

# Foreword

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*Resource Guide on Decentralisation and Local Government* is the third title in the Commonwealth Secretariat Local Government Reform Series. Books in the series offer guidance on various aspects of local government reform to public sector policy-makers, senior managers at central and sub-national levels, as well as students and researchers in public administration with an interest in local government issues. Each volume distils contemporary thinking and international good practices from around the Commonwealth.

Research is an important component of the Secretariat's governance work. Policy investigations contribute to informed decisions taken by policy-makers. Our policy research in local governance outlines choices for member governments rather than presenting categorical solutions. We also endeavour to provide cutting-edge research that concerns the design, implementation and review of public policies and that contributes to broader development goals. As political context is integral to policy making, this *Resource Guide* focuses inter alia on the changing role of small, post-conflict and fragile states in the Commonwealth.

The current debate over the type and extent of decentralisation, to a large extent, revolves around country-specific structural and managerial issues. In recent times, decentralisation has seldom been smooth sailing. Local government reforms pose new challenges in governance and public administration. Decentralised local governments often need to perform new tasks that are more complex and sometimes politically sensitive.

This publication shares guidance on designing, implementing and evaluating decentralisation reforms and good practices in local government. It also synthesises current debates on the impact of decentralisation and local government on poverty reduction, service delivery and conflict, as well as providing links to cutting-edge research and recent case studies. The publication includes summaries of key text that are linked to an extended summary in the alphabetised appendix.

Our aim is to strengthen local government reform strategies and processes, so that Commonwealth governments can make more informed policy choices about decentralisation. The Secretariat will continue to support Commonwealth member governments by advancing knowledge of these and other public sector reforms.

I am grateful to the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre for its valuable contribution to this compilation and for its collaboration with the Commonwealth Secretariat. This resource is available online through our website and CFONet and is published in book form particularly for the benefit of our member countries.

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