

Introduction

This handbook is the first attempt to identify the full extent of unofficial, or non-governmental, activity in the Commonwealth, and its main areas of interest and operation. In doing so it fulfils a need expressed by Commonwealth non-governmental organisations at a conference organised by Dalhousie University in October 1976. It replaces the booklet *Commonwealth Organisations and Sources of Information*, published in 1974 by the Commonwealth Secretariat, which proved to be a most useful reference document.

The information used is mainly from questionnaires completed by the organisations themselves; secondary sources have been used only where the information was known to be reliable. Inevitably, some organisations are omitted because information was not available.

Early publication was, however, given priority for three reasons. First, the booklet mentioned above is now out of print; secondly, the information collected during the six-month period would have become out-of-date if publication had been delayed; and thirdly, it was felt that publication might encourage a response from organisations and individuals which would enable the preparation of a more comprehensive second edition, based upon suggestions of additional organisations, amendments to existing material, and ideas relating to the arrangement of material within the book.

The first section is devoted to official organisations. It is divided into three parts: Commonwealth, regional, and national development agencies. The first part describes the Commonwealth Secretariat and other pan-Commonwealth official organisations; the second gives details of a number of regional groupings which are based in Commonwealth countries; the third contains information on national governmental agencies which have a significant Commonwealth element in their developmental work.

The second section of the handbook lists unofficial bodies. The selection of organisations was not easy: a Commonwealth non-governmental organisation is difficult, if not impossible, to define. It may be a national, regional, pan-Commonwealth, or international body. It may not even recognise itself as a *Commonwealth* organisation. But for the purposes of this book *Commonwealth non-governmental organisations include national, regional and international bodies based in a Commonwealth country and, by virtue of membership or function, with an interest in at least*

three Commonwealth countries. Even this loose definition creates certain anomalies. For example, it excludes those international organisations which have their headquarters in a non-Commonwealth country, but which have subsidiary operations, and even branches, in Commonwealth countries; on the other hand, it includes international organisations which have their headquarters in a Commonwealth country but which have only a small part of their work within the Commonwealth.

All organisations listed under the unofficial section are non-profit making and apolitical; they include secular and religious voluntary agencies, professional associations, trusts and foundations, and research institutions and university centres concerned specifically with Commonwealth studies. National, regional and international bodies are included in so far as they are based in a Commonwealth country and have membership in or function in at least two other Commonwealth countries. Also included are national bodies concerned specifically with the Commonwealth; for example, the Commonwealth of Nations Day Movement in New South Wales, and the Joint Commonwealth Societies Council, the Council for Education in the Commonwealth, and the Commonwealth Institute in London.

Organisations have been classified into subject areas (see Contents) according to their predominant interests. Where borderline cases occurred organisations have, in general, been placed in the groupings most obviously suggested by their names. For example, the Commonwealth Agricultural Bureaux are to be found under agriculture and forestry, not under education, training and research (though research is the main function of the organisation).

The criteria adopted *exclude* the following categories of organisation:

- purely national bodies, e.g., the British-based National Council of Social Service, and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada;
- profit-making concerns, e.g., the Commonwealth Development Finance Co. Ltd.;
- organisations concerned only with bilateral relations between Commonwealth countries, e.g., the Britain-Tanzania Society;
- international organisations with headquarters outside the Commonwealth, e.g., the International Council of Voluntary Agencies, World University Service, Red Cross, World Council of Churches, YMCA, and YWCA;
- development agencies concerned only with development education in one country, e.g., the World Development Movement, in Britain;
- nationally-based organisations with regional or international interests, but no overseas presence, e.g., the African Studies Association of the UK, the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, the Indian Council of World Affairs, and the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

The third section of the handbook lists regular Commonwealth conferences and meetings, organised by both official and unofficial

organisations. The fourth gives details of a few major trusts and foundations which have a special concern with the Commonwealth.

In all sections the aim has been to provide the reader with clear, concise information which will enable a rapid assessment of the objectives, work programme and status of the organisations concerned, as well as their addresses, telephone numbers and, in most cases, the name of the chief executives. Each section or sub-section of the handbook is arranged alphabetically.

The Commonwealth Secretariat is most appreciative of the help and advice received from many organisations and individuals, and of the excellent response to the questionnaire. It hopes that comments, additions and amendments will be offered with equal readiness.