

The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) 2006-2015

1. The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) 2006-2015 is an overarching implementation agenda that provides a blue print for youth development. It is relevant for governments, development partners, youth networks and young women and men who are valued partners in the process.

2. The PAYE 2006-2015 was developed through a wide-ranging consultative process with key stakeholders in all regions of the Commonwealth, building upon the lessons learnt from the implementation of the PAYE 2000-2005. It seeks to assist member governments in establishing and maintaining the enabling conditions that will allow young men and women in the Commonwealth to be empowered through to the next decade and beyond. At its core is the rights-based approach to development where the participation of young women and men across the Commonwealth is a fundamental asset in the development process.

3. The document consists of four sections. [Section 1](#) introduces the Commonwealth PAYE, explaining its background and achievements and its place in the Commonwealth's overall framework and agenda for development, democracy and human rights. [Section 2](#) discusses the context and rationale for youth empowerment and youth mainstreaming and identifies a context for achieving youth empowerment in line with MDGs targets for young women and men. [Section 3](#) analyses the 10 critical areas for Commonwealth action covered by the PAYE, and makes recommendations for strategic action by Commonwealth member governments and the Secretariat in relation to these areas. [Section 4](#) outlines how governments and the Secretariat will implement these recommendations, in collaboration with partners, and how accountability will be ensured through monitoring, evaluation and reporting.

4. The PAYE responds to the Commonwealth mission to **empower**, engage and create value so that young women and men can contribute to the economic, social and cultural advancement of their families and countries and to their own fulfilment. **Youth empowerment** has two dimensions:

- Young people are empowered when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of these actions.
- Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the directions of others. These enabling conditions fall into four broad categories:
 1. an economic and social base;
 2. political will, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks;

3. a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy; and
4. access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system.

5. The Plan of Action 2006-2015 contains 10 strategic objectives designed to engage governments, strategic partners and young people themselves on the transformational agenda of youth empowerment. These are:

PAYE 1 – Develop and implement measures to promote the economic enfranchisement of young people and their participation in the economy;

PAYE 2 – Strengthen social support systems and collaboration between key stakeholders in youth empowerment;

PAYE 3 – Develop and strengthen youth ministries/departments, national youth policies, and legislative and constitutional provisions impacting on youth affairs;

PAYE 4 – Promote positive national role models and self-images for young people, and foster their sense of responsibility and self-esteem;

PAYE 5 – Promote the full participation of young people in decision-making at all levels, including at community, local, provincial and national levels;

PAYE 6 – Take affirmative and direct action to establish gender equity for all young people, and equality of treatment and outcomes for youth in special circumstances;

PAYE 7 – Promote a democratic, stable and peaceful environment in which young people's human rights, as defined in international covenants, can be exercised fully and in which they can fully accept their responsibilities;

PAYE 8 – Take action to promote the development and maintenance of human resources and intellectual capital;

PAYE 9 – Adopt measures to improve access to information and communications technology (ICT) and to provide young people with the skills to make use of it;

PAYE 10 – Identify and implement measures to broaden youth participation in sporting and cultural activities as a means of promoting positive values, healthy lifestyles and behaviour and advancing human development.

6. Governments can benefit from the youth empowerment action points and indicators in the PAYE programmes to empower young people to participate in achievement of their development. The PAYE indicators will also be useful in helping Governments to achieve [MDG targets for young people](#).

7. The Plan of Action focuses on the human resource and life skills needs of Commonwealth youth consistent with the life-cycle approach. It encourages the creation of opportunities for training in leadership, management, community mobilisation,

organisational development and communications skills, along with other core competencies necessary to build and sustain robust youth governance structures and networks. It also emphasises the importance of the holistic development of young women and men so that they can participate fully in decision-making, advocacy and other democratic processes at community, national, regional and international levels.

8. PAYE will take place primarily at the national level. Implementation of the Plan of Action will rely heavily on mainstreaming youth issues into the national development agenda and will require real participation by young women and men in operational and governance issues across all sectors. It will also depend on the integration of programme budgeting, planning, implementation and co-ordination of youth development into the overall national development framework. This will maximise the use of scarce human and financial resources and optimise the delivery, review and evaluation of youth policy initiatives. Youth ministries and departments must be strengthened as part of this equation to ensure effective research, planning, target-setting, monitoring and evaluating progress on youth issues.

9. The effectiveness of the PAYE as a tool for advocacy, brokerage and catalytic youth development and its potential as the key reference point for youth networks and communities across the Commonwealth will also depend on the widest communication, distribution and marketing of PAYE publications and a thorough process of public sensitisation, awareness-raising and social marketing. The Secretariat will work with member governments and other partners to support this objective, through the strategic use of youth-friendly information and communications technologies (ICTs) and other media, supported by a programme of development and training.

10. The Secretariat will also work in close collaboration with the [Commonwealth Youth Caucus](#) to ensure that young women and men in the Commonwealth participate in national and regional efforts to implement the PAYE and that their implementation priorities and concerns are taken into consideration.

11. The Secretariat will provide overall increased support to governments in the implementation of the PAYE and provide policy advice and technical assistance on the implementation of youth development mainstreaming. Governments will also need to review their resource allocations in support of the implementation of the PAYE. The Secretariat will also maintain [close collaboration with key stakeholders](#) to influence better donor community support and investments for young women and men.

12. [Monitoring and Evaluation of the Plan of Action](#) will be managed by governments who should put internal mechanisms in place to assess progress made and lessons learned and to re-align implementation programmes to take into consideration any country-specific issues that apply. The Commonwealth Secretariat will develop and circulate standard reporting formats on PAYE targets and outcomes, and will continue to work in collaboration with other relevant partners to develop the [Youth Development Index \(YDI\)](#), which will serve as the primary evaluation tool of the PAYE. The Secretary-General will also regularly report on the implementation of the PAYE.