

**COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT**  
**COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME (CYP)**



**YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AT THE CENTRE  
OF THE COMMONWEALTH AGENDA**

**THE COMMONWEALTH – AN ASSOCIATION OF FREE NATIONS**

The Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association of free nations that grew out of the former British Empire. There are currently 53 member states that make up the organisation.

The Commonwealth Mission Statement 2004-2008, states that:

*We work as a trusted partner of the Commonwealth people as a force for peace, democracy, equality, good governance, as a catalyst for global consensus building and a source of assistance for sustainable development and poverty alleviation.*

The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) is the Youth Affairs Division of the Commonwealth Secretariat that plans, coordinates, implements and evaluates all youth development programmes in the Commonwealth. It was established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in 1973 as a response to the growing needs of the young people in Commonwealth member countries. The Commonwealth Youth Programme forms a core and integral part of the Commonwealth Secretariat Strategic and Operational Plan and programme of activities. The Commonwealth Youth Programme is also unique in that it is financed by a dedicated fund from voluntary contributions by all the member states of the Commonwealth. The CYP also receives funding from other non-governmental sources, collaborating partners and agencies.

The CYP operates in the 53 member countries of the Commonwealth through four Regional Centres located in Zambia for Africa, India for Asia, Guyana for Caribbean and Solomon Islands for the Pacific. The four Regional Centres work directly with governments, young people and other youth development regional and international agencies working in specific countries of the Commonwealth.

**CYP conceptual framework and development paradigm**

CYP work is based on the concept of genuine and active participation of young people. This approach views development as part and parcel of and 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 also makes those programmes accountable, transparent and legitimate to the young people as opposed to the programmes in which they are mere passive recipients and objects of their own development.

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. Another 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 aimed at giving the young people the power, the platform, the space, the capabilities the choices and the access to resources necessary to change their own lives, improve their own communities and influence their own destinies.

Over the years, CYP has also pushed and advocated for the active participation of young people in their development beyond rhetoric by adopting the youth empowerment paradigm contained in the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment (PAYE), which was approved by the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting at 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 themselves 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. It also views the empowerment of young people as creating and supporting the enabling conditions of an economic and social base, political will, provision of adequate resources, a conducive and supportive legal and administrative framework, a stable environment of equity, peace and democracy, and 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, corporate, non-governmental organisations and civil society. Youth empowerment is everybody's business. It is an approach that succeeds only on the basis of mutual partnership, trust, collaboration, sharing information and not competition for political visibility through flag raising.

### **Definition of Young People in the Commonwealth**

In the Commonwealth youth is defined as the category of persons age *14 – 29 years*. In the Commonwealth age definition categories also range from country to country. In some countries the age definition is culturally determined, while in others there are other considerations to do with the behaviour, level of responsibility, legal obligations, attitude, status and level of vulnerability to social and economic conditions, which define youth in that particular Commonwealth country.

## **Purpose and Objectives of the CYP**

The overall goal and purpose of the Commonwealth Youth Programme is to enable 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 and as part of their societies.

The objectives are to:

- Promote youth enterprise development and sustainable livelihoods in Commonwealth member countries in order to alleviate poverty and unemployment among the youth.
- Facilitate the development and strengthening of effective and efficient operation of youth networks and structures for good governance in the Commonwealth member countries which are informed and fostered by the development and implementation of National Youth Policies..
- Develop and promote youth work education and training for the professionalisation of the youth work and its mainstreaming into the macro-development sector on the basis of a body of knowledge, skills, attitudes and a code of ethics.
- Assist governments to create the enabling environment for young people to participate in the economic, social and political governance of their societies.
- Disseminate and communicate world and Commonwealth-wide experiences, results, lessons learned and best practices in youth development.
- Provide opportunities for young people to develop critical knowledge and skills in the use of information technology to create employment and share experiences there by reducing the digital divide.

## **Governance of CYP**

The CYP governance and management mechanism is structured to ensure that young people participate actively at all levels of decision making. The Commonwealth Secretariat Board of Governors through its Executive Committee is the main governance mechanism of the CYP. It provides the general and strategic direction of the Programme. The Executive Committee is also responsible for the formulation of the general policies to guide the operations of the CYP. This Board consists of all of representatives of Commonwealth High Commissioners based in London. It meets once a year in May.

The CYP strategic programmes are:

- ❖ **Youth Enterprise Development** is concerned with creating employment opportunities and sustainable livelihoods for young people as a means of reducing the incidence of mass poverty and destitution in the member countries of the Commonwealth.
- ❖ **Youth Network and Governance** provides practical support for the achievement of Commonwealth values. This strategic programme area concentrates on enhancing the capacity of young people and youth networks to influence the governance processes at all levels of society and enhance the development and implementation of National Youth Policies.

❖ **Youth Participation** allows CYP to enable young people to realise their potential as active citizens through their participation in, contribution to and engagement with development processes as a way of strengthening democracy and human rights. In this programme area governments and other partners are also encouraged to include youth as part of their governance and management structures.

❖ **Youth Work Education and Training** aims at developing and promoting the profession of youth work, through the development of a body of knowledge, skills and attitudes, a code of ethics that is supported by regulatory mechanisms of occupational standards.

### **Youth Networks and Governance**

The CYP has continued its collaboration with national youth machineries to strengthen the capacity of Youth Affairs Ministries and other focal youth organisations to implement the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment. The following activities were undertaken in support of the implementation of the National Youth Policy programme.

- Supported the implementation of National Youth Policies and governance programme in the Pacific countries. The CYP undertook data collection on youth issues critical for good policy development and implementation.
- Regional refresher courses were held in Barbados, in collaboration with the Barbados Community College aimed at sharpening the skills of youth officers in youth development which equipped them to implement the new programmes. Over 25 youth workers from 10 countries were able to enhance their skills and competencies in the area of youth development.
- In Asia, government and youth NGO officials were trained in youth empowerment and environmental awareness. They are now taking on leadership roles in their respective countries.
- In Kenya and Lesotho government officials and stakeholders are formulating their respective National Youth Policies.
- Youth Development Index (YDI) project is focusing on the development of a computerised database system using web-based technologies to collect and collate information on youth development issues. The YDI that is being implemented in the Caribbean Region will provide information to governments and development agencies on the situation of young people and assist them to develop appropriate and relevant programmes for young people. The project is funded through a grant from the Organisation of American States. It is hoped that on successful completion, the project will be expanded to other countries.

## **Youth Participation**

The key objective of this strategic programme area is to enhance the leadership capacity of young people to enable them to participate effectively in conflict resolution and in combating the spread of HIV/AIDS among the young people.. CYP work which originated with the Ambassador for Positive Living Programme has formed the main focal point for the CYP youth participation programme.

- The Young Ambassadors for Positive Living (YAPL) Programme, which started at CYP Africa, has been expanded to the Asia and the Caribbean CYP Regions. Under the programme young people who are HIV positive perform the role of peer educators and counsellors to other young people. A group of young people from the Pacific region participated in a joint CYP/UNICEF study tour programme to assess the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Africa. These young people have started to lead the dialogue on HIV/AIDS in the Pacific region. This programme is now being developed for implementation at country level in the Pacific region.

- The visit of a Young Ambassador for Positive Living from India to the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UK in November 2003 received wide media coverage by the BBC international radio and television programme and other international networks. This media coverage created much visibility and publicity on the work of the Commonwealth on young people and HIV/AIDS.

- The “Play It Safe” HIV/AIDS initiative in St.Vincent and the Grenadines is evolving as an innovative project to raise awareness on HIV/AIDS. The project uses those sports popular with young people such as Cricket, Soccer and Netball as a medium for reaching unattached young people in rural communities and encourages their involvement and action in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The project has strong potential to become a model of best practice.

CYP emphasis on youth participation is also addressed through its support for youth leadership and good governance. An important operational premise of CYP is to involve young people in the deliberations and decision-making processes on the CYP as a Programme itself. As stated earlier when discussing the CYP governance, youth participation in the overall governance of CYP is critical to the success of the organisation. This is viewed by all stakeholders as an important vehicle to strengthen the capacity of young people and their networks.

- The Regional and Commonwealth Youth Caucuses are an important element in CYP’s decision-making process. The Caucus members are a means for CYP to provide knowledge on the Commonwealth and enhance opportunities for capacity development. Members of the Caucuses participated in the Creating Common Wealth Forum (CCW), Australia, 2003 and the Commonwealth Youth Forum 4, Nigeria, 2003. They were also involved in the development of new CYP Memorandum of Understanding that regulates the management of CYP and its operations.

CYP also offered internships for 20 youth caucus members at Regional Centres and the Pan Commonwealth Office in London. Young people come to work at CYP offices and Centres as a practical means of gaining work experience and developing other valuable skills to improve their academic credentials.

An Adolescent Participation Project across 160 countries was implemented in collaboration with UNICEF, WHO and UNFPA. The project, provided skills to policy-makers and their staff on how to engage adolescents in the development process and programmes, was funded with a grant from UNICEF and UN Foundation.

### **Youth Work Education and Training**

The CYP diploma continues to build on its successes and deepen its sustainability with in educational institutional across the Commonwealth. The programme is now implemented in 42 member countries of the commonwealth and 6 dependent territories. The Diploma is delivered through twenty-four (24) Partner Institutions (PI) with 2,800 students enrolled in the programme during the first cycle of the project. The CYP Diploma is now globally recognised as unique in both its content and method of delivery. It is now in its second cycle which the CYP is promoting across the Commonwealth.

- In Africa, fifteen tutors at the National University of Lesotho were trained in the CYP Diploma. Nine students from that university graduated after successfully completing the Diploma in Youth in Development Work.
- The African Regional Centre has successfully negotiated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Mozambique to implement the Diploma during 2004-2005. Negotiations are ongoing with the Universities in Nigeria and Cameroon to implement the diploma in the New Year.
- In the Caribbean Region, CYP is collaborating with the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus, and Jamaica, to introduce the degree in Youth in Development Work. The University of the West Indies, commenced delivery of the Diploma in Youth in Development Work in June 2004 in twelve countries with 201 students enrolled. Thirty-four (34) students who commenced the second offering of the Diploma in Youth in Development Work at the University of Guyana in May 2003 are continuing in the programme. Youth workers from St. Lucia and Dominica have completed the Certificate course in Youth Development Work.
- In Asia, CYP is implementing the Diploma programme in Bangladesh Open University, University Putra Malaysia, Indira Gandhi National Open University in India, and the Open University of Sri Lanka. CYP has also started consultation with SNTD Women University and Annamalai University in India as potential partners on the diploma programme. These universities are at varying stages of implementing the programme.
- In the Pacific, 30 Papua New Guinea students graduated. The Diploma programme is now being transferred to the Government of Papua New Guinea through the Institute of Public Administration.

- Over one hundred students from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Island, Tonga and Vanuatu have completed the Diploma and a formal review of the course has been undertaken. Recommendations for the modification and improvements in the delivery and outreach of the programme are currently being implemented.
- The Pan Commonwealth Quality Assurance (PCQA) mechanism is an important component of the Diploma programme. The CYP PCQA is responsible for both the Quality Assurance and the continued improvement in the quality of the diploma materials and its delivery. The PCQA consists of the CYP, Regional Moderators and the University of Huddersfield which meets regularly to review and design strategies for improving the management, operations and delivery of the diploma programmes across the Commonwealth.

The CYP Diploma in Youth in Development continues to be in high demand throughout the Commonwealth as it expands and deepens its focus to increase access to youth work education and training to thousands of youth workers working with young people in their communities, but have never had an opportunity to train in youth work as a profession.

### **STRATEGIC DIRECTION FOR THE NEW PLAN**

The success of CYP's work is dependent on its holistic and strategic approach to empowering and engaging its staff, young people and other stakeholders to participate and drive the youth development agenda. This approach provides ownership of the process to all stakeholders, demystifies youth development work and builds trust and collaboration.

Some lessons learnt from the past which are relevant for developing and shaping the future strategic plan programme for the Commonwealth Secretariat and CYP in particular.

- Involving young people at all levels of the programme from governance to operations provides a sense of ownership and empowers them to perform a role as architects of their own development and change.
- CYP can add value to the work it is doing by enhancing the institutional capacity of partner agencies, governments and other stakeholders to deliver better quality programmes. This strategy enables governments and development agencies to be more able to provide resources to support youth development programmes.
- There is a huge capacity for CYP to expend its engagement with development agencies, institutions, individuals and networks to reach large numbers of young people that have eluded its programmes. There is need for CYP to engage with young people in the Diploma programme and with young people through the Youth Caucus network and the Ambassadors for Positive Living programmes on HIV/AIDS.
- CYP is able to demonstrate improved operations and better quality assurance mechanism and this has attracted new partners in the private sector, government, development agencies and other institutions. CYP has focused its work on creating

opportunities for young people to participate in policy making and decision making. It will continue its efforts to build a robust and effective monitoring and evaluation systems to assist it to provide adequate feedback on the performance of its programmes on the ground.

- Partners in the private sector, government and development agencies and institutions will want to participate in a programme where they can see a clear demonstration of improvement of the operation and the delivery mechanisms. This could be in the form of deepening the quality assurance mechanisms of the programmes, creating opportunities for young people to participate in shaping and influencing policies and national decision-making processes, enhancing efficient management, strategic use of ICT to support communication, project management and building a robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to provide adequate feedback on the performance of these programmes.
- The CYCI programme has demonstrated that young people are bankable. Young people can and will repay their loans and participate in credit programmes. If young people are encouraged as partners and provided with training, mentorship support, community outreach and credit, then they can be effective and credible business leaders.
- The CYP Youth Enterprise Development programme has the potential and capacity to enhance the livelihoods and reduce poverty among young people and their local communities.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme invites you to join hands in its efforts to alleviate poverty and to empower young people against social, economic, political and global exclusion and marginalisation.