

News story: UK announces £2.9m for human rights across the Commonwealth

UK Minister for Human Rights today announces 3 projects to support human rights across the Commonwealth, with particular focus on the South Pacific and small states. This £2.9 million work will support member states, regional organisations and human rights institutions in promoting human rights standards across the Commonwealth, with a focus on equality and adherence to international human rights obligations.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon announced a new £1.8 million project to help improve the capacity of Pacific Commonwealth countries to deliver human rights.

Lord (Tariq) Ahmad of Wimbledon said:

Human rights are the bedrock of successful societies and a fundamental Commonwealth value. The Commonwealth is at its strongest when we share our expertise and experiences through our network.

Smaller countries face significant challenges in establishing and maintaining their human rights institutions. This new funding will offer valuable support to our nine Pacific Commonwealth partners as they strive to strengthen their national institutions.

The funding will support human rights institutions to meet international standards and help improve governance. Women, young people, persons with disabilities, and other minority groups will all benefit. The Pacific Commonwealth Equality Project will run over the 2 years that the UK is Chair in Office of the Commonwealth (2018 to 2020). The South Pacific countries are Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.

Lord Ahmad also announced £0.6 million to support the Commonwealth's 31 small states. The Commonwealth small states grouping includes lower income countries and small island developing states (SIDS).

Head of the Commonwealth's Human Rights Unit Karen McKenzie, said:

The UK contribution will give impetus to the Commonwealth's work with small states in Geneva, strengthening their voices in international human rights discourse. Ultimately, it will translate into better understanding and implementation of human rights promotion and protection for all citizens.

Lord Ahmad also announced £0.5 million funding to support the UK's Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) as it takes over the role of the Chair of the Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions (CFNHRI) for the next 2 years.