



Caribbean Youth Development

A quarterly e-journal of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre ISSUE 1 June, 2006

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

By Henry Charles

Presented at CYMM 2006



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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 (CYMM) 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 formed the basis of discussions by youth ministers at the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in Kuala Lumpur (1998), the World Youth Ministers Meeting in Portugal (1998), the CYMM in Solomon Islands (2000) and in Botswana (2003). It continued to be the guiding core framework for the 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 the global, regional, national and

community levels 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

Youth development in focus

The Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre is pleased to launch 'Caribbean Youth Development' - a quarterly e-journal.

This publication is intended to serve as a medium to disseminate research findings, academic studies, emerging theories, concepts, ideas and opinions on youth and youth development issues.

It is our hope that it will serve as a body of knowledge and a source of reference for youth work professionals; international, regional and local agencies working in youth development; students; universities; decision makers and planners, among others.

This journal will also serve as a valuable education and advocacy tool and should contribute to the creation of a more progressive youth development landscape in the Caribbean.

We dedicate this inaugural issue to the volunteers, youth development professionals, activists, youth leaders and the many young persons who have and continue to make invaluable contributions to youth development.

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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



RYCs at a television interview at CYMM 2006.

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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.



Commonwealth Caribbean Youth Exchange 2004, Trinidad and Tobago.

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

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

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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.

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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

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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



RYC Retreat, 2005, St Vincent and the Grenadines

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

provid

by governments at national level.

Conclusion

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

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

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

"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."

The Barbados National Youth Service Rationale and Philosophy

By Richard Carter

Richard Carter is the Director of Youth in the Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sport of Barbados.



Mr. Richard Carter

As a point of departure it is an indisputable fact that there has been substantial social change in post-Independence Barbados both in quantitative as well as qualitative terms and that the pace of this change has been extremely rapid. It is equally clear that none of the major social institutions of the society have, or could have, escaped the forces of social change and in fact the dynamic of social change is still being played out in the structural and relational context of Barbados today. As a result, the social milieu of Barbados today is quite different from that of a generation ago reflective not only of a shift in the structure and relations between social institutions but also a change in the normative patterns and values of the society.

All the available evidence indicates that the major institutions of socialisation such as family, religion, community and education have been impacted in important ways by this process of social change. The declining functional significance of extended kin networks, the

increasing secularisation of the society, the loosening of the bonds of community and the increasingly narrow academic orientation of education are all manifestations of this process. The recent **Report on the Barbados Adolescent Health Survey (1999)** conducted among secondary school students shows, for example, that less than half of respondents (47%) live with both parents and as many as 17% live with other youth. In respect of religion more than a quarter (28%) indicated “no religion” and only just over half (57%) considered themselves religious or spiritual. With regard to community, only 40% reported that they would be unhappy if they moved out of the neighbourhood where they currently live. In terms of education, about half the students were not involved in any organised activities after school and more than a third indicated that none of their teachers had gotten to know them well in the past year.

As would be expected, these findings are mirrored among young people who are at risk or who have already been referred to the various social service agencies as a consequence of deviant or anti-social behavioural patterns. The **Report on Criminal Risk Factors** reports, based on a survey conducted among inmates at Glendairy Prison that:

Apart from the 23% who indicated membership in a club, the vast majority of the inmates (76.4%) were not involved in any sort of constructive, character-building or developmental activities. Many of them gave information which suggested that they spent their time idly “liming on the bloc” with their peers.

In fact, apart from participation in sports, less than 5% of the inmates had been involved in some type of social

organisation or association.

The research paper **Family Disruption and Dysfunction – Divorce and the Case of the Social Service Agencies (1985)** reported similar findings based on an examination of children and young people referred to social agencies including the Family Services Division of the Welfare Department, The Child Care Board, The Juvenile Liaison Scheme, The Government Industrial School and the Probation Department. The paper reports:

The data ...show a relatively high level of structural instability in the households of clients using the social agencies...Children in such households are therefore far more likely to suffer neglect, verbal and other abuse and to be the objects of vented frustration. The atmosphere in such households is less likely to offer the stability, structure and direction needed by many young people in order to properly organise their lives.

The social enquiry reports of the various social service agencies confirm these findings of a consistent relationship between family dysfunctionality and deviant behavioural patterns among children and young people.

These findings are consistent with those from other surveys conducted among young people in Barbados during the past decade including the **ISER National Youth Survey (1993)**, the **Ministry of Education Secondary Students (Reform) Survey (1995)** and the **Division of Youth Affairs National Youth Surveys (1995, 2000, 2005)**. In fact, data from the **National Youth Survey (2000)** show that more than 40% of young people have no religious affiliation; that less than 25% are members of social groups; and that less than

5% spend their leisure activity socialising in the context of family. Preliminary findings from the National Youth Survey, 2005 indicate that these patterns continue.

Perhaps as important as the changes in the individual institutions has been the progressive diminution of the level of normative consensus and mutual supportiveness that existed between them. So that not only has there been a weakening in the efficacy of the principal institutions of socialisation over time, there has also been a corresponding decline in the degree to which these institutions support and reinforce each other in the socialisation of newer members of the society.

Simultaneous with these changes has been the expanded significance and scope of the peer group and the mass media as agencies of socialisation for young people to a degree unparalleled in the history of Barbados. It is an unfortunate fact that the impact of peer relationships and the media has not always been positive. There is evidence of substantial numbers of young people involved in negative peer groupings with a predisposition to deviant, anti-social and contra-normal behaviours such as drug abuse, crime and violence. It is also clear that such behaviours are reinforced in some segments of the mass media to which young people are widely exposed such as movies and music.

The result of all of this is that the society can no longer be assured of the socialisation of the broad mass of its young people into mainstream norms, attitudes and values by the agencies which traditionally performed this role. The evidence of increasing levels of deviant and anti-social behaviour among young people is but the most extreme

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manifestation of the fact that these norms, values and attitudes have not been internalised by substantial numbers of young people. The disrespect for authority, the lack of regard for property and the directionless drift that are becoming increasingly common among youth are all related to this process.

It is therefore against this background of the decline of traditional socialising agencies and the ineffectiveness or inappropriate nature of new socialisation that the concept of a socially engineered programme of support recommends itself. For clearly, the calls for a restoration of traditional agencies to their former role or the bending of new agencies to a traditional role both run counter to the internal dynamic of social change and cannot be relied on exclusively to effect the resocialisation that is required. It is therefore in this context that the establishment of a national youth service programme is proposed.

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Perhaps as important as the changes in the individual institutions has been the progressive diminution of the level of normative consensus and mutual supportiveness that existed between them. So that not only has there been a weakening in the efficacy of the principal institutions of socialisation over time, there has also been a corresponding decline in the degree to which these institutions support and reinforce each other in the socialisation of newer members of the society.

Simultaneous with these changes has been the expanded significance and scope of the peer

group and the mass media as agencies of socialisation for young people to a degree unparalleled in the history of Barbados. It is an unfortunate fact that the impact of peer relationships and the media has not always been positive. There is evidence of substantial numbers of young people involved in negative peer groupings with a predisposition to deviant, anti-social and contra-normal behaviours such as drug abuse, crime and violence. It is also clear that such behaviours are reinforced in some segments of the mass media to which young people are widely exposed such as movies and music.

The result of all of this is that the society can no longer be assured of the socialisation of the broad mass of its young people into mainstream norms, attitudes and values by the agencies which traditionally performed this role. The evidence of increasing levels of deviant and anti-social behaviour among young people is but the most extreme

manifestation of the fact that these norms, values and attitudes have not been internalised by substantial numbers of young people. The disrespect for authority, the lack of regard for property and the directionless drift that are becoming increasingly common among youth are all related to this process.

It is therefore against this background of the decline of traditional socialising agencies and the ineffectiveness or inappropriate nature of new socialisation that the concept of a socially engineered programme of support recommends itself. For clearly, the calls for a restoration of traditional agencies to their former role or the bending of new agencies to a traditional role both run counter to the internal dynamic of social change and cannot be relied on exclusively to effect the resocialisation that is required. It is therefore in this context that the establishment of a national youth service programme is proposed.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre

The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) is an intergovernmental agency established by the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOG) in 1974, as the youth division of the Commonwealth Secretariat, specifically to address the educational, social and economic needs of young men and women across the Commonwealth.

Its vision is to work towards a society where young men and women are empowered to develop their potential, creativity and skills as productive and dynamic members of their societies, participate fully at every level of decision making and development both individually and collectively, successfully promoting Commonwealth values of international co-operation, social justice, democracy and human rights.

The Caribbean Centre, which is located in Guyana, was the first of four centres established to serve the 17 member countries of the Commonwealth Caribbean and Canada.

CYPCC functions through three Strategic Programme Areas which are:

- Youth Work, Education and Training (YWET)
- Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihoods (YESL)
- Governance, Development and Youth Networks (GDYN)

Dominica Youth Business Trust

A timely intervention in youth development

By John Roach



Mr. John Roach

Mr. Roach is a Youth Development Officer in Dominica and the Coordinator of the Dominica Youth Business Trust

A number of institutions have over the years been expressing concern about the plight of youth in Dominica and the impact the present economic situation has been having on their prospects for employment and on their overall standard of living. Several initiatives are being undertaken within the region to promote entrepreneurship and employment generation. One such institution which has been assessing the situation among the young people of the Caribbean with the intention of addressing it in a holistic manner is the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC).

The issue of youth entrepreneurship development was high on the agenda at a Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in 2002. Dominica was represented by the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit who was then the Youth Affairs Minister. A strong case was presented at that forum on behalf of Dominica which at the time was experiencing fiscal difficulties and had embarked on an

economic stabilization programme.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme, understanding the difficulties that Dominican youth were faced with, immediately prepared a plan of action to engage unemployed youth in some sustainable income generating activity.

In 2003 the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre presented the Government of Dominica with twenty-seven thousand pounds (£27,000.00) for the establishment of a loan guarantee fund for young men and women of Dominica who are unemployed and desirous of starting their own enterprise.

Mr. Milton Lawrence was contracted by CYPCC as the consultant for the development of a youth credit initiative for Dominica after evaluating the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative (CYCI) which was set up in Guyana in 1995 for underprivileged youth of that country. Mr. Lawrence was to make recommendation to the Government of Dominica and CYPCC for the implementation of this model to suit Dominica's

situation.

On August 12, 2003 the first national consultation was held at the Public Service Training Centre with CYPCC, the Government, the Private Sector, NGO's, the National Youth Council, the Financial Institutions, Entrepreneurs, the Youth and other stakeholders. Presentations were made by then CYPCC Regional Director Armstrong Alexis, Chief Youth Development Officer Jules Pascal, Consultant Milton Lawrence and two young entrepreneurs Florest Cambran of Florest's Beauty Salon in Portsmouth and Nicholson Scotland of Computronics in Roseau. A number of recommendations were made by the various Stakeholders who participated in the consultation. The initiative was referred to as the Dominica Youth Business Facilitation Initiative (DYBFI).

Accomplishments

In March 2004, the Honourable Minister of Youth Affairs, Vince Henderson appointed a team of nine persons from the various sectors to serve on the Project Advisory & Coordinating Committee (PACC) for a two-year period as recommended by Milton Lawrence.

The PACC comprised the following persons; Ronald Jno Baptiste of the National Development Foundation; Chairman, Daniel Reid of the Enterprise Unit in the Ministry of Tourism; Deputy Chairman, John Roach of the Youth Development Division; Secretary/Coordinator Louisiana Dubique of the National Youth Council (NYC); John Foye of the Small Projects

Assistance Team (SPAT); Patricia Inglis of the Dominica Employers Federation (DEF); Kerry George of the Computer Intranet Solutions (CIS); Macintyre Douglas of the Dominica Hotel and Tourism Association (DHTA); and Caren Prevost of the Dominica State College (DSC).

In May 2004 the Government of Dominica officially launched the Initiative and committed EC\$100,000.00 to the project. Following the official launching, the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the Project Advisory and Coordinating Committee held a series of follow up meetings from May to July 2004 with the financial institutions to confirm their commitment to the project. During that period Mr. Andrew Simmons of the Commonwealth Secretariat and Ms. Dwynette D. Eversley of CYPCC visited Dominica and held meetings with the PACC and other Stakeholders and developed a PEST & SWOT Analysis for the project.

The Project Advisory and Coordinating Committee held its first retreat in July 2004 at the Garraway Hotel, where an implementation plan and budget was developed. The Dominica Youth Business Facilitation Initiative (DYBFI) was renamed Dominica Youth Business Trust (DYBT). That retreat also saw the development of the **Vision**, *'Empowering Dominican Youth In Realizing Their Entrepreneurial Potential'* and the **Mission Statement**, *'Empowering Dominican Youth In Realizing Their Entrepreneurial Potential By Facilitating Access To Financial, Technical And Social Assistance Geared Towards The*

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Sustainable Development Of Viable Business, Thereby Contributing To The Growth And Development Of The National Economy.'

Following the retreat, the Trust embarked on a public awareness campaign in collaboration with the media houses, the Youth Officers and the National Youth Council. The recruitment process began and mechanisms were put in place for the first batch of prospective entrepreneurs. In September 2004, the legal documents for the operation of the Trust were completed by Attorney Anthony Commodore of the Ministry of Legal Affairs. The legal document comprised the Trust Deed, the agreement between the Trust and the Financial Institutions and the agreement between the Trust and Loan Recipients.

From November 29 to December 3, 2004, CYPCC conducted an orientation of the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative model and Training of Trainers workshop at the Garraway Hotel with the Trustees, the Recruitment Panel, Trainers, Youth Officers and other Stakeholders. Ms. Eversley facilitated the orientation and Ms. Marva Bancroft facilitated the workshop. During Ms. Eversley's visit in December 2004, the DYBT Information and Telecommunication Centre (ITC) was set up at the office of the Youth Development Division on Charles Avenue Goodwill. CYPCC contributed EC\$17,612.71 towards setting up the facility. It contains three networked computers with internet, two printers and two air condition units. This facility was set up for use by the prospective entrepreneurs for their market research and other business related activities.

On December 29, 2004 the Trust held its first orientation exercise at the Public Service Training Centre with applicants. A Power Point presentation on the initiative was made by John Roach. Ronald Jno Baptiste also addressed the applicants. The orientation was aimed at

clarifying misconceptions applicants had about the initiative. About 40 applicants participated in the exercise. A television interview was done with John Roach by the Government Information Service (GIS) following the orientation.

On March 16, 2005 the Trust formalized agreement with 15 financial institutions for the Loan Guarantee Fund. The agreements were signed between the Trust and the following institutions: the National Development Foundation of Dominica (NDFD); Agricultural Industrial and Development Bank (AIDB); Bense/Calibishie Credit Union;



DYBT graduates, February 2006.

Castle Bruce Credit Union; Southeast Credit Union, Grand Bay Credit Union; Marigot Credit Union; Portsmouth Credit Union; Salisbury/Coulibistrie Credit Union; St Paul Credit Union, Vieille Case Credit Union; St Alphonsus Credit Union; Roseau Credit Union; Woodfordhill Credit Union; and St Anne Credit Union. The Honourable Minister for Youth Affairs, Vince Henderson delivered the Feature Address at the ceremony. The event received tremendous media coverage. On March 17, 2005 the Trust became a legal entity after registering as a Trust.

In April 2005 the Trust commenced the recruitment process for the first DYBT training in Small Business Management (SBM). Over 100 applications were screened and

about 60 applicants were interviewed by the Recruitment Panel from which 27 were selected. From April 8 to 10, 2005 the 27 recruits participated in a weekend Personal Development retreat at the Springfield Guest House which was facilitated by Ms. Patrice Lafleur and Ms. Eversley. This retreat set the tone for the two-week training in Small Business Management (SBM) which immediately followed at the conference room of the National Development Foundation from April 11 to 22, 2005. The personal development retreat was funded by the Commonwealth Youth

Pemberton and Linford Bastien.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre presented Ella Registe with the **Business Plan Innovation Award (BPIA)**, a novel feature introduced by CYPCC to further support young entrepreneurs in getting started. Six other graduates were recipients of merit awards for their business plans: Karen Peters, Eddyford Lewis, Renauld Deschamps and (Linford Bastien & Erica Joseph). Ella received a plaque and EC\$5,000.00 and each of the other recipients received a certificate and EC\$1,000.00.

By November 2005, 18 of the 27 graduates had accessed the loan guarantee fund. The total amount of loan accessed by that date was EC\$125,260.00 with the Trust guarantee amounting to EC\$90,795.00. Upon follow up with the entrepreneurs, their business operations were progressing fairly well with about two exceptions. Reports from the financial institutions indicated two delinquent loan recipients who are currently being dealt with by the Trust. The other nine graduates who have not accessed the loan guarantee fund are in the process of finalizing their plans to do so.

In July 2005, the National Bank of Dominica (NBD) approved a 4% interest rate on the savings account of the Trust. During that month the Trust also received EC\$8,777.15 from CYPCC for the development of the DYBT website. On September 20, 2005 Dr. Siddhartha Sankar Dash, arrived in Dominica for his six-month attachment with the Dominica Youth Business Trust. Dr. Dash was assigned to the Trust by the Commonwealth Secretariat as an expert in entrepreneurship development upon request by CYPCC.

During the month of October 2005, the expertise of Dr. Dash was employed through the first orientation exercise of the mentorship programme at the Garraway Hotel. Twenty prospective mentors participated in the exercise. Dr. Dash introduced the four-week Entrepreneurship Development

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Programme (EDP) to the DYBT training team. Ten DYBT trainers participated in the exercise. The four-week Entrepreneurship Development Programme would replace the two-week Small Business Management (SBM) training. During the month of October, Dr. Dash also introduced the Entrepreneurship Awareness Camp (EAC) to the Convent Preparatory School. A six-hour programme which is aimed at creating an awareness of entrepreneurship among school children. Thirty-five (35) students of the Convent Prep completed the six-hour programme.

In November 2005, 46 applicants were interviewed for the next DYBT training. Thirty applicants were recruited for the four-week training in the Entrepreneurship Development Programme. The four-week training programme ran from November 21 to December 16, 2005. The training activities were conducted at the conference rooms of the National Development Foundation of Dominica (NDFD) and the Dominica Public Service Union (DPSU) in Roseau. The Achievement Motivation and Personal Development residential retreat was held at the Holy Redeemer Retreat House at Eggleston. The Achievement Motivation component was introduced to the programme for the first time by Dr. Dash. He was understudied by John Roach and other staff of the Youth Division to ensure continuity after the six-month assignment ended. The four-week training was funded by CYPCC with a contribution of EC\$21,315.00 and OAS which contributed EC\$8,910.00.

On February 8, 2006 DYBT held its second graduation at the Garraway Hotel. All 30 participants successfully completed the training programme. Fifteen young women graduated: Ursula Languedoc, Natoia Augustine, Joann Lockhart, Mearl George, Judith Shillingford, Jocelyne Angol, Jodie Andrew, Shantelle Cator, Vanessa Winston, Anita Johnson, Lizette St.ville,

Lornamae Angol, Precilla Johnson, Sabrina Carlton and Anabela Charles. Fifteen young men also graduated: Daren Esprit, Verus Toussaint, Jason Richards, Jumadine Frederick, Willis Joseph, Collins Bruno, Presley Joseph, Tyron Toulon, Hermon Lawrence, Ray Phillip, Rohan John, Grell Benjamin, Eirdrynton James, Richard Andrew and Kyle Pacquette. The Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre presented **business plan merit awards** and EC\$1,500.00 to each of these six graduates: Jodie Andrew, Rohan John, Vanessa Winston, Natoia Augustine, Eirdrynton James and Verus Toussaint.

The Dominica Youth Business Trust recognized the DotDM Corporation and Dr. Dash at that function for their contribution to youth entrepreneurship development in Dominica. Both were presented with plaques by the Honourable Prime Minister.

The DYBT website was officially launched at that function by the Youth Affairs Minister, Honourable Vince Henderson. The Prime Minister of Dominica, Honourable Roosevelt Skerit and the Regional Director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre, Mr. Henry Charles addressed the large gathering of about 120 persons. The ceremony was carried live on two radio stations; DBS Radio and Kairi FM. The programme received tremendous media coverage.

By April 2006, two of the thirty 30 graduates of the second batch of trainees had accessed the loan guarantee fund which was increased from EC\$7,500.00 to EC\$15,000.00. This was due to funding from the Organization of American States of US\$75,000.00 to the Dominica Youth Business Trust Loan Guarantee Fund under the project 'Poverty Eradication Through Youth Employment.' The other 28 graduates are in the process of negotiating with the financial institutions for their business loans. The two loans received, amounted to EC\$19,400.00 with

DYBT guarantee of EC\$14,550.00. This brought the total loan receipt to EC\$144,660.00 and loan guarantee total to EC\$105,345.00

In March 2006, CYPCC presented US\$2,000.00 to indigenous DYBT graduate Jumadine Frederick towards the establishment of his youth enterprise in the Carib Territory. Jumadine's business will focus on growing and using local fruits to make Ice Cream. He will also be involved in the sale of Carib Craft. The Carib people experience tremendous difficulties in accessing loans from the financial institutions as a result of their land policy. This gesture from the Commonwealth Youth Programme is a very thoughtful one and will certainly contribute significantly to the improvement of the quality of life among the Carib community.

Conclusion

Since its intervention in 2004, the Dominica Youth Business Trust has created a consciousness among Dominican Youth, the Government, the Private Sector and the Financial Institutions on the important role that the youth can play in the business environment. The Trust has involved the media and has collaborated with a wide cross section of partners and

stakeholders in the process of creating an environment friendly to youth entrepreneurship. While the Trust is happy with the progress which has been achieved within the given time, we are also aware of the task that lies ahead in maintaining and improving on the collaborative support that is required for the success of the programme.

The Trust wishes to recognize the invaluable financial contributions of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre which to date amounts to EC\$226,079.08 / US\$84,100.54, as well as other vital technical assistance from CYPCC not included in this figure; The Government of Dominica's EC\$100,000.00 and the Organization of American States' EC\$229,230.00 / US\$84,900.00.

The Trust successfully trained 29 young women and 28 young men 18 to 35 years old whose lives have been positively impacted on as a result of this intervention. The Trust is now equipped with a dedicated Coordinator, Trustees, Recruitment Panel, Training Team, Mentors and support staff of the Youth Development Division to continue preparing our young generation for the challenges of globalization and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) and take their rightful place in the social and economic development process of the country and the region.

DYBT

Mentorship Programme What is a mentor?

A mentor is a person who gives help and advice through measured dispensations of knowledge. The mentor provides guidance which enables and empowers the entrepreneur to accomplish his or her business goals. Mentors are sensitive and always seek to build warm relationships.

HIV/AIDS Challenge: A Youth Perspective

By Natasha Grovesnor



Ms. Natasha Grovesnor

Natasha is an intern attached to the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre. As Coordinator of the Commonwealth Youth for Positive Living (CYPL), she is responsible for overseeing the group's outreach activities and planning training workshops, among other initiatives.

information which is desperately needed to empower them to make right, healthy and life-saving choices; reversible, if attention, money and resources are concentrated on youth-led and driven HIV/AIDS intervention programmes, sustainable livelihoods and development, and a greater commitment to the eradication of poverty; and specific attention is paid to ensure that their emotional and spiritual needs are being met simultaneously with their physical and other developmental needs.

The devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on young people, a vulnerable and often times a neglected population, begs the question, *at what stage are we failing our prospective leaders?* The Caribbean region, including those countries where the problem seems to be more acute, is not devoid of HIV/AIDS programmes which target young people, both the unattached at-risk population and those in the school system. There is no question of the availability of programmes; the dilemma is that these programmes fail to accurately pinpoint and address the real needs of young people. Programmes on prevention education; those addressing stigma and discrimination; empowering young People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA); care and support and the gamut of initiatives, are failing to deliver the expected results. Only a reduction in the number of young people who are infected daily with HIV will be the determining factor for pronouncement on the successfulness of these initiatives. While not dismissing these initiatives as being entirely ineffective, it is fallacious thinking to assume that a programme which treats the

symptoms of HIV and not the root problems will be able to harvest the breakthrough the world urgently needs. What then is the solution to this? A collective and effective response to this global crisis will be to marry programmes which target both the cause and effect of the virus, to competently address the physical, emotional, psychological and economic needs of the epidemics' most susceptible group.

It is said that HIV is the end result of contributory factors which put young people at (greater) risk of becoming infected. Poverty is one such factor. Others include parental neglect, an innate need and desire to be loved, appreciated and affirmed, low or no self-worth and self-esteem, peer-pressure and lack of or access to information about HIV/AIDS. Illiteracy and the failure to translate prevention information into action also fuel the spread of the infection.

How then do we reduce these factors that put our youth at risk? We begin by treating the person and not the problem. The research is conclusive which shows that when a child is nurtured in a loving and safe environment, he/she is less likely to seek affirmation outside of that environment. The research is equally compelling for the reverse. When a child is raised in a violent, abusive and hostile home, these problems are evident in that child's life and if not dealt with, persist into their adolescent and adulthood years. We therefore need to ensure that our young people are raised in a caring environment where a healthy sense of self-worth, esteem and respect is fostered and other values and morals are instilled. Hence, parents and guardians

should be targeted and equipped with parenting skills, which will safeguard our young people against many of the risk factors for HIV/AIDS.

Since working on the Commonwealth Youth for Positive Living (CYPL) programme, I have had the opportunity of witnessing firsthand the devastation the virus brings to an individual, a home, and a community. My experience working with young people who are both infected and affected is one I would describe as gripping and eye-opening to the human side of this pandemic, which threatens extinction of our youth population. I have witnessed the psychological struggle many face daily coping with the infection, the stigma and discrimination they have to endure, the insufficiency and at worst the deficiency of social mechanisms to offer sustainable supportive counseling and care. On the upside, I have also witnessed human virtues of compassion, patience and strength at their best. On the one hand by care-givers who exude a dedication to the fight, by motivating their patients to live; and inspirationally by the patients who exhibit a determination and passion for living that drives them to fight for another breath, another day, another chance to live a fulfilling life despite the war raging on the inside.

The programme, while still in its infancy stage, has positively impacted the lives of those who have been trained as CYPL HIV/AIDS peer-educators and the young people reached during outreaches. With the guiding philosophy of responding to the epidemic from a holistic viewpoint, that is taking into account all the aspects of a

In a world ravaged by HIV/AIDS, young people are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "there are around 16,000 new infections each day and young people account for over 50% of this daily toll. That is why young people are, and must be, at the centre of action on H I V / A I D S . " (www.UNESCO.org).

Caribbean statistics for 2005 provided by UNAIDS/WHO, ranks HIV/AIDS as the leading cause of death among adults aged 15-44. In some countries, young women in particular between the ages of 15-19 years are six times more likely to become infected than their male counterparts.

A World Bank study of 2003 concluded that for one-third of all new cases, the disease was contracted when the individual was aged 15-24 years. Furthermore, it is believed that 83% of AIDS cases are diagnosed in people between the ages of 15-54 years; one-third of all new cases are in the 25-34 year old age group.

What is alarming is in many places of the world this infection among young people is preventable with accurate

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person's life (social, emotional, mental, sexual, and economical); the programme embraces the concept of *Positive Living*. This concept stresses the value of taking care of one's physical (sexual and reproductive), emotional, intellectual and spiritual health. Fundamental to this concept is the vital need for behaviour change, which is crucial to reversing the spread of the infection. However, this must not be watered-down and reduced to a "workshop." Behaviour change is a process, one which entails the reconditioning of one's thinking towards a particular mindset, attitude, action and habit. It goes beyond a few days of sitting in a staged setting, to working through the pain, hurt and damage that will be unmasked, once the decision to change had been made. It is by no means an easy process because it demands that an individual takes full responsibility for self. Indisputably, behaviour change is the key to stemming the tide of the infection. It must be given primary focus when addressing risky sexual practices such as no condom use and multiple sexual partners, which despite the known consequences of such practices, remains prevalent among young people.

One of my greatest desires is to see programmes for young people that will consistently monitor their growth and provide support throughout the process of positive behaviour change as they seek to overcome the challenges they face. Disconcertingly, there are too many blanket-type solutions, which are good treatments, but futile cures.

An emerging trend is to combine behaviour change with life-skills. However, this must not be the starting point for intervention. Life skills hinge on the premise that an individual is self-aware, self-confident and has healthy self-esteem. While this is a realistic expectation in an ideal world, the truth is young people exist in societies with high incidences of incest, violence, abuse, unemployment, crime and marginalization. At the root of

these problems there are issues of shame, guilt, inferiority, lack of love and acceptance of self (self-rejection) and rejection by others. These problems, coupled with the physiological and psychological changes, contribute to produce dysfunctional youths. To see substantial, conceivable and measurable change, the behaviour change/life-skills technique has to be the second step in the process. The first being to address self, to uncover the root issues why young people continually make irresponsible choices. Ignoring these issues will impede the holistic development of young people and as a result many HIV/AIDS programmes will fail.

However, facing your realities, which in essence is examining self is not an easy exercise, because it requires honesty to face the truth about your lives - past, present and future, and taking personal responsibility for your choices. Sadly, for many working in the field of HIV/AIDS as educators

"It is said that HIV is the end result of contributory factors which put young people at (greater) risk of becoming infected. Poverty is one such factor."

and change agents, this means an exposure of our own struggles with behaviour change and admittance of risky behaviour(s). Self-examination forces you to look deep within to identify those areas of your life where change is necessary and then making a conscious decision to change.

However, young people you are not absolved from this process. You also need to examine your lives, chart your future. Undeniably, there are circumstances around you which will frustrate your efforts as you

strive to move forward, but what separates failure from success is a willingness to rise above life's challenges. You are the most affected group of the epidemic, and yet it is this very group which continues to be the most difficult to reach with HIV/AIDS prevention messages. Instead, you allow a false feeling of invincibility to overshadow your judgment and thinking to make sound, healthy and responsible choices. With this attitude, your future appears dismal, overwhelmed by a high infection rate and consequently high daily death toll.

Many of you live in poor societies, but by educating yourselves, you take a major step in discontinuing this vicious cycle of poverty which threatens to envelop us further. By taking responsibility for your lives and sexual health, you can stop the spread of the infection, one person at a time. How do you take responsibility? You take responsibility by educating yourselves about HIV/AIDS, by abstaining, by practicing safe sex, and by reducing the number of sexual partners and committing to be faithful to one partner.

King Whitney Jr. said "Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better." Youth, which will you be? Will you go down in history as the fearful or the hopeful? Or will you be known as the courageous generation, who, because of your resolve to confront HIV/AIDS, took personal responsibility to stop the spread of the infection? This however calls for discipline to accept responsibility for your actions and the consequences; to be dedicated to the truth, the truth about yourselves, admitting your weaknesses and strengths; delaying gratification, by putting off sex, until you have the correct information on and about HIV/AIDS and other STIs and about your partner(s) sexual

history; and balancing to ensure that you keep the above in perspective.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre (CYPCC) has a two-fold definition for youth empowerment - 'to empower young people to create choices, make informed decisions and accept responsibility for the consequences of the actions; and to create and support the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others.'

As misguided as some HIV/AIDS intervention programmes may sometimes be, it is a way of creating an opportunity, an environment and the conditions for issues affecting young people to be brought to the forefront. That is why it is imperative that as young people you take the opportunity to participate in these programmes. In so doing your voices will be heard and you will act as agents of change, helping to shape appropriate programmes for your development.

Let's all strive to get it right; right for the millions dying of HIV/AIDS; right for the thousands who have contracted the virus within the last minute; right for the millions who are at risk at this very moment; right for the millions who have no access to information and if they do, are illiterate; right for the millions who have no access to treatment, care and support; right for the millions who are experiencing stigma and discrimination; right for the generation to come. By working together, we create a better tomorrow for all the stakeholders.

"Every day you may make progress. Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb." ([Sir Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister 1940 - 1945](#)).

A Concept paper for the establishment of an Incubation Centre in Berbice, Guyana in the fields of agro processing, food processing and aquaculture for technology transfer to the Caribbean for entrepreneurial growth

By Dr Siddhartha Sankar Dash



Dr Siddhartha Sankar Dash

Dr Dash, who hails from India, is a Commonwealth micro-enterprise expert who has just served in the Commonwealth of Dominica. He has also had consultancies with the Government of Malawi, Africa.

transfer of technology to rural people. The involvement of national institutions, teaching, research institutes, CARICOM and CYP in research and development and their interaction with industry becomes very important.

It is a fact that incubation centres have emerged as an offshoot of these crying needs. An incubation centre is the best arrangement for providing essential knowledge at the doorstep of the rural masses. It acts as a catalyzing interface between the research institutions, the sponsoring institutions and financial agencies on one side and the beneficiaries on the other.

The central role of incubation centres in economic regeneration is being recognized in the USA and Europe. In terms of number, size and establishment and employment, Germany has closely followed the UK pattern. France and Belgium have been slower to move to this centre-based initiative, which has characterized the movement in both Germany and UK, since 1980. All these countries rely heavily on Government or corporate funding for the growth of incubation centres.

INCUBATION CENTRE

An incubation centre is a synthesis of attitude, opportunity, education training, research, finance and management of

OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT

The most important goal of an incubation centre is to encourage

the development of intermediate technology for sustainable growth in the rural areas and transfer this technology to the masses. Attaining this goal requires interaction at various levels. The major objectives of the incubation centre will be:

- To act as an interface between education, research and industry.
- To provide an environment for creating innovative, inventive and enterprising activities.
- To promote, foster and engage in goal oriented industrial research and development.
- To assist and monitor projects and coordinate with the Government, Industry and international agencies to promote growth through research, and up-gradation of skill-cum-technologies.
- Harnessing appropriate technologies to serve the varied interests of farmers, rural artisans, weavers, craftsman masons and others.
- Conducting several skill-cum-technology up-gradation programmes, entrepreneurship and small business management training for youth.
- To provide an industrial liaison, service to scientists and engineers and industries to facilitate the commercial exploitation of their product/process.
- To render technical consultancy to small-scale entrepreneurs.
- To train manpower from industry to effect transfer of technology.

The introduction of the incubation centre concept in Guyana is expected to serve as a mechanism of translating knowledge developed in Berbice into reality. It is a platform in which education, research and industry are brought together for better understanding of transfer of technology to the masses for poverty eradication.

JUSTIFICATION

My experience of working in the Caribbean is that although CYPCC has trained a large number of entrepreneurs, they have not been able to contribute significantly to the country's economic growth due to lack of technology transfer and value addition to various produce.

I believe Guyana produces large quantities of Bananas, Oranges, Tropical fruits, and vegetables and many more crops and catches fish from the rivers and dams with lower-cost (if any) technology than agro processing, food processing, oil extraction and fish farming etc.

CONCLUSION

With CYPCC's intervention, by establishing an incubation centre in Berbice, CYP can train the youth in the field of agro processing, food processing, aquaculture and organic farming initially. CYPCC will therefore act as a **Catalytic Agent of Change** by way of transfer of technology and training to the Caribbean.

"To realize gainful employment of the masses, transfer of intermediate technology to the rural areas is a must and hence the need to establish an incubation centre."

Youth Crime and Violence

By Keith Bell

Presented at CYMM 2006

Keith Bell is an Attorney at Law and a gazetted officer in the Bahamas Police Force

Coupled with the new, materialistic images portrayed by the surrogate parents and role models from film, television and music to which the youth (many of whom are 'latchkey' children) are exposed during their formative years, this climate has caused increased delinquency and criminal behaviour among the young people of The Bahamas, the Caribbean and the wider world.

This paper seeks to address: the multiple causes which result in the high incidence of youth violence, and increasing youth criminal trends; the dual role played by many young people as victims often forced to become perpetrator; and how the socio-economic effects of governmental decisions/non-decisions affect the future of young people, and the choices they make.

In identifying the problems and the causes, the goal of the paper further seeks to: offer positive suggestions for youth empowerment through urban renewal programmes, using strategic partnerships between government, private and church committees and councils to provide programmes and activities which provide productive options for young people and give them a voice in our communities; create, reinforce or reinstate youth programmes that will give Caribbean youth a sense of inclusion in the decision making process relating to youth policy; and provide proactive solutions to reducing criminal and anti-social behaviour among the young people of this region, focusing on rehabilitation and other solutions to change young people's behaviour, rather than incarceration.

The input of various government departments which focus on youth (sports, culture, youth) is addressed and the

necessity for a policy of inclusion when dealing with matters concerning the youth is highlighted.

This paper will also examine the School Policing Initiative, a strategy that was recently instituted by the Government of The Bahamas that seeks to address the growing problem of violence within the school system. By extension, the initiative also serves as a catalyst to direct young people in the areas where they show special interests. In this way, it is anticipated that their paths can be redirected for them to become productive citizens of society.

This paper is geared towards finding solutions to problems that have been left unresolved for too long. It will concentrate on very practical and feasible solutions which can, with minor adjustments, be adapted to suit country, especially those in the Caribbean region since they share many aspects of culture and a common history. In the end, this paper hopes to recreate the template for the 'village' which will raise the children.

Issues causes and concerns

Many Caribbean nations face alarming rates of criminal activities. In some countries, violent crimes are steadily on the rise, while others are subject to 'spikes'. These spikes are usually associated with drug trafficking and related activities. No matter the varying rates and types of crimes in the Caribbean, there is one consistent factor in these island nations: **the face of crime is getting younger.**

How did this come about? What are the contributing factors to this trend?

A variety of experts in the field of child psychology, criminal

psychology and criminal justice suggest a variety of causes for anti-social and criminal behaviour in young people, ranging from social exposure to genetic predisposition. With these factors in mind, one must focus on a number of factors which are generally held to be predictors for violent, anti-social or criminal behaviour in young people today.

The first is the community context. Poor, high-crime neighbourhoods add an extra element of stress to the day-to-day lives of families trying to raise young children, and detract from parents' ability to give time to their children. Further, they set standards for behaviour that encourage violent solutions to disagreements or interpersonal tension and they promote an attitude of suspicion about the motives and intentions of other people. As a result, young people learn to use violence pre-emptively.

The second factor is the family unit itself. Families influence violence in many ways, in some of the same ways as neighbourhoods do. Many parents unintentionally 'train' their children to be confrontational and aggressive by only paying attention to them when they behave in these ways and by failing to respond positively when their children are socially appropriate and use non-confrontational behaviour to get what they want. In more extreme cases, serious abuse can leave some children so emotionally unstable that they react unpredictably to stress, particularly to events that make them fearful or angry.

There are important individual differences in young children, some of them genetically linked and some due to early traumas, especially birth traumas. Impulsive and inattentive children are difficult to

We must bring our attention to bear on two of the most urgent issues that are wreaking havoc on our populations: the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the intolerable increase in the incidence of crime that has made personal security the overriding concern of all our peoples.

These powerful words from Prime Minister the Hon Said Musa of Belize, summarises the concerns expressed by CARICOM Heads of State at the 22nd CARICOM Meeting held in The Bahamas in 2001. Although five years have elapsed, these words act as a reminder to Caribbean countries of the sobering and serious challenges facing this region.

A popular African proverb states that it takes a village to raise a child. If Caribbean countries subscribe to this belief, and if children in this region develop into young people who exhibit anti-social and criminal behaviour, then we would have failed in our duty and will ultimately suffer the consequences for such failure.

The increased use of technology and global access to information combined with the changing nature of the traditional family structure have resulted in a large number of young people who, while technically smarter and more astute, lack the fundamental discipline and support most commonly seen in two-parent traditional families.

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rear in the best of conditions. When family and neighbourhood circumstances add to the problem, these children are often unprepared emotionally, cognitively and socially for the development challenges ahead of them. This can place them on a pathway where their problems escalate and they become successively alienated from teachers, peers and even family so that their only support is from other delinquency prone youths. This happens especially when they attend schools with a high density of children who are equally unprepared for school.

Law and policymakers in a number of countries are also beginning to note a correlation between the breakdown of families and various social problems. While not always the case, a recent study by the US-based Heritage Foundation entitled *The Real Root Cause of Violent Crime* indicates the following: over the past 30 years, the rise in violent crime parallels the rise in families abandoned by fathers; high-crime neighbourhoods are characterised by high concentrations of families abandoned by fathers; state-by-state analysis by Heritage Foundation scholars indicates that a 10 per cent increase in the percentage of children living in single-parent homes leads typically to a 17 per cent increase in juvenile crime; the rate of violent teenage crime corresponds with the number of families abandoned by fathers; the type of aggression and hostility demonstrated by a future criminal is often foreshadowed in unusual aggressiveness as early as age five or six years; the future criminal tends to be an individual rejected by other children as early as the first grade, who goes on to form his own group of friends, often the future delinquent gang.

On the other hand, the study also noted that: neighbourhoods with a high degree of religious practice are not high-crime neighbourhoods; even in high-crime inner-city neighbourhoods, well over 90 per cent of children

from safe, stable homes do not become delinquents. By contrast, only 10 per cent of children from unsafe, unstable homes in these neighbourhoods avoid crime; criminals capable of sustaining marriage gradually move away from a life of crime after they get married; the mother's strong affectionate attachment to her child is the child's best buffer against a life of crime; the father's authority and involvement in

" Research conducted on crime trends and strategies indicate that the most significant changes over the next few decades will not be in the scope of crime, but rather in the nature of crime."

raising his child is also a great buffer against a life of crime.

Research conducted on crime trends and strategies indicate that the most significant changes over the next few decades will not be in the scope of crime, but rather in the nature of crime.

Today's increased use in technology and e-commerce will create more technologically savvy criminals who will be more organised, creative and international in their approach to crime and criminal activities. The one variable that research indicates will have the most significant influence on the nature of crime is technology.

The computer, digital and cellular age will bring about changes in the face of crime and usher in a new generation of technologically-astute young offenders. The assumption is that the largest offending demographic group will continue to be young males between 15 and 25 years of age. This at-risk group continues to grow as a strong, constant male presence is notably absent from the home and the only

role models available to these disenfranchised youths are movie heroes and the stars of rap, reggae and rock.

A 'catch-22' situation is also prevalent in many countries which make perpetrators out of victims. Due to the increased criminal activity and gang violence in school systems today, young people feel a need to seek the protection of others to keep them safe from the criminal element in their schools and neighbourhoods. As a result, the victims or potential victims become part of gangs (whether formal or informal) for protection purposes. In many instances, they end up perpetrating crimes in order to fit in or participating in other anti-social behaviour, thus becoming a part of the very problem they sought to avoid.

The increased instance of single-parent families, inadequate school staff, inappropriately trained school staff and an irresponsible media were identified as contributing factors to an increase in school violence in the United Nations Secretary-General's study on violence against children. Caribbean participants felt that the breakdown within the family structure is responsible for the anti-social, violent behaviours evident at schools. Further, many schools are understaffed, as there is a lack of trained school counsellors or social workers assigned to the school. Also, teacher training is deemed inadequate and it is felt that teachers are generally poorly equipped to deal with or reduce school violence. Finally, the promotion of violence and the valorisation of violent young actors or characters in the media are regarded as the media's input in increased school violence.

Domestic violence also contributes to the state of affairs in many schools. Domestic violence adds to the plight of young people as it exposes them to threats of violence and actual violence, often leaving them feeling unsafe and vulnerable, even at home. In addition, due to the breakdown of the traditional family structure throughout the Caribbean, the

extended family no longer exists. Young persons no longer have the benefit of being reared and exposed in a secure environment, and are often neglected and left to be raised by the television and the streets. This strains the social fabric to the breaking point and fosters an environment that allows violence to grow and flourish. The unfortunate result is that this violence spills over into neighbourhoods, schools and the wider community.

Also contributing to the problem of youth and crime are social and economic factors. The information superhighway and advances in digital communication has removed the traditional country borders and everyone with cable television or access to the internet is exposed to the lifestyles of the rich and famous. The over-the-top lifestyles lived by famous movie stars, millionaires and music moguls provide young people with unrealistic views of how to dress and act to be somebody. Their need to be part of the 'real crew', dress in the right 'rags' and own the right 'bling' and 'toys', places a strain on young people who may already be economically disadvantaged. It has been determined that their desire to present the right image is also a driving factor in a number of criminal activities (shoplifting, petty theft, burglary and even armed robbery).

"The information superhighway and advances in digital communication has removed the traditional country borders and everyone with cable television or access to the internet is exposed to the lifestyles of the rich and famous."

For many at-risk youth, the escape from this seemingly inevitable route into anti-social and criminal behaviour may be something as basic as being able

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to attend a private, church or government school out of the area in which they live. However, many countries possess educational zones (for convenience), which ensure that young people have access to learning by placing them in schools located in their district/community. This zoning, however, can be a double-edged sword, as it can trap young people in a certain 'area' mentality, which makes it more difficult for them to resist peer pressure and often results in their falling prey to gang activity.

All of the above, coupled with the high cost of living in today's society, a majority of mothers work to support the family and are not at home when children return from school, means that young people are left unattended (without a nurturing or preventative adult influence) for a number of hours on a daily basis. The 'village' which is charged with raising these children (many of the 'villagers' being barely older than the children they are to raise) is for the most part, struggling to raise themselves and are not accessible when young people need answers to questions. Hurts, concerns and even the excitement of something new learned during the day, often has to wait until later as jobs/careers and just plain work, interfere with family time.

This results in numerous young people being raised by *MTV, Jerry Springer, Will & Grace, South Park* and other television programmes which may highlight or sensationalise dysfunctional behaviour and present anti-social behaviour as acceptable.

The incidence of rage among young people is extremely high. Forty per cent of school-going CARICOM students reported feelings of rage. High rates of sexual abuse and physical abuse among children likely play out in rage among young people, which can affect their school performance and lead to violence.

Youth unemployment is especially elevated in some

Caribbean countries. According to World Development Indicators from 1996 to 1998, St Lucia had the highest youth unemployment rate in the Americas followed by Jamaica. In the Caribbean, St Lucia, followed by Dominica, St Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica have the highest youth unemployment rates. In contrast to the United States, which has high levels of youth violence, the proportion of Caribbean adolescent males who carry firearms is extremely high. Fully one-fifth of students had carried a weapon to school in the 30 days prior to the survey, and nearly as many had been in a fight using weapons.

Gang violence is also high in the Caribbean, with 20 per cent of male students and 12 per cent of female students at one point having belonged to a gang.

Although data on drug use is scanty, anecdotal evidence suggests a widespread social acceptance of alcohol and marijuana in some Caribbean countries, among both in-school and out-of-school youth. Out-of-school youth aged 13 to 19 years are most at risk of substance abuse as well as drug dealing. Further complicating the situation, the Caribbean is a major trans-shipment point for drugs entering the United States and Europe.

The pressures brought to bear on young people by all of the above factors, along with the challenges of preparing to lead in an uncertain future where they become more technologically astute at an earlier age, but less

skilled at many of the social graces which allow for non-violent and diplomatic solutions to problems, places today's youths in a very precarious position.

A recent World Bank study conducted on Youth in the Caribbean for the United Nations expressed: Young people are the custodians of our society and the trustees of prosperity for future generations. Nowhere is this more apparent than the Caribbean region, where two-thirds of the population is under the age of 30. This youthful profile of the Caribbean nations presents both opportunities and challenges in the years ahead, as the important role that young people play in national and regional development becomes increasingly apparent.

Yet, many young people who are the leaders of the future are consumed with anger, uncertainty about their role in society. They are easily influenced and led by prevailing negative environmental and social conditions. This important role, as noted by the World Bank Study, is jeopardised by the high incidents of crime and criminal activities among today's young people.

A Review of Crime Statistics in The Bahamas

A review of criminal activities in The Bahamas reveals the following as the current face of crime, that is predominantly: Bahamian males between the ages of 16 and 35 years old; middle to

lower class individuals; of a low educational attainment; a marginalised member of society; a repeat offender; likely to reside or offend in a low class, densely populated area; likely to possess a weapon (knife or firearm).

In matters before the courts in The Bahamas, the average age of young men appearing before the courts on serious criminal offences ranged from 18 to 30 years in cases ranging from possession of drugs and weapons to murder (see Appendix A for overall crime statistics and breakdown of matters committed before the Supreme Court).

Statistical overview of persons charged: juveniles and young offenders

For 2005, a total of 8,181 incidents were recorded in The Bahamas. During the first quarter of 2005, a total of 178 juveniles and young adults were charged with various offences versus 124 for the same period in 2006, representing a 30 per cent decrease in the number of persons charged. The offences of note are murder, armed robbery, robbery, stealing, stealing from vehicles, stolen vehicles and housebreaking

As criminal activities continue to grow, the criminals continue to get younger and younger. If this current trend continues unabated, there will be serious economic and social consequences in the future.

Tackling the problem of youth crime and violence

An essential component of

Offence	Recorded Crimes		Detected Crimes		Juveniles or young men (percentage of total)	
	2006 Jan - March	2005 Jan - March	2006 Jan - March	2005 Jan - March	2006 Jan - March	2005 Jan - March
Murder	16	12	16	10	100	83
Armed Robbery	162	170	35	24	22	14
Robbery	48	58	8	5	17	9
Stolen Vehicle	245	224	10	37	4	17
Stealing	302	349	14	26	5	7
Stealing from Vehicle	257	289	5	17	2	6
Housebreaking	791	485	36	59	5	12
Total	1821	1587	124	178	7	11

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any partnership affecting the youth must be the youth themselves.

Many programmes have met with limited success precisely because they failed to recognize that the individuals to whom the initiative is directed must become key stakeholders; there must be direct dialogue/involvement/consultation with such persons, or there is no buy-in.

Alternatives to the problems outlined above must lie in a strategic partnership between government, church, social and private organisations as well as the wider community to target the root causes of crime and dysfunction in young people through joint initiatives and programmes.

Research concludes that there is a correlation between current crime trends among youths and the following: poverty; truancy; lack of positive activities; unemployment; social marginalisation and inequality; the illegal drug trade; corruption; the trafficking of firearms; and the ineffectiveness of existing criminal justice systems in providing rehabilitative options for young people.

A number of partnerships, youth enrichment programmes and urban renewal programmes have been undertaken in different countries. They seek to achieve a more concentrated approach directed towards reducing criminal and gang activities and anti-social behaviour in schools, while creating a safer home and community environment to nurture the youth in order that they may become productive citizens.

Two such initiatives undertaken in The Bahamas work at creating safe environments for young people to flourish both at home and away from home. The first of these initiatives is the Urban Renewal Programme, which seeks to root out criminal activity and anti-social behaviour at the source (the community) and provide a safe, crime-free environment for young people where they can relax and allow their creative nature to be

expressed. The second is the School Policing Initiative, which addresses the growing problem of violence within the school system.

The Urban Renewal Programme (URP)

In May 2002, the Progressive Liberal Party became the Government of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas. An immediate concern was to address social ills affecting the wider society, particularly in the 'black belt', over-the-hill areas. Accordingly, Prime Minister the Honourable Perry Gladstone Christie, initiated an urban renewal scheme in the Farm Road Constituency. Given the overwhelming success of the scheme, the Government is now duplicating it in other over-the-hill areas.

To date, there is a renewed sense of loyalty and community spirit as social standards have improved. The communities have experienced reductions in crime, increased employment

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opportunities, improved housing and an environment that is becoming "clean, green and pristine".

The Urban Renewal Project (URP) has captured international attention and won top awards including: the Motorola Community Policing Award of the Association of Caribbean Commissioners of Police (ACCP); and the Community Policing Award of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP).

The purpose of the URP is to: reduce the levels of crime and the

fear of crime; improve the physical environment of communities; enhance housing provisions for residents; foster relations between government and non-government agencies and the community; and encourage residents to create, participate in and maintain activities that seek to shape and develop their communities, especially those relating to the young and the old in the community.

The overall objective is the development of improved systems of governance by delivering social services closer to the community. Two of the most powerful and successful undertakings in URP related to youth engagement are the Citizens on Patrol project and the revitalisation of youth marching bands.

Citizens on Patrol commenced in the Englerston Constituency in New Providence in 2004.

This area was plagued with criminal activity and disturbances by delinquent youths and repeat offenders. The Royal Bahamas Police Force faced a significant challenge in seeking to provide regular patrols in this area. The idea of enabling the residents to become key stakeholders in protecting their own neighbourhood was conceptualised to address this challenge.

In a pilot study, young men, many of whom were considered marginalised members in society, were given the opportunity to serve their community as 'district constables'. They received basic training in law enforcement and were placed on supervised patrols by urban renewal teams. This programme has met with resounding success.

The Citizens on Patrol has received widespread support. Due to the unyielding determination of these district constables, The Bahamas have seen a decline in the frequency of disturbances in the areas in which they patrol. This has enabled full-fledged mobile officers to deal with matters in other areas, leading to significant seizures in

firearms, dangerous drugs and stolen property.

The Citizens on Patrol constables have uncovered matters and addressed concerns in such a professional manner that the initiative has been copied in other areas; they have become the

"Although data on drug use is scanty, anecdotal evidence suggests a widespread social acceptance of alcohol and marijuana in some Caribbean countries, among both in-school and out-of-school youth.:

'eyes and ears' of the community and nothing occurs within their borders without their knowledge. This initiative provides an excellent example of empowering youths and enabling them to take responsibility for the communities in which they live.

URP also takes great pride in pioneering community marching bands. Many doubted whether it would be possible to take young persons who were challenged in their lives or who had never played a musical instrument and form successful bands. URP has been able to take all the energies and talents of young persons and produce successful musical showcases. Today, all the bands are in demand to play at various events.

The Farm Road Marching Band is an excellent example of this success. For the first time in Bahamian history, a marching band has gone on an international tour. It was indeed an achievement; many of the underprivileged youths had never travelled outside the boundaries of their constituency. Equally importantly, the Parents Association, which was formed to act as trustee of the band and their very own children, travelled with the Band and saw to their needs. Through this association, parents have raised funds, provided instruments and other essentials

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and once again have become actively and meaningfully involved in the lives of their children.

These are only two of many successful undertakings by young people through URP who, once given the opportunity, direction and support can become productive and active citizens.

The School Policy Initiative

A special School Based Policing (SBP) unit was established in 2005 “to foster a partnership between all of the legal, social and educational entities involved in fostering a safe and crime free environment in the school system.”

The underlying premise of SBP is that making schools safer requires a comprehensive strategy that includes the following elements: opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to maintain a school environment in which conflict and differences can be addressed in a manner characterised by respect and civility; intervention and supports for those who are at risk of, or already engaged in, violent or antisocial behaviour contrary to Ministry of Education standards and in violation of the laws of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas; a proactive approach in identifying and preventing where possible random or planned acts of violence in our schools; and an effective response to incidents when they occur – one that respects the rights of victims and witnesses, as well as those of the alleged perpetrators in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth.

Schools are supposed to be a safe place to grow and learn, so the effective partnership between education, government, private and law enforcement authorities in the form of a school-based policing initiative ensures that all areas of development necessary for young people to function, learn and grow, work together with one common goal: ensuring

that schools are safe and focused on education. In addition to focusing on reducing criminal behaviour in youth, SBP is focused on identifying at-risk youths who may themselves be the victims of violence, abuse (physical and mental) and criminal/anti-social behaviour, then providing the necessary counselling to help them rise above the status of victim in their own homes and/or communities.

Church/Community Participation

A number of organisations (education and church-based) have focused on educating the youth to be able to resolve conflict in non-violent manners. They provide lectures, retreats and reference materials for school guidance counsellors and for individuals who may wish to learn to take the high road in matters of conflict. Several highly successful community outreach programmes are noted below.

Youth Alive Ministries, in association with Youth Against Violence

These are two working church ministries which are comprised of former troubled teens and gang members who now work with troubled and at-risk youths to empower and provide them with other options to criminal and anti-social activities. They provide: youth campaigns such as *Peace on the Streets* and *Extreme Leadership*, and workshops using drama, music and a variety of artistic avenues as a means of providing alternatives for today's youth; professional youth workshops and seminars on topics such as extreme leadership, sex and dating, conflict resolution, parents and teens, and strategies for saving the next generation, which are geared towards teens, parents, youth workers, pastors and young adults. These events involve drama, music and multimedia presentations; two television programmes, *talk 2 me*

and *Effective Youth* hosted by young people and directed at young people; outreach programmes at schools, parks, streets, malls and in other countries; A call-in radio show called *The Ruffneck Myxx*, which offers positive advice and a listening ear to young persons.

Youth Empowerment and Skills Training (YEAST) Programme

Another model of rehabilitative empowerment that can be easily modelled from country to country is the Youth Empowerment And Skills Training (YEAST) Programme, which has been introduced into the Commonwealth of The Bahamas by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese.

YEAST focuses on young men between the ages of 17 and 25 years, providing them with skills and training to either advance in the job market or to become entrepreneurs. The precept of the programme is that if young men are given tangible skills (masonry, carpentry, plumbing, etc) to earn a living,

“In order to stem the rising tide of criminal activities among young people, many countries may need to take a two-pronged approach by establishing urban renewal programmes and national youth programmes.”

along with discipline, encouragement and basic educational skills, they will be empowered to reach their potential and contribute to their communities.

In the past, youth partnerships within a number of organisations have proven successful in engaging young people in

activities which keep them focused on helping themselves while helping others. Organisation such as Kiwanis, Lion's Club, Rotary, Toastmasters and the JayCees have provided young people with social and practical skills, leadership and parliamentary training, empowering them to speak and act knowledgeably on matters concerning their country, world affairs and the needs and concerns of youth.

In some countries however, many of these organisations have been challenged due to lack of support (financial and public) and the many lessons they provided for young people have been curbed. By developing strategic partnerships with private and governmental agencies, such organisations will be able to make a difference in the lives of young people.

There are also many initiatives that concentrate on young people with specific skills or who excel in some way, whether in the arts, sports or in school. While this must be encouraged, this group represents a small percentage of young persons and the average achiever is left by the wayside. There are no Hollywood movies, television shows or news articles written about the average girl who helps her mother prepare her siblings for school, maintains a 'C' average, stays out of trouble and goes on to become a clerk. Likewise, there is no special media attention given to the young man who keeps the house and family together while his mother struggles in the absence of a father to provide for her family. These young people go about their everyday lives unnoticed, and in many cases underappreciated. The attention they crave is often given by gang members who satisfy their need to belong. In order to stem the rising tide of criminal activities among young people, many countries may need to take a two-pronged approach by establishing urban renewal programmes and national youth programmes.

Young people do not operate in a vacuum, but are nurtured by three separate, yet equally

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important environments daily (home, the community and school) so it would be useful to develop projects that help families and communities to supplement school-based programmes.

Urban renewal programmes

Urban renewal programmes provide a multi-pronged approach towards changing the environment in the school and at home while focusing on young people, not only as individuals, but also as part of the wider community. Urban renewal can revolutionise the face of policing in a country. It makes “the members of the community 'partners' with the law enforcement agencies, and allows them to 'police' the community by consent. This type of partnership increases the ability of government agencies to take services into the heart of desolate, crime-infested areas and transform them into communities”.

“Research concludes that there is a correlation between current crime trends among youths and the following: poverty; truancy; lack of positive activities; unemployment; social marginalisation and inequality; the illegal drug trade; corruption; the trafficking of firearms; and the ineffectiveness of existing criminal justice systems in providing rehabilitative options for young people.”

Urban renewal takes a simplistic approach; it fosters a relationship between the community and the police and creates a bond of trust between officers assigned to areas targeted for urban renewal and the

residents of these areas. This bond removes some of the suspicion which can exist when strangers enter a community and allows young people to develop a relationship of respect and trust with the officers. This relationship can be the difference which makes a young person reject anti-social behaviour or become involved in criminal activities.

Further, “in poor communities, the more successful persons may migrate to higher status neighbourhoods, thereby depriving the young people in these neighbourhoods of conventional models of success and of authority figures.” One of the goals of any successful urban renewal programme should be to provide mentoring or partnering with individuals who have been a part of the community and may have moved away as a result of their success. These individuals can serve as tangible role models for young people in these communities through this type of partnership.

Partnerships between various government agencies and social partners can reduce or eliminate the bureaucracy and red tape which may ordinarily exist between various agencies and can bring immediate relief in the areas of: poor and inadequate housing; no bathroom facilities; unsanitary conditions; overcrowding; unemployment; lack of positive activities for the young and old; truancy; environmental and social decay; crime.

In addition to the cosmetic or physical changes in the community, there must be changes made in the activities and opportunities offered to youths in these areas. Educational and cultural programmes which focus on learning who we are as a people, and teaching young people the traditions and culture of our respective nations will go a long way to keeping young people involved in positive activities and away from destructive behaviours.

A tradition which has all but died out in many Caribbean nations is that of storytelling. It is through this community activity

that many legends and tales were handed down from generation to generation. It is this self-same tradition which made communities the 'village' to raise the child. The involvement of elders from the community is of vital importance in the role of urban renewal, as they carry the foundation and memory of the community within them.

National youth programmes

Secondly, a structured and well-defined national youth programme will provide positive activities, education and training for young people, those at risk and those who may not be so considered. It can be used as a catalyst to involve young people in their own affairs, and give them a voice in deciding which direction their future will take. The programme should train young adults for positions of authority and directorship within the NYP itself, and let it be a model of youth moulding youth for leadership roles in the organisation and in society.

A Caribbean Youth Explosion was held in Grenada in 2000 and aimed to help young people explore issues pertaining to the implementation of regional and international agreements and integrating them into the youth empowerment agenda. The Youth Explosion incorporated a Youth Assembly of Caribbean Community Parliamentarians,

and was a joint initiative of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretariat, the Commonwealth Youth Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The resolution related to

“One of the goals of any successful urban renewal programme should be to provide mentoring or partnering with individuals who have been a part of the community and may have moved away as a result of their success.”

empowerment that was passed during the conference can be found in Appendix B and provides a framework for co-operation and enhanced regional integration.

This is an essential tool if Commonwealth countries are to have the kind of continuous longlasting impact to stem the incidence of crime among the youths. It is certainly a giant step in the right direction in the best interest of all nations.

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Contributions to e-journal

We welcome contributions from youth work professionals, planners, students, graduates youth activists, organisations, and other stakeholders.

Submissions can be made to cypcc@cypcaribbean.org or to Mr Robert Bazil, our Information Officer at rbazil@cypcaribbean.org

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MATTERS COMMITTED TO SUPREME COURT – 2005	
MURDER	
AGE	OFFENCE
18 years	Murder
21 years	Murder
21 years	Murder
22 years	Murder
33 years	Murder
21 years	Murder
30 years	Murder
28 years	Murder
28 years	Murder
28 years	Murder, Armed Robbery
20 years	Manslaughter
30 years	Manslaughter
31 years	Murder
35 years	Murder

Appendix A Crime Statistics – The Bahamas

PERSONS CHARGED – ALL BAHAMAS						
Category	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total
Murder	44	33	68	56	53	254
Armed Robbery	136	102	189	116	132	675
Rape	58	77	157	51	92	435
Unlawful Sex	116	66	86	47	141	456
Burglary	18	20	28	27	32	125
House/Shop breaking	245	224	378	299	426	1572
Malicious Damage	257	288	387	280	225	1437
Possession of Unlicensed Firearm	88	122	238	134	195	777
Drug Offences	1118	725	1431	1193	N/A	4467

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ARMED ROBBERY	
AGE	OFFENCE
16 years	Burglary
20 years	Armed Robbery(6 counts)
22 years	Possession Of Firearm
23 years	Receiving
26 years	
18 years	Armed Robbery
20 years	(7 counts)
29 years	Receiving
18 years	Armed Robbery (2 counts) Rape (2 counts) Forcible Detention
20 years	Conspiracy to commit Armed Robbery, Armed Robbery,
26 years	Kidnapping, Possession of Firearm, Making a false Report.
26 years	
32 years	
45 years	

SEXUAL OFFENCES	
AGE	OFFENCE
18 years	Unlawful Sex
18 years	Unlawful Sex
18 years	Unlawful Sex
19 years	Rape
23 years	
21 years	Unlawful Sex
22 years	Unlawful Sex
23 years	Unlawful Sex
24 years	Unlawful Sex
25 years	Incest
27 years	Rape, Detention
29 years	Unlawful Sex
31 years	Rape, Forcible Detention
34 years	Burglary, Indecent Assault
37 years	Incest
43 years	Unlawful Sex
44 years	Unlawful Sex
47 years	Unlawful Sex

Resolution 1: Empowerment

WHEREAS young people in Caribbean countries are not receiving information on policies and decisions agreed to at international fora in a timely manner;

AND WHEREAS governments are not accelerating and disseminating information and training to empower young people on structures and systems present nationally and regionally;

AND WHEREAS young people are not involved in the implementation of decision-making processes of policies, structures and systems;

AND WHEREAS existing structures need to be enhanced and strengthened so as to provide true and proper representation for youth throughout the region ensuring a united voice and equal opportunity for all.

BE IT RESOLVED that we the youth of the Caribbean Youth Explosion 2000 urge regional governments to proceed without delay in promoting and establishing simplified and transparent structures and implementing the dissemination of information for the achievement of youth empowerment.

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“The attention they crave is often given by gang members who satisfy their need to belong. In order to stem the rising tide of criminal activities among young people, many countries may need to take a two-pronged approach by establishing urban renewal programmes and national youth programmes.”

National Youth Councils

By Armstrong Alexis

Presented at CYMM 2006



Armstrong Alexis is a former Regional Director of the Commonwealth Youth Programme Caribbean Centre.

Throughout the Commonwealth and the rest of the world, National Youth Councils are considered to be at a significant crossroads. The relationship between young people and their self-governing institutions and the responsibility of governments to provide support, avenues and opportunities for effective youth development have often blurred the boundaries of responsibility and ownership of those councils.

National Youth Councils (NYCs) in the Commonwealth currently reflect a multiple variation of structures, operating procedures and accountability protocols. On one hand, there are NYCs that have been established by young people to address their needs and to serve as a forum for advocating their perspectives on national development issues. These youth councils, while working collaboratively with governments, are self-governing, autonomous and independent of government. On the other hand, there are NYCs that have been established by governments to implement their public intervention programmes and official mandates. The Singapore NYC, established by the

government and chaired by the Minister of Community Development, Youth and Sports is an example of the latter, while the British Youth Council, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) established by young people to serve the needs and interest of young citizens, is an example of the former.

Such diverse situations have led the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) to review the structure of existing Commonwealth NYCs and to propose a blueprint for the future establishment of NYCs in Commonwealth member states.

Despite general consensus that National Youth Councils are necessary for youth advancement, there is no agreement on whether NYCs should be established by governments or should be self-governing, autonomous bodies. This paper argues that National Youth Councils are important for the advancement of the youth sector, and should be youth-led, self-governing and autonomous. The paper argues that if governments create an enabling environment for young people to establish, manage and determine the agenda of NYCs, a platform for true stakeholder participation will be set and young people will accept responsibility as self-determined partners.

NYCs are presented as agencies that help young people to identify, match and meet their needs with the offerings of government and other service providers. Whether economic, social, political, cultural or environmental, national development can only be achieved if there is a focus on the most dominant group of the population, which will ultimately become the major agents and benefactors of national development. Their commitment to promoting development must be nurtured and governments should encourage self-determined

NYCs to create their own space for empowerment and engagement in the development process.

The paper explores the existence and functioning of councils in Commonwealth member countries. It is hoped that a debate will ensue that will reach consensus on the most appropriate model and framework for National Youth Councils. Implementation and adaptation of the model will most certainly reflect the individual circumstances of each member country, but it is important to have a common platform that will help shape international and national public sector intervention on this all-important issue, which holds the key to engaging young people on matters of youth participation in decision-making. It is further hoped that National Youth Councils will receive greater focus and attention as efforts to find innovative means of engaging young people are placed at the centre of our development paradigm.

Young people and the independence of national councils

One of the fundamental arguments for establishing NYCs is empowerment. Young people are often seen as lacking the necessary experience, social networks, contacts and skills to play a part in their own development. As such, governments frequently deal with them as beneficiaries and think that all their needs can be met by dealing with what the state determines to be their most urgent need. This old paradigm is based on the assumption that a caring government will establish mechanisms and structures to provide and deliver services to needy groups.

The new paradigm of

empowerment encourages young people to own the process of development. The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) recognises the need for young people to become owners of the new development paradigm, stating that *“empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others.”*

A National Youth Council should therefore have as its primary aim, the empowerment of young people to participate actively in shaping their societies. In order to engender strong stakeholder participation in youth development, young people must themselves show the willingness, interest, desire and ability to carve out their own roles and spaces. Governments should create the enabling environment that would allow young people to foster their own leadership capacities by ensuring that their representative structures are membership-based, that they emphasise strong and autonomous stakeholder involvement and that these structures allow youth leaders to advocate on behalf of their peers. While government should provide the enabling environment, it should not seek to establish and control these councils.

In keeping with the views expressed by the young people in the European Youth Forum, the character of independent and effective National Youth Councils is embodied in the following rights and privileges:

- the right to choose their own representative organisational structure, and decide upon their own statutes;
- the right to elect their own leadership and representatives through

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democratic procedures;

- the right to determine composition of statutory bodies and working structures;

- the right to take decisions on issues of membership;

- the right to select working methods, including the right to have closed meetings for their members only, to set their own agenda;

- the privilege of accountability only to their own members; and

- the privilege of financial support from government given freely without infringing upon the rights mentioned above.

Over the past decade and a half, young people have been calling for greater involvement in decision-making on issues of concern. Their call for a shift away from the welfare approach to youth development must be matched with a resolve to present a common approach for self-determination, and to take advantage of the opportunities that are available to them. More importantly, they must create their own opportunities, develop an understanding of the key youth development issues and maximise their advocacy and lobbying skills.

Government-established and -run NYCs have access to resources and may be delivering much needed interventions that benefit young people, but the elements of self-determination, autonomous representation and stakeholder group advocacy are largely de-emphasised and in some cases neglected. National Youth Councils must also serve as significant youth structures for the expression of youth views and for transmitting the desires of youth directly to the decision-makers. In some Commonwealth member countries, where the NYCs are established by young people who are determined to participate as equal partners, these councils create opportunities for youth to participate and get involved in decision-making and their officers are elected by popular vote of young people. These councils are autonomous

organisations serving as a communications channel between youth, the private sector and the State to design policies, programmes, and projects of interest to youth.

National Youth Councils have a relatively long history across the Commonwealth. As far back as the 1950s, the establishment of NYCs was seen as an approach that would create avenues for young people to address youth issues and issues of national development from the youth perspective. The councils were guided strictly by youth and were often in stark opposition to governments and any other agencies that wanted to maintain a

"In the Caribbean, few of the National Youth Councils of the 1980s were affiliated to the partisan political structures of their countries."

paternalistic, unequal relationship with youth.

Although youth interest in establishing National Youth Councils reached its peak in the 1980s, young people's advocacy in the 1960s and 1970s had significant outcomes on the political ferment that was emerging across the Commonwealth. The achievement of political independence from Britain gave young citizens from former colonies the opportunity to rally together and to lobby governments to put youth issues on the national agenda.

Young activists were sufficiently sensitised to the political and developmental issues that guided public opinion and policy at the time. They thought it their responsibility to posit youth views on current issues and national youth leaders

emerged, not because they were provided with opportunities but because they created opportunities to voice their concerns.

In the Caribbean, few of the National Youth Councils of the 1980s were affiliated to the partisan political structures of their countries. The forthrightness of their leaders often placed them in stark opposition to the political status quo. However, their vision, articulate positions and charismatic personalities made them potential targets for recruitment into political parties, which co-opted many to the detriment of the youth movement.

National Youth Councils are youth structures established by youth to serve the interest of youth. They ought not to be the youth voice of any established structure working with youth. It cannot be emphasised enough that while NYCs must develop collaborative working relationships with all parties interested in youth development, they must maintain their independence and autonomy. Through an NYC, agencies and structures working with youth should receive the perspective of youth. They should not dictate to but rather should be dictated by the NYCs. Young people must maintain that level of autonomy and independence in order to ensure that youth priorities remain at the forefront of the development agenda. Young people must show the resolve to place on the development agenda, the concerns of their peers. The Commonwealth has several examples of National Youth Councils that are government-led and that do not enjoy the embrace of the young people themselves. It is of course possible for the agenda of government to be in harmony with the priority needs of the young people, but every effort must be made to ensure that the Council, instead of representing governments' vision to the young people, should be representing young people's vision to the government.

It is only through the constant articulation of youth issues that the development of Commonwealth countries can be

secured and if the young people do not participate in that process, there will be no guarantee that the objective of human-centred, youth-focused development can be achieved.

Why a National Youth Council?

A study of National Youth Councils across the Commonwealth indicates that these councils have a set of common objectives. One underlying feature of all the aims and objectives outlined by the various NYCs is the need to advocate on behalf of and provide a voice to young people. The British Youth Council, for instance, has as its aims to:

- provide a voice for young people;

- promote equality for young people;

- help young people be more involved in decisions that affect their lives; and

- advance young people's participation in society and civic life.

The councils state clearly that this can only be achieved if young people are allowed to operate independently for their own welfare and benefit.

In the case of The Gambia, the NYC is founded on the following objectives:

- to facilitate youth empowerment for active participation in national development;

- to support and encourage active youth participation in the process of development of policies and programmes;

- to facilitate the socio-economic and cultural development of youths in the country; and

- to facilitate youth networking and exchanges at national and international levels.

As agencies formed by citizens based on a non-governmental approach, National Youth Councils can and should address social, political, environmental, economic and humanitarian questions and provide answers and services

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related to these issues in manners public agencies and government departments may not feel compelled, comfortable or even competent to use. There is a strong sense of commitment to community and sector that they represent. They are free of all pressures to conform to the dictates of big interests and government. On the other hand, if formed by the government, NYCs will be constrained in their advocacy, capable only to pronounce on issues relevant to government and in a manner acceptable to the government.

NYCs must advance the cause of youth. They must contribute to the society and have as their strength a resolute membership that is anxious to participate in the shaping of our democracy and decision-making processes and in the promotion of the values of peace, equality and civic responsibility. By ensuring that an NYC is a bottom-up organisation, opportunities are created for young people to be empowered and to understand their role in society. One fundamental lesson is the need to be proactive by first understanding the challenges that confront youth, rallying together to respond to these challenges, designing appropriate mechanisms to channel youth concerns, managing the process of advocacy effectively, and assessing the impact of youth involvement in decision-making. The skills learnt in this process are transferable and will serve any young person well in his/her future endeavours.

NYC structures

The evidence from across the Commonwealth suggests that NYCs have evolved in numerous ways. Despite the differences, there are a number of factors that must be taken into consideration when setting up a NYC. The structures must be democratic and representative of youth organisations in the respective country. In many cases across the Commonwealth, and particularly in cases where the NYCs are

autonomous of governments, the structures reflect the membership configuration. It is important in designing structures that the membership, whether it is individual young people or youth organisations, must have access to all the operations of the Council. In order for the Council to be representative of its members, it must bring together local, community and regional youth organisations. In serving as an umbrella organisation, the NYC provides young people with one voice and facilitates cohesive planning and execution of streamlined programmes.

Given the realities of National Youth Councils across the Commonwealth, and the peculiarities of each Commonwealth member country and region, it is impossible to propose a single model that can be applied across the Commonwealth. Nevertheless, a framework that will democratise the NYCs and allow youth participation to remain central to the structure and operations of the Council is being proposed. This framework emphasises the establishment and strengthening of youth organisations at the community level, district groupings of community youth organisations and a national structure that comprises all the district groupings.

Figure 1 is an organogram of the proposed framework, which can be adjusted to suite local specificities. It proposes that youth organisations be established within districts and in cases where they already exist, be strengthened to facilitate youth participation at the grassroots level. These youth organisations can then form themselves into district councils that will represent the young people associated with organisations at the organisation level within communities. The district councils are brought together to form the general council of the NYC and through agreed-upon statutory meetings such as annual general meetings, biennial conferences/meetings and general assemblies, national executives are elected by the membership. Such a democratic

framework and mode of operation has been endorsed by many NYCs. In 2001, the European Youth Forum adopted a policy paper which advocates for just such a democratic and representative structure of NYCs that would allow young people to play an important role in a democratic society.

The strength of the membership of NYCs is of critical importance for the effectiveness and success of the NYC. Often, emphasis is placed on the national structure (like the national executive), but little attention is given to the membership. Any attempt to make an NYC relevant to the times and perform effectively must pay attention to the base structure of youth organisations, since the national body's effectiveness is always a reflection of the strengths or weaknesses of the membership.

demonstrated the benefits of promoting the principles of open and democratic society. NYCs that reflect an NGO philosophy will contribute to increased levels of participation among the youth.

In the first stage when 'relief work' underpinned the NGO philosophy, young people were at the forefront of efforts to assist in the post-war reconstruction of nations. Leading agencies of that era were largely Christian missionaries that attracted young people, and youth wings of significant influence were created. During the second stage, the philosophy changed to sustained development work through 'self-help groups' that provided services at the field level. Here too, young people in developed countries engaged counterparts in developing countries to rebuild communities and to spearhead interventions



NGO approach that guides youth participation

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have a long history of co-operating with governments on various aspects of development. Thomas and Thomas (1998) present four stages of NGO evolution that places popular participation at the centre of development. These stages have seen young people playing a major role and have

such as housing, water supply and community renewal. The 1980s saw a third wave in NGO philosophy where 'advocacy' became the major philosophy. Existing large institutions in developing countries were influenced to develop strategies that favoured the poor. Activities of international agencies such as the WHO and UNDP implemented through the governments of the developing countries are examples of this philosophy. During this period, young people were able to form groups that influenced the work

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and function of these agencies. General Council Comprising District Councils District Council 1 youth organisations District Council 2 comprising youth organisations District Council 3 comprising youth organisations Youth organisations at the community level Youth organisations at the community level Youth organisations at the community level Since the 1990s, the NGO philosophy has focused on 'people-centred-development'. As part of this philosophy, autonomous self-help groups with well-defined goals were encouraged to take up development themselves, based on their perceived needs. NGOs acted only as external catalysts and facilitators in this process.

Youth NGOs also received tremendous attention during this period, as the outcomes of the mid 1980s focus on youth by the United Nations spurred many young leaders into action. The guiding philosophy of the youth movement then was that youth comprised a marginalised group which needs to advance its own concerns in response to its increasing needs. Across the Commonwealth, National Youth Councils were being formed and support from the international community made it possible for these NYCs to design their own programmes and intervention priorities outside of what was being offered by the government. Youth NGOs that operate from the perspective of self-determination are therefore a successful model for engaging the youth population and tapping the vast potential of the most vibrant sector of the productive population.

The role of government

Governments must facilitate youth development by setting the environment in which youth participation is harnessed and encouraged. The United Nations' Declaration of 1985 as International Youth Year gave countries a clear mandate to create programmes directed at

promoting youth development. Ever since this international focus, many Commonwealth countries have established youth departments and ministries, thereby increasing public sector interventions on youth involvement. In India for instance, the creation of the Department of Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Human Resource Development was clear recognition that young people needed special attention because of their potential and actual role in the progress and development of the country.

Throughout the Commonwealth, member governments have embarked on public sector programmes for youth development. Many youth affairs ministries have developed significant interventions to facilitate the advancement of young people. Government's role vis-a-vis that of young people should be to seek to establish sound and appropriate policies, design programmes that reflect the national agenda, establish effective delivery mechanisms for the implementation of public sector programmes and develop and encourage partnerships to monitor and assess the relevance of the programmes which it designs and implements.

Many Commonwealth countries have received support from CYP to formulate and adopt national youth policies. These policies set the stage for comprehensive youth development within the context of national development. Governments have also taken the lead in formulating education and employment policies that benefit the youth sector.

Many innovative youth programmes have been implemented across Commonwealth countries. Some of these have their roots in the post-war period. Traditional programmes such as the Cadet Corps, Scouts and Guides and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards Programme have served to engage young people across the Commonwealth in positive behaviour and in many countries, variations of the national youth

service concept also exist. Commonwealth Youth Ministers have endorsed the Commonwealth Youth Credit Initiative as a programmatic

Many Commonwealth countries have received support from CYP to formulate and adopt national youth policies. These policies set the stage for comprehensive youth development within the context of national development.

intervention to provide young people with access to income-generating opportunities. All these are useful government interventions, to which governments allocate significant financial, technical and human resources that serve young people well.

Governments also have the responsibility to establish public sector-led agencies and institutions to formulate and implement its policies and programmes. In Jamaica for instance, the government has established the National Centre for Youth Development. This agency serves essentially as a policy unit that conducts assessments of the status of youth development in the country. The agency in no way conflicts with the roles and responsibilities of a National Youth Council, which can make use of the assessments of the status of youth prepared by that technical wing of the government.

In India, the government has been running a very successful programme under the auspices of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS). The NYKS is an autonomous body of the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports and is one of the largest

grassroots level organisations in the world, working with almost eight million out-of-school youth affiliated to youth clubs across the country. Its mission, programmatic interventions and purpose is determined by the government and it reports to the government. As successful as that intervention is, it cannot perform the same kind of role as an NYC.

There must be a distinction between public sector responses to youth development and the role of young people as partners in advancing the cause of youth. Governments must continue to seek relevant programmatic interventions, but these must be counterbalanced by other activities determined by young people to be of value and relevance.

Youth mainstreaming

Youth mainstreaming is an approach for advancing national development by focusing primarily on youth development. The concept goes beyond the general philosophy of caring for the young; it presents national development as an objective, which, if it is to be achieved, must address the needs, aspirations, concerns and desires of the most dominant sector of the population. Social policy and development should be targeted at specific population groups that have been traditionally neglected and/or discriminated against, but that are significant sectors of the population. It therefore argues that by addressing the employment, economic, health, housing and life needs of youth, the foundation will be laid for addressing the development needs of the society as a whole. Within this scheme, young people should organise themselves in a manner that allows them to define a stakeholder responsibility, advocate on behalf of their peers, hone their leadership skills and represent their members in various arenas.

The flip side of mainstreaming is marginalisation. In many countries, young people are kept on the periphery of the major

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economic, social, political and other decision making structures of society. Although there is growing recognition that by integrating them, the society is able to generate a broad range of social and economic benefits which otherwise would have been unattainable, there is still very little opportunity for meaningful involvement of young people in development. The International Labour Organisation asserts that 'whereas the full participation of youth in the life of the nation is important for the achievement of social justice and the attainment of objectives of national development, it has become increasingly evident that far too many young people have been left at the margin of society.'

Commonwealth countries must therefore adopt policies and programmes that help guarantee young people's successful transition into adulthood and integration into national development processes, since no significant national development can take place without them.

Conclusion

Through self-determined and autonomous NYCs, young people can advocate for meaningful mainstreaming efforts. They can provide governments with the reality check necessary to ensure that government programmes and interventions are relevant and in tune with youth needs.

National Youth Councils should be youth-led, autonomous and self-governing. Care must be taken, however, not to underestimate the role that governments can play in supporting the efforts of young people in establishing NYCs. The need for sound leadership qualities to be harnessed within youth bodies like NYCs is essential for the sustained growth and development of young Commonwealth citizens. Given the critical role that young people are being called upon to play in national development, it can only be to everyone's advantage to

allow them create their own institutions and run them without undue influence from government.

Governments, on the other hand, must recognise that given the current scenario of limited resources, high youth mobility and increasing distractions, young people more than ever require both policy and programmatic interventions that will build their capacities to identify and address their own needs. Commonwealth governments must urgently prioritise public-private partnerships as a means of reaching consensus on – and bolstering resources for – the priority issues for development. Such partnerships can serve as an apprenticeship period for youth leaders who may in the future be called upon to take leadership roles within government and in the private sector.

The structure to be adopted for an effective and functional National Youth Council must reflect the current status of the youth movement in Commonwealth member country. It must as well, reflect the future intentions of young people as they seek to advance their own cause. That notwithstanding, the framework proposed in this paper can serve to guide young people and youth activists who wish to establish councils in their respective countries. One main criterion for the establishment of an NYC is that it should give voice to the average young person in a community through a local level youth organisation. A functioning NYC will ensure that its ties with its member organisations at the community level allow every young person equal opportunity to influence decision-making and to access the services of the organisation.

Finally, as we reflect on the role that governments should play in supporting young people to contribute to national development, we must recognise that the roles of government and of the young people are different even if they share common goals. Government will not always be in harmony with the youth movement and vice versa. With

young people receiving the support of government to find and occupy their own space in the development arena and with strong independent youth leadership, the Commonwealth stands to deepen democracy even further across its member states.

All our countries will benefit from involving young people and young people themselves will feel a greater sense of inclusion if they have equal rights and responsibilities. Youth ministries seeking to engage young people in ways that allow them to fully

embrace and assess government interventions must recognise that the young people require structures that are void of governmental influence to shape proper responses to these interventions. Autonomous, self-governing National Youth Councils afford young people and governments the opportunity to collaborate as equal partners; it is important for governments to facilitate that collaboration, leaving young people free to shape these NYCs in the way that best suits their needs.

Draft OUTLINE OF A MODEL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY(YDA) TOWARDS A STRATEGIC AND SUSTAINABLE APPROACH

THE BIG ISSUES

- IS THE TRADITIONAL CIVIL STRUCTURE CAPABLE OF RESPONDING TO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT NEEDS?
- OR SHOULD ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS BE CONSIDERED?
- WHAT CONSTITUTES THE BASIC OUTLINE OF A MODERN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY?

THE STRATEGY – A NEW APPROACH

- CIVIL STRUCTURE MAINTAIN RESPONSIBILITY FOR POLICY COORDINATION, MONITORING AND COMPLIANCE.
- EXECUTIVE AGENCY/NATIONAL YOUTH COMMISSION ESTABLISHED TO EXECUTE POLICY/STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

ARCHITECTURAL OUTLINE OF YDA

- POLICY AND ADMIN
- HRD/HRM
- FINANCE AND ACCOUNTING
- RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
- PROGRAMME DELIVERY
- SOCIAL MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS
- SUPPORT SERVICES

DEFINING THE ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

- A SYNOPSIS OF EACH UNIT'S RESPONSIBILITY.
- POLICY AND ADMIN
 - GOVERNANCE
 - MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP
 - POLICY FORMULATION
 - ACCOUNTABILITY
 - BENCHMARKING
 - GUIDANCE & DIRECTION
- HRD/HRM
 - STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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Youth Empowerment and the Commonwealth

By Tyson McKenzie



Tyson is The Bahamas' representative on the Regional Youth Caucus.

'Empowering young men and women so that they can realise their full potential as individuals; as members of communities, youth organizations, political and social action groups; and as key contributors to the well-being and sustainable development of societies and cultures in which they live and of the global community as a whole' – **The Commonwealth's Vision.**

According to the statistics by the Commonwealth Secretariat, one-third of the world's young people are living in Commonwealth countries. In addition, according to United Nations statistics, it estimates that persons below the age of thirty will form over 55 percent of the world's population by the end of the year 2005. Now the question in one's mind that may possibly be posed now is; 'What does this mean?' For those who may not know the answer to this question, it means that young persons are the most important resource for the sustainable development of the member nations of the Commonwealth.

Although many young people already play a vital role in the development of their communities and countries there is a compelling case for young people to assume an even more pivotal role in the sustainable development of their societies. To achieve this objective young people must be sufficiently empowered.

One may therefore ask, "What is Youth Empowerment?"

Youth empowerment is about creating the enabling social, political, spiritual and economic environment for young persons to participate as equal partners in the management and development of their countries. It is therefore a fundamental pillar for the growth of the Commonwealth and a strong belief that young persons, themselves are the best individuals to promoting their development, and they must be both engineers and mediators in meeting the challenges and solving the problems faced in today's world and in the new millennium.

Now that youth empowerment has been explained, how does this entangle or relate to the Commonwealth? It's simple; as stated earlier in the vision of the Commonwealth, the Commonwealth's aim is to empower young men and women so that they can realise their full potential as individuals. By doing this, the Commonwealth Secretariat has strategically set up the Commonwealth Youth Programme. The Commonwealth Youth Programme is an international development agency that is dedicated to empowering young persons in its member countries. The Commonwealth Youth Programme was endorsed by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in 1973, when young persons were seen as important for fruitful growth of this organization. Since then, CYP has evolved from being just a training and information programme for youth workers, to being one of the world's leading youth and development agencies. It is recognized that the Commonwealth is the only intergovernmental organization that has a programme strategically in place for specifically tackling the challenges of youth empowerment and development. CYP works in cooperation with member governments and NGOs

- PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
- PERSONNEL MATTERS
- GRIEVANCE HANDLING
- ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

- CONDUCT RESEARCH
- ANALYZE & PUBLISH RESEARCH FINDINGS
- DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMMES
- EVALUATION OF PROGRAMMES

FINANCE & ACCOUNTING

- PREPARATION OF BUDGET
- COMPREHENSIVE AUDIT OF PROGRAMMES/PROJECTS.
- PREPARE FINANCIAL REPORTS
- DEVELOP AND MANAGE ACCOUNTING SYSTEMS.

PROGRAMME DELIVERY

- COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION
- EXECUTION OF PROGRAMMES & PROJECTS.
- FIELD ACTIVITIES
- INTERACTION WITH YOUTH GROUPS
- PROVIDE FEEDBACK

SOCIAL MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS

- EXECUTE STRATEGIC MARKETING PLAN
- PROMOTE PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES
- PUBLISHING OF DOCUMENTS
- DEVELOP AND EXECUTE EDUCATION/P. AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS

SUPPORT SERVICES

- CLERICAL SERVICES
- TECHNICAL SERVICES
- DRIVERS

THE WAY FORWARD

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- CONDUCT A SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED STRATEGY versus EXISTING ARRANGEMENTS.
- PRESENT PROPOSAL TO GOVERNMENTS.
- CONDUCT PUBLIC EDUCATION/ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN

PARTNERS

- CYPCC
- CARICAD
- CARICOM
- REGIONAL MEDIA
- YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS
- PUBLIC SERVICE MINISTRIES

FOLLOW UP TASKS

- CIRCULATE DRAFT TO YOUTH DIRECTORS/MINISTRIES
- ENGAGE CARICAD TO REVIEW AND FURTHER DEVELOP RATIONALE/JUSTIFICATION
- CONVENE MEETING OF COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN YOUTH MINISTERS.

on policy development and implementation, and facilitates the exchange of information and experiences. With a Regional Centre in each of the four regions of the Commonwealth (Africa, Asia, Caribbean and South Pacific), along with a pan-Commonwealth Office at the Commonwealth Secretariat in Britain, the CYP is prepared to

maximise its potential to respond to the needs of young persons and their member countries.

"In our continuing search for sustainable democracy and development, we must equally turn to our youth. To them we hand the torch of hope; to them we turn for guarantee. We teach them our best and wait to see what they can achieve."