

Youth Leaders Forum of the 9th Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (9CYMM)

Resourcing and Financing Youth Development: Empowering Young People

Policy Recommendations and Voluntary Commitments Youth Development and Youth-led Action

PREAMBLE

Appreciating the Commonwealth Charter Article 13 that recognises the positive and active role and contribution of young people in promoting development, peace, democracy and in protecting and promoting Commonwealth values such as tolerance and understanding, including respect for other cultures.

Significant progress has been recorded since the conclusion of the 8th Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting (CYMM). The Magampura Commitment - leading off from discussions at the 8th CYMM and signed by Commonwealth Heads of the Governments in 2013, recognizes the unique position of young people at the center of sustainable and inclusive development and demonstrates unequivocal commitment to the role of young people in securing their own future.

The Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) was established in 2013 to carry the aspirations, yearnings and mandate of an emerging generation, while also capturing the many frustrations, disappointments, and transformations often experienced by the 1.2 billion young people of the Commonwealth. This has been a definitive step forward in global youth representation, inclusion and participation.

The Commonwealth Youth Networks and the key role they play in promoting youth led action and mainstreaming youth perspectives in various thematic socio-economic areas of development;

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) present an extraordinary opportunity for young people to shape a future they believe in and can truly call theirs. They serve as a blueprint for defining the global development agenda over the next 15 years and demonstrates a unique convergence of resources and interests. Achieving the lofty goals of the SDGs however, remains rife with a myriad of challenges.

The 9th CYMM Youth Forum, held from 31st July to 1st August, 2017 at the Munyonyo Speke Resort, Kampala, Uganda, was convened under the theme “Resourcing and Financing for Youth Development: Empowering Young People”. The Forum aimed at delivering better development outcomes for and with young people. The Forum noted that apart from the sector being under resourced, youth are disproportionately affected by an ever rising burden of disease, including polio, malaria, HIV/AIDS, early pregnancy and forced marriages, unemployment, underemployment, legal and other barriers including access to finance, growing illiteracy and poor quality of education. Emerging global trends mirrored by disruptive technologies and automation is changing the face of virtually every industry and guaranteeing that the future will not be business as usual.

Even within the gross population of young people, inequalities exist. As evidenced by the Global Youth Development Index, 2016, unemployment and equity gaps are wider among the female population as compared to male. This also goes for rates of new infection for HIV/ AIDS and access to formal financial instruments. Young people with disabilities are also hard hit by growing social inequities and harsher economic realities.

This narrative must be changed.

1. Investments Human Resource Development for Youth Development and Youth-led Action

In as much as many youth in developing countries of the Commonwealth have basic literacy and numeracy skills as a product of the education systems that are currently in place, most of them have not received the necessary skills to facilitate their distinction as employers and innovative leaders in the 21st Century. Research recently undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat has shown that only a third of the Commonwealth has professionalised youth work. Youth workers, together with teachers have charge in shaping the skills, values and attitudes of youth and children, preparing them to be significant players in the economy and good global citizens. Challenging environments, relevant and adequate training, and an intergenerational gap limits youth leaders and youth workers from effectively executing their duties.

We recommend:

- a. Governments in collaboration with public/private national universities to consider adopting the Youth Worker Diploma/Degree and have it available and accessible to youth workers, leaders and other interested young people. Additionally, we recommend that governments provide scholarships for the Commonwealth Youth Worker Diploma/Degree at least a minimum of 10% of employed youth workers, annually.

- b. Supporting National Alliance of Youth Workers' Associations in each Member state of the Commonwealth. This would further provide skill set and build capabilities of those who are working with youth and provide a holistic approach to youth development.
- c. Government to allocate funding for mentorship programmes for youth workers and youth leaders who do not have access to formal skills training and capacity-building programmes, this includes recruiting retired professionals, establishing e-platforms, and other mechanisms

2. Legal, Policy and Institutional Frameworks for Resourcing and Financing Youth Development and Youth-led Action

In improving and maximizing the full potential of youth development, we must also resolve legal gender differences which significantly decrease female labour force participation and undermine GDP growth. Across the Commonwealth, 89% of countries have at least one law that hinders women's ability to work or to set up and operate a business. Gender gaps in women's entrepreneurship and labour force participation result in estimated income losses of 19% in South Asia and 14% in the Caribbean. Removing these gender barriers could increase labour productivity by as much as 25% in some economies, simply by increasing women's labour force participation.

Noting that many Commonwealth countries with existing and functioning National Youth Councils which were established by the Ministry/Government receives some funding through government mechanism. However, because of economic challenges and/or political influence,, these funds are insufficient.

We recommend:

- a. Governments to support institutionalised youth-led structures and provide funding for youth led projects while also creating appropriate legislations to ensure full autonomy and management of National Youth Councils, for instance, a National Youth Council Act, to remove political influence and control.
- b. Governments to allocate sufficient funding and resources to cover the operation, human resources and administrative expenses for NYCs, youth-focused and youth-led organisations – create youth champions
- c. Government to ensure Youth Ministries are treated and financed adequately as other Ministries of the state, prioritising implementation and revision of the National Youth Policy, programmes, projects and activities pertaining to youth and social development.
- d. Governments ensure legal frameworks are in place to protect the professionalisation of youth work, including but not limited to develop strategies, create investments and financing, ensure professional standards, respect and provide full

labour rights, fair wage, in order to professionalise youth work by adopting already established minimum standards and facilitating the training an association of youth workers who can then peer-regulate.

- e. Government should commit to the collection of disaggregated data on age, sex, gender, race on young people as well as, strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms of all programmes and activities to develop evidence-based policies. This will also assist enhancing an evidence based approach to youth development and planning and ensure inclusion an integration of the needs and priorities of marginalised and disenfranchised youth, special interest groups including respect to gender identity and SRHR rights, youth with disabilities, romas and travellers.
- f. Government should commit to expanding social protection interventions for youth, including employment related components, as well as introducing new social protection elements within youth entrepreneurship support programmes

3. Creative and Innovative Financing for Youth Development: The role of the private sector and public-private sector partnerships

There is a critical need to diversify sources of funding to complement the public sector financing approach to the youth development sector, especially as most government budgets are organized by sector and do not report expenditures that specifically address the needs of young people. The emergence of creative and innovative financing such as philanthropy and businesses directing profits towards impact in the communities and sectors within which they operate, has brought new and major donors, and new and pioneering approaches, into the development space. Nevertheless, private investments still comprise a low share of the investments aimed at the development and empowerment of young people. For example, a study by the UK Department for International Development (DfID) found that only 6 out of 333 studies of interventions and initiatives which support young people's greater involvement in development processes were funded by the for-profit private sector.

We recommend:

- a. Government incentivising private sector's support for (e.g. banking) informal financing schemes such as youth co-operatives to ensure that youth at grassroots level can access funding;
- b. Youth-friendly taxation and interest rate, e.g. for students, and young people earning minimum wages and remuneration

- c. Governments to assess and consider the viability of establishing a Commonwealth Youth Development Bank to facilitate youth access to finance, especially business credits and loans and capital.
- d. Government to create seed investment schemes through public-private partnership for youth-led social enterprises
- e. Strengthen regulations on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to ensure a percentage goes towards youth-led initiatives and youth development.
- f. Government to ensure policies and or schemes are in place for companies providing goods and services mainly consumed by young people to contribute a fixed percentage of their profit to youth development (e.g. sport betting, beverage, companies, telecoms)
- g. Governments to facilitate multi-sectoral dialogues to strengthen networking, mitigate duplication of programmes and activities, ensure effective coordination, efficient use of funds including tri-partite committees comprising of young people (especially women and those from disadvantaged and minority groups).

4. Harnessing the power of ICT, Media and Innovation and the Creative industry in resourcing and financing youth development

Young people across the Commonwealth are growing up in a world where digital skills, social media, mobile technology and online communities are fundamental to the way that they communicate, learn and develop. Increasingly, technology is being seen as a powerful development tool, used in the global battle to reach child and youth-focused targets in global education, livelihoods and health.

Yet the digital divide still exists, with access and infrastructure remaining critical issues particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, the opportunities provided by ICTs can only be unlocked through greater awareness, access and digital literacy for all. This includes equipping young people with the understanding and skills to engage in the digital economy and leverage new opportunities for social entrepreneurship.

We recommend:

- a. Government to invest in ICT infrastructure and community innovative hubs for all, to facilitate dialogue, training, internet access and equipment, specifically for rural, remote and marginalised areas.
- b. Ensure and where necessary further enhance ICT and E-Learning components across all syllabi to improve digital literacy amongst young people and youth workers
- c. Government to commit to using ICT in accelerating youth development especially in education.