ISSUE 7 - OCTOBER 2026

IFCO *CONNECTS*



IFCO NEWSLETTER

IFCO

IFCO CONNECTS

NEWSLETTER 7 – OCTOBER 2026

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



This is the last newsletter before CHOGM 2026 and comes as Accredited Organisations and everybody in the Commonwealth ecosystem are over-stretched in preparation for Antigua. The frustrations and anxieties around accreditation are waning; IFCO has been in touch with the High Commission and the accreditation office to help smooth the process.

IFCO is holding a welcome reception on Sunday 1st November 2026 10.00 – 12.00 at a venue in St John's. We will offer a space to meet and greet with hot drinks and pastries. This will be very informal with live music sponsored by Commonwealth Resounds. Our thanks to Commonwealth Trades Union Group for securing the venue and to the Bookkeepers and Nurses & Midwives for sponsorship. We hope to attract more sponsors so that we can offer refreshments without asking for donations on the day!

IFCO is hosting a lunchtime dialogue in the People's Forum with a major focus on effective partnerships, the launchpad for a continuing dialogue about making partnerships more effective across the Commonwealth. See this newsletter for more information.

There are several events across CHOGM being organised by Accredited Organisations illustrating the lively contribution to the Commonwealth delivered by civil society.

IFCO is also looking for financial support to create a sustainable basis for future IFCO operations. We all know that co-ordination and partnerships take time and resource. Please watch out for the invitation to AOs to contribute resources according to capacity.

So, lots to engage with when we get back from CHOGM. Meanwhile we extend best wishes to those organising CHOGM and look forward to an interesting time in Antigua and Barbuda. Safe travels to those expecting to be there.

David N Jones, IFCO Chair

Graham MacNeill appointed Director, Resource Mobilisation & Partnerships



David Jones has met Graham at Marlborough House and welcomed him to the Commonwealth ecosystem. He has more than two decades of senior leadership experience in resource mobilization and strategic partnerships across multilateral and international development settings and comes from a similar role with the World Health Organisation. Graham's professional roots are very much in civil society having worked extensively with local and international NGOs in the Middle East and Northern Ireland during the early part of his career.

"The Commonwealth Strategic Plan is predicated on building effective partnerships, among which is the partnership with the lively pan-Commonwealth activity of Accredited Organisations", David commented. "We look forward to working with Graham in a creative partnership which meets the diverse interests of the peoples of the Commonwealth".

IFCO AT CHOGM

IFCO-hosted Commonwealth Dialogue at Commonwealth People's Forum: Dynamic partnerships for positive outcomes - 3 November 12.30-13.30



How can stronger and more equitable partnerships facilitate meaningful change for Commonwealth communities? The dialogue explores the conditions for meaningful and effective partnerships. Drawing directly on participants' experiences of partnerships that have succeeded, struggled or failed, it will consider trust, influence, power, independence, equitable participation in decision-making, transparency and access to resources. Short presentations will stimulate table discussions leading to identification of key issues to take forward and reflections from a Panel of senior Commonwealth figures. The outcome will inform the continuing Commonwealth dialogue on effective partnership working.



IFCO WELCOME RECEPTION – 1 November 10.30 – 12.00

The first ever IFCO welcome reception will provide a space for informal meet and greet over coffee and pastries for delegates from all Accredited Organisations and others wishing to connect with Civil Society during CHOGM. Register here



IFCO SUBMISSION TO CHOGM 2026

The IFCO submission to CHOGM which focuses specifically on developing effective partnership working can be found here.



ADVOCACY LEAFLET

IFCO will provide an advocacy leaflet with key points for Accredited Organisations to share in discussions at CHOGM with member states and Commonwealth partners. This will be sent to all Accredited Organisations.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS AND EVENTS ORGANISED BY ACCREDITED ORGANISATIONS



The Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions Biennial Conference – Antigua - 30-31 October 2026

The Commonwealth Forum of National Human Rights Institutions is a network of human rights institutions, ombudsmen, and public defenders. NHRIs protect, promote and advance human rights within each country.



Commonwealth Interfaith Service –
Sunday 1 November
11.00 – 12.00
St John's Pentecostal Church House of Restoration (SJPC)



45th Anniversary of the National Day of Antigua and Barbuda Ceremonial Parade
Sir Vivian Richards Stadium - Sunday 1 November 2026 6:15– 7:15 pm
"Renaissance Rooted in Pride, Bounded by Prosperity for All."

One Commonwealth, One Team Cricket Series
Sir Vivian Richards Stadium - 1 November 2026 8:15 pm – 11:00 pm
Exhibition cricket matches led by CHOGM Envoy Sir Vivian Richards will unite leaders and young cricketers. Under the theme "A Celebration of Peace, Unity, Leadership and Commonwealth Values", a Commonwealth Caribbean Heads and Senior Officials XI play a Rest of the Commonwealth Heads and Senior Officials XI and a Commonwealth Caribbean Under-23 Rising Stars XI plays a Rest of the Commonwealth Under-23 Rising Stars XI.



Joint Forums and Side Events Opening Ceremony –2 November 2026
St John's Pentecostal Church House of Restoration (SJPC)

Opening Ceremony of CHOGM 2026 – 3 November 2026
Antigua and Barbuda National Performing Arts Centre



One Commonwealth Night Concert and Prime Minister's Welcome Reception – 2 November 2026
Sir Vivian Richards Stadium

CHOGM 2026 Closing Reception – 4 November 2026
Copper and Lumber Store Hotel

Commonwealth Parliamentary Association and the Parliament of Antigua and Barbuda

Safeguarding democracy and inclusion in the Commonwealth
Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies - Tuesday 3 November 3-7pm



How can the Commonwealth support democracy, inclusion and human rights in a rapidly changing world? Join us for an afternoon of discussion with Parliamentarians, government representatives and civil society leaders.

For any questions, or to register your interest in attending, please contact hq.sec@cpahq.org

Commonwealth Sport Summit: Delivering a Resilient and Prosperous Commonwealth Through Sport
Monday 2 November 2026 13:00–18:30

Eustace Hill Campus Conference Room, Coolidge, Antigua and Barbuda College of Advanced Studies (ABCAS)

This half-day Summit will bring together senior leaders and partners from across the Commonwealth to explore how sport can help deliver healthier and more resilient communities, stronger economies and a more united Commonwealth.

REGISTER YOUR INTEREST IN ATTENDING THE SUMMIT HERE →

Blue Finance and Innovation 3 November 2026, 14:00 - 19:30
Venue: John E St Luce Finance and Conference Centre

The Centre of Excellence for Oceanography and the Blue Economy (COBE) at The University of the West Indies Five Islands Campus will host this event.

Showcasing how a step-change in blue finance and innovation can contribute to ocean conservation, this event will increase awareness of blue finance and innovation by showcasing innovative technologies and their financing; as well as bringing investors, governments and innovators together to boost ocean investment. Contact d.wilde@commonwealth.int

The Value of Vision - Global Summit for Eye Health
02 November 2026, 13:00 - 18:30
John E St Luce Finance and Conference Centre

Urgent action is needed now to end avoidable sight loss, to improve the economy and opportunities for the next generation. The Governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Bangladesh, Guyana and Nigeria in technical collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), will host the first-ever Global Summit for Eye Health to focus on the value of vision to countries, communities and individuals.

Hosted in partnership with the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness (IAPB), the summit will convene senior leaders from government, private and public sectors, non-governmental organisations and funding institutions to help reach the one billion people living with avoidable sight loss. Find out more https://globalsummitforeyehealth.org/

Developing the Commonwealth's next generation of professional leaders

How can professional bodies give emerging talent the confidence, skills and networks to create change? At the 2026 Commonwealth Youth Forum, Ian Callaghan, Past President of the Chartered Insurance Institute, will introduce delegates to the CII's New Generation Programme. Chosen participants work collaboratively to investigate challenges facing their professions and produce practical ideas and resources that others can use. In an interactive session, Ian will invite delegates to consider how this model could be adapted for different professions and countries across the Commonwealth, supporting the Forum's focus on stronger youth agency, shared learning and shared prosperity.



Prosperity Starts Here: Investing in Wellbeing for a Prosperous Commonwealth - People's Forum – 3 November 2026

The Commonwealth Health Professions and Partners Alliance (CHPA), in partnership with the Health and Wellbeing Cluster of Accredited Organisations, is hosting an event at the People's Forum to draw attention to some of the critical social, economic and environmental challenges that civil society is working to overcome across the Commonwealth. This will include short videos from around the Commonwealth illustrating what is getting in the way of people living safe, healthy, connected and fulfilling lives.



The Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work submission to GHOGM highlights 5 key themes: 1) Recognise centrality of Social Resilience in achieving objectives of the Commonwealth Strategic Plan; 2) Establish a meaningful, strategic partnership with Accredited Organisations based on genuine engagement, transparency and inclusivity, 3) Endorse the Commonwealth Charter for Young Carers, 4) Leverage Commonwealth Values to provide inclusive leadership to combat extremism, and 5) Develop Innovative Co-Governance Models that uphold First Generations' Rights. See the full statement here.

Implementing Disability Rights across the Commonwealth – 5 November 2026

Sir John E. St. Luce Finance & Conference Centre – 5 November 2026

Symposium organised by Commonwealth Disabled People's Forum, Government of Antigua and Barbuda and Commonwealth Secretariat. The overarching objective of the Symposium is to raise awareness about the Commonwealth Disability Inclusion Action Plan. More information here.

NEWS FROM ACCREDITED ORGANISATIONS

The Royal Life Saving Society Commonwealth (RLSS) has welcomed their first ever institutional member - Reach a Hand Africa - along with new members Nigeria, Guyana and The Panje Project in Zanzibar. RLSS is now an official member of The Global Alliance for Drowning Prevention (GADP) which is a global network of UN organizations and non-state actors with a vision to accelerate country-level action towards a world free from the burden of drowning. RLSS has also announced its Research Honours for 2026. For more news: https://www.rlsscommonwealth.org/2026/09/10/2344/

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) working alongside Times Higher Education HAS published a White Paper: **From research growth to economic impact: Mapping industry-academic partnerships in Sub-Saharan Africa**, which examines how universities across Sub-Saharan Africa are working with industry, how these partnerships are developing, and their role in supporting innovation, economic development and wider societal value.

Download the paper to explore industry academic partnerships across Sub-Saharan Africa: From research growth to economic impact: Mapping industry-academic partnerships in Sub-Saharan Africa



The Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Federation (CNMF) held its 27th Biennial Meeting of Members and the 7th Commonwealth Nurses and Midwives Conference in New Delhi India 23-25 September 2026. The Biennial Meeting and Conference were co-hosted by the Trained Nurses Association of India (TNAI). Over 20 Commonwealth nations were represented, bringing together nursing and midwifery experience and expertise from across the CNMF six regions. The theme: 'Shaping the future ... nurses and midwives navigating new frontiers' was timely as clinicians, academics, researchers, and policy makers shared their pioneering work to meet patient needs and create positive health outcomes for them https://www.commonwealthnurses.org.



The Commonwealth Creative Industries Alliance (CCIA) launched at Marlborough House on 8 September, hosted by the Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBWN) and Goldfinch. It brought together around 70 government and institutional decision-makers from across the Commonwealth, including the Commonwealth Foundation as a founding partner, High Commissioners, capital allocators from Coutts and AthenaFundX, promotion agencies such as JAMPRO, the South Asia Chamber of Commerce delegation, AOs across fashion, museums and performing arts, and the platforms themselves, with ByteDance and Magnific on the AI session. The day focused on three pillars: capital, policy and technology with every session reaching the same conclusion - the Commonwealth already possesses the talent, the markets and the institutional networks, and what is missing is the coordination to convert these into sustainable enterprise, employment, investment and international reach.

The Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work made a significant contribution to the world conference on social work and social development held in Nairobi, Kenya in June 2026. COSW held a seminar on the funding crisis following the aid cuts across the global south, made a presentation on the Commonwealth Charter for Young Carers and organised a side event on the work of COSW. See the video report here.

UPCOMING EVENTS

As recent extreme weather events have graphically illustrated across the globe, the climate crisis is immediate and deepening. There is an urgent need for the world to act together.

On 27 October **Lord Alok Sharma** will give the 2026 Patsy Robertson Memorial Lecture on *Climate Action, International Leadership and the Commonwealth.* His call to action will come weeks before the Commonwealth summit in Antigua & Barbuda and the 31st UN COP meeting in Turkiye.

The event is being jointly organised by the Climate Change and Oceans Directorate of the Commonwealth Secretariat and The Commonwealth Association, the alumni organization of former Commonwealth staff, in partnership with the Commonwealth Human Ecology Council. Registration at https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/alok-sharma-climate-action-international-leadership-and-the-commonwealth-tickets-2001071921986?aff=oddtdtcreator

Contact IFCO and newsletter contributions: IFCOcomms@gmail.com

STAY CONNECTED



IFCO.ONLINE

FIND US ON LINKEDIN

IFCO