



# Faith in the Commonwealth

Promoting Global Citizenship  
and Religious Literacy



The Commonwealth



## Foreword



Young people are our most valuable Commonwealth resource. Of the combined population of our 53 member countries, more than 60 per cent are 30 or younger. Our collective security and prosperity are dependent on realising the vast potential of this rising generation and channelling their energy and dynamism in positive directions.

At the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in April 2018, our understanding of youth empowerment as a critical factor in realising the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the aspirations of the Commonwealth Charter was reaffirmed by leaders. They encouraged the active involvement of young people in finding solutions to the challenges associated with violent extremism, and urged all member countries to consider support for youth-led mechanisms to enable young people to participate in peace-building and social cohesion activities in their communities.

Faith in the Commonwealth is such a mechanism, and is mobilising young people to act as change-makers towards inter-faith understanding and global citizenship throughout the Commonwealth. It does so through formal learning delivered by universities in three Commonwealth countries, and by developing a network of skilled youth trainers supporting other young people to lead positive grass-roots change.

By bringing together youth of all faiths or of no faith in our Commonwealth family, Faith in the Commonwealth invites and empowers young people to join global and local conversations about what unites us rather than what divides.

Building on our early success in Bangladesh, Kenya and Trinidad and Tobago, we look forward to extending the programme more widely to mobilise positive action by young people across the Commonwealth.

The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland QC  
Secretary-General of the Commonwealth

## Introduction



As a Jew who grew up in a Muslim country, it has always been my belief that our cultural diversity should be seen as strength: a force for progress, not a weakness or a reason for prejudice or fear of the other.

It has been my life's work to build cultural bridges. I established the Khalili Foundation, which has been working for over three decades to bring people of different faiths and cultures together through art, culture and education.

Of course, no child is born to hate – we are each born as a human being first, religion is given to us at birth. As such, no faith has a monopoly on truth; we all have a great deal to learn from one another. I always say that the real weapon of mass destruction is ignorance; and if ignorance is the problem, education must be the solution.

This is why we at the Khalili Foundation are delighted to partner with the Commonwealth to initiate Faith in the Commonwealth. This important initiative brings global citizenship education and religious literacy at the grassroots to Commonwealth countries and promotes mutual respect and understanding among the youth. We have to nurture a new generation of young people with open minds and respect for one another, and who in turn will foster peace and harmony in their communities.

We are delighted with the progress so far.

We must now continue this great work and take it to more communities. To invest in peace is the best investment we can make.

So let us be inspired by the fact that there is far more that unites us as human beings rather than divides us. As the great Persian poet Jami said:

*Each tinted fragment sparkles in the sun; the colours are many, but the light is One.*

Professor Nasser D Khalili  
Founder, The Khalili Foundation

## Who We Are



Faith in the Commonwealth is a joint initiative between the Commonwealth and the Khalili Foundation to deliver global citizenship education in an interactive, practical and contemporary way. It builds on the Commonwealth's investments in youth development and entrepreneurship, and in developing young people's skills to build peace and prevent violent extremism.

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) builds understanding, knowledge and skills to help people build a just, inclusive, sustainable and peaceful society.

In 2015, the world's leaders agreed on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including GCED with its own defined target and measurable indicator of progress. By connecting the global focus of GCED with the 2018 Commonwealth Heads of Government's call for youth participation in development and peacebuilding, this initiative uses GCED to drive youth-led action towards a more peaceful and inclusive Commonwealth.

The initiative has two streams: a GCED toolkit for university education, delivered in partnership with Commonwealth universities; and Youth Training of Trainer workshops, where young leaders learn practical facilitation skills to lead inter-faith and intercultural dialogue and social action projects in their communities.

**The GCED Toolkit** is a peer-reviewed global citizenship curriculum that equips students with skills and competencies to navigate the complexities of modern life. Delivered by three partner Commonwealth universities in 2018, the GCED Toolkit explores contemporary notions of identity, culture, and society. The toolkit is offered as an unaccredited elective subject, complementing students' chosen degree programmes and enriching their studies.

**The Youth Training of Trainers workshops** equip young leaders with the knowledge, capacity and tools to engage peers and community leaders on global citizenship, and to facilitate inter-cultural/ inter-faith understanding, peacebuilding and social cohesion. Each workshop creates 26 youth trainers and provides them with resources to become catalysts for grass-roots youth-led action.

In 2017-18, Faith in the Commonwealth partnered with three Commonwealth universities to deliver the GCED Toolkit and trained 80 young people through Training of Trainer workshops in Bangladesh, Kenya and Trinidad and Tobago.

## Why Faith in the Commonwealth?

In today's world, communities are more connected and inter-dependent than ever before. Politically, culturally, economically and technologically, our local experience is intertwined with that of others around the world.

Living in a connected world brings opportunities such as new relationships, ideas and co-operation with other cultures. It can also bring challenges including:



- rapid and unpredictable change as decisions taken locally ripple in unexpected ways affecting communities thousands of miles away; and
- mistrust as cultures encounter each other and experience the feeling that they are losing control over local affairs – the sense that changes are increasingly happening to and not with them.

70 per cent of Youth Training of Trainers workshop participants strongly agreed that they improved their respect and understanding for people from different backgrounds

A response – which reflects the principles of global citizenship – is to identify how young people can create an environment in which their connectedness enables communities and cultures to survive and thrive – locally and globally.

## Why Young People?

The Commonwealth sees young people aged 15-29 years old as assets to a country's development who should be empowered to realise their potential. Harnessing the potential of young people as catalysts of positive social change means an investment in their education. Faith in the Commonwealth mobilises the transformative power of education to help young people develop a greater understanding and respect for themselves and others.

Our aims – respect, understanding and youth empowerment – may seem bold given that communities across the Commonwealth are experiencing high levels of tension and conflict, and that young people remain economically and politically marginalised. However, our intention is not to 'solve' these complex issues but instead to teach young people to open up conversations, build new relationships, try different approaches and discover deeper insights into what works where, when and how.

By enabling greater respect and understanding the project creates the conditions for a more peaceful and cohesive Commonwealth of nations.



## Faith in the Future

With a generous start-up donation from the Khalili Foundation, we have been able to achieve impressive community reach in Kenya, Trinidad and Tobago and Bangladesh. To sustain and build on this important initiative, we will require additional investment. This will allow Faith in the Commonwealth to reach more countries, more young people and more communities around the world.

## How We Are Making Change

With an awareness that talking to young people about faith can alienate people or make minorities feel excluded, Faith in the Commonwealth talks about it positively, creating tolerance, respect and understanding of others' beliefs and world views. This is being achieved through:

### GCED Toolkit

More and more, universities and technical schools are emphasising internationalisation and ensuring that education prepares students for lives and careers as global citizens who are able to navigate the multiple dimensions and complexities of modern life.

The GCED Toolkit supports the establishment of formal GCED learning, adoption of new teaching approaches and uptake of GCED learning by Commonwealth students.

Partner universities are provided with the course material and instructor training. The toolkit and teaching method uses cross-disciplinary, peer-based and hands-on learning with local case studies from current events, student journals and scholarly research. While accreditation of the toolkit is underway, the pilot universities will award students a certificate of completion.

The GCED Toolkit is piloted in partnership with universities in Bangladesh, Kenya and Trinidad and Tobago, with several Commonwealth universities interested in delivering the module following the pilot phase.

To be a successful global citizen, a person must be able to create positive change within their local, national and global communities. This is only possible if a person possesses the necessary knowledge and understanding (of local, national and global issues, structures and governance; intercultural knowledge and understanding); skills (ability to communicate and interact respectfully, appropriately and effectively; empathy; flexibility; conflict resolution); attitudes (openness to people from other cultures; respect for cultural otherness; global-mindedness; responsibility); and values (valuing human dignity; cultural diversity).

McGowan T and S Gomez (2012) *Citizenship Education in Commonwealth Countries*. Commonwealth Secretariat. London.

## Youth Training of Trainers workshops

These workshops equip young leaders with the knowledge, capacity and tools to train and engage peers and community leaders around global citizenship thinking, and to facilitate inter-cultural and inter-faith understanding, peace-building and social cohesion.

Each workshop creates 26 youth trainers with the resources to deliver training workshops. Participants build confidence in their abilities and gain practical experience in facilitating training, methods and tools. Young people leave the workshops with the knowledge, skills and confidence to act as a catalyst for youth-led action. So far, we have seen over 100 social action activities emerging from the workshops, covering social cohesion, peace-building, education, gender equity, human rights and inter-faith dialogue.

'I have no doubt that after this training I am going to make a difference.'

Albashir, Kenya

## What We Have Achieved

Within its first year (1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018), the initiative has showcased the extraordinary potential of young people and educators across the Commonwealth.

'The Faculty of Social Sciences and the University of the West Indies is enthusiastic to be invited to partner with the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Khalili Foundation to promote Global Citizenship Education. The Faculty is aware that what is needed in Trinidad and Tobago and the region as a whole is to engage youth and provide them with the understanding to effect social change and become educators in their own right. Youth can now achieve this through the GCED toolkit delivered by the University of the West Indies.'

Professor Ann Marie Bissessar, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences,  
The University of the West Indies

The GCED toolkit for undergraduate students is being piloted in three universities in the 2018/19 academic year. The toolkit comprises an Educator Guide and Student Reader, and focuses on eight global issues (climate, education, gender equality, the global economy, health, migration, peace and security, and the technological revolution) in the context of the Sustainable Development Goals. Delivered face-to-face during the pilot, we are planning for online delivery in the future so that it is available to as many Commonwealth universities as possible.

Over 80 young people representing 5 Commonwealth countries have attended Youth Training of Trainers workshops.

Within **4 months** of each workshop the participants have:

DELIVERED

**113** community project activities

(workshops, dialogues, presentations)

REACHED A TOTAL OF

**7,036**

community members through project activities

INVOLVED

**2,827** & **2,673**  
women men

in their activities

**KENYA:**

**28** Youth Training of Trainers workshop participants

**21** social action projects

**TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO:**

**26** Youth Training of Trainers workshop participants

**13** social action projects

**BANGLADESH:**

**26** Youth Training of Trainers workshop participants

**14** social action projects

Participants design a social action project for their community using the tools and techniques taught in the workshop. Some of these projects include:

- LGBTQI Awareness workshops for evangelical churches, enabling youth leaders to understand the issues affecting LGBTQI youth and how to work inclusively with the LGBTQI community (Trinidad and Tobago)
- Building the capacity of youth groups at the grass roots level to tackle radicalisation and the potential for violent extremism (Kenya)
- Arranging inter-faith dialogue workshops and no hate speech campaigns across a network of universities (Bangladesh)

## Our Social Action Projects in Focus

### Kenya

In Kalifi County, girls' education is a critical social and cultural issue, with many young girls leaving school early to be married, often without their consent. The 'Girl Child Education' project recruited eight youth volunteers to work with schools, students and community leaders to set about changing minds and cultures. The project brings girls together through role-play and conversations that make them think



about education globally and locally, and particularly in relation to them, their cultures, their faiths and their value as young women. Within just a few months, the 'Girl Child Education' team had reached 319 Christian and Muslim girls and their schools. Working with schools, government and community, this project team is determined to change attitudes towards girls and girl-child marriage, at the same time that it helps a generation of young girls to learn their value.

## Trinidad and Tobago



The Youth Empowerment Project (YEP) is a social action initiative of training participants Stefan and Navina, founders of Potluck social action initiative in Guyana. YEP seeks to build Potluck's network of skilled young community activists by creating training hubs in key locations, where Potluck's members can be trained to work closely with local organisations, faith groups, charities and schools to deliver community building projects that feed, support, develop and serve Guyana's most disadvantaged communities. Services include health checks, health advice talks, meals and clothing distribution. Potluck is providing health and hope to people of all faiths, and giving faith back to those in need.

## Bangladesh



In June 2018 indigenous youth leaders conducted 42 sessions on human rights and indigenous people's rights with indigenous communities in Gaibandha District, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Bangladesh. These sessions introduced the community to the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the UN Declaration on Indigenous People's Rights. In all, the youth leaders reached almost 1200 indigenous community people, mainly women. Bivuti Bhuson Mahato, Youth Training of Trainers participant, said, "Before conducting the sessions community people had no idea on human rights and indigenous people's rights. After conducting the sessions, they responded very well. They are happy to learn about human rights and indigenous people's rights ... They invited us again to arrange and conduct this type of session in their community." Bivuti believes that the community is now better equipped to assert their rights in future.



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