

Foreword

Research and policy investigations are important components of the Commonwealth Secretariat governance work that contribute to informed decisions taken by Commonwealth policy-makers. Our policy research on local governance not only outlines choices for member governments, but also endeavours to provide cutting-edge evidence for the design, implementation, and review of public policies, thereby contributing to broader development goals. The Secretariat portfolio of publications on local government includes four volumes under the *Local Government Reform Series*.

New Century Local Government: Commonwealth Perspectives seeks to cover current and future issues, including moves towards decentralisation in Commonwealth member states that have arisen since 2000, and which continue to present both challenges and opportunities for local government.

The world in which local governments operate is changing rapidly as a consequence of a confluence of forces, including demographic changes, the fall-out from the global financial crisis, shifts in the patterns and location of economic growth, and urbanisation in developed and developing countries alike. This offers scope for local government across the Commonwealth to respond in new and distinctive ways, especially in future within the architecture of the post-2015 global development framework.

‘New Century’ in the title of this publication refers to the evolving role of local government as the function of the State continues to change in the contemporary world. Distilled wisdom drawn from current thinking and international good practices is brought together in this book with contributions by fifteen distinguished authors from across the Commonwealth.

The future of local government depends in most cases upon the attitudes and decisions of national or provincial governments. The Commonwealth Secretariat seeks to play a constructive role in this context in supporting the goals of democratic decentralisation from both central and local perspectives; promoting fresh thinking about and among local governments; and ensuring that new ideas are explored, and that lessons from the varied experiences of member countries are widely disseminated and understood.

The Commonwealth collectively has also long subscribed that development and democracy are inter-related and mutually reinforcing. This is relevant at all levels of government and administration. This book aims to contribute to that endeavour.

We acknowledge all contributions in this publication for helping to carry forward the scholarly agenda on local government for the benefit of all Commonwealth governments and the citizens whom they represent and serve.

Kamalesh Sharma

Commonwealth Secretary-General

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Peter McKinlay
Graham Sansom

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