing and ageing societies, and influential and vulnerable members. This diversity generates different experiences and capabilities, while commonalities in language and culture and related legal and institutional traditions, alongside extensive professional, civil society and diaspora networks, make it easier for experience to travel between them.

Realising this potential will require the Commonwealth itself to adapt. Five priorities stand out: turning diversity into multidirectional learning and resilience partnerships; strengthening networks, pooled capabilities and implementation; harnessing inclusion as a source of resilience; anticipating and adapting to change; and building coalitions for international reform.

Turning diversity into multidirectional learning and resilience partnerships

Commonwealth countries have accumulated considerable experience and capabilities under different economic, political and environmental conditions. Across the Caribbean and Americas, Pacific, Africa, Asia and Europe, member countries have developed innovations in areas ranging from vulnerability, debt and climate finance to digital public infrastructure, renewable energy, institutional reform, the blue economy and climate adaptation. The opportunity is to enable these approaches and capabilities to travel in all directions rather than assuming that expertise flows from North to South. Resilience partnerships could facilitate this exchange, enabling members confronting different combinations of technological, environmental, demographic and economic change to learn from one another, pool capabilities and develop solutions to shared problems.

Strengthening networks, pooled capabilities and implementation

The Commonwealth already possesses institutions and networks capable of supporting this exchange. CCFAH has helped secure US$644.7 million in climate finance, while the CLLC, Blue Charter Action Groups and ACOD support co-operation on climate, land and oceans; the Commonwealth WTO Caucus provides a forum for trade co-ordination; and CMAG and the Secretary-General's Good Offices support democratic principles. But the Commonwealth's capabilities extend beyond governments and the Secretariat. Networks connecting judges, parliamentarians, election officials, civil servants, universities, businesses, professional associations, Commonwealth Accredited Organisations, civil society and youth organisations provide expertise, local knowledge and channels through which successful approaches can travel.

The priority is therefore less to create new institutions than to strengthen and connect this wider Commonwealth family, particularly where individual members cannot maintain specialist expertise across every area critical to resilience. Pooling capabilities in areas ranging from climate finance and sovereign debt to AI governance, cybersecurity and renewable energy can reduce duplication and strengthen implementation. Different members bring different forms of specialist capacity and experience, from finance and technology to climate adaptation, ocean governance and managing vulnerability. Stronger peer-to-peer assistance can help these capabilities travel across the membership and support implementation in different contexts.

Harnessing inclusion as a source of resilience

As is emphasised in the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2025–2030, greater inclusion across democracy, the economy and the environment enables societies to draw more fully on the skills, experience, knowledge and leadership of women, young people, people living with disabilities, minorities, Indigenous Peoples and other under-represented groups. This can improve the quality and responsiveness of decision-making, expand entrepreneurship and productive participation, and strengthen adaptation and natural resource management, while also reducing grievances and conflict risks.

The wider opportunity is to treat inclusion as a source of capability rather than simply a question of representation or vulnerability. Commonwealth networks and programmes can help countries identify, share and adapt diverse approaches to removing barriers, which can widen meaningful participation and expand access to leadership, finance, technology and other opportunities. Practical action could include strengthening platforms for women's and young people's political and economic leadership, sharing gender-responsive approaches to planning and policy, and improving access to finance and technology for women- and youth-led initiatives.

Anticipating and adapting to change

As managing continuous change becomes a central feature of the international environment, Commonwealth co-operation can help countries identify emerging risks and opportunities before they become acute. Regular resilience assessments or foresight exercises could enable governments to test responses and learn from countries confronting similar transitions. These could address AI and biotechnology, cybersecurity, critical minerals and the energy transition, alongside longer-term demographic, health, climate and economic change. This would reinforce a broader shift from responding to individual crises towards building the capabilities needed to anticipate and adapt to change.

Building coalitions for international reform

Many important constraints on resilience – including borrowing costs, access to concessional and climate finance, trade rules and the governance of emerging technologies – cannot be resolved within the Commonwealth itself. One of the association's most distinctive advantages is that its members bring different forms of experience, expertise, networks and influence to international institutions. Commonwealth co-operation can help member countries identify overlapping interests, develop concrete proposals and build wider coalitions through institutions such as the G7, G20, IMF, World Bank, WTO and UN. The same principle applies beyond economic reform, including support for democratic and human rights norms, inclusive governance of emerging technologies, and international action on climate and oceans. The Commonwealth can thereby provide a route from national innovation, through Commonwealth exchange, to wider international influence.

This does not require 56 countries with different interests to become a uniform voting bloc. Where broad agreement is possible, Commonwealth positions may carry particular credibility because they bridge significant differences; where it is not, coalitions of willing members can pursue specific proposals through the institutions best placed to deliver them. Debt and development finance provide an important starting point, given the pressure that high debt-servicing costs, declining aid and inadequate access to affordable

finance place on investment. Potential areas of co-operation include faster and more predictable debt restructuring, climate-resilient debt instruments, greater access to concessional finance and recognition of multidimensional vulnerability in financing eligibility.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, to be held in Antigua and Barbuda in November 2026, and the UK's G20 Presidency in 2027 provide early opportunities to test this approach, while advancing priorities of particular importance to small and vulnerable states, including debt sustainability and access to affordable finance. Small and vulnerable states can draw on their distinctive experience to identify where existing arrangements fail and develop proposals for reform, while Commonwealth co-operation can pool the influence, expertise and networks of larger and smaller members to build wider coalitions for change. For example, Commonwealth countries could identify a small number of concrete proposals and advance them through the G20 and wider international institutions. If successful, the model could subsequently be applied to climate finance, trade, AI governance, ocean protection and international support for democratic institutions.

Commonwealth co-operation should also help members seize opportunities rather than simply manage vulnerability. South–South trade, digital services, AI, renewable energy, critical minerals and the blue economy create opportunities to connect capital, technology and expertise with growing markets, workforces and natural resources. Partnerships that support diversification, skills and local value addition can help member countries capture more of these benefits while avoiding new forms of dependency. Resilience and prosperity are mutually reinforcing: resilience comes not only from protection against shocks, but also from broadening the capabilities and relationships through which future growth can be generated.

Ultimately, the Commonwealth's legitimacy cannot rest on shared history or identity alone. Its continuing value will need to be demonstrated through tangible outcomes, including greater access to finance and expertise, stronger institutions, expanded economic opportunities and improved preparedness. This is especially important for younger generations, for whom jobs, technology, education, democratic voice, climate change and mobility provide a more immediate basis for judging the Commonwealth's relevance. Ensuring meaningful participation by women, young people, people living with disabilities, minorities and other under-represented groups can also help the Commonwealth draw on a wider range of knowledge and capabilities while renewing the association itself. An agenda built around manageable priorities and measurable objectives would help concentrate limited resources where they can have greatest effect.

The opportunity, therefore, is to strengthen the Commonwealth's role as a network for resilience, implementation and influence. Internally, it can help member countries anticipate change, share capabilities and translate ideas into practice; externally, it can support coalitions capable of shaping international decisions. Its role is not to replace existing international institutions, but to help its members work more effectively through them. Turning these advantages into results would strengthen member country resilience while demonstrating the Commonwealth's continuing value and its capacity not only to survive but to thrive in a world of flux.

References

Acemoglu, D., Naidu, S., Restrepo, P. and Robinson, J.A. (2019) 'Democracy Does Cause Growth'. *Journal of Political Economy* 127(1): 47–100.

Adil, L., Eckstein, D., Künzel, V. and Schäfer, L. (2025) *Climate Risk Index 2026: Who Suffers Most from Extreme Weather Events?* Berlin: Germanwatch e.V.

Alonso, C., Bhojwani, T., Hanedar, E., Prihardini, D., Uña, G. and Zhabska, K. (2023) 'Stacking up the Benefits: Lessons from India's Digital Journey'. Working Paper 2023/078. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund.

Anandhi, A. (2025) 'Literature Review on Environmental Resilience: Frameworks, Variables, Scales, Vulnerability, Adaptation, Perfect Storms'. *Environmental Development* 56: 101282.

Arriola, L.R. (2009) 'Patronage and Political Stability in Africa'. *Comparative Political Studies* 42(10): 1339–1362.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2025) *ASEAN Taxonomy for Sustainable Finance: Version 4*. www.theacmf.org/sustainable-finance/publications/asean-taxonomy-for-sustainable-finance-version-4

Auer Frege, I. (ed.) (2025) *WorldRiskReport 2025: Focus on Floods*. Berlin: Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft and Ruhr University Bochum Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict.

Bala, A.R., Behsudi, A. and Owen, N. (2022) 'Country Cases: Meeting the Future'. *Finance & Development* 59(3): 11–17.

Blackman, A., Corral, L., Lima, E.S. and Asner, G.P. (2017) 'Titling Indigenous Communities Protects Forests in the Peruvian Amazon'. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114(16): 4123–4128.

CARE International Climate Justice Center (2025) 'Policy Brief on Gender Integration in NDC 3.0: Progress, Gaps, and Path Forward'. 5 November. CARE International.

Caribbean News Global (2025) 'The Commonwealth Drives Progress on Historic BBNJ Agreement'. 9 June. https://caribbeannewsglobal.com/the-commonwealth-drives-progress-on-historic-bbnj-agreement/

Cederman, L.-E., Hug, S. and Wucherpfennig, J. (2022) *Sharing Power, Securing Peace? Ethnic Inclusion and Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Central Bank of Barbados (2025) 'Debt-for-Development Swaps: A Tool for Climate Action and Economic Resilience'. 20 February. https://www.centralbank.org.bb/news/general-press-release/debt-for-development-swaps

Chaudhry, S. (2026) *Civil Societies, Uncivil States: Government Repression of NGOs*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Cheeseman, N. and Dodsworth, S. (2023) 'Defending Civic Space: When Are Campaigns against Repressive Laws Successful?' *The Journal of Development Studies* 59(5): 619–636.

Cheeseman, N., Desrosiers, M.-E., Cianetti, L. and Gehrke, M. (2024) *How to Strengthen Democratic Resilience: Five Lessons for Democratic Renewal*. European Democracy Hub, 10 December. https://europeandemocracyhub.epd.eu/how-to-strengthen-democratic-resilience/

Cheeseman, N., Desrosiers, M.-E. and Selormey, E.E. (2026) 'Rethinking Pathways of Autocratisation and Democratic Resilience in Comparative Perspective'. *Government and Opposition* 61(e29): 1–24.

Cianetti, L. (2026) 'Democratic Resilience and Re-Democratisation'. *East European Politics*. Advance online publication.

Cianetti, L., Arslanalp, M., Gerschewski, J. and Tomini, L. (2026) 'Interscalar Authoritarianism'. Centre for Elections, Democracy, Accountability and Representation Working Paper 1. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.

Commonwealth Foundation (2025) 'Interim Report of Impact and Change 2021–2025'. London: Commonwealth Foundation.

Commonwealth Lawyers Association (2026) 'Anchoring Justice in a Changing Tide: Strengthening the Rule of Law for a Resilient Future'. www.commonwealthlawyers.com/cla/anchoring-justice-in-a-changing-tide-strengthening-the-rule-of-law-for-a-resilient-future/

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (no date) 'Benchmark Assessments and Outcomes'. London: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2013) *Commonwealth Charter*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2021a) *Energising Commonwealth Trade in a Digital World: Paths to Recovery Post-COVID: Commonwealth Trade Review 2021*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2021b) *Global Youth Development Index and Report 2020*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2021c) *The Commonwealth Universal Vulnerability Index*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2022a) 'Commonwealth adopts historic Living Lands Charter'. 25 June. https://thecommonwealth.org/news/commonwealth-adopts-historic-living-lands-charter

Commonwealth Secretariat (2022b) *Quantitative Analysis of the Move to Paperless Trade*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2024a) *Strengthening Food Security in the Commonwealth: Trade, Investment and Resilient Supply Chains: Commonwealth Trade Review 2024*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2024b) *Apia Commonwealth Ocean Declaration for One Resilient Common Future*. Adopted at the 2024 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Samoa.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2024c) *Small States Economic Review and Basic Statistics Volume 22: Building Resilience in Commonwealth Small States*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2024d) *The Commonwealth Living Lands Charter Implementation Framework*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2024e) *Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth: Summary Report*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2025a) *The Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic Plan 2025–2030: Building a More Resilient Commonwealth*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2025b) *10 Years of the Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub (2015–2025)*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2025c) 'Botswana Presidential and National Assembly Elections, 30 October 2024'. Report of the Commonwealth Expert Team. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2025d) 'The Ripple Effects of US Tariffs: Economic Implications for the Commonwealth'. International Trade Working Paper 2025/03. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2026a) 'Progress towards Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in the Commonwealth: Summary Report'. Unpublished.

Commonwealth Secretariat (2026b) *Paperless Trade 2.0: Quantifying the Commonwealth's Trade Advantage*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (no date, a) 'Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition Agenda'. https://thecommonwealth.org/our-work/commonwealth-sustainable-energy-transition-agenda (accessed 28 August 2026).

Commonwealth Secretariat (no date, b) 'Commonwealth Climate Finance Access Hub'. https://thecommonwealth.org/our-work/commonwealth-climate-finance-access-hub (accessed 28 August 2026).

Constitutional Reform Committee (2024) 'Report of the Constitutional Reform Committee'. May. Kingston: Ministry of Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

Dahlum, S., Knutsen, C.H. and Mechkova, V. (2022) 'Women's Political Empowerment and Economic Growth'. *World Development* 156: 105822.

Dalaker, K. and Lothian, S. (2026) 'BBNJ Agreement: Package Deal Approach'. Briefing Note 4. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Desrosiers, M.-E. and Cheeseman, N. (2026) *The Rise of Authoritarian Middle-Powers and What It Means for World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dodsworth, S. and Cheeseman, N. (2019) *Just Add Women? Parliamentary Committees and the Health Sector in Africa*. London: Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

Douglas, I. (2021) 'Climate Change and The Increasing Vulnerability of the Poor in the Commonwealth'. *The Round Table* 110(5): 564–574.

Eberhardt, M. (2022) 'Democracy, Growth, Heterogeneity, and Robustness'. *European Economic Review* 147: 104173.

Electoral Commission of Ghana (no date) 'Election Reforms'. Accra: Electoral Commission of Ghana.

Electoral Commission of Jamaica (2010) 'Report to Parliament on Continuing Legal Reform'. Kingston: Electoral Commission of Jamaica.

Electoral Commission of South Africa (2025) '2024 National and Provincial Elections Report'. Centurion.

Elections Canada (2024) 'Protecting against Threats to the Electoral Process'. Gatineau, 1 November. www.elections.ca/content.aspx?dir=rep%2Foth%2Fprthr%2Frpt&document=index&lang=e&section=res

Firmin, A., Pousadela, I. and Tiwana, M. (2026) *State of Civil Society Report 2026*. CIVICUS. https://publications.civicus.org/publications/2026-state-of-civil-society-report/

Folke, C. (2006) 'Resilience: The Emergence of a Perspective for Social-Ecological Systems Analyses'. *Global Environmental Change* 16: 253–267.

Freedom House (2026) *Freedom in the World 2026*. Washington, DC: Freedom House.

Global Center on Adaptation (2025) *State and Trends in Adaptation Report 2025: Small Island Developing States*. Rotterdam: Global Center on Adaptation.

Global Commission on Adaptation (2019) *Adapt Now: A Global Call for Leadership on Climate Resilience*. https://gca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/GlobalCommission_Report_FINAL.pdf

Gomez, D. (2021) 'Climate Change – Challenges, Issues and Commonwealth Responses'. *The Round Table* 110(5): 539–545.

Government of Singapore (2026) 'Digital Government'. SG Digital Gateway, updated 21 April. www.digitalgateway.gov.sg/our-resources/digital-government/

Guillot de la Puente, S. and Senghore, M.K. (2025) 'Mid-Term Evaluation of EU–The Gambia's Responsive and Accountable Democratic Transition (EU-UNDP GREAT Initiative)'. Final Midterm Evaluation Report, 29 December.

International Energy Agency (IEA) (2026) 'Strait of Hormuz'. Factsheet, updated February. Paris: IEA.

International IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) (2026) *Reimagining Democracy in the Global South: Concepts, Challenges and Emerging Opportunities*. Stockholm: International IDEA.

International Labour Organization (ILO) (2024) *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024: Decent Work, Brighter Futures*. Geneva: ILO.

ILO (2026) *ILO Modelled Estimates (ILOEST)*. ILOSTAT, Geneva: ILO.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) (2025) *Getting to Growth in an Age of Uncertainty: IMF Annual Report 2025*. Washington, DC: IMF.

IMF (2026) *World Economic Outlook: Global Economy in the Shadow of War*. Washington, DC: IMF.

Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) (2026) *Parline: Global Data on National Parliaments*. Geneva: IPU.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2024) *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2024*. Geneva: ITU.

ITU (2025) *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2025*. Geneva: ITU.

Jayasuriya, D.S. and Burke, P.J. (2013) 'Female Parliamentarians and Economic Growth: Evidence from a Large Panel'. *Applied Economics Letters* 20(3): 304–307.

Kingiri, A., Amakobe, W. and Cheruiyot, M. (2025) 'Strengthening Financing Models to Scale Women and Youth-Led Clean Energy Enterprises in Kenya'. EVI-SICEE Research Brief 4. African Centre for Technology Studies.

Krause, J., Krause, W. and Bränfors, P. (2018) 'Women's Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace'. *International Interactions* 44(6): 985–1016.

Mavisakalyan, A. and Tarverdi, Y. (2019) 'Gender and Climate Change: Do Female Parliamentarians Make a Difference?' *European Journal of Political Economy* 56: 151–164.

Merkel, W. (2026) 'What Is Democratic Resilience?' *Democratization* 33(3): 472–493.

Nisar, R.D. (2026) 'King without Hegemony: China's Rise and International Order'. *International Politics*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1787/62830370-en

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2022) *A Systemic Recovery*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (2025) *Fast-Tracking Net Zero by Building Climate and Economic Resilience: A Summary for Policymakers*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

OECD (2026) 'ODA Projections for 2026 and the Near-Term: Implications for Vulnerable Countries and Sectors'. Policy brief, 19 June. Paris: OECD Publishing.

Ofcom (2025) 'Enforcing the Online Safety Act: Platforms Must Start Tackling Illegal Material from Today'. 17 March.

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2025) *Global Progress Report on Sustainable Development Goal 16: Indicators on Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies*. New York: OHCHR, UNDP and UNODC.

Oyenekan, F. and Corby, C. (2025) 'Promoting Women's Participation in Politics'. Research Report. London: Commonwealth Parliamentary Research Service Research Report.

Pamuk, H. (2025) 'Trump Administration Tells US Diplomats Abroad Not to Opine on Foreign Elections'. *Reuters*, 17 July.

Parditey, J.P. (2025) 'The Unequal Burden of Climate Change: How Climate Change Deepens Inequality for Women and Girls'. ActionAid Ghana, 13 November. https://ghana.actionaid.org/news/2025/unequal-burden-climate-change-how-climate-change-deepens-inequality-women-and-girls

Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago (2025) '22nd National Youth Parliamentary Debate'. Port of Spain: Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago.

Philips, A., Schmidt-Traub, G., Miller, I., Ring, J. and Chia, N. (2026) 'The Ocean Protection Gap Report'. Systemiq, commissioned by the Bloomberg Ocean Fund in partnership with Campaign for Nature, the Marine Conservation Institute, RISE UP, SkyTruth and WWF International.

Presidency of the Republic of South Africa (2025) 'Significant Progress Made in Implementing State Capture Commission Recommendations'. 28 July. www.thepresidency.gov.za/significant-progress-made-implementing-state-capture-commission-recommendations

Quamruzzaman, A. and Lange, M. (2016) 'Female Political Representation and Child Health: Evidence from a Multilevel Analysis'. *Social Science & Medicine* 171: 48–57.

Riedl, R.B., Friesen, P., McCoy, J. and Roberts, K.M. (2025) 'Democratic Backsliding, Resilience, and Resistance'. *World Politics* 77(1S): 151–178.

Sanches, E.R., Cheeseman, N., Veenendaal, W. and Corbett, J. (2022) 'African Exceptions: Democratic Development in Small Island States'. *Journal of International Relations and Development* 25(1): 210–234.

Siddons, B., Schramm, A., Hedley, C., James, P.A., Greenhill, L., Wilde, D. and Ellis, R. (2025) *The Commonwealth Guide to Blue Bond Issuance*. London: Commonwealth, London.

Spotlight Initiative (2025) 'Colliding Crises: How the Climate Crisis Fuels Gender-Based Violence'. Dalberg.

Transparency International (2026) *Corruption Perceptions Index 2025*. Berlin: Transparency International.

Treisman, D. (2000) 'The Causes of Corruption: A Cross-National Study'. *Journal of Public Economics* 76(3): 399–457.

United Nations (UN) (2023) *Our Common Agenda Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace*. New York: UN.

UN (2024) *World Population Prospects 2024: Summary of Results*. New York: United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2023a) 'A New Wave of Debt Swaps for Climate or Nature'. Signals Spotlight 2023: Theme 9. www.undp.org/future-development/signals-spotlight-2023/new-wave-debt-swaps-climate-or-nature

UNDP (2023b) 'Samoa Pilot Time Use Study Report'. 11 October. www.undp.org/samoa/publications/samoa-pilot-time-use-study-report

UNDP (2024a)'Enabling Investments into the Malaysian Care Economy'. 5 July. www.undp.org/malaysia/publications/enabling-investments-malaysian-care-economy

UNDP (2024b) 'Strengthening Legislatures in Pacific Island Countries: Final Report'. Suva: UNDP Pacific Office.

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (2025) *Trade and Development Report 2025: On the Brink – Trade, Finance and the Reshaping of the Global Economy*. Geneva: UNCTAD.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (2025) *Adaptation Gap Report 2025: Running on Empty. The World Is Gearing Up for Climate Resilience – Without the Money to get There*. Nairobi: UNEP.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Secretariat (2024) 'Gender Composition: Report by the Secretariat'. FCCC/CP/2024/4. Baku: UNFCCC Secretariat.

UN Women (2025) *Women's Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing*. New York: UN Women.

Woldegiorgis, M.M. (2023) 'Drivers of Demographic Dividend in Sub-Saharan Africa'. *Review of Evolutionary Political Economy* 4: 387–413.

Women Entrepreneurs Finance Initiative (2022) 'The Case for Investing in Women Entrepreneurs'. https://we-fi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/We-Fi-Case-for-Investment.pdf

World Bank (2023) *World Development Report 2023: Migrants, Refugees, and Societies*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank (2025a) *Digital Progress and Trends Report 2025: Strengthening AI Foundations*. Washington, DC: World Bank.

World Bank (2025b) *The Global Findex Database 2025: Connectivity and Financial Inclusion in the Digital Economy*. Washington, DC. World Bank.

World Bank (2025c) 'Jobs: Unlocking Women's Economic Potential and Boosting Economies'. 6 March. www.worldbank.org/en/news/immersive-story/2025/03/06/jobs-unlocking-womens-economic-potential-and-boosting-economies

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House, Pall Mall
London SW1Y 5HX
United Kingdom

thecommonwealth.org

The Commonwealth

D20703_B