

# *Building the Future Today*



***A collection of Statements, Speeches and  
Papers on Youth Development issues  
September 2005 to September 2006***

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# **The Commonwealth's Response to Global Challenges Facing Youth in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**By Henry Charles**

## **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, the CYP has embraced and 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) and 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 guiding core framework for the forthcoming CYMM in the Bahamas in May 2006. These ideas and perspectives have also informed discussions at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGM) where youth empowerment has been endorsed as the strategy to ensure the future of the Commonwealth in 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 working with 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 critical 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 the young people, especially the millions who are citizens of the Commonwealth. It will then go on to outline a 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 should 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 that are 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 ensures 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;
- ✂ 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 multi-lateral 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;
- ✍ 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 would 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, the 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 in the Commonwealth 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 this prevailing socio-economic and socio-political manifestation is mainly responsible for escalating youth poverty and unemployment and 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 which threaten to destroy the very fabric of our societies.

Despite the success of many young people in the face of this new setting, 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;
- ✍ 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, 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' hierarchy. More often than not, it is only the sheer commitment, passion and dedication of youth development workers which prevents the total irrelevance and collapse of the 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 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 evidenced-based and cannot be accurately evaluated.

Reported increased expenditure on law enforcement and penal services, yet there is 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 philosophy. 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 prevailing 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 is 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 genuine in its advocacy for sustainable youth development and a rights-based approach in youth development.

It 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. In pursuit of this, 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 provide 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 their minds of the idea that young people are problems to be addressed and instead embrace the fact that, like any other citizen 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 themselves should 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 the youth 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 re-positioning 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 policymaking 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 ICT society must be seen as an opportunity to advance development. A comprehensive policy should be developed to expand the 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 re-positioning. Opportunities must be provided to youth leaders to acquire leadership and management skills and competencies to steer this process.

As the majority of youth 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 process to ensure sustainable and full youth participation. These networks need also to engage in a process of identifying 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. 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 establishment of 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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.

# EFFECTIVE YOUTH PARTICIPATION - THE KEY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

**Message by the Mr Henry Charles, Regional Director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre in observance of Caribbean Youth Day, September 30<sup>th</sup> 2005.**

Caribbean Youth Day 2005 is being commemorated at a very interesting and challenging period for our Caribbean societies and peoples. It is indeed a time when the new global realities and its attendant implications are compelling Caribbean governments and institutions to reflect upon, review, reshape and reform traditional modes of governance.

Despite the challenges of this emerging ethos it provides Caribbean people and in particular the youth of the region with an ideal opportunity to participate meaningfully in the search for and development of more sustainable systems of political, social and economic management of our societies.

**Youth participation in this process of reform and sustainable development must be neither tokenized nor ad-hoc.**

Consequently young people have a responsibility to ensure that the available mechanisms are sustainable and facilitate qualitative and effective people's participation in the formulation and implementation of public policy.

To accomplish this vital yet complex objective the Caribbean youth movement must itself engage in a process of reform and re-organization.

The movement must give priority attention to the following issues and challenges. The systematic decline in the effectiveness of youth groups and organizations.

- o The apparent neglect of and/or inability to recruit and integrate "unattached" youth into mainstream youth organizations. Due cognizance of their own unique methods of organization or "bonding" is essential.

- o Attention must also be paid to the unique and innovative methods of advocacy employed by the so called Generation -x youth. These include creative use of language, dress styles and fashion and cultural and art forms. The emerging Dub and Soca icons provide an instructive illustration.

- o Insufficient application of effective and modern management practices in youth organizations. These include the use of strategic planning and management techniques.

- o Inadequate capacity building initiatives to enhance communication, conflict resolution, project management, marketing and public relations and mobilization skills.

- o The democratization of existing youth organizations. Youth organizations have a moral responsibility to adopt the principles of fairness, transparency and accountability they demand of national institutions and agencies.

- o The research capacity of youth organizations.

However despite their moral obligation to assume the vanguard role, the

responsibility for empowering youth to participate more effectively in the national development is not a matter solely for the youth movement.

Regional governments and multi-lateral organizations too, have a moral responsibility to enhance the quality and effectiveness of their interaction with the youth movement. Due consideration must be accorded to:

- o The revamping and strengthening of the various Ministries and agencies with responsibility for youth development.

- o The adoption and implementation of sustainable national youth policies.
- o The strategic repositioning of youth development issues within the broader national development strategy. After all we have found it compelling to reform and reposition the tourism, agriculture, financial, health, judicial and public sectors/systems. So why not the youth sector?

- o Upgrading the financial and technical resources allocated for investment in sustainable youth development strategies.

- o While various international and multi-lateral agencies have placed the issue of youth development on their agenda due consideration must now be given to adopting a more deliberate and strategic approach to sustainable youth development.

The regional media too has a critical role to play in the process of sustainable youth development. Public perception of the media as the craftsmen of negative and anti-social behavior among youth can be eroded by their facilitation of more informative and intelligent analysis of the problems and challenges facing our youth. They must also produce more feature reports on the significant accomplishments of our youth in the national, regional and international arenas.

The commemoration of Caribbean Youth Day 2005 provides an ideal opportunity to congratulate those young persons who have made our Caribbean countries very proud. These include the likes of World 100 meters record holder Asfa Powell, and the impressive bevy of young female athletes from the Bahamas and Jamaica.

Further the various agencies and institutions which have demonstrated in a tangible manner their faith and confidence in the capacity of the youth of our region to add value to the developmental process must be commended and encouraged to continue investing much needed financial and technical resources in youth development.

On behalf of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre, (CYPCC) I, urge you to all celebrate Caribbean Youth Day 2005 with a peaceful and uplifting spirit and to dedicate your energies and resources towards sustainable youth development.

Please be assured of the CYPCC's continued support and commitment in this regard.

**"YOUTH OF THE CARIBBEAN MOBILIZE, ORGANIZE AND UNITE FOR PROGRESS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT!!!!"**

# **LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY IN THE POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

A discussion paper presented by Henry Charles, Regional Director of Commonwealth Youth Programme-Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) at the IICA Workshop on Leadership Development and Policy Integration for Youth in Agriculture held in St.Kitts and Nevis from 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> October 2005.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The CYPCC is extremely pleased to be associated with this project organized by the IICA as it demonstrates yet another recognition of the important role young people are required to play in the sustainable development of our Caribbean society. This project is also very significant because it seeks within its own framework to provide another opportunity for capacity building among the youth of our region.

## **THE CONTEXT-CYPVISION**

“Young Commonwealth citizens maximizing their participation in development and democracy, shaping the present and future of their communities and societies.”

It is in the context of this vision I have chosen to anchor my presentation.

## **PUBLIC POLICY- THE SCOPE**

The central purpose of policy formulation and implementation is indeed the shaping of our present and future communities and societies. It is about developing a framework or an ethos for the orderly development of a community or society.

It is about the creation of an enabling environment for sustainable development, the rule of law, good governance, elimination of poverty, freedom of expression, protection of human rights, non-discrimination and respect for diversity and human dignity.

Suffice it to say public policy is related to and impacts on all aspects of human existence.

However from a CYPCC perspective the formulation and implementation of public policy assume greater significance and effectiveness when a rights-based approach is adopted. That is the clear recognition and demonstrated acceptance that citizens have a fundamental right to participate meaningfully and effectively in the entire process.

## **THE BENEFITS OF EFFECTIVE PEOPLES PARTICIPATION**

The meaningful and effective participation of citizens in the formulation and implementation of Public policy will contribute to the following desirable outcomes.

- More relevant policies and programmes.
- Greater public support for and ownership of projects and initiatives.
- Greater cost effectiveness and efficiency.

- More reliable evaluation mechanisms.
- Reduces social alienation and dislocation.
- Engenders an environment of greater tolerance, and;
- Facilitates the adoption of more effective conflict resolution strategies.

Having examined the scope of public policy and the benefits of effective people's participation in the formulation and implementation process, it is extremely critical to reflect on the issues of leadership and advocacy in this process.

### **LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY**

Effective leadership and advocacy are extremely critical to the formulation and implementation of public policy. Indeed the existence of an enabling environment without the ingredients of effective leadership and advocacy can be compared to building a house without a proper foundation.

The focus of this discussion is on youth participation and therefore the leadership issues will be considered in this context. What therefore are the critical leadership issues in the policy implementation process?

### **LEADERSHIP ISSUES**

- Collective versus individualistic: youth should adopt an organized approach. They should form themselves into effective youth organizations. As the saying goes 'unity is strength.'
- Democratization: every effort should be made to foster a climate of tolerance and democracy within the organization. This is the only way to ensure the broadest cross section of views is considered.
- Strategic management: far too often the management of youth organizations adhere to deformed and antiquated modes of management. There is a critical need for youth organizations to adopt relevant aspects of strategic management. These include visioning, programme budgeting, strategic planning, results oriented approaches to project implementation and effective evaluation methods.
- Capacity building: an integral component of the organizations work programme must include programmes and initiatives to enhance the skills and knowledge base of its membership.
- Transparency and accountability: the integrity of the organization is enhanced when its affairs are conducted in a transparent manner and its leadership is accountable for their stewardship.
- Research capacity: youth organizations must develop a research capacity as far too often positions are developed on the basis of individual emotions and beliefs rather than on facts or empirical evidence.

### **ADVOCACY**

Unfortunately advocacy is usually best appreciated as a confrontational relationship

between two or more entities. However in the context of the policy implementation process advocacy must be seen as an efficient and effective strategy to formulate and promote credible perspectives and views on a particular issue or matter. In this regard youth organizations must consider the following issues.

✍ The message: it should be based upon facts, be carefully considered and formulated. In formulating the message consideration must be given to expected outcome and nature of the audience/recipients. In the process of advocacy it may sometimes be necessary to formulate varied styles without compromising the core message.

✍ Communication strategy: having developed the message it then becomes necessary to develop an effective communications strategy. This includes the determination of the appropriate channels of communication (press interviews, internet, seminars, conferences, symposia, lobbying, meetings with stakeholders etc) through which the message can be conveyed. It also includes the formulation of a proper publicity schedule including budget, desired outcomes, specific roles and responsibilities and execution timelines.

✍ Launching the campaign: arrangements must be made for an effective launching of the campaign. This can assume various forms such as press conference; public rally etc. The launching is an opportunity to outline the purpose of the campaign, the desired outcomes, and the scope of the campaign and to solicit public support for the campaign.

✍ Marketing: far too often marketing is viewed as a tool to be utilized by commercial entities for the purpose of selling goods and services. Social marketing using the core principles and strategies of marketing strategies must become a preferred option for social agencies in the policy implementation process.

✍ Evaluation: there must be ongoing and periodic evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the advocacy campaign and also be used as a guide to refine and reshape the strategy.

## **CYPCC's SUPPORT TO THE PROCESS**

In attempting to ground these observations more in the context of CYPCC's youth empowerment and participation mandates, I want to point out some possible issues for further consideration.

### **1. Membership of within National Youth Councils**

3.1 Becoming part of the NYC allows you to be part of a recognised national process for youth dialogue, participation and decision-making on issues that affect you such as policies on agriculture. CAFY needs structured avenues where you can influence policy makers

3.2 It can enhance access to technical support and development cooperation through established donor and other agencies.

3.3 As CYP channels development support towards Youth Councils, it gives us some leeway to dedicate leadership development support for CAFY in keeping

with our overarching mandates for youth coupled with national mandates for rural and agricultural development.

## 2. Youth Enterprise Development

- 3.1 CYP has modeled a successful youth micro-credit and enterprise model through the Commonwealth comprising small business and personal development training, support and mentorship that can be used to promote and develop business ventures for youth in agriculture.
- 3.2 The comparative advantage of IICA and CYPCC can be used towards developing unique micro enterprise projects in agri-business and agro-processing
- 3.3 IICA and CYP can design a research study on various aspects of micro credit and its effectiveness for rural youth as a means of having reliable data for policy formulation and implementation on micro and small enterprise development to have a lasting impact on economies of the Region.
- 3.4 Enterprise Awareness Camps (EACs) and Enterprise Development Programmes (EDP) can be jointly developed and mounted to sensitise and promote a sustained place for youth in agriculture and agro-business.

## 3. Commonwealth as a significant resource pool

- 3.1 The Commonwealth is a diverse family of nations many of whom have agricultural-based economies and we are strategically placed to provide expertise in Agriculture under programmes such as the CFTC and the Commonwealth Services Abroad Programme.

The issues raised herein above do not represent an exhaustive examination of the issues in the policy implementation process. What I have sought to do in this presentation is to flag some central issues, strategies and techniques that IICA and the Caribbean Agriculture Forum for Youth (CAFY) can take into consideration in mobilizing national and regional membership and engaging partners towards an effective process.

I therefore crave your indulgence to extend the profound appreciation of the Commonwealth Youth Programme, Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) for your generosity and patience.

# **Building the Future Today**

**ADDRESS BY HENRY CHARLES, COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME REGIONAL DIRECTOR AT THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION NATIONAL AWARDS CEREMONY for Outstanding Performance - GEORGETOWN, GUYANA, OCTOBER 5<sup>TH</sup> 2005.**

I wish first of all to congratulate and commend the teaching fraternity for continuing to demonstrate due diligence, commitment, compassion and national pride as they engage in the difficult yet noble task of shaping the spirit and character of Guyana.

I think it is also proper to pay appropriate tribute to the parents of you students gathered here and indeed parents throughout your beloved and beautiful country.

Parenting has always been a major challenge, however the problems and challenges of this new era in our development has placed additional burdens on parents, and consequently many have even found it difficult to assume their responsibility with the spirit of caring, love, compassion and diligence demanded of them.

It is also an honour for me to congratulate and commend you the students who despite all the challenges and distractions have excelled in your various examinations.

To you the parents, teachers and students who despite all the trials and tribulations continue to play your part in shaping the spirit and character of Guyana, I offer you these words of wisdom by John Wooden:

“Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do”

Now comes the difficult part of my task.

Students, young men and women I must admit I had a difficult time deciding what I should say to you today.

Should I tell you to forget your sorrows and dance?

Should I tell you to throw your hands in the air and surrender to the pervasive hopelessness which surrounds our societies?

Should I say to you don't worry, be happy?

After much agony and soul searching I finally decided I must do no more than to tell you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

My friends, fellow Caribbean people as a renowned Guyanese poet, Martin Carter would say “these are the dark times my dear.”

In a report entitled 'Caribbean Youth Development: issues and policy directions' published by the World Bank in 2003 a very bleak picture is painted of the situation

facing the young people of the Caribbean and by extension Caribbean societies. According to the World Bank report “despite the Caribbean’s historical, political, cultural, and linguistic diversity, the negative behaviors and outcomes observed among Caribbean youth are quite similar. These include early sexual initiation and pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, sexual and physical abuse, school leaving (dropout and exit), unemployment, crime and violence, substance abuse and drug dealing, and social exclusion.”

I will not bore you with all the details and statistics but will provide a snap shot of the frightening situation facing us.

## The ISSUES

Early sexual initiation/adolescent pregnancy:

- ✘ The Caribbean is ahead of all other regions in the world in recorded cases of early sexual initiation.
- ✘ At least one –third of school-going young people are sexually active.
- ✘ Of that amount at least 50% of boys and 25% of girls were ten years or younger at first intercourse.
- ✘ 66% reportedly engaged in sexual intercourse before the age of 13 years.
- ✘ Of the one –third of adolescents who had had sexual intercourse, almost 50% reported that their first sexual experience had been forced.
- ✘ 87% of teenage pregnancies had not been planned

This means that a significant percentage of our young people are exposed to sexually transmitted diseases, HIV, early pregnancies and severe emotional trauma.

## Risky Sexual Behavior and HIV/AIDS

- ✘ The Caribbean is second only to Sub- Sahara Africa in HIV/AIDS prevalence rate.
- ✘ One third of all new cases were contracted between the ages of 15- 42 years.
- ✘ Even where young persons were knowledgeable about sexuality that does not translate into preventative behavior.

## Physical/ sexual abuse

- ✘ There is disturbing evidence of widespread physical abuse
- ✘ Many young persons reported being sexually abused by strangers as well as family members.
- ✘ There are also widespread cases of child neglect even among mothers.

## Unemployment

- ✘ Whereas young people make up 20-30% of the labour force they however represent 40-60% of the unemployed.

## Crime and violence

- ✍ Latin America and the Caribbean is reportedly the most violent region in the world.
- ✍ Between 1990 and 2003 the homicide rate has doubled
- ✍ Homicide victims and perpetrators are mainly young men.
- ✍ Large numbers of young people carry offensive/dangerous weapons to school.
- ✍ approximately 40% of youths experience rage
- ✍ Many young persons join criminal and drug gangs to compensate for lack of employment and as a response to violence in their community.

### **Substance abuse and drug dealing**

- ✍ There is widespread acceptance of alcohol and drug abuse among youths.
- ✍ Various studies have confirmed that many young persons are actively involved in drug dealing and trafficking.

### **Social exclusion**

- ✍ Many young persons feel alienated from the mainstream of society
- ✍ Many are indifferent to authority
- ✍ Loss of trust and confidence in institutions and agencies

This bleak picture begs the question – where do we go from here?

I may not be qualified to answer this question but I believe I can share some ideas on – what is to be done today!

It is often said that the youth are the leaders of tomorrow.

In my view this approach may allow you the young people and indeed the various decision makers and persons in positions of authority the comfort and luxury of believing we have time on our side. But like a great American poet once said 'time is like a ship on the ocean; it waits for no man'

Consequently my view is: youth- you are the citizens of today!

Therefore just like any other citizen you have rights and you have responsibilities.

- Ø You have a right to a sustainable livelihood!
- Ø You have a right to be fed, clothed and sheltered!
- Ø You have a right to a decent education!
- Ø You have a right to go through your various stages of biological and emotional development without being violated or traumatized!
- Ø You have a right to be different!
- Ø You have a right to live in a society which is free from discrimination and which respects diversity and human dignity!

- Ø You have a right to work!
- Ø You have a right to decent facilities and opportunities to nurture and develop your creative abilities and talent!
- Ø You have a right to be protected by appropriate laws and a fair system of justice!
- Ø You have a right to decent health care system!
- Ø Above all -you have a right to live!

However like all other citizens with these rights come responsibilities.

Consequently you the youth have a responsibility:

- Ø To respect authority!
- Ø To display tolerance, restraint and respect for others who may appear different!
- Ø To practice healthy lifestyles and positive living!
- Ø To appreciate, protect and use positively facilities provided to nurture your creative abilities and talent!
- Ø To set for yourselves positive, achievable goals and objectives and to vigorously pursue them!
- Ø To know, understand and appreciate your environment and community!
- Ø To practice sustainable and safe use of your country's natural resources!
- Ø To promote your spiritual growth and enrichment!
- Ø To show appreciation for the assistance, kindness, love and compassion demonstrated by your parents and teachers!
- Ø You have responsibility to help build a progressive society, free from violence, hatred, dishonesty and crime!

My dear friends, students, fellow Caribbean citizens!

The simple message I want to leave with you is this.

All the hard work and effort which goes into reforming and reshaping our societies will be meaningless unless the issues and challenges facing the youth are addressed today!

If our societies provide the framework for the protection and advancement of your basic human rights as young people and if you are not negligent in undertaking your responsibilities as young citizens, then we together can build a brighter and more secured future not only for the youth but indeed for the entire society.

According to Lord Herbert “The shortest answer is doing”

I wish you good health, success and divine blessings!!

Thank you!!

# REDEFINING THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Address by Henry Charles, Regional Director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean center (CYPCC) to the opening ceremony of the CYPCC Regional Advisory Board, at the Marriot Resort in St. Kitts and Nevis on Monday 10th October 2005.

Permit me on behalf of the team at the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre to extend our most profound appreciation to the Government and people of St. Kitts and Nevis for agreeing to host the 2005 Regional Advisory Board meeting and also for being such gracious hosts.

Mr. Deputy Prime Minister, please be assured of our highest consideration in this regard.

I want also to pay tribute to all of you, distinguished ladies and gentlemen who are engaged in the challenging, yet noble profession of Youth development. Far too often, your dedication, hard work and perseverance remain unrecognized. I want to assure you that the CYPCC remains eternally grateful for the sterling contribution you have and continue to make towards sustainable youth development in the Caribbean.

Youth development is serious business and we can no longer treat it as an appendage of or a miscellaneous issue within the broader national development policy and agenda.

It is often said that youth are the leaders of tomorrow but in my considered opinion they are first and foremost, the citizens of today and therefore, they have a right to equal treatment and opportunities within the broader context of Sustainable national development.

In my view unless youth development is accorded its rightful place within the national development agenda, efforts to reform, reshape and reposition our economic, social, political and governance systems will be severely undermined, and sustainable national development will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued, but never attained.

Consequently I am advocating the need for youth development policies and initiatives to assume a new and more progressive philosophical outlook. Perhaps this new outlook I have alluded to is best captured in the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) vision statement.

***"We have a vision of young Commonwealth Citizens maximizing their participation in development and democracy, shaping the present and future of their communities and societies." (CYP Strategic Plan 2003-2006)***

In pursuit of this vision the CYP has formulated the under mentioned goal and objectives. **CYP GOAL**

***"Our primary goal is that young people realize 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 recognized as valued stakeholders as part of their communities." (CYP Strategic Plan 2003-2006)***

## **CYP OBJECTIVES**

Promoting youth enterprise development and sustainable livelihoods in Commonwealth member countries;

Facilitating the development and effective operation of youth networks and structures for governance across the Commonwealth;

Developing and promoting youth work education and training for the professionalisation of the youth sector;

Assisting governments in creating the enabling environment for young people's participation in economies, societies and governance;

Disseminating and communicating experiences, results, lessons learned and best practices in youth development; and

Providing opportunities for young people to develop critical knowledge and skills in the use of information technology to create employment and share experiences.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen!!

It is my humble opinion the CYP goal and related objectives are still relevant and provide us with a progressive, broad framework to guide the youth development process over the next two years at least.

However as we proceed to formulate strategies to accomplish these objectives I have taken the liberty to highlight some pertinent issues and challenges which deserve urgent and appropriate consideration.

## **ISSUES/CHALLENGES**

There is urgent need for a comprehensive initiative to work with the youth and other relevant stakeholders to establish and strengthen democratic national and regional youth bodies and their constituent organs.

✍ There is also urgent need to develop and adopt appropriate intervention strategies to re-engage the victims of social exclusion. Mr. Chairman now is the time to decide whether we want the "blocks" to become cradles of creativity or continue to be laboratories of death and destruction.

✍ Youth leaders must be exposed to and provided with appropriate training in modern management techniques so as to improve the quality of management of youth organizations.

✍ We need to intensify advocacy to raise the consciousness of public and private sector stakeholders on the importance of professionalizing youth work and the youth sector.

✍ We must intensify efforts to engage regional governments in a collaborative effort to help re-organize and re-position Ministries of youth and other such public bodies and institutions with responsibility for youth development. The objective here is to enhance the capacity of these agencies to remain relevant and improve the timeliness and quality of their

interventions.

- ✂ We should foster an enabling environment to enhance the consciousness of the youth on the issue of human rights. The objective here is to present the issue of human rights as an integral component of sustainable national development.
- ✂ CYP, Caricom, the Universities of the West Indies and Guyana and other relevant stakeholders must proceed with due urgency to develop a framework and culture of credible research on matters related to youth development. In this regard I am proposing the convening of a regional symposium on "Youth and sustainable national development" as a priority for the CYPCC 2006-2008 work plan. At this symposium it is envisaged that properly researched papers on various aspects of youth development and youth in national development will be presented and debated.
- ✂ Additionally this symposium can be used as a launching pad for the regular publication of a credible regional journal on youth development issues.
- ✂ The CYPCC Youth Enterprise Development programme should be re-modeled to incorporate issues related to the challenges and opportunities of CSME, international standards and competitiveness, and other such economic and trade liberalization issues.
- ✂ We should consider engaging the Caribbean Confederation of Credit Unions in a partnership to enhance the spirit of cooperativism among the youth and to increase their participation in the Credit Union Movement.
- ✂ Further in an effort to demonstrate and showcase the positive contribution made by youth in the development of the Caribbean society consideration should be given to the formation of an alliance of regional and international agencies to host a major exhibition of youth endeavors and creativity to coincide with the 2007 Cricket World Cup.
- ✂ There is urgent need for a proper study to be conducted which will inform the formulation of effective strategies to enhance the economic viability of artistic and cultural expressions, and sports. Young people possess an abundance of talent and creativity and there can be no doubt that the creation of an economically viable art, cultural and sporting industry will provide many of them with lucrative opportunities for employment and a sustainable livelihood.

The CYPCC must seek to upgrade and extend the Commonwealth Youth for positive living model as an effective tool to help promote responsible lifestyles and improve youth awareness and consciousness on issues related to HIV/AIDS and its pervasive impact on sustainable national development. However due consideration must be given to developing partnerships with existing national and regional initiatives  
In closing I want to pay tribute to the regional media and their sterling contribution to national development. I want to suggest that the media fraternity is a credible and

worthy stakeholder in the process of sustainable national development.

In this regard I extend an invitation to them to accord issues related to youth development and youth in national development greater prominence and exposure. After all it must be understood that the existence of intelligent, conscious and progressive minded citizens provides the media itself with an enabling environment for sustainability.

As we engage in our debate and discussions during the course of this week may we be guided by these words of wisdom from Mahatma Gandhi "**Honest differences are often a healthy sign of progress**"

**FELLOW YOUTH WORKERS!!**

**In the process of redefining the Caribbean Youth Agenda may all ideas contend!!!**

**I bid you success and divine blessings.**

**Statement to the 13<sup>th</sup> CARIOM Council of Human and Social  
Development meeting held on 26-28<sup>th</sup> October 2005, at the Le Meridien  
Pegasus Hotel, Georgetown, Guyana by Henry Charles, Regional  
Director, Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre  
(CYPCC)**

The CYPCC wishes to express its support for the Regional Strategy on Youth Development. We take this opportunity to also congratulate the CARICOM Secretariat on this accomplishment.

CYPCC will engage CARICOM in a strategic alliance to assist in the implementation of the Regional Strategy on Youth Development and in this regard we are already in discussions on the possible establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding.

Mr. Chairman

It is our fervent hope that government, the private sector, media and other partners in civil society will fully support the RSYD. However, as we chart a new and perhaps more sustainable youth development agenda in the Caribbean, there are a few concerns and ideas I will share with you.

- We should endorse and promote efforts by CYP and its strategic partners to professionalize Youth Work.
- Greater attention must be paid to strengthening capacities of Ministries of Youth and other relevant agencies.
- There is need to foster and support a culture of systematic data collection, analysis and publication on youth development issues.
- CYPCC reiterates its proposal for the hosting of a regional symposium on youth development and youth in development issues as a vehicle to facilitate exchange of research findings, best practices and emerging trends.
- We also reiterate calls for regular publication of a research journal on youth development.
- The regional media should be engaged as a strategic partner in the youth development agenda.
- There is need to establish a Regional Excellence awards programme to recognize excellent contributions to youth development. The programme can include a hall of fame, award of scholarships, financial support for community projects, research and/or publication of literary works.
- The development of relatively non- traditional industries including, culture, sports, intellectual property must be considered in addressing youth unemployment.
- The issue of accessibility of tertiary education to all young people deserves urgent attention and in this regard government and the private sector must explore sustainable strategies to make tertiary education more readily

available and affordable.

- Finally, but most importantly, we must redouble efforts to establish democratic national and regional youth organizations.

These ideas are presented in the spirit of "redefining the Caribbean youth agenda and empowering youth for action."

# **EMPOWERING OUR YOUTH TO CREATE A DRUG FREE AND VIOLENCE FREE SOCIETY**

**ADDRESS BY HENRY CHARLES, REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME CARIBBEAN CENTRE AT A NATIONAL YOUTH RALLY TO COMMEMORATE YOUTH WEEK IN GRENADA ON SUNDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2005**

I bring you greetings and best wishes on behalf of the Right Honourable Don McKinnon, the Commonwealth Secretary General, Mr. Ignatius Takawira, Commonwealth Director of Youth Affairs and the staff at the Pan Commonwealth Office and Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre.

My presence here today is symbolic of CYP's recognition of and appreciation for the hard work and dedication demonstrated by officials of the Ministry of Youth and Grenada's National Youth Movement.

However it also represents the genesis of a progressive and productive relationship between the CYPCC, Government and the National Youth Movement of Grenada, as we embark on a mission to redefine the Caribbean Youth development agenda.

The theme: "empowering our youth to create a drug free and violence free society" is both timely and relevant.

Crime, violence and drug abuse are among the major challenges confronting young people in the Caribbean today. Though time does not allow me to detail the startling statistics but suffice it to say research conducted by the World Bank, the Caricom Secretariat, the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) and other such reputable organizations have all confirmed that crime, violence and drug abuse, particularly among the youth are not only prevalent in our societies, but indeed threatens to destroy the very fabric of these societies. Of particular concern are:

- ✍ Evidence that these problems are increasingly being manifested at younger age levels.
- ✍ Growing hopelessness among citizens regarding the ability of the state apparatus to adequately address these problems.
- ✍ The apparent pervasiveness and acceptance of the drug culture in our societies.
- ✍ Evidence of linkages between drug use/trafficking and violence, and drug abuse and risky sexual behavior.
- ✍ The social and economic cost implications for our societies.

In response to this crisis Caribbean governments have undertaken numerous remedial programmes and initiatives. Yet the cycle of violence, social irresponsibility, anti-

social behavior and social decay persists.

The logical question therefore is "**what is to be done?**"

Should we throw our hands in the air and surrender or should we just bury our heads in the sand and pretend all is well and "SPICEY"?

I wish to submit that history will not treat kindly this generation of leaders and policy makers, if we fail to provide an enabling environment for the creation of a drug and violence free society

Permit me, therefore, to share some ideas which may assist in the creation of this enabling environment.

- ✍ There is an urgent need to adopt and implement socio-economic policies which provide adequate opportunities for youth employment and reduces the trend of social exclusion.
- ✍ There is urgent need to adopt and implement the relevant provisions of the Regional Strategy for Drug Demand Reduction.
- ✍ There is need to reform the education system to enhance the capacity of schools to become mechanisms for positive socialization and social change.
- ✍ Public health care systems must be upgraded to equip service providers with new protocols, tools and techniques to work more effectively with youth and their families.
- ✍ There is need to reform and strengthen the legal and judicial systems to provide for more effective weapons control, improved juvenile justice protocols and arrangements, and improved police efficiency and effectiveness.
- ✍ There is need for the adoption and implementation of effective adolescent mentoring systems.
- ✍ Use of the media and social marketing strategies to help eliminate the norms and values related to socially decadent practices and risky behavior is critical.
- ✍ There is need to adopt and implement policies, incentives and programmes which promote positive family life and effective parenting as central planks of the national development ethos.
- ✍ There is also a need to develop more effective community and neighborhood support systems for young people. In this regard the collaboration between government, NGOs, churches, the private sector is most critical.

Above all the task of providing an enabling environment for the creation of a drug and violence free society transcends government. It is a responsibility which necessitates the fullest and genuine participation of the entire nation, including youth, political

parties, trade unions, artists and entertainers, churches, the private sector, NGOs and the media.

In closing permit me to share with you two messages which bear much relevance to the task ahead. The first is from **Anatole France:**

**"To accomplish great things, we must dream as well as act"**

And the second is from **John Wooden:**

**"Don't let what you cannot do interfere with what you can do"**

I bid you a successful youth week 2005 and divine blessings as you embark upon the challenging task of creating a drug and violence free society.

**REDEFINING THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**  
**ADDRESS BY HENRY CHARLES, REGIONAL DIRECTOR**  
**COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME CARIBBEAN CENTRE AT**  
**A NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL OF JAMAICA FORUM ON SUNDAY**  
**20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2005**

Ladies and gentlemen, youth leaders and fellow youth workers, I bring to you greetings from the Commonwealth Secretary General and the Director of Youth Affairs.

I wish to extend our most profound appreciation to the Government and people of Jamaica for their support and tremendous contribution to the development and sustainability of the Common Wealth Youth Programme. We are very much aware of the economic challenges which confront our Caribbean countries and it is in this regard we are so extremely grateful for the sacrifice you continue to make by way of financial contributions to the CYP.

It is amazing the perception of our countries that are crafted by biased, uninformed and non-indigenous media coverage of our existence and the rich, diverse Caribbean socialization ethos.

If one were to take as gospel truth the media reports about life in Jamaica you will be led to believe that this country, this civilization is facing extinction. The picture they paint is of a hostile and unruly tribe, unconcerned about human dignity, or unfettered by law and order and indifferent to decent human socialization. It is about a people whose trade mark is causing mayhem, destruction and corrupting the moral principles carved into the Mount Sinai rock.

Yes it is true that every single civilization has its challenges but are these commentators and information brokers aware of the depth and profound character of this spirit and ethos of national pride and identity which has crafted the revolutionary fervor of a Paul Bogle or a Marcus Garvey, the cultural gem of a Louise Bennett, elegance of a Lawrence Rowe, the prophetic vision of a Robert Nestor Marley, the tenacity of Merlene Ottey or a Courtney Walsh.

I wish to submit that the Jamaican people, especially the youth of this beautiful country have made an invaluable contribution to world civilization. Like the boxing commentators would say - "pound for pound" Jamaica can match any develop country in its contribution to the human civilization, especially, in the realms of Academia, intellectual enrichment, sports, music and culture.

Have no fear my brothers and sisters, let the doomsayers dance to discordant notes of their music but history will absolve you.

Permit me this opportunity to pay tribute to Ministers Maxine Henry-Wilson and Dr. Donald Rhodd, Mr. Ohene Blake and the very dedicated staff at National Centre for Youth Development for their vision and dedication to the cause of Youth Development.

In this business of social development criticisms are many but praise seldom and so to these fine Jamaican leaders and the many unsung heroes who have played their part, I say thank you.

## **THE HOUSE IS ON FIRE**

A 2003 report published by the World Bank entitled: "Caribbean Youth Development; Issues and Policy Directions" provide a very interesting perspective of the situation facing young people in the Caribbean. According to the report *"Caribbean youth are generally happy and healthy. They attend school, participate in social and cultural events, enjoy loving support of a family and peers, and plan for the future. Youth played a critical role in the birth of the politically independent Caribbean, and very many of them continue to overcome remarkable odds to achieve lofty personal and professional goals."*

However the same report warns there are *"factors present in the Caribbean that have the potential to disrupt the process of positive youth development."*

What are some of these factors referred to?

A careful situational analysis will reveal the following are some of the major challenges confronting young people in the Caribbean.

1. a volatile macro-economic environment
2. unemployment
3. crime and violence
4. substance abuse and drug dealing
5. physical and sexual abuse
6. risky sexual behavior and HIV/AIDS
7. early sexual initiation and teenage pregnancy and;
8. social exclusion

## **VOLATILE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT**

During the last two decades Caribbean countries have confronted serious economic challenges, resulting from new and unfavorable market arrangements for our primary products, declines in foreign development aid, global economic recession and unfair global economic arrangements. This has resulted in the need for structural adjustment and economic reform programmes which usually dictate removal or reduction in funding for social development programmes. The negative impact of these programmes has disproportionately affected the poorer and more marginalized sectors of the society.

So on the one hand the states ability to fulfill its social responsibility is severely compromised while on the other the ability of families to provide safe and secure environments for their children is undermined.

## **UNEMPLOYMENT**

While youth make up 20 to 30 percent of the Caribbean labor force they however

account for 40 to 60 percent of the unemployed. In a paper presented in 2002 Martin Hopehayn, Social Affairs Officer at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean describes as critical the unemployment situation among young people in the Caribbean because according to him "unemployment among young people in the region is much higher than average unemployment overall"

### **CRIME AND VIOLENCE**

It is sad but true that young people in the Caribbean are disproportionately affected by crime and violence. They constitute the most significant proportion of perpetrators as well as victims. Various studies have revealed that young people, especially young men are more likely to die from homicide and deliberately inflicted injuries than any other age group. Data compiled by the Jamaican Department of Corrections confirms that in Jamaica youth between the ages 17-25 commit 56 percent of all crimes, almost 50 percent of murders, 44 percent of manslaughters and 42 percent of burglaries. In Barbados it is estimated that youth account for nearly 66 percent of those found guilty of crimes.

### **SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND DRUG DEALING**

Various studies have confirmed that drug and substance abuse and youth involvement in drug dealing are among the critical problems facing youth in the Caribbean. It is also believed that the group most at risk of substance abuse and involvement in drug dealing are out of school youth between ages 13-19 years. Further there is widespread social acceptance of alcohol and marijuana. More disturbing is the growing acceptance of drug dealing as a means of social mobility.

### **PHYSICAL AND SEXUAL ABUSE**

It is widely believed that physical and sexual abuse is prevalent in Caribbean countries. However what is even more disturbing is that the perpetrators are usually family members and there appears to be an element of social acceptance and/or cover up of such depraved behavior. The result is many young persons among us are bearers of deep emotional scars inflicted by persons whom they once trusted and depended upon for care and protection.

### **RISKY SEXUAL BEHAVIOR AND HIV/AIDS**

According to the 2003 World Bank Report, on Caribbean Youth Development: "after Sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean region currently has the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the world."

The report states further "for one third of all new cases the disease was contracted when the individual was aged 15-24 years."

### **EARLY SEXUAL INITIATION**

It is believed that one-third of school going young people in the Caribbean is sexually active. In Jamaica, according to the reproductive health survey of 1997, by age 11-12, about 20 percent of boys and girls in the general population have had sexual intercourse. In St. Lucia almost 45 percent of sexually active adolescents

engaged in first intercourse before the age of 10.

Of particular concern is the fact that early sexual initiation is directly linked to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among youth and that 50 percent of adolescents who have engaged in sexual intercourse reported their first experience was forced.

## **SOCIAL EXCLUSION**

Many young people in the Caribbean consider themselves marginalized from the mainstream of political and economic power.

There is also a growing tendency to discriminate against youth on the basis of their cultural norms and moral practices.

Of critical importance is the fact the state machinery and other national institutions seem more efficient in condemning and punishing misdeeds rather than providing opportunities for development and self actualization.

This has resulted in a significant vacuum which is quickly being filled by the merchants of anti-social behavior and crime bosses.

This undesirable situation poses serious challenges for the modes and effectiveness of governance.

I need to make it abundantly clear that my objective for highlighting these problems and challenges confronting the young people of our region is not to lay blame at anyone doorstep rather it is simply to capture the magnitude of the challenge we face.

Indeed I am very well aware that Governments and many Regional and International agencies have undertaken various initiatives and programmes in response to what some have described as the crisis facing young people in the Caribbean and by extension the Caribbean civilization. However there is an urgent need to re-assess the effectiveness of these initiatives and programmes and to redefine the Caribbean youth development agenda.

Permit therefore to share some thoughts with you on the way forward as we seek to redefine the Caribbean youth development agenda.

## **THE WAY FORWARD**

I will refrain from prescribing any detailed and specific programmes and will instead concentrate on some broad strategic approaches you may wish to consider, discuss or debate.

It is now fashionable for international agencies and advisors to reprimand governments for necessary public sector investments in social development. However despite the prevalence of these neo-liberal economic views the state has a moral obligation to invest adequately in social and youth development.

- Such investment must not be sporadic and unplanned but should be predicated upon the existence of comprehensive youth development programmes (National Youth Policies), which are youth driven and which forms an integral component of broader national development plans and strategies.
- Youth development programmes must be formulated based on the whims and fancies of any one or group of individuals but rather must be evidenced-based. That is these should be informed by credible research and study.

- An asset- based approach to youth development is imperative. That is young people must not be viewed as problems to be addressed but rather as valuable national assets which must be properly nurtured and fully developed.
- Proper accountability necessitates that public funds be spent in an effective and efficient manner. Consequently there is a need to develop and adopt scientific methods of evaluating the effectiveness and impact of youth development programmes and strategies. In this regard I recommend the Youth Development Index (YDI) which is currently under consideration by the Commonwealth Youth Programme.
- While Government has a moral responsibility to initiate and implement effective youth development programmes and projects a partnership arrangement involving Government, Youth Organizations, Private sector, the media and civil society is the preferred option.
- Government should accord greater significance to the issue of youth participation and must therefore proceed to adopt and establish more effective measures and mechanisms to facilitate and empower young people to engage meaningfully in the process of Governance. Why not consider legislative reform to ensure that a percentage of National Assembly seats are reserved for the youth?
- Government should ensure that departments and agencies responsible for the management of Youth development programmes are positioned to facilitate adequate and timely interventions.
- Social marketing should be adopted as a preferred mechanism to help reshape individual values and beliefs and to promote positive youth development ideas and strategies.
- National Youth Councils and other such National Youth bodies must become more professional in their conduct and must jealously guard the principles of democracy, transparency and accountability. They must demonstrate intolerance for discrimination, hatred, bigotry, injustice and chauvinism.

Finally, I wish to make a comment about Cricket World Cup 2007.

Our governments have expended significant sums of money in preparation for this historic event. They have solicited our support and understanding on promises of the economic and social benefits to be derived from hosting the event.

I am therefore appealing to Caribbean Governments to implement the measures and interventions necessary to ensure those young entrepreneurs and the other young people in our region benefit proportionately from the expected economic windfall.

My brother and sisters let no one fool you, your country has made an invaluable contribution in shaping world civilization and I suspect this will continue for a long time to come.

*“Thou they maybe tired to see your face, but they can't get you out of this race”*

**ONE LOVE!!!**

# Youth Development in the Caribbean:

## The landscape and Architecture

*Cayman Islands, February 2006*

*by Henry Charles, Regional Director, CYP Caribbean Centre*

Youth development in the Caribbean has assumed a far more complex and challenging character in recent times.

Prevailing economic, social and political factors and policies 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 diminish the prevalence of traditional modes of socialization and indeed the influence of institutions such as family, church, schools, the state apparatus and even youth clubs.

The truth is many young persons have successfully managed the challenges posed by these socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural realities and are making significant contributions to the development of their communities and societies.

However there are a disturbingly high numbers of young people who have become victims of social decadence, social exclusion and marginalization. Consequently the youth development landscape is replete with examples of:

- Increasing hopelessness among many young persons.
- Increasing engagement of significant numbers of youth in risky behaviors.
- Exodus away from involvement in traditional club activity.
- Growing trends of poverty among urban and now increasingly rural youths.
- Disturbing trends of disrespect and disregard for symbols of authority and officialdom.
- Adoption of new and controversial methods of expressing their frustrations, issues and concerns.
- Increasing impatience with procedure and bureaucratic systems and structures.
- Increasing involvement of young persons in socially deviant behaviors.

These problems are further exacerbated by the pervasive influence of popular but usually socially degrading and often non-indigenous sub-cultures and norms.

Another disturbing trend is the effectiveness of criminal and socially deviant forces and agents in filling the gap created by the declining influence of the bastions of social order and civic responsibility.

Faced with such challenges Governments, development agencies and non-governmental organizations have responded in various forms ranging from strategic to sporadic/ad-hoc programmes and initiatives. Some of these programmes and initiatives include:

- In some jurisdictions the adoption and implementation of National Youth Policies.
- A plethora of Youth enterprise schemes.
- Diverse models and concepts of youth employment programmes.
- Adoption of varied youth participation and empowerment models.
- Commemoration of youth weeks and months.
- School based initiatives to stem violent and socially deviant behavior among students.
- Faith based initiatives.
- Increased expenditure in law enforcement and penal services.
- Increased investment in sporting infrastructure.
- A plethora of HIV/AIDS awareness programmes.

At the micro level there have been some success stories however from a macro perspective the impact and relevance of the prevailing youth development strategies remains a subject of much speculation and debate. Some jurisdictions have crafted and adopted various evaluation tools and mechanisms to quantify the impact of youth development programmes but in the main these are non-existent. Consequently the prevailing youth development strategy framework may very well be overpopulated with 'feel good' programmes and projects which have little or no profound impact.

In the meantime there is growing panic among the citizenry regarding the negative manifestations of youth socialization and development. Indeed many commentators will argue that the Caribbean region face a virtual crisis. Such concerns and opinions have dominated the various 'talk shows' and other popular mediums. Consequently Governments are under increasing pressure to formulate and adopt more effective youth development strategies to arrest the rut.

## **The Way Forward**

Given the current scenario the following strategies should be given due consideration.

- ⌘ Youth Ministries and departments have in the main not shed their social --welfarist posture and it is therefore imperative to engage in a process of re-positioning these agencies to become more proactive in their approach.
- ⌘ Timeliness, relevance and efficient service delivery should become the underlying principles of operation.
- ⌘ The feel good rather than evidenced based approach to Youth development is prevalent. Consequently there is an urgent need to develop and enhance the research capacity of Ministries, departments and youth development

agencies.

- ✍ There is also a dearth of credible research on emerging trends of youth socialization and behavior. It is therefore imperative to cultivate a regional research culture on issues related to youth development and youth in development. This will facilitate the documentation and presentation of credible data and analyses which should serve to enhance the policy formulation environment.
- ✍ Traditional tools of intervention have proven ineffective so it is necessary to 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 adopted programmes and initiatives.
- ✍ 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. Hence it is imperative that a more comprehensive and better coordinated approach be adopted in the execution of these initiatives. Such programmes must of necessity respond to changing global economic arrangements while at the same time providing opportunities to progress from micro to medium and full fledged enterprises and industries. It is also extremely important to explore and exploit the opportunities provided by the rich cultural heritage of these countries.
- ✍ Youth networks remain largely ineffective, inefficiently managed and unattractive to significant numbers of youth at risk. This has undermined the ability of these organs to become effective advocates and representatives of young people. Consequently there is an urgent need to engage in a process of capacity building and re-positioning. In this regard opportunities must be provided to youth leaders to acquire new and cutting edge leadership and management skills and competencies.
- ✍ Of all its achievements the Caribbean region cannot boast of having a proven track record of forming and sustaining effective alliances and partnerships. Consequently youth leaders and relevant agencies must be provided with opportunities to develop effective conflict resolution, networking and coalition building skills and competencies.
- ✍ Despite the regions geographical configuration and relatively underdeveloped status the emerging ICT culture and landscape must not be seen as a disadvantage but rather as an opportunity to advance development. Consequently there is need for a comprehensive policy to expedite the access to ICT for expanding educational opportunities, creation of new

business opportunities and increase space for advocacy and information exchange.

In essence there is need for a new youth development architecture and paradigm shift in approach.

### ***Conclusion***

The proposals and ideas contained herein in no way represent a panacea for all the challenges and problems confronting youth development initiatives within the Caribbean region. However the assumption and expectation is that it will provide the launching pad for a comprehensive re-examination and re-positioning of regional youth development agencies as major partners in sustainable youth development.

Let all ideas contend.

## COMMONWEALTH DAY RECEPTION

### **ELEBRATORY TOAST BY MR HENRY CHARLES, REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME CARIBBEAN CENTRE TO HIS EXCELLENCY AND THE PEOPLE OF THE COOPERATIVE REPUBLIC OF GUYANA ON THE OCCASION OF COMMONWEALTH DAY MARCH 13TH 2006.**

As we congregate to commemorate Commonwealth Day 2006 I am mindful of the serious challenges which confront many of the 53 countries and 1.7 billion people which constitute the Commonwealth of Nations.

Excellency, the issues of poverty, violence, crime, intolerance, HIV/AIDS and social exclusion are placing undue strain on the governance and sustainability of our communities and societies.

Unfortunately these problems and challenges have created a climate of despair and hopelessness among many commonwealth citizens, especially the youth.

In this context, though monumental a task, it may be we must rededicate ourselves to the mission of creating new and more sustainable livelihoods for millions of Commonwealth citizens, especially young people who remain unemployed and who in many instances live below the poverty line.

The magnitude and complexity of the task compels all civic minded Commonwealth citizens, democratic governments and institutions to forge effective partnerships for development.

Excellency, the values, goals, objectives, philosophical principles and impact of its various agencies and programmes has firmly established the Commonwealth as one such valued partner in the quest for sustainable development.

It is in this regard I humbly join you, the government and people of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana in proposing a toast, firstly, to Guyana's forty years of unswerving support for the ideals and development of the Commonwealth, and secondly to the Secretary General and the entire Commonwealth of nations for their tireless effort and commitment to social justice, global peace, economic progress and sustainable development.

# **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN: THE CASE FOR A TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH**

## **REMARKS BY HENRY CHARLES REGIONAL DIRECTOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME CARIBBEAN CENTRE(CYPCC) TO THE OPENING CEREMONY OF CYPCC REGIONAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP FOR YOUTH DIRECTORS AT THE ROYAL BARBADOS BEACH HOTEL, BRIDGETOWN BARBADOS ON 7<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2006.**

Permit me first of all to welcome you on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary General and the Director of the Youth Affairs Division.

Secondly I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Richard Carter and the staff of the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports in Barbados for their kind assistance in the planning and hosting of this important workshop.

I wish also to express my gratitude to Ms. Dwynette Eversley, Programme Manager of the CYPCC in particular and indeed all the other CYPCC staff members whose tireless efforts and perseverance made this workshop become a reality.

I crave your indulgence to place in proper perspective this very important and I dare say historic strategic planning and leadership workshop for Youth Directors.

Within recent times there is growing panic among the citizenry regarding the negative manifestations of youth socialization and development. From Belmopan, Belize to Georgetown, Guyana the widely held view among many commentators is that the Caribbean seems to be facing a virtual crisis in youth development. Such concerns and opinions have dominated newspaper columns, the various 'TALK SHOWS' and other popular media. Consequently Governments are under increasing pressure to formulate and implement effective strategies to address the perceived crisis.

The truth is that youth development in the Caribbean has assumed a far more complex and challenging character over the last two decades.

Prevailing economic, social and political ethos, as well as encroaching cultural influences 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 socialization and indeed the influence of institutions such as the family, church, schools and of many civic organizations.

Yet despite this ever changing and challenging socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural environment none can honestly deny that many if not most young persons in the Commonwealth Caribbean have successfully managed the challenges

posed by this new ethos. Many young people continue to make significant contributions to the development of their communities and societies.

However, we must be concerned that disturbingly significant numbers of young people are increasingly becoming the victims of social injustice, social exclusion and economic marginalization.

Consequently the youth development landscape is replete with examples of:

- Increasing hopelessness among many young persons.
- Increasing engagement of significant numbers of youth in risky behaviors.
- Increasing apathy and disinterest in individual, family and national development.
- An apparent exodus 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 affected by the failure of traditional rural-based sources of livelihood.
- Disturbing trends of disrespect and disregard for symbols of authority and officialdom.
- Reported underachievement and escalating social exclusion of the Caribbean male
- Adoption of new and controversial methods of expressing their frustrations, issues and concerns.
- Increasing impatience with procedure and bureaucratic systems and structures.
- Increasing involvement of young persons in socially deviant behaviors.

There are those who argue that these challenges are either the consequence of the pervasive influence of popular but usually socially degrading and often non-indigenous sub-cultures and norms or that these serve to exacerbate the problem. (I recommend this proposition for further interrogation by the cadre of social scientists at our prestigious institutions of higher learning.)

However another disturbing trend is the effectiveness of criminal organizations and socially deviant forces and agents in filling the gap created by the declining influence of the once bastions of social order and civic responsibility.

Faced with such challenges Governments, development agencies and non-governmental organizations have to large extent switched to panic mode. To be fair to the governments of the region no one can honestly deny that most if not all have demonstrated some measure of concern for the youth. However, with very few exceptions their response to the youth development challenges remains social-welfarist and non-systemic in nature. Further in many instances youth development agencies and structures that have been created to manage youth policy and development are inadequately funded and accorded very little importance in governments' hierarchy. More often than not it is only the sheer

commitment and dedication of youth development workers which prevents the total irrelevance and collapse of the youth development architecture.

Permit me therefore to examine some of the responses and initiatives governments and some youth development agencies have adopted.

- In most jurisdictions National Youth Policies have been formulated but these to a large extent have remained simply statements of philosophical principles and intent.
- A plethora of Youth enterprise programmes and diverse models and concepts of youth employment schemes have been implemented. Unfortunately many of these are under funded and neither adequately aligned to broader national development nor sustainable livelihood goals. To compound the problem, in most cases there is no credible mechanism that allows for evaluation and adjustment of the impact of these initiatives on the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalized of youth. How then do we determine whether or not these are having any significant impact on youth unemployment and economic empowerment?
- Most countries have adopted various models of youth participation and empowerment, including but not limited to appointment of youth representatives on boards and various committees. However 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 presumably to stem violent and socially deviant behavior among students. Yet many of these initiatives are not evidenced based.
- We hear repeatedly about increased expenditure in law enforcement and penal services. Yet there is crying need for reform of the penal system and juvenile justice systems.
- Ironically while many governments may have increased investment in sporting infrastructure, there is an evident decline in comprehensive sustainable sporting and healthy lifestyles programmes.
- A plethora of HIV/AIDS awareness programmes exist in the Caribbean. Yet many of these programmes are neither youth driven nor asset based in approach.

Consequently whereas at the micro level there are some success stories however from a macro perspective the impact and relevance of the prevailing youth development strategies remains at best speculative. It must be noted

further that whereas some jurisdictions have crafted and approved various evaluation tools and mechanisms to quantify the impact of youth development programmes in the main their application remains non-existent. This may very well be one of the reasons why the prevailing youth development strategy framework is overpopulated with 'feel good' programmes and projects which have little or no profound impact on the Caribbean youth development landscape.

## **FROM SOCIAL WELFARIST TO TRANSFORMATIONAL**

Taking into consideration the perceived youth development crisis in the Caribbean and the apparent inadequacy of the existing youth development strategies, I wish to propose that a paradigm shift from a social welfarist to transformational approach is long overdue. What therefore are the main characteristics of this transformational approach which I advocate?

First of all it demands an evidenced based approach to youth development work. We must abandon the idea of our youth work strategies being informed mainly by myths, emotions and stereotyping. Our strategies should be based upon empirical data and truth.

Secondly we must adopt a rights based approach to youth development. We must disabuse our minds of the idea that young people are problems to be addressed and instead embrace the fact that they like any other citizen 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 fulfill their needs and aspirations.

But perhaps most importantly the time is overdue for governments and youth development agencies to 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 and clearly articulate a youth-mainstreaming approach in its operationalisation. It must therefore, have built- in the implementation mechanisms that are appropriate to ensure that policy is transformed into action.

I wish to submit that the adoption and implementation of a strategic youth development plan will among other benefits facilitate a credible process of consultation and inclusion, as the success of the plan will to a large extent depend on the genuine participation of youth and other relevant stakeholders. The strategic development plan will create a more effective framework and enabling environment to implement comprehensive and sustainable programmes which will have a more profound impact on the youth development landscape than the current cacophony of “feel good” initiatives and activities. Further once properly managed

it should also facilitate more efficient utilization of public and private resources.

Fellow youth development professionals, it is in the context of this latter characteristic of the transformational approach I have advocated that this Strategic planning and leadership workshop assumes even greater relevance. Essentially the primary objective is to empower you the youth development professionals to undertake an appropriate leadership and visionary role in advocating, formulating and implementing a more strategic and participatory approach to the youth development in the Caribbean.

During the next few days, your considerable experience and knowledge of youth development challenges and prospects in the Caribbean will contribute to the development of a model strategy framework for a modern and empowered youth development agency. However, our commitment to this process goes however, beyond this milestone. You will be enjoined to flesh out and adapt this strategic framework as a national action plan that also achieves complementarity with current public sector management and development initiatives.

We at CYP have always emphasized the participatory approach to development as a right and a mutually beneficial value-adding tool. There will be implications, therefore, for how you as leaders and policy architects create ownership and ongoing commitment to these national plans by relevant stakeholders, particularly the youth and youth development professionals and public sectors managers in your respective countries. It is at this point that the leadership development intervention that you will be undertaking will come most into play.

In this same vein, let me remind you that information and knowledge only assume real value when they are shared and they pass into the domain of communal property. I urge you therefore to share your learning with your colleagues at home and to become worthy advocates of the strategic approach to youth development.

# Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre

April 28, 2006

## Labour Day message by Mr. Henry Charles, Regional Director, Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre

On the occasion of Labour Day, traditionally observed on May 1, the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) wishes to take this opportunity pay tribute to the millions of young workers and professionals who contribute to the development of their local communities, the Caribbean and the wider Commonwealth.

We wish to call on employers and employees alike to focus attention on the plight of millions of young persons who continue to live below the poverty line and who continue to be the victims of social exclusion and economic marginalization.

We support these young persons and those still to get the opportunity to enter the labour force and we urge all citizens to reflect on their plight. The trade union movement has made a valuable contribution to the working class and marginalized individuals, especially young workers.

CYPCC believes that all stakeholders should resolve to embrace the Commonwealth principles such as - to promote tolerance, combat injustice, and secure development among the peoples of the world as they mark another Labour throughout the world.

We also call on labour organizations to forge a partnership with other social development agencies and organisations to help alleviate some of the problems that exist. In this regard, trade unions must redouble their efforts to involve the rank and file in the leadership.

The trade union movement itself has a role to play in addressing some of the youth development challenges in the Caribbean. We feel that the labour movement, in partnership with governments, can assist in the struggle to address the challenges facing young people. One way this can be achieved is by involving the rank and file members.

## TIME TO REBUILD THE REGIONAL STUDENTS MOVEMENT

*Statement by Henry Charles, Regional Director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre, Georgetown Guyana.  
28th June 2006.*

Later this year, November 17th to be precise will be commemorated as International Students Day. It is an occasion when the international students' movement engages in various forms of educational and mass-based activities to highlight the issues affecting students, young people and victims of social and economic exclusion.

Unfortunately within recent times, with the exception of a very successful Students rally hosted last year by the National Students body and facilitated by the National Youth Development Agency of Jamaica the commemoration of this important international event has become non-existent in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

One factor which may very well be responsible for this new reality is the relative weakness and in many instances non-existence of vibrant national and regional student bodies.

We can speculate on the reasons for the apparent decline but one thing is certain the non-existence of a vibrant student's movement is indeed a major setback for the Commonwealth Caribbean.

It is most instructive that during the same period we have witnessed the decline of the student's movement we are experiencing a spiraling increase in school based violence and other manifestations of anti-social behavior.

Are we oblivious to the sterling contributions that vibrant and organized student movements have made to the development and democratization of education worldwide? Have we forgotten the invaluable contribution made by the South African and International Student movement in the dismantling of the Apartheid regime?

Are we unaware of the Herculean efforts of student movements in the North American civil rights movement and in the removal of repressive regimes in Latin America?

In our own Commonwealth Caribbean the students' movement has provided our communities and societies with a cadre of competent political, economic, social and cultural leaders. Many political leaders in Dominica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Barbados, Grenada and Jamaica crafted their leadership and advocacy skills during their involvement in the Students Movement.

Many prestigious regional development institutions such as the Caribbean Community Secretariat, Caribbean Development Bank, Eastern Caribbean Central Bank have all benefited from the expertise of individuals who "cut their leadership

teeth" in the Student's movement.

Many other leading cultural activists, grass roots and community leaders in the Caribbean emerged from the students' movements. It is sad yet true that despite all these achievements we seem oblivious to decline of the students' movement and the consequential impact on national development.

Young people have been constantly clamoring for a greater say in national governance and nation-building. They want to have their views reflected in the way that governments are making decisions on the economy, the environment, education and social development, and global partnerships and trade arrangements. Many development agencies, including the CYP recognize that youth voices must be acknowledged and be part of policies and have made provision for this in their governance processes. The Students' Movement is a natural and accepted mechanism whereby young women and men can be architects and agents of social change. Is it not time to rebuild students' movement in the Commonwealth Caribbean?

Perhaps we should declare November 17th 2006, International Students Day the start of the rebuilding process for students' movement in the Commonwealth Caribbean.

What You are, I Once Was. What I am Soon You will Become.

# **Statement by Henry Charles, Regional Director Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre**

July 24<sup>th</sup> 2006

**Landmark Commission can help transform regional Youth Development landscape provided it receives the fullest support of all youth development stakeholders.**

A progressive and significant decision was taken by CARICOM Heads of Government at the 27<sup>th</sup> regular meeting in St. Kitts and Nevis to establish a Commission on Youth Development to among other issues investigate the issues and challenges confronting young people in the Caribbean. This decision should be embraced by all regional youth development stakeholders as an ideal opportunity to further advance the regional youth development agenda.

Both in terms of its historical relevance and contextual significance the proposed commission can be equated to the Moyne Commission which was established by the then colonial authorities' consequent upon a period of unprecedented social, economic and political upheaval within the colonies in the late 1920's and early 1930's. During that period the challenges emanated from the combined negative impact of the economic and social policies of the plantocracy and allied ruling class on the working people and other less privileged sectors of the society.

Today the challenges facing young people are driven largely by inadequate social and economic opportunities. The situation assumes greater complexity and potential crisis proportions in the face of ill-advised adherence to irrelevant, antiquated and myopic youth development policies.

In the prevailing socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural environment, the enabling environment must be created and unprecedented political will visibly demonstrated to ensure the Commission on Youth Development becomes and is accepted as a tool for fundamental social change. It cannot and must not be relegated to yet another public relations stunt nor must it become another gesture of intent or a "feel good" tactic.

In this regard not only governments but all youth development stakeholders must diligently play their part in creating an enabling environment to empower the Commission.

First and foremost the Youth of the Region and their representative organizations must engage in a massive mobilization, education and advocacy campaign to ensure the widest cross section of youth views are presented to the commission. They must also intensify efforts to revitalize and consolidate national and regional youth networks and organizations. They must also spare no effort to engage the services of the many talented young professionals to provide necessary technical support.

Apart from the fundamental role of youth development agencies, mainstream Government, the private sector, civil society and other organisations working in areas such as democracy and good governance, human rights and law, economic development, enterprise and trade, agriculture, health, HIV/AIDS, urban planning and so on must be called upon to provide the necessary technical and other support to ensure that the Commission is effective; its processes are inclusive, integrated and accommodating, and its recommendations are comprehensive. There must also be the requisite political will and civic responsibility to ensure timely and effective implementation of the commission's findings and recommendations.

Above all the commission itself must be fully seized of its historical significance and pivotal role it has to play in engendering an enabling environment for fundamental change in the youth development landscape and regional development ethos.

In this context it is imperative that the commission examine and address the following youth development issues and challenges among others;

1. The challenge of youth mainstreaming in order to make young people an integral participant and beneficiary of planned policies and programmes in all spheres (the political, legal, economic and social) and at all levels of society.
2. The relevance of current education strategies and systems in the context of developmental needs and challenges of globalization.
3. Access to more affordable tertiary education opportunities for the youth
4. The phenomena and impact of unemployment and under employment among youth.
5. The marketability of the Caribbean Youth focusing on optimizing the impact of music, the arts and other unique heritage products on the global market.
6. Youth poverty
7. The relevance and impact of existing youth entrepreneurship and employment programmes
8. The integrity and relevance of existing policy development and implementation strategies.
9. Strategies to enhance youth participation in the national and regional development process
10. Issues related to the social and economic marginalization/exclusion of young people, and in particular specific sub-sectors of the youth population
11. Youth and the emerging ICT culture
12. Relevance of the existing youth development architecture
13. An appropriate and effective national and regional funding and resource mobilization strategy for youth development.
14. Adoption of an evidence based approach to youth development
15. Human resource and development issues confronting youth development professionals.

16. The professionalisation of youth development work
17. Youth and sustainable livelihoods, including issues related to mental health, HIV/AIDS, and healthy lifestyles and behaviours.
18. The establishment of internationally acceptable bench marks and standards to guide and measure the impact of youth development strategies.
19. Appropriate capacity building strategies for youth development agencies, youth development professionals and youth leaders.
20. An over arching framework/strategy to mitigate the impact of globalization and related development initiatives on youth and to empower them to maximize emerging opportunities.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme recently updated the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment up to 2015. This document is a key guide for governments, youth agencies and all major stakeholders working to empower engage and create value for the contributions of young women and men to the economic social and cultural advancement of their families and countries and for their own self-fulfilment. As testimony to our commitment to work with the CARICOM Secretariat and other development partners for youth empowerment, we reiterate our fullest support to the proposed Commission on Youth Development and call upon all progressive minded citizens to do like wise.

Commentary Reprinted from Caribbean News Net

# **REDEFINING THE OECS YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENDA- EMPOWERMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**A PAPER PRESENTED BY HENRY CHARLES REGIONAL DIRECTOR  
OF THE COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME CARIBBEAN  
CENTRE AT A CONFERENCE ON “YOUTH, CRIME AND VIOLENCE”  
HOSTED BY THE ORGANIZATION OF EASTERN CARIBBEAN  
STATES IN SAINT LUCIA 9-12 OCTOBER 2006.**

## **Preamble**

I must admit upon receipt of the correspondence inviting the Commonwealth Youth Programme to participate in this conference I had some misgivings about the theme “Youth, crime and violence.”

These misgivings did not originate from any diminished perception of the significant contribution the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States has and continues to make towards the sustainable development of the member territories.

Instead the influencing factor was my own wariness with the apparent pervasive tendency on the part of too many policy makers to treat young people as problems to be addressed.

However notwithstanding my initial trepidation the decision to support and participate in this process is based on two important principles.

First it is historically important that yet another credible regional development agency has recognized the significance of becoming a partner in the regional youth development agenda. Secondly the conference itself allows a critical opportunity for sharing of ideas and grinding out strategies to help transform the regional youth development landscape.

## **Methodology**

I must warn the thrust of this paper does not strictly conform to guidelines provided for submission of conference papers. It is not an academic analysis of any of the issues related to 'Youth, crime and violence.’’

The main thrust of the paper is to highlight the inadequacy of prevailing youth development policies and strategies and propose a paradigm shift.

This approach is anchored by the firm belief that a paradigm shift in the youth development strategy and agenda is urgently necessary if we are to address the many youth development challenges including that of youth, crime and violence.

## **Introduction**

Within recent times there is growing panic among the citizenry regarding the negative manifestations of youth socialization and development. Throughout the Caribbean the widely held view among many commentators 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, the various 'TALK SHOWS' and other popular media. Let us juxtapose this against the virtual panic in the United States in the 1980s, when prophets of doom predicted that there would be a “blood bath across the US” with youth crime being unstoppable. Of course history has proven otherwise and statistics bore out a drastic reduction in crime in the 1990s and early 2000. There were several cogent reasons for this that you can research.

Then and now Governments are under increasing pressure to formulate and implement effective strategies to manage this perceived crisis.

### **The youth development landscape**

The truth is that, over the last two decades youth development in the Caribbean has assumed a far more complex and challenging character.

The prevailing economic, social and political ethos, as well as encroaching cultural influences in most regions have conspired to undermine the capacity of the state to perform its role as a medium to facilitate economic and social justice. They have also in many instances diminished the prevalence of traditional modes of socialization and indeed the once sobering influence of institutions such as the family, church, schools and of most civic organizations.

Yet despite this ever changing and challenging socio-economic, socio-political and socio-cultural environment none can honestly deny that many if not most young persons in the Caribbean have successfully managed the challenges posed by this new ethos. It is not usually front page news but many young people continue to make significant contributions to the development of their communities and societies.

However, there must be concern that disturbingly significant numbers of young people are increasingly becoming the victims of social injustice, social exclusion, economic marginalization and political theatrics.

It is now well established that this prevailing socio-economic and, socio-political ethos is primarily responsible for the escalating youth poverty and unemployment and indeed other social and political challenges such as the alarming prevalence of HIV and AIDS among young people, youth violence and crime, drug abuse and drug trafficking among the many other social challenges, which threaten to destroy the very fabric of our societies.

Consequently despite the glowing success of many young people as alluded to previously the Caribbean youth development landscape is replete with manifestations of:

- ✍ Increasing hopelessness among many young persons.
- ✍ Increasing engagement of significant numbers of youth in risky behaviors.
- ✍ Increasing apathy and disinterest in issues related to personal, family and national development.
- ✍ An apparent disinterest 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 and officialdom.
- ✍ Reported underachievement and escalating social exclusion of young males.
- ✍ Adoption of non-traditional and often controversial modes of advocacy on issues of concern.
- ✍ Increasing impatience with and distrust of established procedures, bureaucratic systems and structures.
- ✍ Increasing involvement of young persons in socially deviant behaviors.

There are those who argue that many of these challenges are either the consequence of the pervasive influence of popular and often non-indigenous sub-cultures and norms that are socially degrading and or that these serve to exacerbate the problem.

Another very disturbing trend is the efficiency of criminal organizations, fundamentalists, and social and political deviants in varying incarnations who occupy the space created by the declining influence of the comatose guardians of our social justice, social order and civic responsibility.

## **GOVERNMENT'S SOCIAL-WELFARIST RESPONSE**

Faced with such overwhelming challenges Caribbean Governments have to large extent switched to panic mode. Most governments if not all have demonstrated some measure of concern for, at least the negative manifestations of these youth development challenges.

However, with very few exceptions their response to the youth development challenges remains very much social-welfarist in nature.

This social welfarist approach to youth development is characterized by the following.

- ✍ Youth Development Agencies and structures created to implement and manage the youth development agenda are inadequately funded and accorded very little importance in Ministerial hierarchy. Very often it is only the sheer commitment and dedication of youth development workers which prevents the total irrelevance and collapse of the youth development architecture.
- ✍ The majority of youth development initiatives and activities are not informed by empirical data and fact but rather by myth and stereotyping.

· In most jurisdictions National Youth Policies have been formulated but these to a large extent have remained simply statements of philosophical principles and intent.

⌘ A plethora of quick-fix youth enterprise programmes and diverse models and concepts of youth employment schemes have been implemented. Unfortunately many of these remain under funded and inadequately aligned to broader economic recovery or development strategy. The problem is further compounded by the absence of credible mechanisms to facilitate proper evaluation of the impact of these initiatives on the lives of the most vulnerable and marginalized of youth. How then do we determine whether these are just feel good projects or whether they have any significant impact on youth unemployment and economic empowerment?

⌘ Convening of Youth Parliaments is a very commendable initiative. However there is little evidence to suggest that the issues debated by the young parliamentarians inform or influence national development agendas.

⌘ Most countries have adopted various models of youth participation, including but not limited to appointment of youth representatives on boards and various committees. However the optimum impact of these initiatives are usually devalued by the fluctuating dispositions of governments and often the disproportionate influence of more powerful social groups, and the lack of an effective policy and legislative framework to support meaningful youth participation.

⌘ 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 presumably to stem violent and socially deviant behavior among students. Yet many of these initiatives are not evidenced based nor are they treated as an integral component of the education system.

⌘ Official reports confirm increased expenditure in law enforcement and penal services. Yet there is crying need for reform of the penal and juvenile justice systems.

⌘ Ironically while many governments may have increased investment in sporting infrastructure, there still is a conspicuous absence of comprehensive sustainable sporting and healthy lifestyles programmes.

⌘ A plethora of HIV and AIDS awareness programmes exist in the Caribbean. Yet many of these programmes are inadequately youth driven and asset-based in approach.

⌘ Partnerships among youth development stakeholders are in the main ad hoc rather strategic in nature.

· There is a lack of strategic awareness and related urgency to support and promote the professionalization of youth development work.

⌘ An uncanny tendency to hastily adopt some youth development strategies and concepts which have little or no relevance to our cultural heritage.

Consequently whereas at the micro level there maybe some activity based success stories however from a macro perspective the impact and relevance of the prevailing youth development strategies remains at best speculative. It must be noted further that whereas some agencies have crafted and employed various evaluation tools and mechanisms to measure the impact of existing youth development strategies, in the main their application remains non-existent. This may very well be one of the reasons why the prevailing youth development strategy framework is overpopulated with 'feel good' activities, initiatives and projects which have little or no profound impact on the Commonwealth youth development landscape.

In the circumstances it would appear unless there is a paradigm shift in the youth development strategy the pursuit of economic empowerment, social justice and sustainable development will remain an **“espwa mal papyi”**. In the words of Haile Selasie it will remain **“a fleeting illusion- to be pursued but never attained.”**

## **THE WAY FORWARD – FROM SOCIAL WELFARIST TO TRANSFORMATIONAL MODEL.**

### **The vision**

***“Prosperous societies populated by a citizenry co-existing in a climate of peace, social cohesion, economic viability, social justice and empowered to pursue self actualization and sustainable development; conscious of their cultural heritage and identity.”***

### **The way forward**

Given the complexities of youth development in the Caribbean conjoined with the inability of the existing social welfarist model to produce sustainable development outcomes, there is a compelling case for a paradigm shift in the youth development strategy framework and architecture.

Governments, development agencies and youth networks must bite the bullet and proceed to abandon their social –welfarist posture and adopt a transformational approach to youth development.

### **The Transformational model- characteristics and possibilities**

The character of this transformational approach will be presented from two different but intrinsically linked perspectives. First there is the macro perspective which establishes the broad philosophical outlook and then at the micro level are the more specific programmes and initiatives which seek to operationalize the philosophical principles.

## **MACRO PERSPECTIVE**

First, the transformational model demands an evidence- based approach to youth development work. The idea of youth development strategies being informed mainly

by myths, emotions and stereotyping must be abandoned. These strategies should instead be based upon empirical data and fact. A good place for us to start would be to have a better handle on our Caribbean youth demographics – how many young women are heads of households without jobs; what is the youth rural base that is marginalized by failing agriculture, and so on?

Secondly a Rights- based approach to youth development must be adopted. Policy makers must disabuse their minds of the idea that young people are problems to be addressed and embrace the fact that they like any other citizen 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 fulfill their needs, aspirations and desire for self actualization.

Governments and youth development agencies and indeed youth networks must adopt a strategic approach to youth development. This requires the formulation of a Strategic Youth Development Plan (SYDP) formulated on the basis of a broad based, democratic, consultative process. This SYDP must include a clear vision, definable and attainable goals and objectives, precise outcomes and performance indicators and credible evaluation strategies. The vision and goals of this strategic plan must be aligned to the broader national development goals and clearly articulate a youth-mainstreaming approach in its design and operationalization. It must therefore, have built-in the implementation mechanisms that are appropriate to ensure the policies are transformed into action using young people themselves as key implementing agents in this process, as advocates for empowerment and as evaluators of outcomes.

Governments and their youth development partners must be committed to developing strategic and sustainable partnerships built upon mutual trust, respect and understanding for each others role and responsibility. Further every effort must be made to engage non-traditional partners such as the media, trade unions, credit unions and cultural development agencies.

I want to spend a few minutes exploring the role of the media in this paradigm shift. Sensationalism sells! This probably explains why we have seen a disproportionate amount of negative reporting and stereotyping relating to youth. The media should be impartial but they are not distant observers of social development. They have a part to play. I would like to see some more responsible investigative journalism celebrating youth achievements. Furthermore, I want to challenge the regional media to embrace a wider social agenda whereby they engage community youth in broadcasting, journalism and media work in order to channel positive energies and social consciousness towards nation-building. Let's start seeing community youth pilots where the media becomes a positive force in youth empowerment, not only in 'sensationalising' crime.

While due consideration must be given to the financial and budgetary constraints facing Caribbean governments, our youth development budgets must not be perceived

as yet another line item but must be treated as an investment in our countries' sustainable development. Further, notwithstanding the dictates of international financial institutions governments must remain firmly committed to their moral responsibility to provide the enabling environment for youth empowerment. It is a clear and present moral responsibility that cannot be abdicated.

But perhaps the most important consideration is for our youth development strategies to be anchored in the context of who we really are as a Caribbean people – using the pertinent features of our cultural heritage and identity and imbued with the requisite spiritually uplifting ethos.

## **MICRO PERSPECTIVE**

Governments should consider the following:

- ✍ Engage in a process of reforming and re-positioning youth development Ministries and agencies to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. Timeliness and relevance must become the bedrock of service delivery.
- ✍ In this regard 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 para-statal bodies or joint venture entities to function as executing agencies for strategic youth development plans.
- ✍ As already established, there is in the main a dearth of credible research on emerging trends of youth poverty, youth socialization and behavior. Therefore 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 analyses which should serve to enhance the policy formulation environment.
- ✍ Many of the traditional tools of intervention are becoming less and less effective. It is therefore necessary to consider, develop, adopt and implement new and more effective tools of intervention. Here the use of popular education and communication techniques and social marketing should be given due consideration.
- ✍ There is also an urgent need to adopt effective evaluation tools and mechanisms to assess and measure the impact and relevance of approved 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 empowerment and self actualization. It is therefore imperative that a more comprehensive and mainstreaming approach be adopted in the formulation and execution of these initiatives. Such programmes must of necessity reflect a capacity to navigate emerging global economic arrangements while at the same time providing adequate opportunities for youth entrepreneurs to progress from micro to mainstream enterprises and industries. It is also extremely important to explore and exploit the opportunities provided by the rich cultural heritage of our countries.

✍ The existing avenues and mechanisms to ensure and facilitate youth participation are mainly ad-hoc and tokenistic in nature. Therefore appropriate legislation and policies must be adopted to ensure that youths are adequately empowered to participate as equals in the various decision and policy making forums and organs of the state.

✍ Too much of the vital youth resource is squandered in the abyss of existing penal and juvenile justice systems. Consequently the issue of penal and juvenile justice reform must be made a priority of our youth development strategy. In this regard governments should give due consideration to the World Bank's recommendation to establish "Second Chance" programmes for young people. Further there is an urgent need to invest more and better quality resources towards the establishment of effective social rehabilitation programmes.

✍ Stereotyping the victims of social exclusion fuels social instability and must be abandoned. Instead we must engage these young people in dialogue to formulate and implement programmes which will help reintegrate them into the main stream of society.

✍ Despite perceptions about our relative technologically underdeveloped status in the Caribbean, the emerging ICT environment must not be treated as a passing trend. This is a useful opportunity to advance sustainable development. Consequently there is need for a comprehensive policy and urgent action to expedite the access to ICT for expanding educational and business opportunities for youth and to increase space for advocacy and information exchange which can contribute in no small measure to further advancing our fledgling democracies. Our youth must be empowered to become developers, producers and suppliers of ICT products and services of globally acceptable standards.

### **Youth Networks should themselves consider the following:**

✍ These are in the main ineffective, inefficiently managed and unattractive to significant numbers of youth at risk. This has served to undermine their ability to remain as effective advocates and representatives of the majority of

young people. Consequently there is an urgent need to engage in a process of capacity building and re-positioning. In this regard opportunities must be provided to youth leaders to acquire new and cutting edge leadership and management skills and competencies.

☞ As indicated above in many countries the majority of youth are indifferent to the existence and functioning of youth networks. Consequently there is an urgent need for these networks to engage in a comprehensive mobilization and recruitment programme. Beyond this these youth networks must ensure there is adequate transparency and participation in their policy and decision making process to ensure sustainable youth participation.

☞ These networks need to also engage in a process of identifying adequate sources of sustainable funding for administrative and programming functions.

## **Conclusion**

The proposals presented in this paper do not in any way represent an exhaustive list of initiatives and strategies. However I am convinced that the proposed transformational model of youth development provides a credible framework to effectively transform the youth development landscape and create an enabling environment for the sustainable development.

Finally I wish to re affirm the thirty plus year old commitment of the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Caribbean Centre to work in partnership with existing and emerging youth development stakeholders towards a more progressive youth development ethos in particular and the sustainable development of member territories in general.

We can either allow our societies to disintegrate into laboratories of hopelessness, despair and social instability or help transform them into cradles of creativity, social cohesion and economic prosperity.

**The choice is ours!!**

## **Regional Director's Address at the Dominica Youth Business Trust graduation ceremony - September, 2006**

I bring to you greetings from the Commonwealth Secretary General and the newly appointed Director of Youth Affairs. Permit also to extend heartfelt greetings from my colleague Dwynette Eversley who is unavoidably absent due to illness. She has requested me to convey that her love, passion and commitment to the CYP/DYBT project remains as solid as a rock.

CYP is in a period of transition as we witness a change of the leadership. As some of you are aware the former Director Mr. Ignatius Takawira recently completed his tour of duty and in a matter of days Mr. Andrew Simmons, Deputy Director will also be completing his tour of duty.

Though we shall sorely miss the invaluable contributions of these two colleagues, I want to assure that having had the opportunity to meet briefly with the new director I am confident the days and months ahead shall prove to be very exciting and rewarding for both CYP and its partners.

The CYP is extremely proud of the progressive relationship it has forged with the Government of Dominica and in particular with the Youth Division. We are extremely grateful that you thru the Dominica Youth Business Trust have provided us with the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution towards the empowerment of many young people in Dominica.

It is indeed an honour to be here once again to participate in the graduation ceremony for another group of young Dominicans who are now empowered to make an even more significant contribution to the development of their communities and indeed the socio-economic landscape of the Nature Island.

Dominica seem to be leading the way in the requisite qualitative shift in approach to Youth Enterprise development. I say this because the time has come for regional governments to abandon the concept of promoting youth enterprise development as a social welfare response to youth challenges and instead embrace youth enterprise development as an integral component of their economic recovery or development strategy.

This relationship we have forged in developing a vibrant and progressive entrepreneurship programme and culture for the youth of Dominica has laid the foundation for further cooperation in other areas of youth development.

Only recently the CYPCC approved a sum of 10,000 USD to fund the training of over 50 young Dominicans to become peer educators and counselors under the Commonwealth Youth for Positive Living programme. I am advised that these training programmes will commence on Monday, right here in the Commonwealth of

Dominica.

The CYPL is a youth Driven and youth focused programme which promotes a holistic, sustainable livelihoods approach to HIV and AIDS.

Mr. Chairman

I have previously expressed our appreciation for the existing bonds of cooperation between CYP and the Government of Dominica.

However I must also confess that CYPCC is even more grateful for the unprecedented level of support and commitment demonstrated by the Hon. Roosevelt Skerrit , Prime Minister of Dominica towards youth development , here in particular and the indeed regionally.

Such commitment and support for youth development was illustrated by his decision to allocate EC 2 million to the DYBT. Many of you may not be aware that at the recently held CARICOM heads of Government meeting in St. Kitts and Nevis Mr. Skerrit led the charge for CARICOM to place the issue of youth development high on its agenda. Indeed thru his efforts and the support of several other heads of government the meeting agreed to establish a CARICOM Commission on Youth Development.

Mr. Chairman

The Honourable Prime Minister I am advised is today unavoidably absent so permit me to invite the Hon. Vince Henderson, Minister of Education, Human Resource Development, sports and Youth Affairs to receive on his behalf a small token of our appreciation his contribution to Youth Development from the Director of Youth Affairs and CYPCC Regional Director and staff.

Tomorrow September 30<sup>th</sup> is Caribbean Youth Day. I wish therefore to leave you with greetings and best wishes form the CYPCC.

May you all have a productive and blessed Caribbean Youth Day 2006.

# Paradigm shift needed in Guyana's Youth Development Strategy

By Henry Charles  
August 2006

There is a compelling case for the Guyana Government to consider the revision and remodeling of the country's youth development strategy.

Guyana, like many other Commonwealth countries, is confronted with serious youth development challenges. These include unemployment and underemployment and all its related consequences, the ravages of HIV and AIDS, alarming rates of increase in crime, violence and juvenile delinquency, other forms of anti-social behavior and a pervasive climate of despair and hopelessness.

Successive governments have attempted to address these issues by undertaking various programmes and activities such as national youth service in all its varied forms, youth entrepreneurship schemes, youth award projects, youth training and skills development projects. Various development agencies including the Commonwealth Youth Programme, CIDA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, the Inter-American Development Bank and others have also contributed significantly to the youth development agenda.

However, any qualitative improvement in Guyana's youth development landscape demands a paradigm shift in approach to youth development.

The new government must consider among other strategies the establishment of a dedicated Ministry of Youth Development. It must engage all its development partners and youth development stakeholders in an urgent effort to revamp existing youth development plans and proceed to formulate a Strategic Youth Development Plan.

The proposed Strategic Youth Development Plan must be aligned to Guyana's broader national development vision, goals and objectives. It must include a clearly defined vision, goals and objectives and achievable outcomes. This strategic plan will among other benefits provide a credible and enabling environment for strategic partnerships in youth development. It will facilitate a more efficient use of resources and provide an effective framework for the much needed transformation of the youth development landscape.

Additionally it will provide government with a powerful tool to measure performance and enhance accountability.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) is convinced that if the new government adopts the concept of formulating and implementing a Strategic Youth Development plan, the extent of technical, human resource and financial support it receives from traditional and non-traditional partners to execute its youth development strategy should be enhanced.

Further, while the adoption of this paradigm shift will benefit youth in particular it will also contribute to the transformation of Guyana's entire socio-economic landscape.

CYPCC is extremely appreciative for the support it continues to receive from the Government and people of Guyana and further, remains strongly committed to forging effective partnerships with government and other stakeholders in an effort to enhance Guyana's youth development strategy.

**CARIBBEAN YOUTH DAY MESSAGE BY  
MR HENRY CHARLES, REGIONAL DIRECTOR,  
COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME  
CARIBBEAN CENTRE  
(September 30, 2006)**

**Theme: 'Sustainable Livelihood: A Youth Development Challenge'**

On the occasion of Caribbean Youth Day 2006 which will be observed on **September 30**, the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean wishes to pay tribute to the thousands of young people throughout the Caribbean who continue to make significant contributions to the development of their societies despite the many social and economic challenges and problems which confront them on a daily basis.

CYPCC also takes this opportunity to pay tribute to the many persons and institutions who continue to demonstrate in a tangible manner their commitment to youth development.

Due recognition must also be given to the various United Nations agencies, CARICOM and other stakeholders in the region which continue to make an invaluable contribution to the development of youth. In particular the CARICOM Heads of Government must be singled out for special commendation for their timely decision to establish a Commission on Caribbean Youth Development.

We also salute the teachers and other education professionals who continue to struggle to provide a better quality of education for our youth.

Tribute should also be paid to the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Secretariat which has recently embarked on an initiative to promote youth development in the region and in this regard we welcome the hosting of the forum on Youth, Crime and violence to be held in St Lucia in October, 2006.

Caribbean Youth Day 2006 provides us with yet another opportunity to reflect on the many issues and challenges confronting young people in our region.

Issues such as unemployment and underemployment, crime and violence, HIV/AIDS and other lifestyle diseases, poverty, access to better quality education, and social exclusion must continue to be the focus of our youth development agenda.

However if we are to successfully address these challenges and problems and accomplish the goal of sustainable development there is urgent need to form broad-based partnerships which must include young people, government the private sector, the media, development organizations, regional and international agencies and

other relevant stakeholders. There is also a compelling need to adopt a more strategic and holistic approach to youth development.

Further if we are to accomplish any qualitative improvement in the regional youth development landscape governments and youth development partners must proceed to sunset the era of tokenism and adopt effective policies and legislation to ensure more effective youth participation in the development process. Providing opportunities to engage in consultative processes is commendable but governments also have a responsibility to help develop the capacity of the youth to contribute meaningfully to the process. The appropriate legal and policy framework must be established to ensure that youth participation is not subjected to the fluctuating dispositions of government nor sacrificed in the interest of promoting or protecting the agenda of more powerful social groups. In essence government must recognize that young people have a civic responsibility and right to participate fully in their development and that of their communities and societies.

Greater emphasis must also be placed on providing better quality education and the development of more sustainable employment creation programmes and initiatives for young people as a deliberate strategy to address youth poverty and creating opportunities for self actualization.

On the burning issue of youth crime, violence and other manifestations of anti- social behavior we strongly urge regional governments to demonstrate greater commitment to social rehabilitation. More and better quality resources need to be invested in sustainable rehabilitative strategies and programmes. There is also an urgent need for reform of the juvenile justice systems throughout the region. In this regard we strongly support a recommendation in the World Bank's recently published World Development Report for Governments to adopt a deliberate development strategy of second chances for young people whom may have committed themselves or fall through the cracks of social order.

It is also critical for us to abandon the tendency to stigmatize the victims of social exclusion and instead establish and implement effective programmes and strategies to re-integrate them into the mainstream of society.

**Regional Director's remarks at inaugural  
CYPCC regional lecture series  
September 30, 2006**

I bring you greetings on behalf of the Commonwealth Secretary General, the Right Hon. Don McKinnon and the newly appointed Director of Youth Affairs, Dr. Fatiha Serour.

Today, Caribbean Youth Day is indeed an occasion to celebrate and pay tribute to the many young persons throughout the Caribbean who despite many challenges continue to make significant contributions to the sustainable development of their communities and societies.

However even as we pay tribute to these nation builders we remind mindful of the fact that the Caribbean like many other Commonwealth countries is caught in a struggle to effectively address the many youth development challenges, some which have undermined the basic tenets of our traditional modes of socialization and indeed poses a grave danger to the economic, social and even political stability of the Caribbean region.

Indeed in many of our societies there appears to be a prevailing climate of hopelessness and despair.

It is this prevailing climate which dictates, that now, more than ever before Government, the youth movement, corporate sector, development organizations and civil society in general must engage in the building of sustainable partnerships to formulate, support and implement sustainable youth development policies and strategies.

Over the last thirty years the Commonwealth Youth Programme has engaged Governments and the Youth movement in a very successful partnership to help advance the regional youth development agenda. Together we have provided the Caribbean with hundreds of trained youth development workers. CYP has also made significant contributions to youth empowerment through appropriate advocacy initiatives, youth entrepreneurship programmes and the provision of capacity building opportunities for youth leaders and youth development professionals.

**MR. CHAIRMAN**

I have highlighted some of the contributions made by the CYP not because I feel persuaded by an obligation to show slate but rather it is to assure you, that in this your hour of need, when the Caribbean is faced with ever more complex youth development challenges the Commonwealth Youth Programme remains steadfast in its commitment to build even stronger bonds of partnership with all youth development stakeholders in the search for more effective strategies for sustainable

youth development.

One of the philosophical pillars of the CYP youth development strategy is that of an **evidenced based** approach to youth work. It is our firm belief that youth development programmes and strategies are irrelevant and insignificant if these are merely driven by myths and misinformation. The experience of your very own Youth Affairs Division here in Barbados confirms the significance and indeed correctness of formulating youth development policies, strategies and programmes on the basis of sound empirical data and facts.

However developing an evidenced based approach to youth work requires the emergence of a culture or better yet an ethos of credible research into youth development issues and challenges.

Yet we are mindful of the fact that the findings of such research activities assume real value only when these influence public policy, public debate and discourse.

It is for this reason we at the CYP have embarked on the publication of a quarterly Journal “**CARIBBEAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT.**” The main purpose of this organ is to provide space for persons engaged in research on youth development issues to publish their findings and to help influence the policy development environment.

The Regional Youth development lecture series we launch today is yet another tool to stimulate more research, informed public debate and discourse on youth development challenges and issues. It is our sincere hope that this initiative will help ignite the development of a more progressive policy environment and contribute to the much needed transformation of the regional youth development landscape.

I wish to thank the government and people of Barbados, in particular the Honourable Minister of Youth, the Director of Youth Affairs and his colleagues and indeed Dr. Ivan Henry, today's guest speaker for their support in making this venture a reality.

May you all be showered with divine blessings on this Caribbean Youth Day 2006.

**ONE LOVE**

# **New Challenges: New Paradigm**

**By Henry Charles  
September, 20006**

For over thirty years the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) has contributed to the human resource development needs of the Caribbean youth development strategy. Today many senior public officers, throughout the Caribbean, serving in the various youth development and social service agencies are graduates of the CYP certificate and diploma training programmes. Many have also benefited from other customized training programmes and capacity building initiatives.

These CYPCC training and capacity building initiatives have served the region well and are still vital tools to expand the regional pool of trained youth development volunteers and professionals, and significantly upgrade the quality and impact of youth development interventions.

However there are new challenges, which demand new strategies.

Despite the invaluable contribution made by youth development professionals and volunteers to national development, many persons including some policy makers still treat them as persons who only engage in the social pastime of organizing “afternoon tea parties.”

This diminished perception of Youth Development professionals is reflected in the relatively unfair job classification and status within most public services.

To address this glaring anomaly and to establish Youth work as a respected profession the CYPCC is engaged in a strategic partnership with some public sector agencies and non-governmental development organizations to create an enabling environment for the professionalisation of youth work.

This professionalisation will not only have a tremendous positive impact on the youth development landscape but should contribute in a most significant manner to sustainable development of our delicate societies.

We congratulate the partners who have demonstrated faith in this process and salute those who are now invoking the self confidence to become involved.

Our youth are our most valuable resource and we must ensure that the quality of service

provided to them is of internationally acceptable standard.

Play your part now!! Form your youth workers associations.

Undertake research activities on various aspects of youth development. Publish your findings.

Be guided by appropriate ethical and quality standards in the execution of your functions.

Above all, remember young people are also citizens, with requisite rights and responsibilities.

# The Mission



Helping young people in the Caribbean to realise their abilities and aspirations is the main mission of Henry Charles, the new Regional Director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) Caribbean Centre.

Forty-eight-year-old Mr Charles took office at the CYP Caribbean Centre, based in Georgetown, Guyana, in September 2005 following a career in youth work and social development. He was previously working as the general manager for the National Conservation Authority of St Lucia before joining the CYP.

Topping Mr Charles' agenda is the provision of assistance to Caribbean youth to explore their potential. He is particularly concerned about vulnerable young people who have been exposed to violence and unhealthy lifestyles.

"There is a need to get this group of young people into the mainstream of society. Marginalised youth, especially those who had dropped out of primary and secondary schools, are a vulnerable group of people. More attention must be paid to assist them, to build up their self-esteem and give them hope for the future," said Mr Charles in an interview with the Commonwealth News and Information Service on 28 September 2005 during a week-long visit to the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, UK.

Mr Charles had been previously involved in programmes organised by the Government of St Lucia to provide short-term employment to young people and marginalised persons.

"Existing systems and programmes should be devised and structured to meet the needs of young people to avoid any alienation to society. We need to work with them on issues such as human rights so that they will understand that a rights-based approach is an integral part of sustainable development," said Mr Charles.

He believes that, "Youth participation in national development is important. So too is their social and political consciousness. We need to nurture the young people so that they, in turn, can contribute meaningfully to their societies."