6th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting

Strategy Papers

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Commonwealth Secretariat

Contents

The Commonwealth's Response to Global Challenges Facing Youth in the 21st Century

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Introduction

Youth empowerment has long been the driving force at the centre of the work of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP). Since its establishment in 1974, CYP has engaged in projects and programmes aimed at directly or indirectly creating an enabling environment to ensure the holistic development of young Commonwealth citizens. In pursuit of this goal, CYP has been mandated by Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meetings to guide youth development within the Commonwealth, through their endorsement of youth participation and youth empowerment as overarching principles.

The democratic ideals enshrined in the Harare Declaration, translated into the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) form the basis of discussions by youth ministers at the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (CYMM) in Kuala Lumpur (1998), the World Youth Ministers Meeting in Portugal (1998), the CYMM in Solomon Islands (2000) and in Botswana (2003). It will continue to be the core guiding framework for the forthcoming CYMM in the Bahamas in May 2006. These ideas and perspectives have also informed discussions at several Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs), where youth empowerment has been endorsed as a strategy to ensure the future of the Commonwealth through its development and democracy agenda.

The CYP, through its youth empowerment and rights-based approach, has also actively influenced other organisations at global, regional, national and community level to adopt the same approach. Today, CYP is a respected youth development partner agency, working with other agencies internationally toward a progressive vision for change and development among the youth of the Commonwealth and beyond.

The CYMM this year in the Bahamas is being convened at a very important and opportune moment in the evolution of the organisation. It is time for critical self-introspection and evaluation to agree where we have come from, where we are, where we are going and how to get there. This year's CYMM needs to take stock of the emerging global technological, economic, social and political youth issues, the challenges they pose and the solutions and opportunities presented by these challenges, given the diversity of the Commonwealth.

This paper will therefore provide a broad overview of some of the major issues and challenges confronting young people, especially the millions who are Commonwealth citizens. It will then outline the case for youth development to be accorded even greater focus and significance within the broader national, regional and global development context. Finally, the paper will propose strategies, mechanisms and policies which characterise the paradigm shift from the social-welfarist, youth-fixing and quick, problem-fixing approach to a transformational, sustainable developmental approach to youth development in the Commonwealth.

Youth development

> Young people are empowered when they feel that they have and can create choices, make an informed decision freely, take actions based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of that action.
>
> The Commonwealth Plan of Action to the year 2005

For many, youth development is narrowly defined as projects, programmes and initiatives designed to help young people avoid and/or reduce exposure to harmful risk behaviours, including those associated with alcohol and substance abuse and violence. For CYP, youth development is more than risk aversion programmes for young people. Youth development encompasses dynamic and sustainable patterns of programme development and delivery that reflect the needs and aspirations of young people. It is about providing young people with relevant knowledge, skills and tools to help them contribute to a politically stable, economically viable and legally supportive environment, and to ensure their full participation as active citizens in their countries.

In the implementation of its approved 2003-2006 strategic and operational plans, CYP came face to face with a number of challenges and opportunities. In particular, the following challenges and opportunities require honest and robust debate during the CYMM in the Bahamas:

Challenges

❖ persistently high levels of poverty in many parts of the Commonwealth;

❖ widening gap between rich and poorer nations;

❖ high and rising levels of unemployment, especially in developing countries;

❖ negative effects of globalisation on many developing countries;

❖ armed conflicts in many regions of the world;

❖ growing signs of religious and ethnic intolerance, extremism and conflict;

❖ terrorism;

❖ unfair trading arrangements between developed and developing countries;

❖ the HIV/AIDS pandemic;

❖ pervasive impact of the illegal drug trade on the global social, economic and political landscape;

❖ the negative consequences of unbridled economic and social policies on significant sections of the population in many underdeveloped and developing countries;

❖ unsustainable environmental practices; and

❖ rising levels of violence and crime.

Opportunities

❖ new avenues and opportunities to expand access to education and information – critical for building sustainable livelihoods – have been created as a result of unprecedented developments in technology and telecommunications;

❖ this phenomenon has also created unprecedented opportunities for economic development, employment creation and public advocacy;

❖ the growth of democracy in many regions previously dominated by totalitarian regimes has created new opportunities for citizens to participate more meaningfully in national, political and economic processes;

❖ the insistence by multilateral institutions and agencies that governments should uphold and practice the principles of good governance has led to some successes in the fight against corruption, nepotism and waste; and finally

❖ the establishment of human development goals and social mandates by international institutions and agencies has created an enabling environment to address the negative consequences of globalisation and ineffective governance.

These global challenges highlighted here have affected humanity in the most profound manner. But the indisputable fact is that they affect young people in a disproportionate manner and therefore provide grounds for global concern. Any international forum which convenes to discuss and examine youth and youth development issues must therefore examine these global challenges and determine how to reduce their negative impact within our national and regional contexts.

There is also a compelling need to review and evaluate the existing youth development landscape and architecture. This is critically important to support the development of new and more sustainable strategies to effectively manage the existing and emerging challenges and create an enabling environment to optimise prevailing opportunities.

Most importantly, there must be visible demonstration of the appropriate awareness, vision and political will to pursue new and more sustainable youth development strategies. A major breakthrough will have been achieved if the courage and foresight to evolve from a mainly social-welfarist to transformational approach to youth development is demonstrated. Action must replace communiqués, rhetoric and other grand statements of intent. Transformational youth development must go beyond political spin.

The Commonwealth experience

Youth empowerment and youth participation have been the central pillars which have guided CYP's work. The Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment provided CYP with a comprehensive and practical framework to realise the potential of young people across the Commonwealth.

To the Commonwealth, empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their behalf and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. Young people are empowered when they can acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of these choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of that action.

Other youth development agencies have adopted the CYP Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment as a framework for informing their youth programmes, but what are the disabling factors that are consistently preventing us from achieving our desired goals?

Recently, there is growing global concern about the negative manifestations of youth socialisation and development. Throughout the Commonwealth, the widely held view is that we seem to be facing a virtual crisis in youth development. Such concerns and opinions have dominated national and regional conferences and meetings, newspaper columns, various talk shows and other popular media. Governments are under increasing pressure to formulate and implement effective strategies to address this perceived crisis among the youth.

Youth development in the Commonwealth has assumed a far more complex and challenging character over the last two decades. In the majority of the Commonwealth developing member countries, youth constitute more than 50 per cent of their populations. To ignore such a large segment of a population does not constitute economic, social or political common sense. In Commonwealth developed countries, the challenge is the sharp decline of the youth population caused by a range of factors. The challenge posed by both scenarios is equally daunting for member governments. Both cases represent a global challenge for this CYMM to address.

Prevailing economic, social and political conditions, as well as emerging cultural and religious influences in most regions have not only conspired to undermine the capacity of the state to perform its role as a medium to facilitate economic and social justice, but has also diminished the prevalence of traditional modes of socialisation and the influence of institutions such as the family, church, schools and community organisations.

Despite this ever-changing and challenging socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural environment, many if not most Commonwealth young persons have successfully managed the

challenges posed by these new global realities. Indeed, many young people in the Commonwealth continue to make significant contributions to the development of their communities and societies.

However, disturbingly significant numbers of young people are increasingly becoming the victims of social injustice, social exclusion and economic marginalisation and the active foot soldiers of acts of extremism and other forms of anti-social behaviour.

It is now well established and accepted that these socio-economic and socio-political manifestations are mainly responsible for escalating youth poverty and unemployment, as well as other social and political challenges such as the high HIV/AIDS prevalence among young people, youth violence and crime, drug abuse and drug trafficking. All of these threaten to destroy the very fabric of our societies.

Despite the success of many young people in the face of this, the youth development landscape within the Commonwealth must still tackle:

❖ increasing hopelessness among many young persons;

❖ increasing engagement of significant numbers of youth in risky behaviours;

❖ increasing apathy and disinterest in individual, family and national development;

❖ an apparent move away from involvement in traditional civic and community-based activities;

❖ disproportionate trends of poverty among urban youth as a percentage of the employable population, and the related increasing poverty of rural youth affected by the failure of traditional rural-based sources of livelihood;

❖ disturbing trends of disrespect and disregard for symbols of authority;

❖ reported underachievement and escalating social exclusion of young males in the Caribbean region, including for example domestic violence and unequal pay;

❖ issues related to gender inequality in some regions;

❖ adoption of new and controversial methods of expressing their frustrations, issues and concerns;

❖ increasing impatience with bureaucratic systems and structures; and

❖ increasing involvement of young persons in socially deviant behaviours.

Many argue that these challenges are either the direct consequence of the pervasive influence of popular, usually socially degrading and (often) non-indigenous sub-cultures and norms or that these serve to exacerbate the problem. Another disturbing trend is the effectiveness of criminal organisations and socially deviant groups, fundamentalists, misguided political forces and agents in filling the gap created by the declining influence of the former bastions of social order and civic responsibility.

Faced with such challenges, Commonwealth governments have largely switched to reactive and extreme quick-fix modes. Despite their obvious concern, Commonwealth governments' response to the youth development challenges remains, with very few exceptions, very social-welfarist, curative, and non-systemic in nature, rather than long-term, developmental, collaborative and preventive. Further, youth development agencies and structures created to manage youth policy and development are often inadequately funded and accorded very little importance in governments' hierarchies. More often than not, it is only the sheer commitment, passion and dedication of youth development workers which prevent the total irrelevance and collapse of youth development programmes in many countries.

A close examination of some of the responses and initiatives governments and some youth development agencies have adopted will reveal the following:

❖ In most countries, National Youth Policies have been formulated, but many have remained simple statements of philosophical principles and intent without a clear resource commitment for implementation.

❖ A plethora of youth enterprise programmes and diverse models for youth employment schemes have been implemented. Unfortunately, many of these are under-funded and not adequately aligned either to broader national development or to sustainable livelihood policies and goals.

To compound the problem, in most cases there is no credible mechanism that allows for evaluation of the impact of these initiatives on the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalised of youth. It becomes difficult to determine whether these are having any significant effect on youth unemployment and economic empowerment.

❖ Convening youth parliaments is now a very commendable and popular initiative. There is little evidence, however, to suggest that the issues raised therein in any way inform or influence national development policies and agendas.

❖ Most countries have adopted various models of youth participation and empowerment, including, but not limited to, the appointment of youth representatives on boards and various committees. The optimum impact of these initiatives is usually undermined by the disproportionate influence of other entrenched interests, lack of technical support and the inadequacy of youth networks themselves.

❖ Commemoration of youth weeks and months is now a common feature of the national calendar in most countries. Though commendable, these are not supported by appropriate strategies to ensure sustainability of youth support and active participation around the various themes.

❖ There are now many school-based initiatives aiming to stem violent and socially deviant behaviour among students, yet many of these initiatives are not evidence-based and cannot be accurately evaluated.

❖ Reported increased expenditure on law enforcement and penal services, but there is still obvious need for reform of the penal system and juvenile justice systems.

❖ Ironically, while many governments may have increased investment in sporting infrastructure, in many regions there still is an evident decline in comprehensive sustainable sporting and healthy lifestyles programmes.

❖ A plethora of HIV/AIDS awareness programmes exist in the Commonwealth, yet many of these programmes are neither youth-driven nor asset-based in approach.

In summary, some of the initiatives are predominantly driven by the welfare and 'feel-good' approach to youth development. At the micro level, there are some success stories, but from a macro perspective, the impact and relevance of the prevailing youth development strategies remains, at best, speculative. While some countries have developed and approved various evaluation tools and mechanisms to quantify the impact of youth development programmes, their application remains non-existent. This may very well be one of the reasons why the current youth development strategy framework is overpopulated with feel-good programmes and projects which have little or no profound impact on the Commonwealth youth development landscape.

It would appear that there is need for a paradigm shift to a transformational approach, whose focus and thrust would be the pursuit of economic empowerment, social justice and sustainable development.

Over the years, CYP has provided much-needed support and guidance to youth development frameworks throughout the Commonwealth. Through its pioneering efforts in Youth Work Education and Training, it has contributed to the development of a cadre of competent and skilled youth development professionals. Its work in the area of Youth Enterprise Development has provided the *raison d'être* for the adoption of sustainable economic empowerment strategies for the young people. It has established itself as a genuine advocate for sustainable youth development and a rights-based approach in youth development.

CYP has established many credible partnerships to help guide the formulation of policy and the establishment of an enabling youth development environment through its work in Youth Networks and Governance, as well as providing spaces for the genuine participation of young people in its governance, programme planning and implementation. One concrete result of this programme is that Commonwealth Election Observer Groups now include young people.

Even as the global partnership for sustainable youth development must be broadened to include all relevant international development agencies, Commonwealth governments must ensure that CYP is empowered to improve its effectiveness as a leading global agency in youth development.

The way forward

Given the magnitude of the challenges facing youth development efforts in the Commonwealth, there is a compelling need for a paradigm shift in the youth development strategy framework and approach. Governments, development agencies and youth networks must abandon their mainly social-welfarist posture and adopt a transformational approach to youth development.

The elements of this transformational approach must be considered on two levels. First, there is the macro level mission, vision, strategy and policy perspective, which provides the broad philosophical direction. The second is at the micro level, at which the more specific projects, programmes and activities are operationalised to translate policy and strategy into actions that address poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and crime and violence.

Macro perspective

The transformational youth development paradigm requires both an evidence-based and rights-based approach to youth development work. First, youth work programmes, projects and strategies must be informed by well-researched evidence and not based on myths, impressions, stereotyping and passion. These strategies should instead be based upon empirical data and truth which portray the youth reality.

The paradigm equally relies on a rights-based approach to youth development. Policy-makers must disabuse themselves of the idea that young people are problems to be addressed. Instead, they should embrace the fact that, like any other citizens, young people have a right to sustainable livelihoods; they have a right to advocate their needs, desires, fears and opinions; and they must be accorded appropriate and adequate opportunities to fulfil their needs and aspirations.

Perhaps most importantly, governments and youth development agencies and youth networks must adopt a strategic approach to youth development. This requires the formulation of a strategic youth development plan which includes a clear vision, definable and attainable goals and objectives, precise performance indicators and credible evaluation strategies. The vision and goals of this strategic plan must be aligned to the broader national development goals, which should clearly articulate a youth-mainstreaming approach. It must also build in the implementation mechanisms that will transform policy into action.

Additionally, governments and major international agencies must ensure youth development issues are accorded even greater priority in the broader context of national development.

International development agencies have signalled a desire to engage in a global partnership to promote and advance a more progressive youth development agenda, but there is still need for these partnerships and alliances to be strengthened and deepened, to achieve more efficient use of scarce resources, and to confront the various youth development challenges in a more organised and concentrated manner. Governments, development agencies and youth must form partnerships that work for a common goal, not in competition with each other.

All strategies must acknowledge the financial and budgetary constraints facing many Commonwealth governments; nevertheless, governments must demonstrate the political will to increase significantly the current level of investment in youth development. In this regard, member governments should note that inadequate investment in youth development may be the deciding factor between the existing environment of despair and hopelessness and the potential for creativity and productivity. Finally, there should be no doubt that governments have a moral responsibility to ensure the existence of an effective youth development agenda. They will need to engage and build sustainable partnerships with young people and other stakeholders, such as the corporate and non-governmental sector, to formulate and execute effective youth development strategies and programmes

Micro perspective

Governments should consider the following activities and approaches to plan more effective and resource-efficient projects and activities:

❖ Engage in a process of reforming and repositioning youth development ministries and agencies to become more proactive in their approach. Timeliness, relevance and efficient service delivery should become the underlying principles of operation. It may also be appropriate to consider the suitability and capacity of civil service structures to efficiently and effectively deliver quality youth development services. Consideration should be given to the formation of autonomous parastatal bodies or joint venture entities to function as executing agencies for strategic youth development plans.

❖ At the national and regional levels, there is a lack of credible research on emerging trends of youth poverty, youth socialisation and behaviour. As part of the reform process, consideration must be given to developing and enhancing the research capacity of ministries, departments and youth development agencies. This will facilitate the documentation and presentation of credible data and analysis which should serve to enhance the policy formulation environment.

❖ Many of the traditional tools of intervention are becoming less and less effective. It is necessary to consider, develop, adopt and implement new and more effective tools of intervention. Here, the use of popular education and communication techniques should be given prominence.

❖ There is also an urgent need to adopt effective evaluation tools and mechanisms to assess and quantify the impact and relevance of programmes and initiatives. This will assist in ensuring more efficient use of scarce resources and greater accountability.

❖ There is little evidence that the various youth entrepreneurship and employment programmes as they are presently configured will achieve any sustainable and profound impact on youth unemployment and satisfy youth desires for economic and social justice. It is imperative that a more comprehensive and better co-ordinated approach be adopted in the execution of these initiatives. Such programmes must respond to changing global economic arrangements while providing opportunities to progress from micro to medium and full-fledged enterprises and industries. It is also vital to explore and exploit the opportunities provided by the rich cultural heritage of these countries.

❖ The existing avenues and mechanisms to ensure and facilitate youth participation are mainly ad hoc and tokenistic in nature. Appropriate legislative and policies should be adopted to ensure that young people are adequately empowered to participate as equals in the various decision and policy-making forums and organs of the state.

❖ The issue of penal and juvenile justice reform must become a priority youth development goal. Often, young people become trapped in an impersonal, inadequate system which will ultimately rob them of their potential to be active, productive citizens.

❖ Despite the relatively underdeveloped status of most Commonwealth countries, the emerging prevalence of information and communications technology (ICT) must be seen as an opportunity to advance development. A comprehensive policy should be developed to expand access to ICT for creating new educational opportunities, providing new business opportunities and increasing space for advocacy and information exchange. Due consideration must be given to elevating young people from merely being consumers to becoming producers and developers of ICT products and services.

Youth Networks should themselves consider the following:

❖ Many existing youth networks are ineffective, inefficiently managed and unattractive to significant numbers of youth at risk. This has served to undermine their ability to be effective advocates and representatives of young people. These networks should engage in a process of capacity-building and repositioning. Opportunities must be provided to youth leaders to acquire leadership and management skills and other relevant competencies to steer this process.

❖ As the majority of young people are indifferent to the existence and functioning of youth networks, these networks should engage in a comprehensive mobilisation and recruitment programme. Beyond this, they must ensure there is adequate transparency and participation in their policy and decision-making processes to ensure sustainable and full youth participation. These networks need also to identify adequate sources of sustainable funding for administrative and programming functions.

Whither the CYP?

CYP has established itself as a valuable partner in youth development. It will continue to play a critical role in advocating and nurturing the paradigm shift from a social-welfarist to a transformational approach to youth development.

Its programme focus for the 2006-2008 period will seek to consolidate gains made in the field of youth development, while acknowledging the existing challenges.

CYP is advocating for developing youth enterprises and promoting sustainable livelihood activities through its **Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihood (YESL)** programme area, as an alternative, more holistic approach. This strategic approach recognises that factors associated with poverty are interconnected and correlated. For instance, people with poor financial and social assets might be more at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS because they might be forced to engage in risky sexual behaviours to earn an income. This integrated, holistic approach is consistent with overarching Commonwealth principles relating to creating sustainable livelihoods and the role these play in promoting youth empowerment and socio-economic development.

If we are to work towards eradication of poverty – where poverty "must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than lowness of income" (Amartya Sen) – then it is imperative that governments recognise the role professional youth workers can play in promoting youth development and therefore national development. Through the **Youth Work Education and Training (YWET)** programme, governments can ensure that proper professional youth work training courses are set up in all parts of the Commonwealth. Youth workers play a critical role as agents of transformation through the engagement with young people, and without their involvement, young people would struggle to realise their full potential.

CYP's understanding of development is broad and holistic and is viewed from a rights-based perspective. The **Governance, Development and Youth Networks (GDYN)** programme area is an example of this comprehensive approach to change creation because it values the positive impact that youth participation in decision-making can bring to individual as well as societal development. In this context, all young people live in 'developing' societies because all Commonwealth states are still refining ways in which they value and centralise young people as active citizens. Unfortunately, no society can yet claim to have achieved a perfect world that works for all young people and this is as true of so-called developed states as it is of developing states. If we are serious about young people being partners in development and democracy, then all Commonwealth societies (regardless of their Human Development Index ranking) need to engage with the questions explored in this paper.

The **Youth Development Index (YDI)** has the potential to impact positively on youth development strategies and programmes in Commonwealth member countries and beyond. It can assist governments and donors to develop programmes that will better target resources to enhance the performance of development agencies engaged in youth development work. Besides being used as a measure for youth development, it will enable development planners and practitioners to identify areas that need specific attention, compare progress between countries, advocate for youth and support the development of appropriate youth policies.

Youth empowerment and development refer to strategies and outcomes to make young people self-reliant and secure in realising their livelihoods on a sustainable basis. Such strategies relate to the adequate allocation of resources by policy-makers in the first instance, and in the second, to the

creation of a framework to enable, promote and sustain the effective participation of young people in policy formulation, programme implementation and decision-making.

The Plan of Action will continue to define the framework for youth engagement within the Commonwealth. It reflects the Commonwealth's principles and values and incorporates its responses to the differential impacts of global changes and challenges on young women and men throughout the Commonwealth. Young people and their sustainable development is one of the fundamental priorities for Commonwealth Heads of Government. The Commonwealth supports and promotes its own objectives for the development and empowerment of young people and fully supports other global initiatives such as the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which have young people and children as their major target.

For CYP to maintain its relevance as a major player in the emerging youth–focused, globally connected world there are a few issues which require urgent consideration. Some of these are outlined below:

❖ At a time when many question the relevance of the Commonwealth in the current global environment, a vibrant, visionary and pace-setting CYP and its work with and for young people will provide a formidable *raison d'être* for the relevance and continued existence of the Commonwealth. Every effort must be made to mainstream CYP's work within the broader context of the Commonwealth Secretariat and other collaborating partners. Just as we challenge governments to accord youth development a more integral and central role in national development, so too must the work of the CYP become a central plank of the overall Commonwealth agenda.

❖ CYP must be empowered to undertake or co-ordinate appropriate research initiatives on youth development issues.

❖ Its capacity to analyse, package and disseminate relevant research findings must be strengthened. This will enhance CYP's ability to engage in more effective advocacy on youth development issues and will further enhance its capacity to provide invaluable policy guidance to member countries.

❖ Social marketing is also another effective tool to enhance public awareness about youth issues, but it is an even more effective tool to help shape consciousness and initiate action. There is an urgent need to enhance the CYP capacity to engage in a comprehensive programme of social marketing.

❖ Finally, CYP has always channelled its commitment to effective youth participation through the Regional Youth Caucus. Appropriate structures and resources must now be made available to enhance the effectiveness of this programme by governments at national level.

Conclusion

CYP has demonstrated the capacity and potential to assist member governments as their premier global advocate on issues related to youth poverty, HIV/AIDS and violence and crime as the Commonwealth response to the global challenges facing young people in the 21st century.

The proposals and strategies proffered in this paper are not intended to be a panacea for all the challenges and problems of youth development in the Commonwealth. Rather, these proposals are intended to provide the upcoming CYMM in the Bahamas with a launching pad for a comprehensive, robust and frank engagement and re-examination of the youth development agenda in the Commonwealth. It is hoped that these discussions will act as an incentive to create a more strategic and sustainable youth development agenda that ensures that there was, there is and there always will be a strong, vibrant and relevant Commonwealth.

This CYMM provides an opportune platform for this road mapping to take place, and we look forward to a vigorous takeoff and, most importantly, a successful and safe landing.

Henry Charles

Henry Charles has served in the youth movement for over twenty years, including 4 years as an executive member of the Saint Lucia National Youth Council and 2 years as secretary/treasurer of the Caribbean Federation of Youth.

As a trade unionist, Henry was the longest serving General Secretary of the Saint Lucia Civil Service Association (1985-1997). During his tenure, the Union was upgraded from a weak and divided entity to become one of the most vibrant and influential social partners in Saint Lucia. He has represented Saint Lucia and the region at numerous regional and international conferences and also served as regional education coordinator for Public Services International, which is the largest confederation of public sector unions.

Over the past several years, Henry has been responsible for the co-ordination and management of various public sector projects to provide employment opportunities and social relief for youth and other less fortunate individuals.

He is a passionate student of history, global political and current affairs and is also an amateur poet and freelance writer. An avid cricket fan, Henry also has a keen and abiding interest in African and Caribbean folklore and a wide spectrum of Caribbean music.

Governance, Development and Youth Networks (GDYN)

Amanda Shah

Introduction

In today's modern Commonwealth, members are bound together by more than shared history or a common language. The thread that binds together 53 states from across the globe is shared commitment to a set of common, Commonwealth values. The Harare Declaration, the Fancourt Declaration and the Aso Rock Declaration[1], among others, make it clear that this is an association which values human rights, good governance, sustainable development and human security for all. In our efforts to make these values real, the energies, talents and resources of all Commonwealth citizens will be needed, and this includes those of young people.

In fact, Commonwealth leaders have specifically recognised the centrality of young people to powering positive change in our societies, as well as their unique role in global development efforts such as the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the 2003 Aso Rock Declaration Commonwealth leaders recognised that "[…] more than fifty per cent of the population of the Commonwealth is below thirty years of age. All Commonwealth efforts to achieve the MDGs must reflect this demographic reality by including young people in development and democracy".

This sentiment was reiterated at the 2005 Malta Commonwealth summit where Heads of Government "[…] reaffirmed their commitment to the inclusion of youth in Commonwealth efforts that sought achievement of the MDGs".

The Governance, Development and Youth Networks (GDYN) strategic programme area of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) aims to provide an enabling environment for young people to become central actors in such societal change, specifically in planning and taking decisions about development. The philosophy behind GDYN centralises youth participation during the design and conception of programmes and not just during the implementation of adult formulated plans. It sees youth participation in decision-making as having no sectoral boundaries – this philosophy is as relevant to the business community as it is to government or youth organisations. It also uses a rights-based framework to underpin its aims and to guide its actions.

This paper begins by exploring briefly what we mean by some of the key terms in this area of CYP's work – governance, human rights and development – and how they can be useful agents when promoting youth empowerment. The next part of the paper focuses on the rationale behind youth participation in decision-making processes. It is hoped this section will provide some useful arguments for those advocating youth participation with actors not traditionally involved with young people. The paper then moves on to offer examples of how the theory of rights-based youth participation has been translated into action. Case studies are included to provoke discussion on how this programme area can be realised after the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (CYMM). Finally, suggestions are offered on areas which CYP and its partners might focus on to enable young people's voices to be heard loud and clear in the decision-making processes that shape their societies.

Who makes decisions?

When we talk about governance, we are really talking about the way in which decisions are made within our societies. Citizens have been reassessing the roles expected of them and their elected decision-makers and many, young and old, see occasional trips to the ballot box as just the beginning of their involvement. In short, they expect to be active citizens.

As a result, the range of actors involved in decision-making has diversified. In many Commonwealth countries governance now involves a combination of actors, including:

❖ the state;

❖ active citizens and their networks;

❖ the private sector;

❖ the media.

Many sources agree that despite the enlargement of governance actors, a strong and responsive state is essential for societies to function well[2]. Moreover, the fundamental job of the executive and legislative branches of government (why they are voted into office) is the making and implementing of decisions. For this reason, while young active citizens expect more than the right to vote (a right denied to many on grounds of age), engagement with the process of choosing governments is still a key way in which young people can influence decision-making.

How are decisions made? The role of rights

The range of actors involved in decision-making within the Commonwealth has increased, but some societies have adopted the mechanics of governance without adopting the corresponding rights-based values that ensure all groups have a say, rather than just the most powerful, the loudest or the most affluent. Young people can often be trampled over in the rush to the decision-making table, particularly in the absence of a rights framework to promote and protect their involvement.

At the 2003 CYMM, "a new paradigm guiding the CYP and its work [was adopted…] based on international human rights standards". As a result, CYP's work on youth participation is viewed through a rights-based lens – a lens which is in keeping with the Commonwealth's fundamental values. Proponents of the rights-based approach, such as CYP, argue that it can provide a vibrant and, importantly, a workable framework through which to achieve decision-making that is shaped by the views of those affected, including young people.

So, what are some of the arguments in favour of rights-based approaches and how can they be useful in ensuring the role of youth in decision-making?

❖ the duality between rights and responsibilities makes us all, young and old, rights holders and duty bearers and helps identify where these boundaries lie in real-life scenarios;

❖ the concept of rights as entitlements represents an enforceable tool for young people when navigating adult-youth relations in which decision-making power often lies in the hands of adults;

❖ the interdependence and indivisibility of rights underpin a holistic view of development as a total human experience;

❖ 'good' governance provides a climate where rights can be realised, as well as embodying the realisation of rights. Governance principles such as accountability, transparency, participation, equity, equality can be negotiated through a rights/responsibilities framework;

❖ rights can link macro-level policies or legislation with micro-level realities and relationships;

❖ rights are empowering, they encourage active participation and ownership which in turn lead to more relevant, sustainable policy-making.

A rights-based approach does not provide a blueprint for development processes but it does provide a framework of values through which decisions on development can be made, and competing claims to decision-making powers, resources or development outcomes can be weighed.

How does rights-based decision-making shape development?

The Commonwealth's commitment to human rights influences more than its view of how decisions should be made – it also shapes the Commonwealth's view of development. In the past, discussions on development centred on economic growth and quantitative indicators. Now, development discourse speaks of a broader, more holistic and qualitative view of human experience which:

❖ enables the expansion of human capabilities, allowing people to lead healthy, creative and fulfilling lives within 'good' societies;

❖ focuses upon the needs of society's most vulnerable, to ensure development benefits the poor rather than just resource-poor countries;

❖ recognises the importance of longevity and sustainability rather than short-term gain at the expense of future generations.

> **What do you mean by a rights-based approach to development?**
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> In 2002, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights conducted a study of rights-based approaches to development. The study drew on documentation from UN agencies, development co-operation agencies and NGOs. It showed that there are different understandings of how development and human rights are related. Four levels of integration of rights into the development process were identified through the study:
>
> 1 successful development leads to respect for human rights;
>
> 2 respect for human rights contributes to sustainable development;
>
> 3 realisation of human rights as a goal of development; and
>
> 4 realisation of all human rights as the ultimate goal of development.
>
> Which one most closely describes your perception of the relationship between rights and development?
>
> Taken from Paul Gready and Jonathan Ensor (Eds), Reinventing Development? Translating Rights-based Approaches from Theory into Practice, (2005)

This approach defines development as the political, social, economic and cultural transformation of individuals and their societies from the micro to the macro level. It also centralises the voices of those affected by development processes and recognises that for development processes to work for the many rather than the few, the way in which decisions over development programmes are made is of paramount importance. If development is to be 'by the people, for the people,' then it requires the active participation of those whose reality is to be affected. Fundamentally, this involves young people.

Young people: a place in the governance of development?

Across the Commonwealth, young people's voices are frequently marginalised during discussions on societal development. Despite this, there are strong arguments why young people must not be ignored and why their involvement is of central importance. This section examines the rationale behind youth participation in governance and makes arguments which can be used by youth ministries, youth agencies and others when promoting youth participation with partners unfamiliar with working with young people.

National development is youth development

Young people's participation in decision-making structures promotes both their own development and the development of their societies, present and future. It is not just the outcome of development processes that matter but the process itself – both have the potential to bring about the practical realisation of young people's rights.

CYP refers to this as "a spiral of development[3]" in which:

❖ **young people's participation in governance enables them to develop as active citizens**

Participating in processes of transformation gives young people space to explore what they consider to be a 'good' society and their role in transforming their communities. It also allows young people to develop skills and techniques that they can use to protect their own rights and the rights of others. CYP has noted that "[y]oung people who are practiced at being assertive will be better able to deal with abusive, threatening or unfair situations. They are better able to seek advice or exit a harmful situation where necessary[4]". Research also indicates that young people's involvement in positive adult-youth relationships "decreases the risk of their engaging in risky or anti-social behaviour[5]".

❖ **their input promotes more relevant and accountable development processes**

Young people can provide useful information and ideas about policy areas that affect them in their families, schools, communities, work places, etc. Their input can promote development which is more relevant, more sustainable and better owned.

❖ **their societies develop to provide an enabling environment for young people (and other frequently excluded groups) to thrive**

For a society to prioritise youth participation requires a process of self-reflection as to its core values. The connection between youth participation and wider democratisation has been articulated by Steve Mokwena, "young people's participation is in itself a marker for a society's development […] young people are a barometer which we can use to measure the level of social cohesion, democratisation or lack of it[6]".

In fact, youth participation is a prime example of how democracy and development can be mutually reinforcing.

Rights, not charity

Let us not forget that young people have the right to participate in the developmental processes taking place in their societies. This right is most clearly articulated in the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (ICRC) which, as the most widely ratified international human rights convention, provides important normative standards as well as hard legal obligations for state parties. Article 12 of the ICRC affirms that:

❖ young people have the right to participate in decisions which affect them;

❖ states have a corresponding responsibility to ensure this right is upheld;

> **Commonwealth statements on the links between democracy and development**
>
> Commonwealth leaders have recognised the mutual reinforcement of democracy and development in transforming societies in ways that allow for human potential to be realised. For example, one of the central themes of the 2003 Report of the Commonwealth Expert Group on Development and Democracy was that development processes themselves must be a practical manifestation of democratic values. Here are some snapshots of the Commonwealth's view:
>
> *The Commonwealth is deeply committed to both democracy and development, which in its view, are organically linked*
> – Taken from a Commonwealth Secretariat Press Release, (23 August 2005)
>
> *We further recognise that while development and democracy are goals each in its own right, they must be mutually reinforcing, with a clear 'democratic dividend', in terms of delivering tangible benefits to people. We are convinced that broad-based prosperity creates the stability conducive to the promotion of democracy; and that strong democratic institutions better promote development.*
> – Taken from the Aso Rock Commonwealth Declaration on Development and Democracy: Partnership for Peace and Prosperity, (2003)
>
> *While development and democracy are goals in their own right, they can and should be mutually reinforcing.*
> – Taken from the Report of the Commonwealth Expert Group on Development and Democracy, (2003)

❖ the views expressed by young people should be taken into account.

This is a powerful and incontestable argument. By participating in governance, young people are claiming their rightful place within the decision-making process and adults are discharging the duties incumbent upon them through the rights-responsibilities paradigm. Although it is still often perceived as a charitable concession to be handed out when it suits, youth participation is actually a central part of societal decision-making. Every time youth participation is not centralised, young people's rights are being violated. This is true, both at the micro (at the level of individual relationships within families, schools and communities) and at the macro level (at the level of national development plans or international conferences).

Linking today and tomorrow

Development is about connecting the present and the future. The outcomes of today's development processes will determine the societies we live in tomorrow. As the adults of societies shaped by today's development programmes, young people therefore have a huge amount at stake.

Development discourse often refers to the desire to build a better future for our children. This sentiment does not always translate into the meaningful participation of young people as central actors in developmental planning. If young people are not involved in the development decisions made today, there is no guarantee that they will be interested in the societies being built for tomorrow. It would be unthinkable for a builder not to involve a landowner in deciding how his house should be built – why should it be different for young people in development planning? Instead, the *World Fit for Children* report urges us to nurture "[t]he energy and creativity of children and young people […] so that they can actively take part in shaping their environment, their societies and the world they will inherit[7]".

Young people want to be involved

Youth engagement with development processes is not just a matter of adults ceding power to young people. It is about young people saying, "my society needs change" and then spontaneously claiming their rights to affect this change. Young people have always been motors for social change, writes Charlemagne Gomez in *C21 Citizens: Young People in a Changing Commonwealth*, and the goal for youth agencies is therefore "for all young people to contribute and participate fully in the social, economic, political and cultural life of their communities, and [to] build on the ways in which they are already are contributing."

There is a desire on the part of many young people to be involved and it is imperative that governance structures harness this energy and power rather than disenfranchising young people by encouraging them to sit back and wait for others (adults) to take care of development. Rights and their corresponding responsibilities do not begin when young people reach the age of majority. Or, as Ignatius Takawira of CYP puts it, "[t]he creation of active Commonwealth citizens must start now in order for tomorrow to come[8]".

Using human capital

We live in a young Commonwealth and, as CYP's Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) points out, young people are "the greatest resource for Commonwealth nations' future development." It is an immoral waste of ideas, resources and manpower not to include the energies of two thirds of the Commonwealth's citizens in processes of development. This was emphasised in the 2003 Aso Rock Declaration, which recognised the need for the "active participation of civil society, including

women and youth" in the pursuit of pro-poor development. The persuasive logic behind this argument has much overlap with discussions about women's participation in decision-making.

Making youth participation a reality: how to go about it

So far, this paper has concentrated on the rationale – or the 'whys' – behind youth participation in planning societal change and development. Now let us look at some examples of this rationale being translated into practice – the 'hows' of youth participation in governance. These case studies are offered as a means of provoking discussion rather than as concrete examples of good practice. The thread that binds these examples is an outlook which sees young people as active protagonists rather than passive recipients.

> ### Fighting for the rights of asylum seeking children in the UK
>
> In Scotland, a group of seven girls from Drumchapel High School came together as the Glasgow Girls to campaign against dawn raids to deport young asylum seekers and their families. Supported by their school and wider community, the girls have successfully prevented the removal of fellow pupils and their families. The campaigning teenagers were honoured for running the most effective and imaginative political campaign of 2005 at the Herald Diageo Politician of the Year Awards. Upon hearing that a family, on whose behalf they had been campaigning, had been given a reprieve, one of the Glasgow Girls stated, "I found out yesterday and everyone is delighted they were not deported. We will continue to campaign."

Youth ministries and the voice of youth in decision-making

Post-independence in Timor-Leste, a specific government portfolio has been created for youth and sport. Through its Leadership for Economic Development (LED) Programme, the nascent secretariat has been working to achieve nation-wide youth input in the development of a national youth policy and dialogue on national development. How is this being attempted?

❖ Young people's social, educational, health and aspirational profiles were surveyed and, with existing data, were captured in the Timor-Leste Youth Social Analysis. The analysis helped identify the major challenges young people saw themselves as facing.

❖ Results of the survey helped identify the crosscutting nature of issues affecting young people. As a result the new Secretary of State for Youth and Sport commented, "[v]ery soon we will be organising inter-ministerial meetings to co-ordinate our plans for youth".

> ### Young people say 'no' to poverty
>
> In December 2005, Y Care International held a conference in the UK to take forward the anti-poverty campaign. The make-up and format of the conference shows how a number of the concepts discussed here can be applied in practice.
>
> • Value of local and international networks: in workshops, young people shared campaign ideas and learnt from youth leaders who had visited Y Care projects in India. This led to discussions on potential partnerships with YMCAs in the South.
>
> • Diverse enabling environments: different forms of self-expression were encouraged through drama workshops and capoeira workshops
>
> • Importance of the process itself: A YMCA youth worker commented "[i]t's about teaching young people in our society beyond the curriculum, beyond Maths and English. There are other things in life that they need to know about."
>
> • Recognising young people's desire to participate: Opportunities for discussion and action challenged assumptions that all young people are apathetic about politics. One participant said "[w]e want to speak to Tony Blair face to face. We don't know how easy it is but we're going to try."
>
> – Taken from a Y Care International Press Release, (10 December 2005)

❖ World Bank-supported workshops have been held for youth leaders from 26 youth councils. According to the LED project co-ordinator: "We are strengthening the youth councils through training for leadership, organisational management, financial management, entrepreneurship skills and conflict management programmes. This will empower them to take part in national

development programmes and make them more effective in youth outreach programmes in the districts."

❖ Timor-Leste is challenged by the involvement of high numbers of young people in martial arts groups, which, during the independence struggle, formed part of the strategy for fighting the Indonesians. Now, the government wants to ensure that these groups make a transition to purely sports activities rather than perpetuating uncivil acts such as gang fights. The view of the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport is that "It's a question of leadership first; a good leader should be able to control the organisation. We are also going to draft new laws for those who want to establish organisations […]. Each organisation will have to register its policy and there will be penalties for those who default[9]".

Volunteerism

It is clear that many young people are already motors for positive change and that a large part of their activity is done voluntarily. In the USA, Youth Service America (YSA) has been working since 1986 to increase the quantity and quality of opportunities for young people to volunteer. Areas on which YSA has focused include:

❖ sharing good practice. Information is gathered from across the field and repackaged into knowledge tools. Dissemination takes a range of formats – from a National Service Briefing sent to 5,000 groups, to a National Service Learning Conference where youth leaders discuss how youth can strengthen their efforts;

❖ changing public opinion of youth. Public awareness campaigns include National and Global Youth Service Day (the world's largest service event); awards sponsored by government and industry which recognise young Americans' volunteer efforts; and partnerships with a leading national magazine which devotes two front covers per year to youth service issues;

❖ incubating innovation and preparing leadership. YSA provides training and technical assistance to support youth service-related organisations and young leaders.

YSA's research has found that young people who volunteer are 50 per cent less likely to abuse drugs and alcohol, more likely to do better academically and are more likely to be active citizens as adults. Furthermore, young people's involvement in, for example, strategies to prevent drug, tobacco or alcohol dependency promotes a positive image of youth as action-oriented assets rather than problems to be solved. Or, as an International Youth Foundation report puts it, "[it] shift[s] the responsibility for preventing problems away from professionals and agencies to the youth themselves becoming responsible for decisions that affect their lives[10]".

Youth parliaments

Another strategy for promoting governance and youth participation is youth parliaments. There are already many youth parliaments operating in different countries and offering different outcomes and experiences. Some act as an educational vehicle to enable young people to explore democratic ideas and models in practice as well as developing self-confidence and skills. Others provide direct routes for young people's views to be heard and to influence policy.

Members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) – including parliaments as diverse as Sierra Leone, Queensland, Zambia and Norfolk Island – have organised youth parliaments, and the CPA itself has organised three Commonwealth-wide youth parliaments. One of the aims of the CPA-led event was to "engage young people in a debate around the governance issues in their countries and train them to become agents of change in their community and partners in development". Acting as a hub for disseminating lessons learnt and drawing on its own experiences, the CPA developed a youth parliament planning kit to assist others.

Empowering unengaged youth

Marginalised or isolated young people (exactly those whose views need to be heard in development decision-making) often fall outside networks of structured associational activity. This presents problems for youth ministries who traditionally use structured hubs of activity to provide a framework for networking with young people. Young people outside this framework are undoubtedly harder to engage with, and to ensure their voices are heard requires creative thinking.

In many contexts, young people themselves have been supported to reach out to unengaged youth, through their informal networks within family, schools and neighbourhoods or through more structured activity. For example in Nepal young people involved in child clubs have become "more aware of excluded groups and [have started] making greater efforts to ensure that clubs and participation initiatives include children with disabilities, younger children, both girls and boys[11]".

In Egypt, Uganda and Zambia, UN agencies have worked with the Girl Guide movement to set up Guide units in refugee camps. The Guides act as a channel for information about health issues (particularly reproductive health) and for training peer educators among adolescent girls. According to the girls, as a result of their involvement they have become more self-confident, developed a sense of group identity and benefited from a relationship with a mentor. The UN Population Fund (one of the UN agencies involved) concluded that, "[e]ssentially, the Girl Guides offered a safe space in which the displaced adolescents could learn and grow[12]".

> ### Child Clubs in Nepal
>
> Tens of thousands of young people aged 8-17 years are involved in about 3,000 child clubs across Nepal. The clubs meet weekly to share views and organise on issues such as improving the school environment, sports, raising money to pay for poorer children's schoolbooks or improving the child rights situation within communities.
>
> Strategies adopted by child clubs to increase recognition of youth rights and youth participation have included:
>
> * legal recognition. In 2001, the Supreme Court of Nepal granted child clubs the right to register their organisations and based its decision on article 15 of the ICRC (right of association);
> * establishment of district level child club networks and the forming of stronger partnerships with Village Development Committees (local level governing bodies responsible for basic services) and District Child Welfare Boards;
> * involvement in national level policies. Young people have contributed to Nepal's five-year plans and to the country's ICRC report through an inclusive process supported by Save the Children and the Government of Nepal;
> * impact on organisations working with young people – NGOs used to support child participation 'projects'. Now children's participation is integral to programmes and is being encouraged at every stage of the programme cycle.
>
> – Taken from Theis and O'Kane, (2005)[13]

Recommendations

We have explored the 'whys' of participation through a rights-based lens and examined some implementing strategies through case studies. The task for CYMM is to consider how CYP might best use its position to actualise youth participation in governance. Here, some recommendations are offered:

1 Leading by example

Organisations working with young people have an important example-setting role – if the values they espouse are not evidenced in their behaviour then their message will ring hollow. This requires an examination of how deeply embedded the philosophy of rights-based decision-making has been internalised within CYP and its partners.

When young people contact the Commonwealth Secretariat or the Commonwealth Youth Programme, do they come away feeling valued and respected, or are they treated as time wasters within an 'adult' world?

Are there clear and accountable recruitment practices in place within youth ministries so that young people see good governance in action?

Are decision-making structures within national youth councils flat or hierarchical and what does this say to young people about power sharing?

Holding Commonwealth summits in retreat may work for heads of government, but what message does it send to young people about the Commonwealth as a closed and exclusive forum? (In fact, Commonwealth meetings could learn much from the inclusive approach to youth participation as practiced by the CYMMs.)

2   Values in action

If young people are to take the Commonwealth seriously as a vehicle for positive change, they need to see Commonwealth values in action. Too often, commitments made by member states are left as unrealised aspirations rather than plans of action. CYP should use its position as an inter-governmental Commonwealth agency to advocate a 'report-back' of actions taken by member states towards the implementation of commitments made at previous Commonwealth summits. These report-backs should focus on how young people have been involved. Youth ministries should initiate national dialogue in preparation for report-backs. This would develop advocacy skills and experience among young people, while simultaneously creating a more transparent system of national policy-making and demonstrating young people's contribution to international development processes.

3   Standard-setting

CYP has a clear role in promoting high standards in the participatory practices of its partners. At its most basic level, this means ensuring that personnel are confident with the theory of rights-based approaches and how they can apply in practice to youth participation.

CYP should facilitate the provision of any further training which may be required by partners to enable them to:
❖   examine their own working practices;
❖   develop programmes and structures in the light of a rights framework; and
❖   become advocates themselves for rights-based governance.

The need for this type of training may be particularly strong in partners from sectors unused to working with young people such as the media, the private sector or even certain branches of government.

4   Hub of good practice

CYP is a hub of information on youth participation and should facilitate the sharing of good practice through exchange visits, workshops or publications. It can draw upon expertise in human rights education from Commonwealth agencies such as the Commonwealth Secretariat's Human Rights Unit (HRU) or the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI). Both HRU and CHRI run short- to medium-term internship programmes which develop an understanding of Commonwealth values among a pool of young people, and CHRI has already conducted training on Commonwealth values within CYP's diploma course. CYP could institutionalise a link with expert agencies, such as CHRI, HRU and others, to promote capacity-building among youth agencies.

5   Removing barriers

Young people's participatory rights are inalienable, yet in reality they face barriers to fully accessing their entitlements. To facilitate successful strategies to overcome these barriers requires information about *which* young people face *what* barriers.

Usefully, PAYE identifies four conditions for the creation of an enabling environment for youth empowerment.[14] However, young people do not face uniform sets of problems – gender, class, age,

education, religion, resources, ethnicity, health, location (urban/rural) and family all create different threats and opportunities to participation. The conditions outlined in PAYE are a useful starting point, but young people themselves are best placed to advise youth agencies on the hurdles preventing their full participation in society, how these hurdles can be overcome and the roles they expect of youth-friendly adult organisations in facilitating this change. This form of dialogue is the essential building block of a national youth plan in which development is for and by young people. CYP should work with youth ministries on mechanisms through which young people participate in the development of national youth plans and wider national development plans.

6   Brokering resources

When mobilised, partners from different sectors can offer different tools and resources. CYP has a role in brokering such resources. Here, potential partners from among Commonwealth agencies have been suggested:

❖   young people are not the only sector of society facing problems in accessing their entitlements – lessons can be learnt and shared with other social movements (women's groups, trade unions, refugee organisations, etc).
Contact suggestions: Association of Commonwealth Amnesty International Sections (ACAIS), CHRI, Commonwealth Women's Network;

> **Promoting participation by raising standards**
>
> In response to inconsistency in the quality of participatory approaches, Save the Children has developed a set of "practice standards […] to ensure consistent, high quality child participation practice throughout Save the Children's programmes." Key planks within the standards are:
> • an ethical approach: transparency and honesty
> • children's participation is relevant and voluntary
> • a child friendly, enabling environment
> • equality and equity in participation
> • staff are effective and confident
> • participation promotes the safety and protection of children
> • ensuring follow-up and evaluation.
>   – Taken from Save the Children, Practice Standards in Children's Participation: Introduction to Practice Standards in Child Participation, (2005)

❖   organisations in the legal or constitutional environment can offer technical support and advice on strategies to remove legal impediments that may stifle youth participation such as curbs on their right to information or access to education.
Contact suggestions: Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Commonwealth Lawyers Association, Commonwealth Legal Education Association;

❖   the private sector can provide material resources, work experience, training opportunities and sponsorship.
Contact suggestion: Commonwealth Business Council;

❖   local media sources can provide space for youth opinions to be heard as well as raising public awareness of the positive contribution that young people make to societal development – the need for celebrating successes is particularly important.
Contact suggestions: Commonwealth Press Union, Commonwealth Journalists Association, Commonwealth Broadcasting Association.

Conclusion

CYP's understanding of development is broad and holistic and, with other Commonwealth inter-governmental agencies, is viewed from a rights-based perspective. The GDYN programme area is an example of this comprehensive approach to change creation because it values the positive impact that youth participation in decision-making can bring to individual as well as societal development.

In this context, all young people live in 'developing' societies because all Commonwealth states are still refining ways in which they value and centralise young people as active citizens. Unfortunately,

no society can yet claim to have achieved a perfect world that works for all young people and this is as true of so-called 'developed' states as it is of 'developing' states. If we are serious about young people being 'partners in development and democracy,' then all Commonwealth societies (regardless of their Human Development Index ranking) need to engage with the questions explored in this paper.

The challenge is to work towards a framework where, as PAYE suggests, "[t]he empowerment of young people is everybody's business." This requires CYP, youth ministries, youth councils and others to engage with a much broader set of partners than might previously have been the case, and it brings on board many agencies with no, or little, experience of interacting with young people at all, let alone in a meaningful, participatory or rights-based way. This paper has suggested some ideas, offered as a start to further discussions, on how CYP can, through a facilitative, exemplary, creative, cross-sectoral and rights-based approach, best use its strategic advantage to broker change through its partners.

In the 2005 *In Larger Freedom* report, Kofi Annan stated, "We have it in our power to pass on to our children a brighter inheritance […] If we act boldly – and if we act together – we can make people everywhere more secure, more prosperous and better able to enjoy their fundamental human rights". If we do work together with young people, we do act boldly and we do uphold Commonwealth values, then we can create a future where young people power the creation of societies that work for all.

Amanda Shah

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Notes

1 Three statements agreed by Heads of Government at Commonwealth summits.

2 UN Secretary-General, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*, (2005); Commonwealth Secretariat, Report of the Expert Group on Democracy and Development, (2003). Rajesh Tandon, Barry Knight and Hope Chigudu, *Reviving Democracy: Citizens at the Heart of Governance*, (2002).

3 Commonwealth Youth Programme, *Participation in the Second Decade of Life: What and Why?*, (2005).

4 Commonwealth Youth Programme, *Participation in the Second Decade of Life: What and Why?*, (2005).

5 Commonwealth Youth Programme, *Adolescent and Youth Participation,: Adults Get Ready!*, (2005).

6 Steve Mokwena, *Youth Participation (YP): Taking the idea to the next level: A challenge to Youth Ministers* in Commonwealth Youth Programme, Fifth Commonwealth Youth Ministers MeetingStrategy Papers, (2003).

7 UN General Assembly, *World Fit for Children*, (2002).

8 Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit (CPSU), *Survival of the Youngest: From Rhetoric to Action*, (2003).

9 World Bank, *Timor-Leste's Youth Groups Want to be Part of Development*, (undated).

10 International Youth Foundation, *What Works in Youth Participation: Case Studies from Around the World*,(2002).

11 Joachim Theis and Claire O'Kane, "Children's Participation, Civil Rights and Power", in Paul Gready and Jonathan Ensor (Eds), *Reinventing Development? Translating Rights-based Approaches from Theory into Practice*, (2005).

12 UN Population Fund, *Reaching Out to Diverse Populations*, (undated).

13 Joachim Theis and Claire O'Kane, "Children's Participation, Civil Rights and Power", in Paul Gready and Jonathan Ensor (Eds), *Reinventing Development? Translating Rights-based Approaches from Theory into Practice*, (2005).

14 These are: an economic and material base; political will, resources and legal and administrative frameworks; equality, democracy and peace; and knowledge/information/skills/values.

Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Development (YESL)

Cecil Ryan

Introduction

Since 2003, the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) has been placing emphasis on enterprise development as a strategy to reduce poverty among young people. Working in partnership with governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), CYP has implemented and promoted youth enterprise development programmes in its four regional centres in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

This work has led CYP to conclude that youth enterprise development is a useful strategy for creating income opportunities for young people that empowers young people and adds value to their contributions. This strategy does however have two major limitations: first, it treats young people as a population sector separate from mainstream life and second, income generation and employment creation for young women and men are not considered part of an integrated social and economic development process within the wider context of youth policy.

Consequently, CYP is advocating for developing youth enterprises and promoting sustainable livelihood activities through its Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihood (YESL) programme area, as a more holistic, alternative approach. This strategic approach recognises that factors associated with poverty are interconnected and correlated. People with poor financial and social assets might be more at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS because they might be forced to engage in risky sexual behaviours to earn an income. This integrated, holistic approach is consistent with overarching Commonwealth principles relating to creating sustainable livelihoods and the role these play in promoting youth empowerment and socio-economic development.

Youth empowerment and development refer to strategies and outcomes to make young people self-reliant and secure enough to identify and create sustainable livelihoods. Such strategies relate to the adequate allocation of resources by policy-makers in the first instance, and in the second, the creation of a framework to enable, promote and sustain the effective participation of young people in policy formulation, programme implementation and decision-making on the use and allocation of resources for the provision of adequate food, decent shelter, good health, quality education, and adequate safety and security, in the context of general social development.

Scope of the paper

This paper has been prepared to assist the deliberation among Youth Ministers and officials attending the Sixth Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (CYMM), which will be looking at strategies for youth empowerment for the eradication of poverty, crime and HIV/AIDS.

It supports the call for the greater acceptance of, and commitment to, the strategy of enterprise development and sustainable livelihood as a means of empowering young people to play a more active and partic-

ipatory role in national, social, political and economic development in their respective countries.

Sustainable livelihood refers to the tangible and intangible assets that are necessary to reproduce life and living, where "tangible assets are resources and stores, and intangible assets are claims and access." According to Chambers and Conway (1991), "a livelihood is environmentally sustainable when it maintains or enhances the local and global assets on which livelihoods depend, and has net beneficial effects on other livelihoods. A livelihood is socially sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, and provide for future generations."

Sustainable approaches therefore place people and their livelihoods at the centre by prioritising their assets and their ability to withstand shocks, and establishing policies and institutions that reflect poor people's priorities rather than those of the elite. This conception recognises that "sustainable livelihoods are derived from young people's capacity to exercise choices, to access opportunities and resources, and use them for their livelihoods in ways that do not foreclose options for others to make their living, either now or in the future." When applied in the real life context of young people, the basic preposition is that to be sustainable, livelihood activities for young people must be based on a holistic view and an approach that recognises that the provision of quality education, decent employment, proper health care for young people are integrally connected with the plans and programmes for the development of the entire society – and thus, the future security of the nation.

This paper recognises that many Commonwealth countries, particularly the developing ones, find it difficult to mobilise resources for development purposes. It asserts that, to the extent that the energies of young people can be harnessed and channelled into activities that promote wealth creation and better living standards, any additional resources for youth development will contribute towards greater social stability and economic prosperity for the entire society. The paper is premised on the belief that governments and other stakeholders in the Commonwealth are willing to implement and fund new programmes through greater investment in enterprise development initiatives.

The paper also examines the situation of young people, noting their vulnerabilities versus their prospects, looking particularly at young people at risk – from gangs, crime, armed conflict, violence and HIV/AIDS. It proposes some specific programme possibilities as supplementary initiatives that could strengthen the basis for the sustainable livelihoods of Commonwealth young women and men at risk.

Young people: vulnerabilities versus prospects

Generally, living conditions are extremely difficult for the majority of young people. Statistics show that in every country young people are the ones most heavily represented in the categories of persons who are poor, illiterate, unemployed, living with HIV/AIDS or at risk of contracting the disease, involved in armed conflicts, and engaged in crime and violence.

The situation of poverty among young people

Poverty is "a distorted human condition". It is the absence and/or denial of access to resources and the processes and mechanisms that are necessary to organise and sustain life both physically and socio-culturally. In situations where poverty is extreme, hunger and malnutrition, ill health, high incidence of morbidity and mortality from illness, unsafe environments, homelessness and poor and inadequate housing are some of the immediate manifestations.

Poverty affects young people in ways that are very personal and very striking. Take, for example, the young girl living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, who cannot attend school because she has to fetch water for her family. Or, consider a young father, who may not be able to pay for his anti-AIDS treatment because he cannot find work since there are no opportunities for employment in the local economy.

In many countries, poverty is more extreme in rural areas than in urban areas. This may be a consequence of the scarcity of the means to sustain livelihood and income, and the absence of social

services. In many instances, changing weather patterns and worsening environmental conditions, coupled with changing market conditions and trading regimes for agricultural and primary products have made it uneconomical for small farmers to earn an income. This places pressure on the surviv-ability of the rural family, which often results in migration. Invariably, it is the young who are first forced to migrate in order to find work. This creates a cyclical effect that leads to greater poverty both in the rural and the urban areas, since over-population and conditions in the urban areas cannot sustain a further influx of people. This is especially so in poorer countries.

While there are a variety of different factors affecting a country's economic viability and prospects, poverty generally results from a lack of resources. It is maintained by a continuing inability to acquire the means to secure and reproduce livelihood requirements. In turn, it is the springboard for poor health, poor education and a lack of basic living necessities – proper food and nutrition, adequate shelter, clothing, and security. It becomes a vicious cycle and its effects multiply from generation to generation in a context where a family, a community, or ultimately a country is unable to devise strategies and programmes to halt or reverse the situation.

Based on the above, this paper makes the following three observations:

1   There seems to be an increasing level of poverty throughout the world, particularly in the group of developing countries in which some Commonwealth nations feature prominently.

2   The incidence of poverty has also increased generally and specifically among young people, thereby putting them at greater risk.

3   People will remain poor as long as they have only limited or no opportunity to earn income. This applies in general, but is particularly true for young people.

The reduction of poverty among young people therefore requires a combination of co-ordinated responses from young people and policy-makers, both of whose decisions and actions are critical. A multi-dimensional approach is necessary if efforts to reduce youth poverty are to be effective and successful.

Anti-poverty intervention strategies among young people

Policies and programmes aimed at eradicating poverty among young people must necessarily address the socio-economic, socio-political and cultural realities confronting them daily. These include high unemployment, low levels of education and limited educational opportunities, poor health and a higher than normal exposure to diseases especially HIV/AIDS, high exposure to and the propensity for involvement in incidences of crime and violence, and poor and inadequate housing.

Creating income opportunities for young people

It is generally accepted that opportunities for income generation are the most direct route out of poverty. Some countries have pursued twin approaches. The first is to create job opportunities in the formal wage economy using state resources. These are generally of a short-term duration, where the primary objective is to build workplace discipline among young people, by enabling them to acquire valuable work experience while earning an income.

The second approach is to encourage private sector businesses to employ young people by providing incentives in the form of tax breaks. This can be seen as a sort of youth employment or empowerment service, which benefits government, business and the young people. In some situations this is seen as an apprenticeship programme through which participants are able to acquire or upgrade skills that would make them more workplace-ready or even strengthen the basis for them to start their own businesses.

In their report[1], the Ad Hoc Working Group on Youth and the Millennium Development Goals outlined a number of recommendations to eradicate poverty among young people as nations strive to

meet the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The following were deemed both timely and relevant:

1 "Governments must create mechanisms that ensure young people are involved in the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) through National Youth Councils or other forums for youth representation;

2 Governments should include young people in the implementation of new projects identified in national development and poverty reduction plans and strategies, as well as support existing youth-led development initiatives;

3 Development policies must prioritise the growth of rural areas, which have high percentages of unemployed youth and little public infrastructure, by engaging young people in creating necessary services and infrastructure;

4 Governments and the private sector must support agro-based micro-entrepreneurial endeavours by young people and invest in farming technologies that boost agricultural production[2]."

Young people working to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS now poses perhaps the greatest threat to the health and livelihoods of young people. For many Commonwealth countries, especially many developing countries in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, HIV/AIDS has become the major cause of mortality among young people between the ages of 15 and 24.

The vulnerability of young people to HIV/AIDS is a consequence of a number of factors including the propensity to become engaged in risky behaviours that exposes them to infections. This is linked to, and can result from peer pressure, lack of information, lack of power to negotiate for safe sex, an inability to calculate risks, impaired judgement because of intoxication, an inability to refuse unprotected sex, and the limited availability of, or access to condoms.[3] In addition, it is worth recalling that young people have never lived in a world without HIV/AIDS, since knowledge of the disease is less than twenty-five years old. This adds a dimension of complexity to resolving this issue.

The heightened vulnerability of young people underscores the need for interventions that can halt the level of infection and the spread of the disease. There need to be urgent policies and programmes set in place that are specific to the local and national situations, which take account of the prevailing sociological and cultural norms and behaviours. These should include:

❖ Targeted HIV/AIDS education that would empower young people to make informed choices and decisions about their health;

❖ Organised family and community supporting networks;

❖ Affordable primary health care that is accessible and available; and

❖ Ongoing international support in the areas of medical supplies and technical resources.

Based on the ideas of youth presented at international conferences on HIV/AIDS, the Ad Hoc Working Group on Youth and the MDGs has published a number of related recommendations which are important and critical steps to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS among young people. They include proposals to:

❖ encourage youth-led sexual reproductive health education in secondary schools, and integrate HIV/AIDS education into curriculum as a sustainable way of sharing information about HIV/AIDS;

❖ use youth expertise to create innovative and effective strategies for the prevention of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and all other diseases, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs);

❖ create, mobilise and strengthen teams of young peer educators to visit schools, places of worship, and other structures in their communities;

❖ link local youth employment networks to clinics in affected areas;

❖ further investigate the role of youth as caregivers, and how youth employment strategies can be part of scaling up delivery of medication and care services;

❖ support conferences and existing youth structures as contact points, using them to incorporate youth in national strategies, advise on government policies, and distribute resources; and

❖ People Living With AIDS (PLWA) associations and other efforts to support those affected by the disease should provide channels for youth-focused services and participation.

The Report[4] also recommended an additional set of actions for countries where solutions to the prevailing situation needs to be fast-tracked. They include:

❖ establishing teen clinics and promoting peer-to-peer education on sexual and reproductive health, and encouraging young people in the community to take a role in the design and needs assessment required for these programmes;

❖ encouraging community-based condom distribution for youth by youth.

❖ funding and supporting youth-led media and awareness campaigns about scientific implications of some cultural practices.

❖ encouraging youth-led sexual reproductive health education in secondary schools and integrating HIV/AIDS education into the curriculum as a sustainable way of sharing information about HIV/AIDS[5].

These were seen as ways of expanding access to sexual and reproductive health information and services, including family planning and contraceptive information and services, and closing existing funding gaps for supplies and logistics.

Ultimately, young people themselves will have to take responsible for the choices and the decisions they make, but investments must be made on intervention programmes that make them aware of the "the full range of prevention options, with emphasis given not only to developing healthy lifestyles, but also to sexual health and behaviour issues". This includes "abstinence, delayed sexual debut, a reduction in the number of partners, and correct and consistent condom use[6]".

Involvement in armed conflicts

Armed conflicts are occurring in areas of the world where poverty is most extreme and where the status of young people is most challenging. The UN World Youth Report 2005 noted that, "in the past decade, an estimated two million children and youth have died in armed conflicts and five million have been disabled".

It is generally thought that in an environment that provides few viable options for employment, armed conflicts frequently offer young people the only way of generating an income. There is therefore a direct link between the absence of employment and involvement in armed conflict among young people. The no-income situation of young people causes them to be disproportionately involved in armed conflicts.

Conflict affects both young men and young women, albeit in different ways, and have an overall negative effect on development in afflicted communities, regions and countries. As noted in the UN World Youth Report, "young people are most likely to be recruited as soldiers and constitute the majority in most armed forces." It is also commonly reported that many young men and women are captured and forced to serve in the armed forces or militias in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including some Commonwealth African countries. Among other things, this generally leaves them open to sexual violence, the very high risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections, and prevents them from starting or completing their education.

Armed conflicts bring increased health risks to young people, especially women. They also increase cases of anxiety and depression, extreme stress, high-risk drug use and suicide, all of which weigh

heavily on the affected communities and can act as barriers to socio-economic stability and development.

Young people and drug abuse

Drug abuse among young people is of growing concern generally, but particularly in developing countries, including several Commonwealth countries. During the transition period between childhood and adulthood, young people find themselves subjected to intense peer pressure and there is a tendency to experiment with a range of ideas and lifestyles. In the process, they may take bad decisions or make risky choices. Some of these decisions and choices are about the use or abuse of drugs and alcohol.

It has been reported that growing alcohol and drug abuse (which can also result from armed conflicts) has contributed significantly to increases in both mortality and HIV infection rates among young people. This is the case in both developing and developed countries, where consumption is mainly associated with higher income youth.

Programmes and policies to decrease and prevent drug abuse among young people must address the factors causing young people to use drugs in the first place. Such programmes must also constitute and be located in the framework of countries' overall strategy to tackle poverty and facilitate social inclusion, ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are accessible to all.

Young people and criminal behaviour

In many Commonwealth countries, young people make up the most criminally active segment of the population. This stands to reason since:

❖   they can be more easily influenced and pressured into negative behaviour;

❖   they are most likely to be without life skills and not productively engaged, and

❖   they are more inclined to be involved in criminal gangs.

In a background paper entitled *Strategies and Best Practices for Crime Prevention in Particularly in Urban Areas and Youth at Risk*, prepared for the Eleventh UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in 2005, the view has been offered that young people are most likely to commit violent acts against their contemporaries and peers. It is further argued that young people living in difficult circumstances are at greater risk to become involved in delinquent activities. In this sense poverty, family dysfunction, substance abuse and death of family members have been shown to affect delinquent behaviour. These conditions are prevalent among young people in many of the less developed Commonwealth countries.

Conclusion

It is clear that young people as a group are affected most and in most immediate ways by the issues of high unemployment, high incidence of HIV/AIDS, involvement in armed conflicts, involvement in crime, etc. It is also evident that across the Commonwealth, across localities, population groups and countries, there are wide disparities in living conditions linked to these issues and the resources available to address them.

These are not young people's issues; these are inter-generational issues, with national, regional, and international implications. To this extent, the successful implementation of the ideas expressed in this paper depends on technical and pragmatic solutions conceived in the context of a holistic, people-centred development approach at both the national and broader Commonwealth level.

Specifically, the paper wishes to propose the following as the way forward.

Creating youth employment

The importance of youth employment is underscored by the fact that all the issues affecting youth rest fundamentally on their lack of assets or material means. Their housing status rests on it; their health status depends on it; the concept they have of themselves, and the state of the level of their independence, indeed their very ability to exercise their rights as a human being depend on their access to assets. Youth employment must therefore be given priority attention.

Actions to create youth employment must ensure that:

❖ employment opportunities for youth are flexible, especially for those most at risk;

❖ working conditions are decent for all young people and are in accordance with national and international labour laws and ILO standards;

❖ employment policies must ensure that jobs are meaningful, contribute to the creation of more just and sustainable communities, and reinforce young people's self-esteem and self-worth;

❖ action on youth employment needs to be integrated as a central platform for achieving poverty reduction. Treating the issue of youth employment as a fundamental block to poverty eradication is also a powerful mechanism for delivering the MDGs;

❖ youth employment poverty reduction strategies should especially focus on young women, indigenous populations, and rural youth as those most marginalised within the current economic system;

❖ governments and relevant local and international organisations must address the needs of young women and rural youth to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as to address pressures and problems arising from mass rural-to-urban migration;

❖ opportunities must be created and sustained so that youth can participate in the fair trade movement, and further develop open trading and financial systems that are rules-based, predictable and non-discriminatory; and finally

❖ partnerships between young people, the public and private sectors need to be established and reinforced.

Micro-credit and micro-financing

According to Muhammad Yunus, founder and Managing Director of the Grameen Bank, "self-employment is the quickest and easiest way to create employment for the poor". This, he insists, is a viable strategy to eradicate poverty, based on his experience in the area of micro-financing. For him, "a big step towards eliminating poverty is to make sure that we offer financial services even to the poorest person, that no one is rejected by a bank on the ground that he/she is a poor person." It is on the strength of this argument and the experience and record of Commonwealth and other successful micro-financing initiatives that this paper recommends that Commonwealth governments:

❖ use micro-finance and skills development initiatives to reduce barriers for youth entrepreneurship, and create and strengthen youth entrepreneurship networks; and

❖ maintain and broaden the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative based on its record of success.

Youth and information and communications technologies (ICTs)

The area of information and communications technologies (ICTs) is dominated by young people. From simple cellular phone usage to the more complex computer applications to information technology, young people are playing a leadership role. The Youth and the Millennium Development Goals Report made the points that:

❖ young people see great potential for improving development efforts and providing meaningful livelihood opportunities through the establishment of telecentres in both rural and urban areas. These telecentres provide livelihood opportunities for many young people;

❖ young people use ICTs to seek information about education and livelihood opportunities available to them;

- ❖ young people appreciate the increased consultations on information technology policy and priorities;
- ❖ young people play a critical role in the development of locally appropriate content. Many work to repackage information between old and new media types and to interpret it for local, national, and international audiences;
- ❖ ICTs enable young people to explore and define their cultures within the context of rapid globalisation;
- ❖ ICT training provides a context for skills development, socialisation, and community building for out-of-school or otherwise marginalised youth.

Local e-commerce may open more significant livelihood opportunities for young people than international e-commerce. Smaller scale e-commerce networks and ICT-enabled small and medium enterprises provide young people with the opportunity to develop professionally without having to relocate large distances from their families and support networks.

Worldwide ICT expansion has been possible due in part to the volunteer efforts and internship work of young professionals. Many have postponed or foregone potentially lucrative private sector jobs to train others in ICT.

It is convenient and natural therefore to see ICTs as a medium for dealing with a range of related issues. ICTs provide new opportunities for social interaction and networking among young people, for training and information exchange, and for job creation and income generation. The report of the Ad Hoc Group has pointed to a number of areas where young people can use ICTs for development. They proposed the following, which the present paper in turn endorses highly:

- ❖ youth in urban and rural areas should have access to ICTs in order that they could be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers;
- ❖ governments should play a facilitating role in nurturing ICT-related youth enterprise through policy and investment in ICT infrastructure, and encourage, support and resource partnerships around ICTs;
- ❖ community cyber cafés and telecentres could be used as means to address multiple development needs, such as business training, and opportunities for education in reproductive and sexual health.

There are a number of principles that must guide these actions. Specifically interventions must target and promote strategies and measures that will:

- ❖ enhance the capacities of young people;
- ❖ cater to the basic needs of young people;
- ❖ ensure adequate protection for young people from exploitation, violence and abuse;
- ❖ strengthen the community; and
- ❖ provide ongoing educational opportunities for young people.

In the eradication of youth poverty, there can be no uniform solution – there must be country-specific programmes. Young people must be active participants in all programmes, and such participation should recognise existing rural-urban as well as gender disparities and inequalities. All actions would have to be undertaken using a holistic approach, consistent with the natural interrelation of things in the real world, where unemployment, HIV/AIDS, involvement in armed conflicts, drug abuse and juvenile delinquency converge to pose a great risk not only to young people, but also to the entire society. They have one common denominator – poverty. This suggests that they can be eliminated or minimised when poverty itself is eliminated or minimised through bold and determined actions originating at each distinct level of the individual, the family, the community or region, the nation, and the Commonwealth.

Cecil Ryan
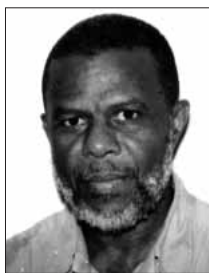
A native of St Vincent and the Grenadines, **Cecil Ryan** is a human resource development consultant, having received training in behavioural science at York University in Toronto, Canada, and at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, the University of Toronto.

Cecil has extensive experience in the areas of community and human resource development, including human settlement, natural resource management, organisational development, the design and implementation of community-based economic projects and small enterprises; and has designed monitoring and evaluation methodologies to determine their success.

For more than 20 years, Cecil has worked with a number of national, regional and international organisations in the areas of strategic planning, community mobilisation and leadership development. He is currently the Managing Director of Projects Promotion Limited, a leading non-governmental organisation in St Vincent and the Grenadines. He is also a radio commentator and he hosts a weekly interactive radio discussion programme on development issues.

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Notes

1 *Youth and the Millennium Development Goals: Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation,* Final Report of the Ad Hoc Working Group for Youth and the MDGs, April 2005.

2 Ibid, p i.

3 Ibid, p 135.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid, p 65.

6 Ibid, p 136.

Youth Work Education and Training

Chandu Christian

Executive summary

This paper identifies the generic goals of youth work, and more specifically, the goals of Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), which states that young people are empowered when they can perceive and make choices on an informed basis and take responsibility for the consequences, and empowering young people means creating and supporting enabling conditions (by the adult society) in which young people can exercise their autonomy. The paper then moves on to a brief exploration of six relevant concepts:

1 redefining our mental landscape;

2 conditions for change;

3 autonomy and relatedness;

4 processes of adulthood;

5 participation as an integral ingredient of youth development work; and

6 understanding our work as a network of relationships.

Each of these conceptual constructs lends support to the goals and methods that youth development work pursues.

Before outlining the strategies, the paper identifies the specific initial conditions that prevail in youth work at present. A number of favourable conditions are identified, including a trained cadre of youth workers, thanks to the initiative by the CYP. Further, there is an interest among higher education institutions to mainstream youth work training and distance education methods. This is because youth work training has created a climate of andragogy in which, unlike pedagogy, learners take control of their learning as active partners. It makes a plea for the prevalence of more uniform specific initial conditions across the Commonwealth.

Finally, the paper identifies 13 strategies that would further the goal of youth work. The paper recognises the scarcity of financial resources in youth development work and therefore recommends that adequate resources be allocated for youth work training and education. It also recommends as a strategy a search for alternative resources and identifies the potential human resources available to youth development work. Sri Aurobindo's vision, which identifies the real goal of humanity, provides a suitable conclusion for the paper.

Introduction

This strategic paper draws on its predecessor, the concept paper entitled *Youth Work Education and Training: From Training to Professional Education*, prepared for the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, 2003.

The importance of Youth Work Education and Training

UNESCO defines education as "organised and sustained instruction designed to communicate a combination of knowledge, skills and understanding valuable for all the activities of life". Training is defined as "the systematic acquisition of skills, rules, concepts or attitudes that result in improved performance in the work situation". CYP's Youth Work Education and Training Programme implicitly accepts the contents of these definitions in preparing youth workers for their role in today's world. It is stating the obvious that today's economy is very largely based on knowledge and skills. Without an educated and trained workforce, a national economy is not likely to meet the demands of national development made on it. Education has a part to play in eradicating poverty at a community and national level and therefore a professional cadre of youth workers which appreciates the value of education and training and transmits that value to young people is a vital part of a national system. In his humorous way, Mark Twain summed up the value of education and health thus: "In the end, education and soap are deadlier than guns".

Importance of having a professional youth work force

The value of having an adult as a mentor who understands the trials and tribulations of growing up and supports young people in that process is well understood from ancient times in all parts of the world. From time to time, different words have been used to describe this function: an informal educator, a counsellor, a mentor, a coach. The generic title 'youth worker' embraces all of these functions. As society becomes more complex and fragmented, the youth worker can provide a hand of friendship to young people and eases their path into adulthood. Young people's tribulations come in many forms. They might have relationship, educational, employment or similar other issues to contend with. A youth worker who wants to befriend them and help them therefore needs the relevant education and training. Overall, 'adult' society also feels more confident in the ability of youth workers if they have requisite professional qualifications. This then becomes our *raison d'être* for investing time, money and know-how into youth work education and training,

The generic goal of youth development work

CYP's overarching goal is for young people to "realise their own potential in the Commonwealth to transform and improve the quality of their lives, in partnership with other stakeholders and in a way that they are recognised as valued stakeholders as part of their societies". Nearly seventy years ago, Lord Radcliffe-Maud offered a definition of the purpose of youth work, which is just as relevant today as it was when he offered it.

> To offer individual young people in their leisure time opportunities of various kinds, complementary to those of home, formal education and work, to discover and develop their personal resources of body, mind and spirit and thus the better to equip themselves to live the life of mature, creative and responsible members of a free society.
>
> Quoted in Youth Service Development Council:1969:55

In looking at this definition, we need to bear in mind that CYP's vision goes beyond simply the leisure time of youth; however, the definition does provide a template for holistic growth – of mind, body and spirit. The definition has endured the test of time, though we have some new phenomena such as HIV/AIDS to contend with. It has endured because it balances perfectly the need for individual development (developing personal resources of mind, body and spirit) with the needs of society (to have mature, creative and responsible members of a free society). This paper discusses how that dualistic goal can be achieved through CYP's Youth Work Education and Training programme area. It recognises from the outset that the other two programme areas, namely, Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihoods and Governance, Development and Youth Networks together form a web in which each plays an equal part in enabling holistic youth development, encompassing mind, body and spirit.

The specific goal of youth work education and training in the Commonwealth

The more specific goal of Youth Work Education and Training Programme has been clearly articulated by CYP:

> To develop the profession of youth work comprising knowledge, attitudes, attributes and skills, acquired through formal and non-formal education and training, and guided by a code of practice and supported by regulatory mechanisms.
>
> Strategic Plan 2003-2006, Commonwealth Youth Programme

The outcome of this goal is to have a cadre of professional youth workers who would specifically focus their work on enabling young people to become autonomous; that is, able to make choices of their own free will and to take responsibility for the consequences of their choices. To facilitate such youth autonomy, an enabling environment under four broad categories has to be created: an economic and social base; political will for adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks; a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy and finally, access to knowledge, information and skills and the development of a positive value system.[1]

This statement contains, naturally, overlapping themes with Radcliffe-Maud's generic definition, but it goes deeper in identifying the enabling conditions that must prevail for youth development to take place.

Some theoretical considerations

The two goal statements above identify two important elements. Firstly, the youth need to be their own destiny makers, speaking on their own behalf, driving their own agenda. Secondly, adult society should offer enabling conditions outlined above as a nurturing environment in which individual growth and fulfilment can take place. But this development has an equally important second purpose: it should be to create a free society of 'joined-up' individuals, in which rights and responsibilities are balanced, and which allows for social, political, economic and spiritual growth to take place and manifest itself through participation in various arenas. Professional youth workers act as a bridge between the adult society and young people. It is their role to be specialist agents who facilitate the transition from youth to adult. It therefore follows that youth work training must equip them for this role through education and training. Below we identify some theoretical concepts that could undergird youth work training and education, and equip youth workers with appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills in pursuit of the goals outlined above.

Briefly, six theoretical concepts require our attention:

1   redefining our mental landscape;
2   conditions for change: stability and change;
3   autonomy and relatedness;
4   processes of adulthood;
5   participation as an integral process for our work; and
6   a network of relationships: the 'Bootstrap' theory.

1   Redefining our mental landscape

As youth workers and youth policy-makers examine concepts relevant to youth development, they would be able to identify some paradigm shifts that need to take place if our goals are to be achieved. To Thomas Kuhn (writing in 1957), paradigms and paradigm shifts were intellectual constructs. When an existing paradigm revealed its inadequacy to solve a problem confronting us, it was time to have a paradigm shift, and to create a new conceptual model, that would help us solve the problem. More recently, Shere Hite[2] has made a significant addition to this repertoire. After years of research

on gender relationships, she has expanded Kuhn's model in a very illuminating way. She contends that we need to create a new psychological and emotional landscape in our minds – not just a new cognitive paradigm, but a new attitudinal domain – which replaces the old mental landscape. A new paradigm, such as 'men and women are equal' cannot become functional until men's emotional landscape (unconscious fear or jealousy of women's equality) is also altered. Shere Hite's enriched model of a paradigm shift,

> An example of deleting old and installing new software
> *Old software to delete:*
> ❖ Young people need to be trained to become economically productive units.
> *New software to install:*
> ❖ Young people should be nurtured to develop as holistic human beings.
> ❖ They should be accepted as stakeholders, partners in the human enterprise.
> ❖ Their presence adds energy and improves the quality of life.

embedded in a matching emotional landscape, gives us a much more effective tool for youth development work. Hite uses the familiar computer terminology to make her point. She encourages us to think of our 'mental software,' and talks of two brain software commands. For ideas and emotions that need to be replaced, she uses the phrase 'software to delete' (from our brains), and for the new ideas and emotions that we need to embrace, she uses the phrase 'software to install' (in our brains). Whilst accepting that the human brain is infinitely more complex than the most sophisticated computer, this paper will use Hite's technique as a useful strategy to work towards our goals, to identify what we need to unlearn, so that we can then learn in its stead something more appropriate.

2 Conditions for change and stability

Kurt Lewin[3] has given us a useful model for thinking about change. He asserts that change involved 'push' and 'pull' factors. Push factors obviously create a momentum for change, whereas pull factors try to maintain the status quo. Lewin identified that despite this tension, usually, it was the push factors for change that eventually win. As a strategy, it is very useful to identify those factors that create the drag, so that they can be combated more effectively. Shere Hite's observations would suggest that we need to identify the psychological and emotional landscape that keeps our minds stagnant, and then identify the attitude change we need to implement our goal. It is already well known that peer pressure is a big factor in attitude – and therefore in behaviour – change. This observation logically leads us to Strategy 2 described later in the paper. Long ago, it was also discovered that mothers play an important role in attitude formation and change. This valuable insight has largely gone unrecognised and therefore unused. It is now time to acknowledge this massive resource and tap into it whenever feasible.

> Change is inevitable. You cannot step in the same river twice. By the time you step into it the second time, the 'old' water has flown away. A change that is understood and supported becomes evolutionary. One that is not accepted or supported becomes revolutionary and often creates violent consequences.

For a peaceful change to occur there should be an ideal mix of stability and change. Stability without change begins to stagnate, and too much change creates an unwieldy social environment. With our adult-youth dichotomy, it is the adults who generally provide stability, and young people who push for change. Another condition for a peaceful, evolutionary change is that there should be an environment of enabling conditions. CYP has identified these in their specific goals cited above. It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of these conditions as initial conditions that promote change. In an enabling environment, change would not be a tug-of-war between two opposing forces, but a mutually agreed move forward; it is therefore very important to identify the push and pull factors and create strategies for handling them. Young people want to push for change; adults want status quo. New software: support the change without disturbing the stability too much.

3   Autonomy and relatedness

These two concepts are so intricately woven together that it is best to treat them together.

Autonomy

As the CYP quote earlier in the paper stated, young people have to be enabled to act on their own behalf and on their own terms. This state of autonomy is, of course, the most precious gift that humankind possesses, whereby we can see different options available to us and choose one from amongst them. Sadly, sometimes adult society behaves towards young people in a way that does not foster their autonomy. They are taught to fear adult authority; they learn to fear that if they make mistakes punishment from adults might follow. Yet, Karl Popper[4] tells us that the only way human beings learn is through trial and error. As we try an option, we recognise the mistakes in it as we implement it. We learn from our mistakes and next time we refine the choice to avoid those mistakes – we move to a more sophisticated level of options. Thus, we learn to make more and more judicious choices as we progress. If, on the other hand, we are punished for our mistakes, then we dread making them and therefore avoid making choices and, sadly, do not develop our autonomous critical faculty. An enabling condition, therefore, is that we need to create a tolerant social environment where young people can learn from their mistakes. Without such an environment, they cannot develop a will to experiment (and to risk failure), or the faculty of critical judgement.

Relatedness

Fostering autonomy (perceiving options, making a choice and to take responsibility for the consequences) is sometimes mistakenly taken to be a development of selfish individualism. This is erroneous. From birth to death, we live in social groups such as family, school, hospital, peer groups, work teams and so on. Our relatedness to other human beings is therefore a given, and so autonomy and relatedness are points of the same continuum, and young people need to develop attitudes and skills to handle both. It is only when we live as autonomous individuals in harmony with other human beings that we can achieve what Abraham Maslow termed self-actualisation.

Maslow's well-known 'hierarchy of needs' makes the point about autonomy and relatedness fairly clearly. An individual strives in the first place to meet her needs of hunger and shelter, for physical survival. The hierarchy then moves to psychosocial needs such as belonging, love and esteem and then finally culminates in self-actualisation. So a human moves from the self to the others and then back to the self. This is another way of describing a person's autonomy and her relatedness to others, without which, self-actualisation is not possible. Our self-esteem is thus a mixture of how we perceive ourselves, plus how we think others perceive us. Youth development work therefore has to concentrate not only on fostering individual autonomy as the CYP paper outlined, it also has to enable young people to develop healthy, trusting and mutually satisfying social relationships – the relatedness end of our autonomy-relatedness continuum. The benefits of this, as Maslow reminds us, are enormous. He provides the most succinct argument for why we should foster young people's autonomy or their self-actualisation.

4   The process of adulthood

Usually, society is in the habit of seeing adulthood as a particular age in a person's life. Some states confer it at the age of 18, some at 21. Even after the attainment of this threshold, we sometimes hear that a person 'behaved like a child'. Similarly, we hear phrases about children: 'he acted like a grown up'. Both these statements give us an insight that adulthood is not a fixed point, but a process into which both children and grown-ups engage, though to a varying degree. So how should we perceive adulthood?

The Grubb Institute defines it as 'an ability to remain in touch with one's capacities whatever the context'.[5]

We can now see that an adult who loses that capacity, on occasions, acts like a non-adult, and a child who remains in touch with his capacities and, for example, in a crisis, dials the phone for an ambulance to come and help his mother, is exercising the adult capacity within him. Seeing

adulthood as a process in this way is helpful because it enables us to see and respect the 'adulthood' in young people and to help them put it to a beneficial use for themselves, to exercise their autonomy and to help others and thus experience relatedness.

Seeing adulthood as a process rather than a product of any particular chronological age has enormous advantages for youth development work. Viewed as a process, adulthood becomes something of a journey of learning and discovery that a young person undertakes. She learns the art and skill of discernment and can perceive the difference between fantasy and reality, a first step towards recognising what she is capable of doing and what she is not. In the process, she also learns that she is not completely powerless and that she is, either autonomously or by relating with others, able to take steps that release the power within her. Youth workers and youth mentors, by 'staying with' the young person in this process, can be of great help.

5   Participation as an integral process for all our work

Steve Mokwena's considerable work has enhanced our understanding of participation enormously. We now see it as an integral process when human beings interact with each other in a mutually co-operative way. We need to affirm participation as a developmental process in which two parts, adult and youth, join together as yin and yang to form a whole.

 The old way, in which we see adults as donors and young people as recipients was famously condemned by Carl Rogers as the 'jug and mug' approach in which we pour out of a full jug (adults) into an empty mug (young people). The metaphor of yin and yang from the Chinese philosophy offers us a much better way of viewing the relationship between youth and adults. The two form a whole circle, but it is impossible to see where yin ends and yang begins. Paradoxically, they both contain an element of the other in their centre as can be seen from the diagram, so if you focus on yin, it is yang which becomes the centre of attention – and vice versa! Their swirling shape suggests a dynamic, perpetual movement, just as participation is – an ongoing process which maintains the wholeness of the circle not in a stagnant way, but in a dynamic, forward moving way. Using this analogy, we can say that it is participation that keeps the young and adults in a constantly dynamic, moving whole. It is a process which mutually holds each other up, and without which no developmental activity can take place.

6   A network of relationships and the Bootstrap theory

In the 17th century, the philosopher Thomas Hobbes saw the commonwealth as the common will of people residing in one person, the monarch. Today our view is exactly the opposite. We see the present Commonwealth as a network of nations and peoples, interacting with one another, with a common will, for the common good of all. Rather than asking them to surrender their will to one person, we teach our young people to *exercise* their will, their autonomy; in a way that not only benefits them but also the rest of the humanity. The right to exercise one's autonomy is at once predicated by the responsibility not to harm anyone else's way of life. We call this way of thinking human rights, or Commonwealth values. The process of applying these rights and values to the work with young people is defined by CYP as youth empowerment. It is also an acknowledgement that work still needs to be done to create a true 'commonwealth' where human rights flourish for all.

The science of physics has developed a theory, which lends some support to the view that we are a network of individuals and institutions, in interaction with each other. It is called the Bootstrap

theory[6], and its main idea is that it is the network of different theories, like a joined up web, that keeps our universe functioning. No one theory in the web has dominance over any other. Although somewhat problematic, the theory provides us with a useful paradigm in youth work. How can we benefit from the Bootstrap approach?

It suggests that all stakeholders such as young people, government, adults, teachers, male, female are all part of a network that together sustains youth development. Remove any one part from the web and the entire system becomes dysfunctional.

> **How does the Bootstrap theory help us to see the links in our youth development work in CYP's YESL, GDYN, and YWET programme areas?**
>
> First, it helps us to see that all these programmes are interconnected, and disturbance in any one part causes the whole network to be unstable. For example, the Governance Development and Youth Networks Programme develops participation and networking skills. These feed the goals of autonomy and relatedness in the Youth Work Education and Training Programme, leading not only to better participation in decision-making agencies but also in developing skills and insights for entrepreneurial activities that generate wealth. Each programme is related to every other and no one programme can claim dominance over others. Another benefit that accrues from this viewpoint is that all CYP work becomes part of the mainstream, and deserves resourcing as mainstream work rather than remedial work, as is sometimes the case with its programme activities, like for example its work to combat HIV/AIDS. Above all, young people manifestly become mainstream stakeholders along with the other stakeholders.

In youth development, we have sometimes experienced this dysfunction right up to the present time. Ronald Laing's scathing observation, although made in a different context, become equally applicable to youth development at times: "It is only after the basic human rights are taken away from the recipient that 'treatment' is offered to them." Young people too are sometimes treated as 'clients' who are deprived of their rights first before the 'experts' offer them help. This way of functioning removes young people's autonomy and their capacity to make decisions that affect them. The way to alter this is to assume a different paradigm, in which young people, whatever their social, economic or medical condition, possess inalienable human rights, even if unable to exercise them temporarily. This theoretical precondition then gives youth workers a strategy: engage young people as partners in development. Thus, they become active agents in the achievement of goals, and participation becomes a process in the achievement of goals.

Specific initial conditions

Before we develop some strategies, we need to look at the specific initial conditions that are prevalent at present. Thanks to all the work that has gone on before, we have some excellent initial conditions in which to implement our new strategies. There are several well qualified youth workers in all Commonwealth countries, engaging in youth work at chalk-face level. The Youth Work Training Programme has aroused interest among academic institutions to further develop youth work concepts and curricula, so an intellectual climate of response to youth agenda prevails. Distance education techniques and resources are also well established. Governments are well disposed to giving a youth agenda and its priorities a hearing. A case has been made to place non-formal education and training within an andragogical context, rather than a pedagogical one. Lastly, human rights and Commonwealth values now underpin youth work education and training.

We need to recognise that the specific initial conditions as described above do not exist uniformly across the Commonwealth. No strategy can succeed without appropriate specific initial conditions. If we are to work towards eradication of poverty – where poverty "must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than lowness of income" (Amartya Sen) – then it is imperative that governments recognise the role professional youth workers can play in promoting youth development and therefore national development. Governments must ensure that proper professional youth work training courses are set up in all parts of the Commonwealth. Youth workers play a critical role as

agents of transformation through the engagement with young people, and without their involvement, young people would struggle to realise their full potential.

Strategies and resources

Equipped with our goals and theoretical concepts, and having identified the favourable specific initial conditions, we are now at a stage where we can propose some strategies and identify resources that can help us achieve our goals.

> An organisation which boasts one statement of purpose, one vision, five values, six goals, seven strategic priorities and eight key performance indicators without any clear correlation between them is producing a recipe for total confusion and exasperation.
>
> Official inquiry into the British Prison Service, 1995

The above quote warns us that unless we can create coherence between our statements, we end up with confusion that impairs our efforts for the achievement of our goals. This paper therefore strives to ensure that its statements and proposed strategies, resources and actions cohere with one another. To that end, it lists below strategies and resources (potential and actual) that have emerged so far. The list does not appear in order of importance. Practitioners therefore have the freedom to create their own list of priorities as suits their local conditions.

It is not within the realms of this paper to talk about financial resources in a detailed way; however, far too many good ideas fail because they have not been backed by adequate funding. This paper therefore urges governments to create a climate in which youth development work is seen as mainstream educational work and funded accordingly, as a key component of the national educational system.

At the same time, the paper assumes that all stakeholders, their intellectual resources and skills, are potential resources for youth development work. Micro-credit activities that link young people seeking to develop independent livelihood with experienced businesspeople as mentors, is an example of this.

To outline primary responsibilities for their implementation, strategies have been grouped into the following four areas:

1 General. This implies that all stakeholders have some responsibility for implementation;

2 Government (youth and other related ministries), youth workers and young people;

3 Youth ministries, social leaders, youth workers; and

4 Training agencies, youth agencies, youth workers.

1 General

Strategy 1: Constantly monitor our coherence

The first strategy is constantly to monitor our statements: are we consistent in what we say, and what we do? We have acknowledged human rights and Commonwealth values as our guiding principles. We therefore need to ensure that in all our practice these principles are manifest. Youth workers in particular should be given an extended role in creating youth development policies that reflect these principles, so that they own them and ensure that their practice coheres with the policies they have had a part in developing.

> *Software to delete:1*
> ❖ Constant monitoring is a waste of time and energy.
> *Software to install:*
> ❖ We need to insert a feedback loop in all our work that routinely provides us with feedback, especially negative feedback, so we can make appropriate adjustments to progress towards the specified goal(s).

Resources: youth workers and youth policy-makers obviously have a frontline role here. We should actively engage young people in this monitoring process too, because not only do we get a feedback from 'the horse's mouth', the process also creates a sense of ownership in them in place of apathy.

Strategy 2: Identify mental software that needs to be deleted, and develop new mental software that needs to be installed

Old habits die hard, but as long as they survive, they make change rather difficult. At the start of any project, therefore, we need to identify those cognitive, emotional and physical factors which might make implementation of our goals difficult, and those that facilitate achievement of goals (the push-pull factors). Are there any prejudices that prevent promotion of health for example? What software do we need to delete? What software do we need to install? We need to remind ourselves that this is only a shorthand way of talking; the human brain does not lend itself easily to 'deleting' and 'installing' programmes.

> At the United Nations, sustainable human development means looking at development in an integrated multidisciplinary way. Human rights are central to this concept of development.
>
> United Nations, quoted in YWET Paper 2003

Resources: youth workers are a great resource here. They can train peer educators who act as models with other young people. Obviously, peer educators can have a multiplier effect ('each one teach one'). Mothers too need to be enlisted as allies in attitude change. Research that identifies specific initial conditions and push-pull factors should be made available to youth workers.

Strategy 3: Acknowledge development as a human right, thus making it part of youth work training curriculum and consequently a goal of youth work

This strategy would enable the training agencies to develop youth work curriculum whose central focus is development as a human right. Youth workers, equipped with such training would be able to tackle development at three levels: individual (promoting autonomy and adulthood), community level (promoting education, health, employment, sustainable livelihood) and at national level (exercising rights and responsibilities of citizenship, influencing national policies).

> *Software to delete:3*
> ❖ Youth work is a peripheral or marginal activity.
>
> *Software to install:*
> ❖ Youth work is a mainstream activity and therefore we should provide adequate resources for training youth workers. We can then demand from them a holistic, development-orientated policy and practice with young people.

Strategy 4: Combating HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, etc, needs to be taken out of the realms of remedial work and placed in the developmental context within formal and non-formal education

Health needs to be treated as a human right. The beneficiary needs to be seen as a whole person – as a partner in treatment.

Resources: reformers, health and literacy educators, family members, youth workers and young people, beneficiaries.

> *Software to delete:4*
> ❖ HIV/AIDS, illiteracy, unemployment etc. are remedial actions in which experts treat the sufferers.
>
> *Software to install:*
> ❖ We need to see development as a multidisciplinary enterprise in which the so-called sufferers are treated as partners in development, and their active participation is viewed as an educational activity and an underused resource.

2   Governments, youth agencies, youth workers and young people

Strategy 5: Seeing young people as partners

It is well-known that much of the population of the Commonwealth is under 25 years of age. Since our goal is to empower the young, we are at once presented with a problem which, paradoxically, contains its own solution. What needs to be done is to enable this youth force to power-steer itself. To do so, we need to alter our mental landscape from seeing young people as some kind of investment for the future, and see them as equal participants now. Despite our rhetoric, adults remain 'stockholders', holding young people as a 'stock' for the future. We need to delete this old software from our brains and install the new software which treats young people as genuine partners. Do not make change a tug-of-war, but a gradual, evolutionary process.

Resources: young people, youth workers, social and political leaders

Strategy 6: Creating the enabling conditions for empowerment

Initially, this is an advocacy project. The Commonwealth Youth Ministers have a primary responsibility for this advocacy. The old software, which prevents establishment of enabling conditions, is the main obstacle that the ministers have to help others to delete.

Resources: youth ministers and other government ministers. Youth workers need to play a much greater role in advocacy and attitude formation. Academics and researchers also need to be enlisted in this task.

> *Software to delete:6*
> ❖ Young people are not ready to exercise power.
> *Software to install:*
> ❖ Young people are an energy force who should be viewed as equal allies in the quest for development.

3   Youth ministries, social leaders, youth workers

Strategy 7: Engaging Maslow's 'best fighters'

We need to recognise young people's zeal for reform and engage them as stakeholders in that activity. The UK Government's prevention of teenage pregnancy programme, a £150 million enterprise, failed. One of the main reasons for its failure was that the programme did not engage teenagers as reformers. Clearly, the old software here is the government or adults' inability to see young people as development agents and social reformers. We need to replace the old attitudes with a yin-yang approach where, without young people's participation, the whole model becomes inoperative, as the teenage pregnancy prevention programme showed.

> *Software to delete:7*
> ❖ Power is best concentrated in the hands of the adults.
> *Software to install:*
> ❖ The adult society needs to create enabling conditions through which young people can exercise their power.

Resources: young people who have experienced change and want to spread it further.

Strategy 8: Replace the imagery of powerlessness with that of powerfulness

> *Software to delete:8*
> ❖ Young people need top-down remedial action to improve their decision-making skills.
> *Software to install:*
> ❖ Young people can be leading partners in influencing reforms that improve their lifestyle.

We need to delete the old brain software that young people are powerless and install in its place the new software which inherently acknowledges young people as powerful participants. Naturally, we would need to revise our rhetoric which brands young people as powerless and then develop solutions for empowerment. The way you devise a problem is largely determinative of the solutions you create. Seeing young people as a storehouse of power (just as Gandhi did with ordinary people) immediately creates an enormous resource for our goals.

Resources: youth workers, reformers. **Potential resource:** young people.

4   Training agencies, youth agencies, youth workers

Strategy 9: Redeploy youth workers to use their skills and knowledge to develop peer educators among the young

In order to engage young people as a resource, youth workers need to alter their focus from direct, face-to-face work to training young people as mentors and peer educators. The old motto 'each one teach one' can prove

> *Software to delete:9*
> ❖ Young people are powerless.
> *Software to install:*
> ❖ Young people are full of potential power that needs to be enabled and released.

inspirational here. The old software to delete here is the prevalent donor-recipient relationship between the adult and youth. It needs to be replaced with the new software which treats the young as a part of the development network.

Resources: youth workers, youth work employers, training institutions, in-service training programmes.

Strategy 10: Use educational institutions as our intellectual powerhouses

We need to create a much stronger two-way link with our educational institutions so that they constantly stimulate and challenge us. Do the vice-chancellors have a role here? We need to urge them to help us develop strategies that use alternative resources. 'Casting your nets on the other side to catch the fish' is a very ancient, proven technique! Why can't our educators be the ones that shout that suggestion to us from the shore?

Resource: educational institutions.

Strategy 11: Enable youth workers in training to be the first 'experiencers' of autonomy, adulthood and other fruits of development. They would then be enthusiastic catalysts for similar work with young people

Resources: youth work trainers and policy-makers.

Strategy 12: As youth work training reaches a higher level of sophistication, a specialised training programme for managers and policy-makers needs to be developed

As the cadre of youth workers grows, it would become necessary to develop management training and policy development courses in youth work to reflect the growth of the profession.

Resources: youth ministers and CYP have a vital role in getting governmental recognition for the growing profession and its need for an increasingly specialised training. Educational institutions need to respond to this need, and youth workers themselves need to advocate their case for further training.

Potential resources: Youth work agencies, training institutions.

Strategy 13: Develop a code of conduct

Software to delete: 14
❖ Youth workers do not need a professional code of conduct.

Software to install:
❖ It is a mark of a growing profession to subject itself to a professional scrutiny and standards.

Software to delete:10
❖ Youth workers must continue to work at 'chalk and talk' level.

Software to install:
❖ Youth workers can act as educators and maximisers who train young people as peer educators in development and human rights.

Software to delete:11
❖ Educational institutions are ivory towers.

Software to install:
❖ Educational institutions can provide us with intellectual insights and knowledge that could give us the analysis, techniques and innovative methods required to fulfil our goal(s).

Software to delete:12
❖ Youth work training needs to follow the pedagogical style of 'chalk and talk' in delivering the curriculum.

Software to install:
❖ Youth work training needs to be based on andragogy, giving the learner an opportunity to develop learning strategies including the concept of a 'practicum', a setting designed for the task of learning a practice.

Software to delete:13
❖ Basic training in youth work is adequate for all development work.
❖ One size fits all.

Software to install:
❖ Youth work training contents and methods need to reflect the increasing sophistication our society reflects.

Developing a code of conduct moves a 'semi-profession' such as youth development work further towards professionalisation. Youth work practice could thus benefit from developing a professional code of conduct.

Resources: youth agencies, youth workers and training institutions.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper, I have argued that youth work is a sophisticated profession, which can contribute hugely to individual and national development. Nevertheless, compared with other branches of education it remains somewhat neglected and less well-regarded. Yet it could be a key player in bringing about a change. Thanks to writers like Amartya Sen, we have come to see poverty not just as an economic condition, but also as an all-pervading ill in which basic capabilities are denied. This is a task which formal education alone cannot tackle. The state of autonomy is not just a physical condition – it is a mental condition as well. Youth workers, with their skills in non-formal and social education are well suited to help young people achieve this state.

> (Human beings) perceive that a greater revolution is the real goal of humanity (which) they attempt to effect in themselves, to lead others to it, and make it the recognised goal of the (human) race. The degree to which they succeed will make the unrealised potentiality an actual possibility…
>
> Sri Aurobindo, The Human Cycle

This paper is all about goals and how to achieve them. It is therefore fitting to end it with the words about 'the real goal' from Sri Aurobindo, whose wisdom and insights have won admiration and reverence from people of all continents.

It is precisely the task of turning that unrealised potentiality into an actual possibility that the Commonwealth Youth Programme strives to achieve.

Chandu Christian

Chandu Christian was born and brought up in India. After completing his university education, he became a youth and community development worker in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. He trained as a youth and community worker in the UK. After migrating to UK, he specialised in working with Asian and Afro-Caribbean youth. He was principal of the YMCA George Williams College in London until he left in 1997 to pursue freelance work as a trainer. He lives in London with his wife.

Notes

1   Quoted in Jarvis, P (1990) *An international dictionary of adult and continuing education p 105*
2   Goldstein, I and Gessner, M (1988) Quoted in Tight, M (1996) *Adult education and training*
3   Paraphrased from *Youth Empowerment in the New Millennium* CYP (1998) pp 7-8
4   Shere Hite (2000) *Sex and Business* London: Prentice Hall
5   Cited in Kast, F and Rosenzweig, J (1985) *Organisation and Management* London: McGraw Hill pp 638-39
6   Karl Popper (1966) *Objective Knowledge* Routledge and Kegan Paul
7   Cited in Jane Kitto (1985) *Holding the Boundaries* London: YMCA George Williams College
8   Cited in Fritjof Capra (1988) *Uncommon Wisdom* London: Flamingo

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Commonwealth Youth Development Index (YDI)

Challenges and Prospects for Youth Development
Andrew Simmons

Introduction

The global youth landscape indicates that young people from Commonwealth developing countries are in a more vulnerable position than their counterparts in developed countries. Issues and challenges such as poverty, discrimination and inequality, as well as lack of access to proper education and health services, continue to dominate their lives. Data suggests that more young people than adults, specifically those still in their early teens and twenties are HIV positive, with young women accounting for the majority of those affected. Worldwide, young people account for nearly half of all new HIV/AIDS infections.

Unemployment is another serious issue facing young people, with an estimated 88 million affected in 2003, up from 58 million in 1995. Young people generally account for 47 per cent of the world's unemployed. This figure is three times more than that of adults. However, this figure can be as high as 50-70 per cent in some Commonwealth developing countries. Statistics have shown that, globally, over 208 million (18 per cent) of the 1. 09 billion young people aged between 15-24 years survive on less than one US dollar per day, and 515. 1 million (45 per cent) on less than two US dollars per day.

According to OXFAM predictions in 2005, over 45 million children will die in the next 10 years as a result of global poverty. This is mainly due to unfair trade practices towards developing countries and their need to service ever-mounting debts to developed countries and international agencies in foreign currency.

In addition, over 75 million school-age children do not have access to basic education facilities, resulting in over 133 million illiterate young people since 2005. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 20 per cent of secondary school age young people are enrolled in such institutions, compared to Latin American and the Caribbean, where 62 per cent of these young people are enrolled in the school system. This problem is further compounded by early pregnancies (globally, 13 million girls aged 15-19 years are mothers) and increases in crime and violence among youth. There is also evidence of lack of participation of young people in development policies and processes.

It is against this background that the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) and a range of partners within the UN system, including the World Bank, are working to provide support to governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other development institutions. Such support is aimed at enhancing policy and legal frameworks as well as developing programmes for young people, to enable them to live and work in an environment that values them, builds their confidence and self-esteem and creates a space for them to participate equally as trusted partners in the development process. More recently, CYP and partners have begun formulating a Youth Development Index (YDI) to measure the impact of specific development activities on the lives of young men and women.

Numerous programmes have been implemented at local, regional and international levels in response to the challenges outlined above. However, there is still no adequate instrument or model, to measure, monitor and evaluate how well these initiatives are performing. At their meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 1998, Commonwealth Ministers endorsed the development of this Index as a means of enabling CYP and the Commonwealth Secretariat to work to develop viable indicators that will

enable all stakeholders effectively to implement, monitor and assess the Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment (PAYE).

UNESCO's country office in Brazil has done a considerable amount of work in this area. During the period January 30 to February 4 2005, the UN Focal Point on Youth, in collaboration with other agencies within the UN system, met with inter-governmental organisations and the World Bank in Coimbra, Portugal to review the implementation of the World Plan of Action of Youth. This meeting unanimously endorsed CYP to take the lead in the development of a Youth Development Index (YDI) based on the UN's Human Development Index (HDI) model.

In July 2005, CYP hosted a consultation involving UN agencies including the World Bank, as well as a number of development and research institutions with a youth focus, to devise strategies aimed at developing the YDI. This was followed in October 2005 by the Sixth Session of the UN General Assembly, which adopted resolution A/RES/60/2, focusing on policies and programmes involving youth. This resolution requests the United Nations Secretariat, in collaboration with other relevant United Nations programmes and agencies, to establish a broad set of indicators related to youth, which governments and other actors may use to monitor the situation of young people. In December 2005, the UN Focal Point on Youth hosted an Expert Group Meeting on Youth Development Indicators at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. This meeting sought to review indicators used to collect population data on youth and to create momentum for international cooperation to move forward on the YDI.

This paper aims to:

1   present the conceptual framework and development paradigm employed by CYP in formulating the YDI;

2   define young people in the Commonwealth within the context of age and the Youth Life Cycle Approach;

3   locate youth development practice within the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);

4   draw attention to the challenges facing Commonwealth member governments and other stakeholders in implementing the YDI; and

5   present a set of indicators for measuring the performance of CYP and national youth development programmes within the three strategic programming areas.

1   CYP conceptual framework and development paradigm

The CYP programme of work is based on the concept of genuine and active participation of young people. This approach views development as an inextricable component of human rights. The active participation of young people is fundamental to their development. Their participation in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes that affect them renders those programmes accountable, transparent and legitimate, as opposed to programmes in which they are merely passive recipients and objects of someone else's development plans.

The rights-based approach to development as it applies to young people is also well supported and advocated for by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. An important component of this approach is that young people should share in the burdens and benefits of national development and responsible citizenship. Youth participation in both theory and practice underpins the work of the CYP with young people in the Commonwealth. CYP also encourages its member governments, collaborating partners and others to adopt the same youth development paradigm. The ultimate goal of this approach is to give young people the power, platform, space, capabilities, responsibility, choices and access to resources necessary to change their own lives, improve their own communities and influence their own destinies.

Over the years, CYP has also advocated for the active participation of young people in their development by adopting the youth empowerment paradigm contained in the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment, which was approved by the Commonwealth Youth Ministers

Meeting in 1998. This is the development philosophy which has shaped the work of CYP in the past and will continue to do so in the future.

The concept of youth empowerment arose from the dire need to enable young people to have a say in decisions that affect them and their communities. Youth empowerment is an acknowledgement that young people have and can create choices in life, make informed decisions freely, take actions based on those decisions and accept full responsibility for the consequences of those actions.

Empowering young people also involves creating and supporting the enabling conditions of an economic and social base, political will, the provision of adequate resources, a conducive and supportive legal and administrative framework, a stable environment of equity, peace and democracy, access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system in which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. CYP sees the empowerment of young people not just as a role of government singly but as one which involves a concerted effort by all key stakeholders – the corporate sector, non-governmental organisations, civil society and young people themselves.

Youth empowerment is everybody's business. It is an approach that succeeds only through equal partnership, mutual trust, collaboration, sharing information and building long-term capacity.

The conceptual framework of the Youth Development Index (YDI)

In order to enhance the significance of the PAYE, CYP felt that it was necessary to develop a monitoring and evaluation tool. It was expected that such a tool would assume the form of a framework of indicators that could be referred to as the Youth Development Index.

From the standpoint of the Secretariat, the YDI is considered to be a framework that provides measurement for evaluating changes in the status of youth development at human, institutional and national levels.

In his paper, *Youth Empowerment and Indicators of Human Development – Challenges Facing the Caribbean* (2000), Dr Godfrey St Bernard of the University of the West Indies, noted that the impact of the Commonwealth's Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment or any other Plan of Action was increased if their results could be monitored and evaluated. According to Dr St Bernard, for the YDI to be considered as a "framework that provides measurement for the purpose of evaluating changes in the status of youth development at human, institutional and national level, it should assume the form of statistical measures such as counts, indicators, and indices that permit assessments of changes in the status of attributes pertaining to youth and captured at the three levels under review".

The YDI is expected to be based on a set of demographic, socio-economic, political and other indicators that address the status of youth and will serve as the primary monitoring and evaluation tool of the PAYE. This will provide a standardised tool that can measure critical aspects of youth development across countries and regions. The YDI is not intended to evaluate all aspects of youth development; rather, its focus should be on a few critical areas that lend themselves to statistical and socio-analytical methods, which, having been carefully studied and analysed, can provide good approximations relative to the overall status of young people.

It should also provide policy-makers with an important instrument that could be useful in shaping the direction of development work and policies affecting young people. The YDI could also help Youth Ministers and other policy-makers in determining how to allocate scarce resources among competing priorities that affect youth development.

2   Definition of young people within the context of CYP's youth life cycle approach

Defining what constitutes a young person is an issue for many organisations and countries. The United Nations have their own age definition of youth, as do the Commonwealth and the

Commonwealth Youth Programme. For CYP, youth is defined as the group of persons aged 14-29 years. In the Commonwealth, the definition of youth ranges from country to country: in some countries the age definition is culturally determined, while in others, the definition of youth is related to behaviour, level of responsibility, legal obligations, attitude, status and level of vulnerability to social and economic conditions.

Qualitatively, youth is defined as a phase when a person moves from a time of dependence (childhood) to independence (adulthood). Such transition involves several shifts which present unique challenges:

❖ moving from school to seeking work and independent sources of income;

❖ moving from the parental home to new living arrangements; and

❖ forming close relationships outside of the family and having children.

This is a vulnerable period in young people's lives, especially if they are poor, have low levels of skills, or poor prospects for employment. Such youth have a higher risk than their peers to drop out of school, to develop a substance abuse habit, turn to crime and violence or to contract HIV/AIDS.

The World Bank Plan of Action on Youth and Children entitled *Children and Youth: A Framework for Action 2005*, identifies 'building blocks' for youth life cycle development. This model has tremendous relevance to the youth development approach implemented by CYP.

These building blocks include:

Secondary and tertiary education

The focus in this stage is to increase the number of young people completing school and improving the quality and ensuring the relevance of such schooling to the job market and employment sector, rather than a simple emphasis on the number of young people enrolled in these educational institutions. There is also an emphasis on providing adequate 'school-to-work' transition and the creation of safe and healthy schools.

Informal and non-formal education

This is concerned with building adequate skills and competencies for life and work, specifically for those who have never entered formal schooling or who drop out of the formal school system. Here, attention is focused on lifelong learning, effective apprenticeships and internship programmes, development of youth multipurpose centres, life skills, literacy and numeracy, vocational skills, information and communications technology (ICT), return to school programmes and peer education.

Healthy behaviours

Healthy behaviours is concerned with achieving the objective of and making interventions focusing on lowering the rate of HIV/AIDS, crime, substance abuse, violence and conflict, malnutrition, risky sex as well as early pregnancy and to improve knowledge of reproductive health and parent skills. The strategy which supports this area of work consists of the provision of relevant and youth-oriented information, and the provision of reproductive health service through schools, health clinics, mass media and other avenues where young people can be reached.

Livelihood and employment

The focus in this area concerns the development and implementation of policies and interventions to increase youth employability and employment. The emphasis is on enhancing labour market policies, linking and defining the role of the private sector for job seekers, understanding the structural mismatch between education and the labour market, apprenticeships and internships, youth entrepreneurship and income generation support, credit policies and community-driven development projects/programmes.

The youth development life cycle approach is an important aspect of youth development strategy. It provides opportunities for governments and key stakeholders to link policy development with intervention in youth development. It also supports the development of synergies among the sectors to improve access to basic services for young people. In consideration of the resource constraints faced by most developing countries in the Commonwealth, it enables governments and development agencies to become innovative and strategic when developing programmes and services for young people. Such services and programmes have maximum impact in a cost-effective way.

3 Youth Development Index and the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

> We will have time to reach the Millennium Development Goals – worldwide and in most, or even all, individual countries – but only if we break with business as usual. We cannot win overnight. Success will require sustained action across the entire decade between now and the deadline. It takes time to train the teachers, nurses and engineers; to build the roads, schools and hospitals; to grow the small and large businesses able to create the jobs and income needed. So we must start now. And we must more than double global development assistance over the next few years. Nothing less will help to achieve the Goals.
>
> Kofi Annan
> *United Nations Secretary-General*

> For many Commonwealth countries, attaining the Millennium Development Goals remains a struggle. If we are to meet those goals, eradicate poverty, bridge the digital divide, bring equality of opportunity and economic freedom to our 1. 8 billion Commonwealth citizens, there is no time to rest.
>
> Commonwealth Secretary-General
> *Don McKinnon*

The UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a comprehensive set of eight goals to galvanise unprecedented efforts to meet the needs of the world's poorest by the year 2015. The MDGs are supported by a set of indicators to enable the monitoring of the performance of initiatives to achieve these goals. It therefore makes sense to link the work on the indicators developed by the MDGs to any work that enhances the performance and investment in youth development. Five of the goals in the MDGs have direct relevance to the development of young people.

These goals and supported indicators (in parentheses) are:

Goal 1: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than US$1 a day

❖ (1) proportion of population below US$1 (1993 PPP) per day

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

❖ (8) Literacy rates among 15-24 year-olds

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

❖ (9) Ratio of girls to boys in secondary and tertiary education

❖ (10) Ratio of literate females to males in the 15-24 year old age group

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

❖ (18) HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-24 years

❖ (19) percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development[1]

❖ (45) Total unemployment rate among 15-24 year olds and disaggregated by gender

It is argued that although the MDGs indicators are very important and possess the potential for a platform for developing indicators for youth development, it is believed that these indicators are

limited. The World Programme of Action on Youth (WPAY) developed by the United Nations is more comprehensive and focuses on youth more consistently than the MDGs. There are fifteen priority areas of the WPAY, which are divided into three different clusters: Youth in the Global Economy, Youth in Civil Society and Youth at Risk.

Although at present there is favourable progress on investment in young people across countries, governments and development agencies still need to provide more investment in the area of youth development. This is because young people are viewed as key agents of social change, economic development and technological innovation. While the WPAY and PAYE offer comprehensive frameworks for youth development, the indicators to measure the progress achieved in implementing WPAY and PAYE have not yet been established. Therefore, the need exists for collaboration among development agencies, government and other stakeholders to develop indicators and implement appropriate strategies to collect useful data.

4 Challenges for Commonwealth member governments

Most of the data needed on young persons is not available because the data currently collected is not disaggregated by age for 14-29 year-olds. This difficulty is compounded by the absence of qualitative indicators to support data collection processes. Indicators need to be available to facilitate comparison across countries. To enhance the quality of the YDI process, efforts should be made to involve young people at all levels of the YDI development process. This would result in adding value to the process. Consideration should also be given to facilitating a range of stakeholders in the data gathering process.

Global organisations such as UNESCO, UNFPA and WHO collect a range of data. They have cited the following constraints as having a potentially negative impact on the effective implementation of the YDI: a) limited budgets for data gathering, b) the reliability of data, and c) periodicity of data. While it is plausible to develop global indicators to gather data on young people, consideration should be given to developing specific indicators to gather data at national and sub-national levels. For example, it is important to collect quantitative data on the level of literacy, but it is also important to develop indicators to assess the quality of education provided at the local level.

The development of such indicators can be done in collaboration with youth development organisations to form the basis for the establishment of the YDI.

Among the specific issues that will need to be borne in mind as part of the evolution of YDI process are the following:

❖ Census data will provide a good mechanism for benchmarking and extrapolating to monitor the effects of activities that have been implemented to enhance the lot of specific target populations, such as for young people.

❖ There is need for countries to undertake rigid technical evaluations of how they collect and analyse their statistics.

❖ With respect to migration patterns, there is a paucity of data of satisfactory quality in most member countries. This is especially important in the context of youthful populations insofar as they are predisposed to a substantial amount of mobility whether to seek and obtain employment, to pursue further education and training, to leave home, or to enter into meaningful social and emotional relationships. Special efforts have to be made to provide a continuous basis for assessing migration, not only in terms of stocks but also in terms of pattern.

❖ Countries will need to identify adequate capacity to develop relevant indicators of young people's status.

❖ To be of any significance, these inquiries should be pursued every five years targeting individuals between the ages of 14 and 29. The process should be designed in a manner that

would permit panel studies of young persons as they progress through different stages in their lives, for example, 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29 years old.

❖ A sustainable accompanying process of training and internship should be initiated by suitably qualified personnel in order to develop adequate and sustainable capacity over time for data collection.

❖ At national and sub-national levels, it might be worth considering the development of a 'youth status index' (YSI) that will represent a composite measure of the overall status of young people according to specific age groups, say 15-19, 20-24 and 25-29.

❖ A measure such as the YSI is likely to assume the form of a linear combination of dimensions that reflect levels of education, health, living conditions, labour market experiences and involvement in processes of governance. Age-specific items will be identified as being associated with these dimensions and will provide a basis for measurement at each stage.

5   CYP strategic programme areas and proposed indicators

The programmes implemented by CYP seek to meet our main strategic objectives through a wide range of activities for young people and those associated with youth. Programmes are implemented in direct partnership with governments or other youth development agencies at national, regional and international levels. While CYP has developed indicators primarily to measure the performance of its programme delivery in member countries, it is still important to develop a set of indicators which can measure the direct impact of policies and programmes on the overall development and well-being of young people.

Such indicators have significance beyond use by national governments; they will provide an unassailable argument for further investment in youth development programmes by CYP and other agencies. The indicators will be divided into four categories, namely core indicators, determinant indicators, behaviour indicators and impact indicators.

Governance, Development and Youth Networks (GDYN)

Professor Roger Hart, at the City University Graduate School in New York, states that participation is voluntary; it is not just a top-down opportunity given to young people for them to be mobilised. To get to the core of development, he suggests that we should measure the freedom of youth to engage in terms of available legislation opportunities. He proposes uncensored Internet access, and the right to information as part of the legislative freedom young people should enjoy. Some indicators suggested by Hart include mechanisms for monitoring youth participation at the level of local government, both in terms of decision-making and budget-setting priorities; membership of young people in politically neutral organisations; the ability of young people to self organise and be at the helm of leadership within organisations, and the degree to which youth can practice and reproduce their culture.

Governance is a very important aspect of youth development. Indicators should therefore be developed to assess the quality of participation of young people in governance processes. This level of participation of young people in power and decision-making processes can be assessed through the following indicators: the number of young people in parliament and the number of young people participating in election processes.

At the policy level, indicators that evaluate the quality of life of young people detect felt needs and guide policy processes should be developed. Indicators should also be developed to assess quality of housing, determine family policies and practices and assess the transition from school to work.

Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihoods (YESL)

Although the MDGs provide a set of useful indicators to measure its eight goals, it is important to note that the poverty and hunger indicators are not age disaggregated. Some of the main 'depriva-

tions' of basic human needs are food, water, sanitation, shelter, education and information. David Gordon, Head of the Centre for Study of Poverty and Social Justice at the University of Bristol, noted that the available data is disaggregated for most countries within the age categories of 16-24 years. He said that the absolute poverty threshold could be defined as equal to two or more deprivations of basic human needs. Body mass can be used as a tool to measure hunger for the youth population and such data is available disaggregated according to age categories.

Employment

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is the agency responsible for monitoring target 16 of the MDGs on creating decent and productive employment for youth. Young people face unique challenges, as they are more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed and are more likely to be in precarious employment situations. Although there are numerous indicators to measure employment there are challenges facing this area of work. These challenges are a) currently there are no agreed methods to measure the quality of employment and b) no definition available for productive and decent employment. The ILO definition of employment is an issue for concern: employment is defined as one hour of work per week for pay, profit or family income. Indicators for this area of programming includes the ratio of youth to adult unemployed, the youth share of total employment who are employed; the employment to population ratio by sex and the youth labour force; and the number of young people in gainful sustainable employment .

HIV/AIDS and risky behaviours

HIV/AIDS is a component of the YESL strategic programming area. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) are responsible for collecting data globally on the incidence of HIV/AIDS. This area is linked to MDG 6 on combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. Some of the indicators currently existing on young people are: HIV/AIDS prevalence among 15-24 year old women and men; sexual activity of 15-24 year old women and men; incidence of drug abuse among 15-24 year olds; and child marriage.

Other key indicators would include a national policy index relating to young people and HIV/AIDS; the provision of HIV education in schools; the establishment of youth-friendly health services; regular or increased use of health services by young people and condom availability; knowledge of a range of HIV/AIDS prevention methods; adult support for education on condom use; and details on prevalence rates among pregnant women and among youth with sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Drugs and crime

Drugs and crime are areas of concerns for youth development. Due to the absence of an international definition of crime, it is difficult to compare data across countries on the incidence of crime. The indicators on drugs as proposed by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) are the number of youth involved in drug abuse; the number of youth involved in drug trafficking; the negative legal and social impact of drugs; and dependency and addiction rates. Indicators for crime include youth as victims of crime; youth as perpetrators of crime; and youth in the criminal justice system. Data on youth lifetime prevalence rates for drug use and the total number of juvenile suspects is available, but data on youth as victims of crime is scarce and inconsistent.

Information and communications technology (ICT)

Young people are the pioneers of ICT both in terms of content and technology. Although they are at the forefront of ICT, a large number of young persons do not have access to the Internet. Strategies need to be created to bridge the digital divide so that young people have access to ICT, irrespective of where they live or their socio-economic status. The indicators for monitoring ICT include Internet access; mobile phone by age and income; possession of an email address; PCs per student at secondary school; and cyber cafés per thousand people.

Youth Work Education and Training (YWET)

This area of work for CYP focuses on the professionalisation of youth work through the delivery of a diploma in youth development work. The indicators to monitor this programme area are the number of agencies offering professional quality youth work courses and the number of graduates from these programmes.

For the purpose of the YDI, we may wish to expand this programme to cover areas pertaining to collection of data on the quality of education provided to young people and their rate of literacy in relationship to the rest of the population. Indicators should include literacy rates (15-19, 20-24 age groups), the gross and net enrolment for secondary education, the gross enrolment rate for tertiary education, and the ratio of newcomers at secondary school to people that finish primary education.

UNESCO is the agency charged with collection of data on education, but there are considerable gaps in the data collection process. These gaps are caused by the absence of indicators relating to city-level data on education, the absence of the use of longitudinal studies to evaluate changes in quality of education over a period of time; and the absence of adequate indicators to measure results of vocational training, non-formal learning and digital literacy.

Crosscutting issues

Globalisation

Indicators to measure emerging and crosscutting themes such as globalisation need to be developed. Instead of looking at youth in relation to the global economy, it is useful to look at the effects of globalisation on the individual level. Indicators to monitor this area should focus on:

- ❖ migration flows within a country or abroad;
- ❖ remittance flows from and to young people and changes in employment patterns;
- ❖ access to micro-credit or other forms of credit;
- ❖ number of young people studying abroad;
- ❖ access to and usage of global media as well as access to the Internet;
- ❖ trans-national connections of youth through organisation;
- ❖ the ability to speak native and foreign languages and ability and frequency to travel abroad; and
- ❖ the number of youth employed in the tourism sector.

Gender

Issues relating to gender discrimination and gender equality are important considerations for measuring performance of youth development. Young women are not just a vulnerable group but are subjected to a number of challenges due to their being disadvantaged. The indicators for this area should measure progress in gender quality. Indicators should include availability of a secure and adequate gender responsive infrastructure; number of women in governance or authority roles; equal opportunities and adequate access to training and productive resources for young men and women; number of sexually and or physically abused and or exploited girls; and number of girls being trafficked.

Sport

Indicators relating to sport and physical activity are also important for measuring performance on youth development. Sport and physical education play an important role in the development of young people and can contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Indicators to monitor this area should focus on sport being used to re-engage young people in education; its ability to improve academic attainment in key skills such as literacy and numeracy; its use to increase access for young women and girls to physical education and helping to empower women through the development of leadership skills and confidence; using sport to reach out to young people and provide

them with positive role models who can deliver prevention messages on HIV/AIDS; and finally, sport's ability to teach young people valuable life skills through its inclusiveness.

Conclusion

The Youth Development Index has the potential to impact positively on youth development strategies and programmes in member countries of the Commonwealth and beyond. It could assist governments and donors to develop programmes that will better target resources to enhance the performance of development agencies to engage in youth development. Besides being used as a measure for youth development, it will enable development planners and practitioners to identify areas that need specific attention, compare progress between countries, advocate for youth and support the development of appropriate youth policies.

There are also challenges identified with the development and implementation of the YDI process. These are:

❖ difficulties in selecting significant indicators for the index that reflect the dynamic social strata of youth;

❖ apportioning weights to the indicators in order to meaningfully reflect the real needs and concerns of young people;

❖ challenges relating to collecting necessary data;

❖ considerations given to the political sensitivity of some member states relating to comparison of data;

❖ issues relating to finding adequate resources to implement the YDI;

❖ the fragmentation among agencies involved in collecting data on young people; and

❖ the absence of adequate indicators to capture the type of data necessary to provide an indication on how well youth development programme is or is not performing.

From all indications, operationalising the YDI would require a huge amount of resources. It is therefore necessary for development partners such as the World Bank, Commonwealth Secretariat, agencies within the UN system, research institutions and other international development agencies to collaborate in this regard.

Efforts should be made by partners to proceed rapidly on the development of the YDI and to capitalise on the progress made by the Commonwealth and its partners. Youth Ministers are invited to note the importance of the YDI to the successful implementation of the new Commonwealth PAYE and the overall development of young people in the Commonwealth. Ministers are equally invited to note the progress made by CYP to develop the YDI, including the endorsement by the UN General Assembly in October 2005 for CYP to act as lead agency, and are encouraged to pledge resources necessary to support strategies to develop this important initiative.

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Prior to his employment at the Commonwealth Secretariat, he worked for the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines as Director of Community Services in the Ministry of Housing and Community Services, with responsibility for spearheading government's poverty eradication and social development programmes (1990-97). He is the recipient of a number of prestigious international environment awards including the UN "Global 500 Award" (1989), the Goldman Environmental Prize (1994), and another UN Award for his contribution to the development of Small Island Developing States (2005).

"True development involves people at the core of the developmental process and enables them to actively participate in the shaping and determining the type of outcomes needed in their communities and societies."

For further information on Mr Simmons, please see:
www.un.org/smallislands/stvincent.html
www.goldmanprize.org/recipientprofile.cfmprecipientID=49
www.share-international.org/archives/environmental/en-mlrevolution.htm

Notes

1   Specifically target 16: "in co-operation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth".

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