

Culture and Diversity Programme 2006–2008

The Commonwealth Foundation

The Commonwealth Foundation is an intergovernmental organization resourced by and reporting to Commonwealth governments. It works to enhance the role of civil society organisations in governance, democracy, sustainable development and culture and diversity by strengthening their institutional and human capacity, and creating opportunities and space for partnership, participation, advice and leadership. The Foundation was established by Commonwealth governments in 1965 and is guided by the principles, values and priorities of the Commonwealth.

Background

One of the greatest strengths of the Commonwealth is its rich cultural diversity. Through its Culture and Diversity Programme, the Commonwealth Foundation strives to encourage understanding of and respect for different cultures. The Commonwealth Foundation has a mandate from Commonwealth Heads of Government to support and promote culture. It seeks to do this in many ways including facilitating exchange between Commonwealth countries for young artists to enable them to share their work and ideas and learn about different cultural practices. This work increases people's understanding and appreciation of other cultures. The Foundation connects culture and diversity with the Commonwealth goals of good governance, democracy and sustainable development. The Foundation's Citizens and Governance Toolkit highlights the use of cultural actions to encourage voter participation, hold elected officials to account and promote constructive action to eliminate violence against women. The Commonwealth Foundation is now expanding its Culture and Diversity Programme to strengthen its relationships and networks with and beyond those working in the field of culture.

About the Programme

Many cultural practitioners and communities have benefited from the Foundation's cultural programmes over the years. Looking forward, the Foundation will take its work to a deeper level and make connections between culture, governance and democracy, and sustainable development by:

- _ Facilitating understanding of and between different cultures, and appreciation of those cultures through exchange and sharing of practice;
- _ Recognising and publicizing Commonwealth artists to increase awareness of the diversity of the Commonwealth;
- _ Supporting the increased use of cultural actions towards development and governance goals;
- _ Encouraging the attainment of gender equality in access to education;
- _ Strengthening the capacity of cultural organisations through targeted grant-making.

Activities

Activities for 2006-2008 include:

- _ The Commonwealth Writers' Prize one of the pre-eminent international literary awards, encouraging broader reading and understanding, rewarding excellence and, through a Best First Book prize, bringing new writers to a wider audience;

_ The Commonwealth Arts and Crafts Awards – giving young artists the opportunity to take up a residency in another Commonwealth country, to share their skills and artistic practices and learn more about other cultures;

_ The Commonwealth Short Story Competition – showcasing fresh voices from different Commonwealth cultures through radio broadcast, giving aspiring writers international recognition;

_ A Commonwealth Reference Toolkit on Culture to provide vital information about the state of Commonwealth cultures. The Toolkit will outline the needs of cultural practitioners, sharing models and case studies of successful practice of working in culture;

_ Identifying examples of good practice in achieving gender equality in access to education and promoting policies to advance this;

_ Supporting exchanges and documenting and disseminating examples and models of good practice in multi-faith co-operation to increase respect and understanding;

_ Supporting community media and publishing networks;

_ Developing new schemes to provide exposure and access to skills and networks for film-makers, and to help Commonwealth music-makers become better known internationally;

_ Documenting and sharing examples of cultural approaches to achieving development and governance goals;

_ Providing targeted grants to support these objectives, and to help strengthen the capacity of cultural organisations.

Outcomes

Expected outcomes include:

_ Increased awareness and appreciation of other cultures;

_ Greater recognition of the diverse talents within the Commonwealth;

_ Greater use of cultural actions towards development and governance objectives.