

The Commonwealth Secretariat

Multilateral Aid Review (MAR) Update 2013 progress rating:



MAR 2011: *Poor Value for Money for UK Aid*

Progress Assessment	
Summary	Performance improving, particularly in area of financial management. Much less evidence of stronger contribution to development objectives - difficulty in agreeing new Strategic Plan is key indicator in this regard.
Baseline	
<p>The Commonwealth Secretariat is the main inter-governmental agency of the Commonwealth, an association of 54 independent states. It works to strengthen democracy and support development across the membership, and to make the Commonwealth's voice heard on global issues.</p> <p>The MAR highlighted several strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Secretariat has a unique role in the international system that allows it to influence across and beyond its membership.• It has access to a network of networks which enables it to promote south-south and north-south cooperation.• It has a niche role in supporting and representing the needs of small states. <p>The MAR also highlighted several weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Secretariat's development programmes do not make a critical contribution to international development objectives.• It has insufficient focus on results.• Its financial resource management requires considerable improvement. <p>DFID's reform priorities for the MAR Update were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater focus and prioritisation whilst exiting from development activities where it does not have a comparative advantage – assessed under <u>critical role in meeting development objectives</u>;• Focussed interventions with increased evidence of follow-through, and demonstration of innovative approaches (eg drawing on new technology) – assessed under <u>contribution to results</u>.• Strong leadership from the Secretary-General, and a results-based approach driving budgeting, project design, and decision-making – assessed under <u>strategic and performance management</u>;• Financial statements and systems getting a clean bill of health from auditors, and evidence of learning from bad experiences – assessed under <u>financial resources management</u>;• Administration costs transparently classified and tightly controlled, a Secretariat-wide procurement policy developed and adhered to, and evidence of the public sector management programme impacting on partner governments' approach to cost control – assessed under <u>cost and value consciousness</u>.	

Summary of Overall Progress

The Secretariat has made reasonable progress in financial management, with sufficient positive movement to warrant a score change from 1 to 2, some progress in results, strategic and performance management and cost and value consciousness, but little or no progress in its contribution to development objectives.

Progress against Reform Priorities

MAR Reform Component	MAR 2011 Score	Progress Rating	MAR Update Score, if any change
<p>Critical role in meeting development objectives The Secretariat continues to make modest contributions on important development issues, including through outreach and advocacy. However, the Secretariat proposals for a Strategic Plan focused on a small number of areas where they can add value did not secure consensus, and the agreed Plan is broader-based.</p>		 Little or no progress	
<p>Contribution to results The Secretariat developed new partnerships and sought to innovate through the use of information technology. Management has been seen to intervene pro-actively in project management. Programmes appear to be delivering against their objectives, but there is little evidence of increased impact.</p>		 Some progress	
<p>Strategic and performance management There has been some progress with the introduction of results-based management, and the new Strategic Plan includes a stronger results framework. The HR function has been strengthened, but there are still weaknesses to be addressed, and the new Plan is not as tightly prioritised as the initial draft.</p>		 Some progress	
<p>Financial resources management The accounts for the last two years have been unqualified, and a comprehensive programme of action has been taken to address weaknesses. There have also been indications of a more proactive approach to programme management.</p>		 Reasonable progress	
<p>Cost and value consciousness The Secretariat has defined administration costs more clearly, but as yet there is little concrete evidence of improved cost consciousness and control.</p>		 Some progress	