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EDITORIAL

On 27 May 2003 the first edition of *Commonwealth Youth and Development* was successfully launched as part of the official opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting in Gaborone, Botswana. In his brief speech, Prof Mandla Makhanya, Dean of Unisa's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, expressed his satisfaction at the relationship that has been forged between Unisa and the Commonwealth, and, more specifically, the Commonwealth Youth Programme. He explained:

We are proud of being a Commonwealth partner in presenting the Diploma for Youth in Development Work, because the Diploma and the rationale for its implementation reflect in so many ways our own commitment to forging partnerships with tertiary institutions, government and groupings within society.

Our involvement with the diploma also dovetails with our own commitment to building capacity and to transforming. We have achieved a great deal in terms of capacity building and transformation in our 130 years of existence, particularly after 1994 when we were able, for the first time, to start aligning ourselves truly, as one of the leading mega-universities, with the ideals and aims of our new democracy. We have made great strides in the past nine years as an institution, but there is still much to be done.

However, when Unisa talks about capacity building and transformation we are not concerned only with what is happening within Unisa. We are also deeply committed to playing a role in addressing some of the challenges that face South Africa, and the African continent as a whole with regard to open and distance learning. In the 2001 annual report our Principal and Vice Chancellor, Prof Barney Pityana, elaborated Unisa's vision in no uncertain terms: 'We seek to move beyond the traditional role of distance education as the last choice of people unable to obtain conventional contact education by pioneering distance education as the preferred choice of people requiring flexibility, guaranteed quality and



lifelong learning.' Clearly, this vision is shared by those who initiated the Commonwealth Diploma.

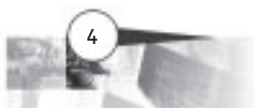
In conjunction with the Commonwealth, Unisa is committed to playing a significant role in producing learners who are transformative youth-in-development workers – people who will strive to empower Commonwealth youth to transform their communities.

The theme of the Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting was 'Youth: partners in the fight against poverty and HIV/Aids'. Because of the importance of the issues addressed at the meeting, we have included three of the key discussion papers, by Mokwena, Christian and Shah respectively, in this edition of *Commonwealth Youth and Development*. Issues raised in these discussion papers also feature in the articles by Maunders (a case study on the United States Youth Council and the way it was used to promote American beliefs about democracy and human rights), McIntyre (the deployment of youth in order to achieve social, economic and political goals), and Davidson and Haines (the use of experiential methodologies in HIV/Aids awareness programmes).

Linda Cornwell

Editor

September 2003



AFRICAN CHILDREN IN ARMED CONFLICT: bridging rights and reality

ANGELA MCINTYRE¹

ABSTRACT

Children's social, political and economic spaces are protected to some degree in every society and the ways in which the child-adult transition is managed are as diverse as culture itself. While the applicability of definitions of childhood under international legal frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been subject to question, there is little doubt that armed conflict undermines the familial and community stability that permits children safe space for growth, development and learning. In recent years civil wars in Africa have erased the boundaries between soldiers and civilians; a situation in which children have become the targets of atrocities that include forced recruitment, sexual violence, genocide, and other assaults clearly intended to jeopardise the continuity of communities. The phenomenon of child soldiers has simultaneously become prominent in the media. Underlying what have verged on graphic and even exploitive portrayals of children in the name of advocacy is a trend that began even before Africa's colonial liberation struggles – the systematic political and military mobilisation of children and youth for political change. Beyond the debate on whether children can be considered volunteers, given the social and economic pressures they face, and beyond the litany of violations of children's rights that drives child advocacy, young people hold political and military potential that has consistently been exploited by conflict stakeholders and ignored by conflict analysts. This article explores the nature of child and youth agency in conflict in an attempt to show that young people are not only victims of conflict, but actors and stakeholders who are overlooked to the detriment of our understanding of conflict.

Approaching children and youth

The myriad ways in which societies manage transitions from childhood to adulthood have been the subject of sociological, anthropological and psychological investigation. The growing child's quest for identity, the tension generated by a simultaneous need for independence and

belonging and the acquisition of status that accompanies adulthood are, in the absence of a universal definition of childhood, omnipresent.

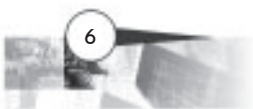
Blueprints for social continuity are informed by understandings of individual human development, from the individualistic to the collective, from the biological to the spiritual. Childhood is distinct from adulthood and the need to nurture children, by equipping them with knowledge, norms, behavioural conventions and skills, is recognisable in some form in every society.

Violent conflict influences every aspect of the socialisation of children according to former Mozambican First Lady Graça Machel's United Nations-sponsored work *The impact of war on children* (Machel 2001). Considered groundbreaking by policy workers and advocates, the book describes in detail the assault of war on the protected space of childhood and the effects on individual familial and social fragmentation, uncertainty, injury and loss of life and exploitation.

The significance of Machel's work lies in its examination of the impact of war on childhood rather than speculating on the impact that war will have on future adults or on the eventual political and social configurations that will be populated by today's children. It documents the experiences of children in war, within the framework of human rights provided by the almost universally ratified United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. With this perspective Machel invites us to begin seeing her subjects as people shaped by war experiences and by the physical, developmental and cultural realities of being children.

More importantly, the book reflects a milestone in efforts to 'mainstream' children's rights issues into the broader reading society. In the context of armed conflict, mainstreaming essentially refers to a process in which respecting children's rights becomes a regular feature in the workings of the UN Security Council, in United Nations peacekeeping, politics and policy, conflict prevention, resolution, peace building and humanitarian assistance.

Some of the most important advances in international child rights legislation since 1996 include the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (which prohibits the participation of children under the age of 18 in



armed conflict); the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement; the Convention on the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction; the International Labour Organisation Convention no 182 on the Immediate Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour; and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which makes the conscription or enlistment of children under the age of 15 into national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities punishable as a war crime. While this article will not analyse legal frameworks in any detail, it is worth calling attention to the comprehensiveness of international law and the international endorsement (if not practical implementation) much of it has received. To date, only the United States of America and Somalia have not ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2002).

More recently, the United Nations General Assembly conducted its first Special Session on Children (ten years after the entry into force of the Convention). On most accounts, the world has become, in a mere decade, a worse place to be a child (see www.unicef.org/specialsession/).

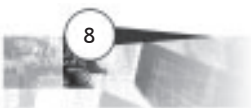
The moral and ethical underpinning of concern and legislation is that children suffer disproportionately in conflict and thereby become the vanquished (Cohn 2001:129); the dismantling of norms and values that would protect children amounts to something more than civilian deaths and collateral damage. This is all the more so when the lines between soldiers and civilians are blurred, and the village itself becomes the battlefield (Twum-Danso 2002). Indeed, the weapons and strategies of insurgency warfare seem aimed at the very heart of the family and community. Abductions, systematic rape, genocide, amputations and plunder seem not to form part of any coherent military or political strategy, but to prey on the social fabric itself, to raze all that is anthropogenic and ensure the discontinuity of entire peoples.

The notion of children themselves perpetrating atrocities has been met with incomprehension, outrage and hasty dismissals of responsibility. Children appear to be victims purely and simply: they are forced to fight, drugged, brainwashed, not mature enough to value human life, young enough to be untouched by the loss of the fruits of lifetimes of labour. A litany of rights violations defines the status of underage fighters. Child victims are most easily seen as by-products of clashes be-

tween conflict stakeholders, as happy, healthy, educated children are by-products of peaceful, functional and prosperous states. The stakeholderhood of children in conflict is consequently defined by whichever entity represents humanitarian interests and the upholding of human rights in the throes of armed conflict. These agencies include national and international non-governmental organisations, human rights monitoring groups and various United Nations agencies, who may or may not fall under the coordination of a national government focal point and who, often at their peril, engage with belligerent sub-state actors in this pursuit.

'Who acts on behalf of children in armed conflict?' This question remains only partially answered. Do capacity and commitment exist at international, state, community and family levels to guarantee the degrees of provision of basic rights and protection from violence prescribed by international law? The following discussion presupposes the answer to be negative, compelling us to momentarily extricate children from the 'victim' discourse and to explore the ways in which they become political and military actors. We must take into consideration that the environments in which children make decisions to fight and that the participation of children influences the very trajectories of warfare. Within child-rights discourse, the use of children as soldiers can categorically be called instrumentalisation (see Chabal & Daloz 2000). The collective agency of children, however, as a group that composes over half the population of sub-Saharan Africa, is more than the sum of its parts.

The question of whether demographics play a role in fuelling conflict will not be addressed here; rather I suggest that the child-adult transition may somehow lend itself to co-option by groups with varying degrees of (opportunistic) sensitivity to the developmental, economic and social needs of children. Peace-time 'generational conflict' is contained by social conventions, institutions, rites of passage and other socially accepted social fora where children challenge themselves and their elders in the quest for adulthood. The socialisation of young people can be seen as a project of containment; of harnessing youthful energy in the interest of perpetuating not only the family and community, but power structures as well. This project is hijacked in ways that range from



innovative and sensitive to wholly brutal, in the interests of agendas that range from politically coherent to apparently nihilistic. But first it is necessary to examine how children's stakeholderhood has thus far been defined.

The following discussion will, by necessity, disregard the international 18 years standard as the delimitation of childhood and situate the discussion within a framework that is assumed to be more universal: the transition from childhood to adulthood. I will therefore use the phrase 'children and youth' to describe the young people who contributed to the case studies. Some of the subjects were under 18, while others were recruited as children and demobilised as adults. All may be considered ex-child soldiers. It is also important to note that 'youth' has become an important social construct and identity in many contexts that does not adhere to any particular chronological age. The responsibilities and privileges that come with adulthood are unattainable by many young people, often for economic reasons, yet this vulnerability is not recognised in the (low, in this case) 18 standard of international law. Conversely, children under 18 often assume what could be called adult responsibilities owing to customs, pressures and constraints.

Advocacy and media: the dissociation of children from conflict analysis

The response of moral outrage over images of children in ill-fitting scraps of camouflage carrying assault rifles has been a double-edged sword. Machel (2001) draws attention to cases where 'in the effort to publicise a relief programme or organisation, or even to make a political point, ex-child soldiers have been asked to pose with guns'. Similarly, she points out that 'humanitarian organisations have been known to comply with requests from film-makers and journalists to talk to "younger girls" who have been raped or children with "more traumatic" stories'. She goes on to warn of the danger of distorting the reality of conflict situations through inaccurate representation of the involvement of children in conflict. Yet the existence of an estimated 300 000 child soldiers worldwide (a small number compared to the estimated millions of child civilians affected by war in Africa alone) has been the inspiration behind an international ban-campaign that culminated in the entry-into-force of

the Optional Protocol the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict in early 2002.

Advocacy campaigns have been effective in part because they have taken the discourse on child and youth involvement in conflict out of the political and military context and into one circumscribed by legal and moral concern. There have been criticisms of the Convention, however, on the grounds that it proposes a limited definition of childhood, one that may not be applicable to different cultural and historical contexts, and one that does not give space, for example, to the economic roles of children in the developing world. It is not the purpose of this article to explore this question, although one consequence of definitions and standards is that they alienate discussions of child agency from realities where the immediate feasibility of guaranteeing child rights may seem wholly unrealistic. The language of child protection, quite simply, does not permeate the discussions that take place in the war-room.

While war-affected children may be recognised as more than collateral damage, the guarantee of child rights is certainly perceived as a collateral benefit of future peace and stability, wherein strong, capable government administration provides education, adequate health care and social services, where economic stability and productivity enable proper nutrition and a strong civil society holds states accountable for the welfare of children.

The gains of child welfare agencies operating in conflict settings, by contrast, tend to be incremental and dictated by emergency prioritisation, limitations on infrastructure, concerns for physical security, the ability to engage with belligerents and perhaps most importantly, funding from outside. Indeed, there have been remarkable achievements on the part of humanitarian workers carrying with them the legal imperative of child protection; vaccination campaigns, basic education, the release of child abductees and family tracing and reunification have taken place in the most impossible of circumstances. Unicef, for example, has succeeded in negotiating 'days of tranquillity', brief periods of cease-fire during which emergency humanitarian activities are allowed to take place with relative guarantees of security. Direct negotiations with Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army and Sierra Leone's Revo-

lutionary United Front, in the total absence of any other humanitarian concern on the part of the belligerents, have resulted in limited releases of abducted children. These small victories have been viewed cynically by some as attempts by rebels to establish credibility or to create some form of proximity to 'legitimate' humanitarian agencies for the purpose of procuring essential supplies such as food and medicines. Either way, there is deep certainty of the moral leverage of children.

These battles-within-battles are fought by churches and charities rather than militaries, with the spoils of war constituting the wellbeing of children rather than control over territory, resources or populations. But children continue to act on their own behalves, within the parameters of humanitarians, belligerents and governments. However small or insecure their spheres of influence, the choices children make are in what they perceive at the time as their own best interests.

Co-option: the political significance of children and youth

The question of children and youth being for or against a particular regime's doctrine is a peculiar one. The coherence of political agendas, particularly of armed insurgents such as Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front and Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army, has been disparaged for the most part. This is perhaps a moot point, since appeals to young people need not always lie in the promise of a better future.

The child soldier phenomenon was highlighted over a decade ago in Mozambique, where, although Renamo (the Mozambique National Resistance) was widely condemned for its use of children as combatants, there were no formal interventions under Unomoz (United Nations Peacekeeping Operation in Mozambique) to demobilise and reintegrate children. Furthermore, there was no formal acknowledgement by Frelimo that children were ever used by them during the civil war, despite the evidence that has been gathered by researchers and advocacy groups over the years (Leño 2003).

The analysis of the Mozambique conflict over the years refers consistently to the use of children by Renamo, while overlooking the fact that Frelimo had done the same, using some of the same forcible recruitment

methods in addition to more sophisticated ruses that include the use of mechanisms of the state to draw the loyalty of young people; memberships of youth leagues which become prerequisites to entitlements such as employment and education. These often landed children and youth on the frontlines rather than in the classroom, a clear example of the duplicity (of the state, in this case) sometimes necessary in capitalising on the motivations of young people.

The political significance of the child soldier phenomenon is multifaceted. It serves as a ready-made condemnation of one's opponents (as with Renamo and more recently the Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone); it has been a powerful generator of humanitarian support (Sierra Leone's United Nations inter-agency humanitarian appeal of 2001 met with significant shortfalls in all areas except appeals on behalf of child soldiers, a trend that has unfortunately not been sustained into 2002 with programming in Sierra Leone in danger of being cut short this year owing to the lack of funding (*Agence France Presse* 2003). (A cynic might note that children are perhaps more appealing with assault rifles still in hand.) Finally (discussed below) children and youth have inherent political and military value that has by no means gone unrecognised.

The child soldier issue and its discourse have become powerful shorthand for all that is bad about intrastate warfare in Africa: it violates that most precious of human institutions – childhood – at least insofar as it is defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Recruiting children has become a war crime under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and punishable under half a dozen other highly specialised legal instruments designed to preserve a particular notion of the integrity of childhood (*Agence France Presse* 2003).

It has also given rise to a remarkable duplicity within the discourse of accountability. It is far easier to condemn a handful of heinous human rights abusers who have abducted a few thousand children than to be accountable for the health, education, welfare and future of half of the nation's population. For generals and politicians, the welfare of children may seem like a distant collateral benefit of victory, future peace and stability. In the heat of the moment, disenfranchised children and youth constitute a critical recruitment pool, one that has been tapped into by



regimes and rebels alike, for agendas that have ranged from colonial liberation struggles to election campaigns to armed insurgencies, using recruitment tactics that range from the brutal and coercive to the more subtle and ideological. Creating recruitment pools, however, is unlikely to be acknowledged as a war crime any time soon.

It is helpful to overlook for a moment the debate on voluntarism, that is, the disagreement over whether children facing social, political and economic pressure possess the free will to decide whether to join a militant youth group or to resist forced recruitment. To truly understand the role of young people in change, we need to describe them in broader terms than human rights violations, consider for a moment the environments that shape their agency, and accept that children do make decisions in the interest of their own survival and advancement. Even a decision to fight rather than die at the hands of abductors is a decision, and carries with it a military or political consequence at some level.

During Angola's civil war, both Unita (the Movement for the Total Independence of Angola) and the MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) engaged systems of co-option that researcher Imogen Parsons has described as both 'bottom up' and 'top down' (Parsons forthcoming). Forming part of Unita's political and military machinery were Alvorada ('Dawn'), a compulsory group for pre-adolescent children living in Unita areas, and Jura, a youth military wing.

Children were taught songs and dances that celebrated Unita heroes and victories. Alvorada in particular then entertained visiting troops with these when they came to the villages (Richardson 2001, in Parsons forthcoming). Jura went further in separating youth from their families so that they could work for Unita troops transporting food and weapons to the front lines, growing food or even fighting. It also had an additional element, however, of explicit political sensibilisation and preparation. This was a recurrent theme of education in Unita, which on the one hand 'bought' their loyalty by offering them a concrete opportunity and a form of 'normalization' of life, and as Spears points out, provided a means by which they could be 'indoctrinated into the war movement' (Spears 2002, in Parsons forthcoming).

ISS researcher Imogen Parsons (forthcoming) interviewed a number of former youth combatants in the process of demobilisation who had un-

dergone education covering Unita's version of the political history of Angola and the necessity of the struggle:

I joined the armed forces of Unita in 1992 ... I did not begin fighting immediately. In 1992 we were still in political preparation. We were given material. The reason why we were fighting, whom we were fighting against, why we had to fight. This was the politics of the party ... We had to learn all this. So that when I fought I would understand (interview, ex-Unita soldier, aged 21. Uamba gathering area, January 2002)

The MPLA's answer to this was the JMPLA (Youth of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), and the Agostinho Neto Organisation of Pioneers (OPA), both of which engaged in the education and mobilisation of children in their support. A 1996 proclamation of 'the end of corruption' by President dos Santos was accompanied by the creation of the 'National Spontaneous Movement', a youth organisation without apparent affiliation to the party (Parsons forthcoming).

This may be seen as an attempt to draw youth into clientelistic relations of power, centred on dos Santos, and also to capitalise on existing social tensions to divert attention away from the country's economic problems and towards his opposition, Unita. Much of the abuse being shouted in those streets was reportedly anti-Ovimbundu, directed at the Prime Minister who had been appointed following the 1992 elections precisely because he was Ovimbundu, but also thus indirectly at Unita. Youth who may have had no desire to participate directly in the war were thus inadvertently incorporated into its dynamics (Parsons forthcoming).

A critical mass of children exposed to harsh situations is of serious political significance, as is a critical mass of discontented students seeking ideological solutions to a lack of life opportunities owing to their exclusion from patrimonial systems. Thus the environment (the political, economic and social climate) and the individuals become the focus and our attention shifts to those responsible for creating and maintaining what are arguably bottomless recruitment pools. Human resources, like natural ones, can be plundered to sustain patrimony, power and control. By virtue of demographics, this human potential happens to be composed largely of children under 15, who make up about half of Africa's population.

Understanding the agency of children and youth in conflict analysis requires that we momentarily shift our focus away from the yardstick of human rights. It is understood that states and armed groups are in violation of international legal instruments and deserving of moral condemnation. But this does not contribute to our understanding of the dynamics of conflict, its root causes and potential solutions, it only offers another list of what is lacking. Although accounts of forced recruitment of children and youth destined for the frontlines during Angola's conflict are abundant, the appearance of children on the political front is often overlooked.

Child and youth recruitment: exclusion and inclusion

The idea of voluntarism among child recruits has been fiercely debated, particularly in the context of the notorious forced recruitment methods of groups such as Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), the Mozambique National Resistance (Renamo) and Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The decisions of children and youth joining armed groups are seen to be subject to pressures that influence the degree of free choice exercised. These pressures, in effect, in the absence of the ideal, rights-respecting, child-protecting society determine the vulnerability of children to recruitment. They increase the likelihood that children will face the decision to join a movement, be it on pain of death, for fear of exclusion, desire for revenge or the pursuit of more positive goals such as education, employment and the need to feel part of social and political change.

'Recruitment potential' is created during armed conflicts by destructive sub-state actors who, with apparent nihilism, destroy infrastructures and social fabric, a way of facilitating coerced recruitment. It could also be said then that recruitment potential is fed in times of peace when states, through their unaccountability to young people, induce economic and social pressures. Recruitment potential is thus a product of inclusion and exclusion. Recruitment methods of state and non-state actors may differ in the ways in which they appeal to young people's sense of political legitimacy, nationalism, social and personal aspirations, anger, resentment, hunger and, in the extreme, fear of being tortured or executed on the spot.

The most prominently featured recruitment style in the child soldier discourse has been inclusion, hardly an incentive at all, but made effective, in Northern Uganda, for example, by the particular historical circumstances of the Acholi people, whose 'recruitability' (or vulnerability) is sustained by the activities of the LRA itself, but also exacerbated by the heightened insecurity brought on by periodic up-scaling of the military efforts of the Ugandan government.

In clear recognition of the inclusion-exclusion dilemma, the United Nations Special Representative to the Secretary General on Children in Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu, commented after a recent visit to Sierra Leone:

The youth ... represent a tremendous resource for the future of the country. However, many missed out on education due to the war and suffer from a lack of employment opportunities. How to make them peace-builders, instead of potential spoilers of the newly won peace ... is a major challenge. Every effort must be made to harness their potential and to engage them actively and constructively in the reconstruction process, including the speedy adoption and concerted implementation of a national youth policy, as well as programmes targeting and benefiting young adults (Women's Commission on Refugee Women and Children Monthly Update 2003).

The roles of youth in Sierra Leone's civil war were created with a broad spectrum of mobilisation tactics used by different actors: the rallying of discontented students and marginalised Freetown youth; the press-ganging of young people into government forces; the use of 'traditional' cultural constructs such as hunting societies by the Civil Defence Forces; and the coerced recruitment for which the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) gained notoriety (Richards 1996). The success of each of these mobilisation strategies was not accidental; rather it was because of calculated estimations of the social, political and economic stakes and, in some cases, the sheer vulnerability of fleeing and displaced young people (McIntyre, Aning & Addo 2002). Accounts of the origins of the RUF alone show the full range of the spectrum, the merging of pan-Africanism with popular culture among Freetown youth, the employment of disenfranchised youth as foot-soldiers of the politicians of the day and the gradual deterioration of the RUF agenda into a kind of

nihilism intended to deliver the simple message: 'Your government cannot and will not protect you' (Abdullah 1998).

The political and military significance of children and youth in this context cannot be denied. The availability of young people to actors in the conflict was a critical strategic consideration. Recruitment methods, training, discipline – the very pillars of military culture – would adapt to this fact, assuming that since children's social, developmental and physical needs and capabilities differ from those of adults, their motivations and behaviour in situations of armed violence would also differ. Hence, the means of securing their loyalty, cooperation and ensuring their effectiveness must correspond.

Military victories, like Otunnu's vision of a peaceful Sierra Leone, have depended on 'harnessing the potential of youth'. The success of campaigns and the nature of warfare itself, to an extent, will be determined by the physical ability, obedience, strategic and tactical efficiency of the soldiers. It has been argued that children make good soldiers owing to their pliability, loyalty that stems from emotional immaturity, under-developed moral and ethical substance, a fearlessness akin to that of children at play, and lack of appreciation of the value of human life. Others have argued the opposite; that these features are liabilities in combat. The important point is that the strengths or limitations of children have been accommodated pragmatically when they suit the circumstances.

Individual versus collective agency

In Ethiopia the struggle of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front against the Derg held very different but equally diverse appeal for girls and young women. For some, joining the fighters offered escape from early marriage or an agenda for women's emancipation, for others, camaraderie, songs and dances and a coveted status. The collective agency of women and girls in the TPLF was nonetheless militarily formidable.

Ethiopia's Tigrayan People's Liberation Front was founded in 1975 in opposition to Mengistu's Derg military dictatorship. Combined with the forces of a number of other regional resistance movements that formed

the EPRDF, composed of approximately one third female fighters, they brought about the overthrow of the dictatorship in 1991. The profile of the EPLF was documented in 1993, at the time of their demobilisation.

They report that demobilisation was a difficult strategy and was a process of ‘weaning’ fighters off the military and encouraging them to be self-sufficient and to take life into their own hands. They quote a senior EPLF fighter who summed up the dilemma of demobilisation as ‘We have convinced them to be ready to die; why shouldn’t we be able to convince them to work for themselves’ (Bruchhaus & Mehreteab in Veale forthcoming).

In 2002 the ISS interviewed a small group of women who had been recruited as children and demobilised as adults. Researcher Dr Angela Veale (forthcoming:95) observed a remarkable range of accounts of how women joined the fighters, in which abduction was notably absent.

S10: ‘I knew nothing about the TPLF but then one of my classmates told me about TPLF liberators, and about people being oppressed by the Derg. I withdrew from my family and went to the army. My family were not happy, about it because it was difficult for my family to tell others that I had joined the TPLF.’

S11: ‘I had three friends and I joined the army with them.’

S4: ‘I became a fighter because my best friend went to the fighters and I went with her because I liked it more than staying.’

S7: ‘... because my family members joined the army. There was drought, migration and other problems at that time. The reaction of my family was not good because they did not think I would be coming back.’

S8: ‘There were my three brothers who joined the army before. I didn’t know why they had joined the fighters but I expected that I would meet them and join them there. At that time, many people were joining, even girls. My parents were not happy because my brothers had disappeared and they thought the same might happen to me.’

S1: ‘When I was 11 years old, I became involved with the fighters because of the Goila. Goila is the fighters’ dance. It implies if anyone joins that Goila and dances with them, he or she has already entered the fighters and is ready to

become a fighter. Therefore I joined the Goila when I was 11 years old, and I was taken to the training programme.’

S5: ‘I joined the fighters to escape marriage. I was married when I was 12 years and the only option to escape was to go join the fighters.’

Veale, a psychologist, comments that joining for these reasons would be consistent with developmental expectations. Interspersed with these social motivations are a budding political awareness and a sense of impending insecurity. Regardless of the motivations, undoubtedly as varied as the individuals themselves, the collective agency of women in this struggle was formidable.

Girls have not been excluded from the recruitment pool in any of the contexts mentioned above. Although much of the literature on girls involved in armed conflict has focused on their supporting roles as sex slaves, camp attendants and ‘wives’ of soldiers, extreme care must be taken in this categorisation. Engendering girls’ and women’s stakeholderhood in conflict has tended to focus on impacts that stem from sexual violence and ensuing reproductive health problems. Again, this view focuses on the extreme examples of abduction notably again, in Uganda and Sierra Leone. The omission of more meaningful analysis of the stakeholderhood of women and girls in conflict (and in peace) is particularly disturbing and rings of a reduction of women to their reproductive functions, something that educated Western women have battled for decades. This kind of generalisation stands in striking parallel to the diminished view of children and youth as victims. The combined under- and misrepresentation of women and children in conflict analysis leaves us with a picture that effectively omits the overwhelming majority of conflict stakeholderhood.

Conclusion

The process by which people’s choices narrow and bottleneck are highly complex and begin well before the occurrence of wartime atrocities committed by and against children. This snowballing momentum of rights failures is a political process characterised by policy decisions to neglect the welfare of children. The presence of children and youth in

fighting forces, while undeniably exploitive, is a reflection of decisions taken by children that have unmistakably strategic and military origins and consequences. A failure to guarantee the rights of children and youth before armed conflict occurs cannot be remedied by laws designed to protect victims during warfare, when the backlash is already in full force.

Children's motivations may change over the course of months or years of involvement, as the psycho-social consequences of violence and insecurity take their toll, but the capacity of wars to accommodate young people seems to know no limits. War seems to open opportunities for surrogate social and political identities that are not offered in peaceful, civilian life. Is it possible to say that young people seem to be more pragmatically accommodated during the processes of militarisation than they are in peace.

In this case defining children's agency has been an exercise in afterthought, made possible largely by extrapolating on the situations of different groups of young people in conflict. The path that leads to their involvement in violence is a crooked one, embarked upon in the pursuit of survival, of education and other entitlements prescribed as fundamental human rights. With this in mind, child advocacy may yet play its most important role in conflict prevention.

NOTE

- 1 Angela McIntyre is the project leader of Interact, an Institute for Security Studies research project on children in armed conflict.

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CONTROLLING YOUTH FOR DEMOCRACY: the United States Youth Council and the World Assembly of Youth 1946–1986

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ABSTRACT

To counter the left influences in the pre-war American and world youth congresses and the communist domination of the World Federation of Democratic Youth, founded in 1945, leaders of youth organisations in the USA and Britain set up national and international agencies for the development of youth work and the involvement of young people to promote democracy and human rights. Such agencies needed extensive funds, which were eventually liberally provided by the CIA. Generational conflict in the 1960s finally exposed this, but the State Department continued financial support. From the beginning, young American delegates argued for the democratic control of World Assembly of Youth (WAY) by young people, thus directing generational conflict to the international arena, which suited US government agendas. Government withdrew its financial support when WAY no longer served its purposes and the United States Youth Council (USYC) rationalised its withdrawal by accusing WAY of no longer being committed to democracy and human rights. The USYC became more narrowly based and subject to government agendas, which prompted Congress to withdraw funds. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the dominance of New Right agendas removed the likelihood of renewed support.

Introduction

There have been moments in history when a movement of young people has tried, and sometimes succeeded, to influence the course of events. The 'Young Lions' in South Africa made a recognised contribution to the overthrow of apartheid (Seekings 1993). The post-apartheid government has looked for ways of placing young people at the centre of reconstruction and development (National Youth Commission 1997). Little has been written about the opportunities for young people in established democracies to learn the craft of citizenship at national and

international level. This article tells the story of one such opportunity, the United States Youth Council, throughout the Cold War. It shows how government acted to harness the idealism and enthusiasm of young people for democracy and human rights to its Cold War strategy and how it tried to maintain control in the interests of 'democracy'.

Nothing has been written about the United States Youth Council (USYC), though pre-war youth congresses and their international links are better documented (see Gould 1940; Miller 1981; Reiman 1992). The history of the participation of the USYC in the World Assembly of Youth (WAY) provides some insights into the changes in generational relations over time, the role of the state in youth affairs, and the role of youth in international relations. It has been argued that generational conflict can reflect 'lifecycle', 'cohort' and 'historical period' effects. The interaction of all three, as in the 1930s and 1960s, can lead to a youth generation seeking to change the course of history. The 1930s generation was part of a large birth cohort, the largest student cohort in history, in a period of economic depression. Left-wing ideas, the planned economy of the Soviet Union, influenced many, and the pre-war youth congresses espoused anti-war sentiments. The 1960s generation was part of an even larger birth cohort, in a period of technological change, social reform and the Vietnam War. The concentration of young people on university and college campuses made these the focus for political activity. The paradoxes of human rights agendas at home and military agendas overseas contributed to questioning and distrust of adult actions (Colton 1992:349ff). In the USYC this included questioning the source of funds. The waning of the militancy of the student movement in the 1970s saw the USYC again supported by government funds, without challenge.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and reduction of government expenditure in wealthier countries left national and international youth participation low on the list of priorities. It remains to be seen whether the increasing gulf between the rich and the poor results once more in an organised challenge by young people.

Antecedents: i) The American Youth Congress 1934–1942

The massive unemployment and social disruption of the Great Depression provided great challenges to American institutions and values. As the New Deal steered America away from revolution, plans for a National Youth Administration (NYA) were developed from 1933. Established in 1935, the NYA hoped to teach young people the essentials of self-government and the practice, responsibilities and rewards of citizenship. The NYA essentially had three aims. First, its creators wanted schools to serve a wider spectrum of young people by expanding curriculum to include vocational training and to encourage unemployed youth to re-enter school. Second, NYA planners desired to superintend and guide the minds of the young in their own interests and those of national security. Finally, the NYA had to serve Roosevelt's political needs, such as retaining leftist support or, later, moving to collective security (Reiman 1992:4–8).

The NYA's administrative structure was decentralised and its ideological approach open and benign. The model of the Hitler Youth inspired some advisors to advocate a more strongly organised movement for education in democracy (Reiman 1992:40–45). Roosevelt never envisaged the NYA undertaking ideological training. Yet there were others outside the circle of government who were influenced by European youth movements. One such was Viola Ilma, founder of the American Youth Congress, which developed characteristics of a mass youth movement in the inter-war period and became a critic of many aspects of the NYA programme.

Unlike later councils, the American Youth Congress was actually the initiative of young people. Viola Ilma had observed the Hitler Youth in Germany and was determined to organise American youth in similar fashion. The first meeting of the American Youth Congress at New York University in 1934 drew 500 delegates from approximately 70 youth and student groups. To plan the congress, Ilma had established the Central Bureau for Young America, which drafted preliminary rules and, according to Gould, had predetermined her election as president (Miller 1981:73–74; Gould 1940:50ff). Approximately thirty organisations withdrew and picketed the congress and ultimately took control from the

Ilma group. Miller describes how communists worked behind the scenes to achieve influence in an organisation that could reach large numbers of youth and how a communist caucus selected the president (1981:74–75). Draper, who was a participant (later an 'anti-communist historian'), concurs: 'I was delegated to represent the NSL (National Student League) and with other co-conspirators, soon succeeded in taking the organization away from her' (Draper 1994:47). Gould, also a participant, doubtless a communist or sympathiser, describes the event in the light of a commitment to American values and processes of democratic election. In spite of Draper's condemnation of attempts to 'rehabilitate communism by making it part of the larger family of socialism and democracy' (1994:51) it is important to consider Gould's view, which has important implications for the USYC. He condemns Ilma as 'interested in problems dressed up in social work terms of social education and individual adjustment'. This is close to the approach of the YWCA and Settlement Houses, which owed the basis of their existence to charity. Young people wanted their own organisation (not one run by adults), 'some sort of set-up we could run where we could elect the officers and make the decisions and tell the world and the government how we thought the country should fight its way out of the mess' (Gould 1940:51).

The American Youth Congress (AYC) took a strong stand on racism. At its second congress in 1935 at Fort Wayne, delegates took united action against a hotel that had reneged on a promise to register negroes. It maintained consistent pressure for action against unemployment. Its vice-president, James Blaney, became secretary of the CIO at age 27 and brought close cooperation of youth and labour (Gould 1940:192). Certainly the White House did not ignore its efforts. The AYC gained the support of Eleanor Roosevelt, who received a delegation in 1936. Aubrey Williams, a senior New Deal administrator, 'left in a huff' over criticisms of the NYA (Gould 1940:75). Mrs Roosevelt sat with the AYC leaders during the Dies Committee hearings, a House of Representatives investigation into un-American activities. In spite of the use of witnesses to 'spew out wild and fanatical charges of communist control of the AYC' the committee reported a clean bill of health in 1940 (Gould 1940:137). The president was not as accommodating as Mrs Roosevelt and criticised the AYC for passing resolutions that had been insufficiently thought through (Gould 1940:12–13).

The AYC successfully drew attention to the needs of young people in the Depression. The first United Youth Day in New York City drew five thousand participants, and this was exceeded by later locally organised events (Miller 1981:172). Four thousand young people attended a conference in Washington in support of the American Youth Act and presented a petition of one million signatures to the president. Congress failed to pass the legislation and the AYC continued to lobby for expenditure for youth and students (Miller 1981:173–174). The American Youth Act was finally passed in 1940, offering young people ‘the chance for education and vocational training to which they are rightfully entitled and which the future of our Nation requires that they have’ (American Youth Act 1940: section 1, in Gould 1940:293ff). To a limited extent this Act met the employment and educational aims of the AYC. Its pacifist objectives of course were not met, though it hosted the Second International Youth Congress at Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1938. Five hundred delegates from over fifty nations attended, and one delegate from each nation signed the Vassar Pact of Peace and Friendship, pledging the youth of each nation to work for peace (Miller 1981:175). Though the congress was condemned for communist involvement, a large number of delegates came from Christian organisations. Marjory Cardwell, leader of the Australian delegation, a young YWCA organiser, recalled the strong Christian pacifism of the period (Cardwell 1986).

The American Youth Congress, like the National Youth Administration, did not long outlive the entry of the United States into World War II. The virtual elimination of unemployment through war needs presumably diminished the need for both, though the idea of international youth cooperation, fostered by the Depression and threat of war, survived the hostilities, and organisation of a World Youth Congress began as soon as victory was declared.

Antecedents: ii) The World Youth Congress 1945

In 1941 an International Youth Council was established to provide a club for young people of 30 nationalities in exile in London. An international youth conference was held in 1942, which founded a World Youth Council (WYC) with its headquarters in London. The WYC broadcast to occupied countries during the war and on the cessation of hostilities,

invitations were issued to all except Fascist youth organisations to attend a World Youth Congress (Hookham 1945, quoted in Bloomer 1954:34ff).

The left-wing credentials of the WYC organisers led the Churchill government to refuse entry to delegates, but when the Attlee Labour Party government was elected, this restriction was removed.² The auspices of the congress concerned adult-organised youth programmes. In Australia, for example, where the quasi-governmental National Fitness Council had coordinated and provided some government funding for youth programmes, government officers commented that the World Youth Congress was being organised by people older than the 14–18 age group usually involved in adult-run youth programmes. A further concern was that the British Standing Conference of Non-Government Youth Organisations was not involved.³ The dissociation of the Boy Scouts Association was 'fairly conclusive' evidence that the WYC had nothing to offer youth organisations of British or international origin. The Australian High Commissioner in London advised confidentially that the WYC was under communist control. Bert Williams of the communist-associated Eureka Youth League campaigned unsuccessfully for backing from the National Youth Association of New South Wales (a state-wide council of youth organisations associated with the National Fitness Council), but set off for London anyway with an acknowledgement that he represented 'a large section of industrial youth' and his fellow delegate Weston 'a section of ex-student youth'.⁴

The American delegation of twenty, averaging 26 years of age, claimed to be organised by a representative group and to 'include a cross section of national organisations, interest areas, geographical locale and of professional and volunteer youth leadership'. These delegates came largely from religious groups (the Jewish Welfare Board, Junior Hassadah, YWCA, Unitarian Youth, Washington Federation of Churches, Baptist Educational Center), negro organisations (NAACP, Southern Negro Youth Congress) and student and labour organisations (CIO, United States Student Assembly). They played an active part in the congress and in the foundation of the World Federation of Democratic Youth on which they were awarded eight council seats. Elsa Graves, from the National Industrial Council of the YWCA, was elected vice-chairman and Frances Damon, from American Youth for a Free World, treasurer.⁵ Frances Damon

and Doris Senk, also from American Youth for a Free World, were later described as 'communist or communist sympathizers' (Bloomer 1954:36).

Three secretaries were elected: Kutty Hookham, the congress organiser, Bert Williams, the Australian, and Svend Beyer Pedersen from Denmark, the first two described as communists and the third a communist sympathiser. These three, it was alleged, planned to control the federation before the conference (Bloomer 1954:35ff). The account of the conference given by the American Unitarian Youth delegate Elizabeth Green suggested that it was very political, with 'too much about governments and not enough about young people'. The 437 delegates were not sufficiently representative of young people in the 62 countries from which they came. The un-American Activities Committee of the House of Representative expressed concern in 1947 that the Soviet Union controlled a two-thirds majority at youth conferences (Bloomer 1954:46).

Svend Beyer Pedersen attempted to increase the involvement of non-communist youth to make WFDY more acceptable. Williams latched on to this strategy and reported him to the executive, which suspended him and four Scandinavian youth organisations. This effectively split WFDY, which reported in its *Information Bulletin* that 'splinters in the youth movement represent the interests of Anglo-American reactionary circles ... and weaken the unity of democratic youth' (in Bloomer 1954:50ff).

The foundation of the World Assembly of Youth and the United States Young Adult Council

Delegates to the 1945 World Youth Congress returned to the United States convinced of the need to build a broadly representative coordinating committee of national youth organisations.⁶ Yet this emerged in a different form from the youth congresses of the pre-war era. The seven members of the Association of Youth Serving Organizations joined with others to form the Youth Division of the National Social Welfare Assembly in 1946 (Bloomer 1954:81; Chambers 1948:140). The NSWA had been formed the year before to 'provide a means of consultation and conference on social welfare needs and problems' (Chambers 1948:138). It comprised 35 voluntary and 11 governmental affiliates, the latter including the US Children's Bureau, Bureau of Public Assistance, Public Health Service, Extension Service of the Depart-

ment of Agriculture and Veterans Administration. Its income came from its affiliates and the Russell Sage Foundation. The NSWA included a youth division, which consisted of 16 youth serving organisations, with a committee composed of one lay and one professional worker appointed by each organisation.⁷ The United States thus began to establish a similar structure to those that had been formed in Britain and Australia since the beginning of the war, namely coordinating bodies of adult-run youth-serving agencies that saw themselves as embodying the essential experience to provide for the needs of young people. This is demonstrated by Katherine Elliot, chair of the British National Association of Girls Clubs and Mixed Clubs. Elliot had arranged contacts and support for the young Australian Bert Williams when he arrived in England in 1945, but she wrote to Kathleen Gordon, the Australian government's National Fitness officer, that Australia would gain by a visit from more experienced leaders.⁸

It was not only the communist control of WFDY that prompted the British National Council of Social Service (a body with similar aims to the American National Social Welfare Assembly) to invite six other countries (Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Holland and the United States) to send representatives interested in youth activities to a meeting in July 1947. WFDY, like the pre-war youth congresses, was run by organisations of youth, not experienced (adult) youth leaders. At this meeting it was agreed that a new channel was needed if youth organisations wished to undertake cooperative work on an international basis. To bring this about, an international conference on 'Work and Leisure' was called in London in August 1948.⁹ It was not intended, however, that the conference should only study the work and methods of youth organisations but 'the part which youth itself can play in the community by its own free initiative' was also to be demonstrated (*Work and Leisure* 1948:19). It was thus intended that two thirds of the delegates should be young people aged 18 to 30 and the remainder 'adult leaders of National Youth Organizations'.¹⁰ Forty-five nations were invited to the conference and twenty-five attended.

The London conference prompted the NSWA to establish a national council for young adults (the YAC) though the delegation was selected by the Youth Division before this occurred. The plan for the YAC was

devised by adults in the NSWA 'to avoid nebulous or philosophical statements which offered no basis for mutual agreements' (Bloomer 1945:88). This was outlined by Robert Bondy, executive director of the NSWA, at an inaugural meeting presided over by Bernice Bridges, director of the Youth Division. Bondy reported that a group of young people from a number of organisations had raised the issue of a central body for joint undertakings such as representation of American youth at international conferences. This had made the Assembly (NSWA) conscious of its responsibility to young adult membership and 'staff representatives ... had worked out a plan'.¹¹ Bondy's plan received some criticism as being too narrow in scope, requiring a high level of consensus and having limited opportunities for social action, but the agencies attending agreed to support it. These agencies excluded the labour and more politically oriented groups that had been included in the delegation to the first WFDY conference. They included the American Youth Hostels, Camp Fire Girls, 4 H, American Red Cross, American Unitarian Youth, National Catholic Welfare Conference, National Federation of Settlements, National Students Assembly, National Jewish Welfare Board, United Christian Youth, YMCA and YWCA.

The United States delegation to the 'Work and Leisure' conference in 1948 consisted of 32 people, 22 of whom were aged between 19 and 26. The delegation was allocated 20 voting members, and 17 of these were young adults. It was briefed at the American Embassy and elected its own officers. In spite of having a majority of youth delegates, the conference appeared, at least to the American delegation, to be adult dominated. The delegation, adult as well as youth, 'was confused by control of a youth conference by an efficient adult management'. The issue seemed to relate to the opportunity for young people to lead discussion groups and chair sessions. American adult leaders seemed more willing for the young people to take an up-front role than the British. George Haynes, executive director of the (British) National Council of Social Service, invoked rules of order 'quite foreign to us and were considered undemocratic'. The American delegation became seen as preoccupied with procedure and blocking the work of the conference commissions. They called for help in the person of Margaret Mead, the anthropologist, who was attending a nearby international conference on mental health. Mead persuaded them to work within a framework for

understanding rather than amplify differences. The delegation thereafter began to interpret its points of view in small groups and succeeded in having one of its young adult members preside over a plenary session. The British delegation 'with which ... we had the completest misunderstandings agreed that if our system of work creates self reliant, thoughtful leadership among the young, as demonstrated by our delegation, maybe there was something worthwhile in it'.¹²

The content of the conference was dominated by adults of considerable stature who presented a moral stance. The inaugural address and welcome were given by Herbert Morrison, deputy prime minister of the United Kingdom and lord president of the council. Morrison stressed education as learning to think, stand on one's own feet and accept and share responsibility. He wanted to see more people in every country allowed to think for themselves, and voluntary youth movements contributed to this. Keynote addresses on the 'Work and Leisure' theme came from Jean Joussein of the French National YMCA and Barbara Ward, governor of the British Broadcasting Corporation and assistant editor of the *Economist*. Joussein concluded that leisure should restore the balance upset by work and restore self-worth. Ward returned to Morrison's theme of responsibility, alluding to individual responsibility and the loss of production through slacking.¹³ Addresses were followed by commissions on the rights of minorities, of women, the need for a proper education base and opportunities for working youth, protection of working youth in factory and farm, the development of leisure programmes for working youth and the protection of voluntary organisations. The need for an organisation to serve as a medium of exchange for young people and for youth workers became apparent as did the need for a body that was not representative of a political or economic point of view. It was considered that WFDY might join the new body on the same basis as the International YMCA.¹⁴

A Committee on Continuing Organisation presented a draft constitution that was accepted in principle. Delegations then took this for discussion in their own countries and a provisional council was established to modify and arrange for the ratification of the Charter of the World Assembly of Youth. Countries that attended the London conference were invited to send four delegates to Ashridge College, Berkhamsted, near London, in

February 1949. The YAC discussed the outcomes of the London conference at length.¹⁵ Arnulf Pins, secretary to the delegation, stressed that other countries were looking for American leadership. The opportunity for people of different religions, cultures and nationalities to meet was in itself justification for the venture. John Wood of the United Christian Youth Movement was less enthusiastic. Most organisations affiliated with the YAC had their own international connections already; the international assembly represented a great investment in time and money that might not be wise, as the YAC was still establishing itself. A Mr Horton of American Unitarian youth pointed out that 'in many European countries, youth are the tools of their advisers ... the opinions of youth delegates ... would most likely be dictated by adults'. Pins prevailed sufficiently for the YAC to send him to the meeting of the Provisional Council. Only the European countries sent the four delegates allocated. Those with further to travel sent only one or two. Just over 50 delegates attended from 34 countries.¹⁶

Pins reported that the proportion of young people was 'far greater' than the previous summer and that most leaders of delegations were young people.¹⁷ The draft charter was rewritten for ratification by the first full council to be held in Brussels in August 1949. Pins reported that the principle of youth participation had been won, and that a great deal of credit for this lay with the American and Canadian delegates to the London conference. In Berkhamsted the 'US point of view had much in common with England, Holland and Canada' (a change in relation to the English delegation from the previous summer). Pins reported some questions about the role of professional workers in the structure, which might be dealt with by ad hoc meetings. He considered that the group looked to Americans for leadership and that it was essential that the YAC participate in the new body to the fullest extent possible. He recommended that the YAC should instruct its delegation to the Brussels meeting to vote for the charter as it was important for the USA to be among the founder members. In future the YAC should send a full delegation as the responsibility was too great for one person and it was impossible for one person to attend all committee meetings.¹⁸

The YAC sent four delegates, an observer and Bernice Bridges (director of the Youth Division of the NSWA) as 'adult adviser' to the WAY Coun-

cil Meeting in Brussels. The cost of the delegation was met by the Rockefeller Foundation. In his letter approaching the foundation, Robert Bondy also asked for the opportunity to discuss the foundation contributing the American share of the WAY budget. The World Assembly of Youth and United States participation in it through the YAC, he concluded, 'seem to be the most significant undertakings for strengthening the hand of democratic world understanding and collaboration through young people that have appeared'.¹⁹ The American delegates acted in accordance with recommendations of the YAC's meeting of 1 June 1949 and attempted to amend the WAY charter at a meeting of the Continuation Committee before the full council met to ratify it. In this they were unsuccessful and so voted against the charter, the only delegation to do so. They did sign the charter, however, and reported that their dissatisfactions were receiving serious consideration. The US delegation was also successful in persuading the council to delay a full assembly meeting to 1951 in order to give the national committees a chance to establish themselves and make WAY known through regional conferences. The US delegation's nomination of Maurice Sauve of Canada as WAY president was successful and one of its own members, John Wood, was elected to the executive with a near unanimous vote.²⁰

In spite of his election, Wood remained less than enthusiastic. He reported to the YAC that the charter was unworkable and the organisation controlled by 'non-free, non-youth elements'. Unless the WAY executive showed serious concern to overcome these difficulties, he recommended that YAC change its status to observer member and spend no more time and money on delegations. Chuck Sherover, YAC chairman, concurred, but Arnulf Pins was more optimistic, stressing that WAY was the last and best hope for international youth cooperation despite its limitations.²¹ At its meeting in March 1950, the YAC redefined amendments to be submitted to WAY. These were largely aimed at making the council more responsible to the assembly and at restricting the age of delegates. Most of the proposed changes were unsuccessful.²²

In spite of the YAC emphasis on restricting the age of delegates, the NSW staff maintained an active interest in WAY. Robert Bondy wrote to his British counterpart George Haynes, expressing his hope that Haynes would maintain some continuing relationship with WAY 'at least until it

is on a definite line of direction'.²³ Haynes responded that he had been invited to attend the executive meetings 'as a kind of counselor'. He was concerned about the British financial contribution owing to the devaluation of the pound.²⁴ Bernice Bridges also gave strong advice to YAC delegates. In her letter to Donald Sullivan, a YAC member visiting Holland, Bridges advised that she had not discussed matters with the International Committee of YAC, but 'since adults will doubtless provide most of any American funds which may be forthcoming to WAY, I do not hesitate to speak on these points'. It appeared that the WAY president Maurice Sauve had approached the CIO for funds and was proposing to approach the US government. Bridges advised a 'motion to curb him' as approaches should be made through the coordinating committee of the country, not by WAY direct. Visits by WAY staff or officers should only be made at the invitation of coordinating committee of the country to be visited. These approaches would 'tangle with our own efforts' and YAC members and the adults backing them could 'take care of what needs to be done here'. Such 'field visits or financial approaches without the consent of the local people ... would be a quick way to kill WAY'. Bridges concluded that a relationship of WAY with Unesco might provide necessary stability and adult consultants.²⁵ Bridges followed this by a letter to Helen Dale, the British assistant secretary of WAY. From this, it is clear that she was also in correspondence with the secretary, Paul Mercereau, and Bridges commended the pair on their 'sincerity, integrity and good common sense'. She was less favourable about 'one other key leader' who had been elected with American support, presumably Maurice Sauve.²⁶

John Wood was unable to fulfil all his commitments as an executive member and so the YAC nominated Thora Carr of the American Red Cross as a non-voting alternate. The legal basis for this is not clear from the charter, but it seems that it was not only accepted by the executive but Donald Sullivan was also accepted as an observer from the YAC. Carr reported that the executive had nominated Arnulf Pins as the WAY delegate to the UN Economic and Social Committee and that it was proposed to hold the first full assembly of WAY in the USA in 1951.²⁷

That the YAC had been hesitant and half hearted in its support of WAY was recognised by the delegation to the Second Annual Council held in

Istanbul in August 1950. Arnulf Pins chaired the delegation and Bernice Bridges was again staff consultant. Donald Sullivan had attended an executive meeting as an observer, but Ernest Howell and Helen Coutchavlis had no previous WAY experience. The delegation was successful in many of its objectives. The charter was amended to require two thirds of assembly delegates to be elected representatives of youth organisations aged under thirty (previously thirty-five) and a national voluntary youth organisation had to have a majority of members under thirty to be so defined. Whilst many other resolutions moved by the US delegation were also successful, its report pointed to barriers to the complete realisation of the United States view. A significant barrier was the lack of interest and participation by YAC in WAY in the year leading to the council. YAC members who were corresponding members of commissions had failed to keep adequately in touch with issues; the 'duly elected representative' on the executive (John Wood) had failed to attend meetings and deprived the US of a vote on such subjects as the agenda of the conference. This was taken as a lack of commitment by other countries and, because the US delegate was one of the youngest members on the executive, as an argument against lowering the age limit. A further barrier was the failure of the US to make a financial contribution to WAY, which was all the more serious as Americans were seen to be wealthy by many other nationalities. One of the greatest barriers was the attitude and position of the French. The French had devoted considerable effort to bringing French-speaking territories into WAY, whereas the US had done nothing to bring in the countries of Central and South America. The French-speaking African territories tended to form a cultural block and to vote with France. The French had a different concept of democracy, with less respect for procedural safeguards. European youth leaders were often older than those in America, sometimes elected and often more closely linked to political movements. Moves to lower age requirements were often taken as a personal affront by Europeans, who retaliated by criticising staff dominance of American movements.²⁸

The foundation of the World Assembly of Youth was an adult initiative in response to the communist domination of the World Federation of Democratic Youth. The United States YAC, in contrast to pre-war youth movements in America, was also founded by adults. In its early years,

young adults and advisers seemed to find little difficulty in accepting a common policy. Advisers seemed to put young adults in key positions, confident that they would act responsibly. This was possibly made easier because many early delegation leaders were in fact youth workers: Arnulf Pins, for example, who exercised considerably influence in the foundation period, worked for the National Jewish Welfare Board. The control of WAY by young people rather than by governments was something that American delegations continued to fight for until they left WAY in 1976. They were either unaware of or colluded with the fact that their efforts served the agendas of the US government. In 1963 the YAC changed its name to the United States Youth Council but remained part of the National Social Welfare Assembly.

He who pays the piper: funds from the CIA

The early years of WAY were financially precarious. At its meeting on 2 February 1950 the YAC was informed that WAY had enough money to continue to the summer.²⁹ At the Istanbul Council Meeting in August 1950, the WAY treasurer pointed out that it was not sufficient to make plans unless they could be financed, and called upon delegates to collect the necessary funds.³⁰ The YAC was successful in obtaining funds from 'private donors and foundations' including an anonymous donation of \$301,000, for the first assembly of WAY held at Cornell University in 1951.³¹ One source was the Foundation for Youth and Student Affairs, which soon became a major contributor to both YAC and WAY activities. In 1956 Jacques Duquesne, the WAY treasurer, reported that 'by far the largest proportion of our projects are financed by the Foundation for Youth and Student Affairs' and warned against being so dependent on one body.³² This report was released before the council meeting, much to the horror of FYSA and the NSWA. Bernice Bridges wrote a personal letter to Immanuel Wallerstein, then WAY vice-president, studying at Oxford University: 'As David [Davis, board member of FYSA] will have told you, both of us aged some 10 years when we saw that WAY financial report listing sources of funds for each project. From now on, WFDY – as well as the French – can prove their charges about American control. They have it in writing. Was that Duquesne's doing?'.³³

David Davis became an increasingly significant influence in the following years. In 1960, in a confidential memorandum to Robert Bondy about the level of autonomy of YAC, Bernice Bridges referred to a possible breakaway of YAC from the NSWA, the least acceptable alternative and viable only if 'David's Foundation' were to fund it.³⁴ In the 1960s YAC received significant funds from FYSA. For example, in 1960 \$1 500 was received towards the cost of a YAC–WAY executive meeting. In 1966 FYSA paid the salary (\$3 283) of James Fowler as president of YAC and funded delegates to travel to Africa (\$819) and Guyana (\$542).³⁵ In 1967 C F McNeil, director of NSWA, informed his board that USYC had received 90 per cent of its funds from FYSA for some years.³⁶ Indeed the SYC staff manual and budget notes of 1966 stipulated that approaches to foundations for funding had to be cleared by the NSWA except in the case of FYSA.³⁷ WAY, according to its secretary general, received 60 per cent of its 1967 budget from FYSA.³⁸

Where did FYSA obtain funds with which to support YAC and WAY? In 1960 the *National Review* reported the briefing of the US delegation to the WAY council meeting in Accra, Ghana. The expenses for the briefing were shouldered by the Foundation for Youth and Student Affairs, an outfit whose principal putative sponsor was Arthur Houghton of Coming Glass, one of the wealthiest men in the world. It was not actually clear whether he or the CIA paid the bills for the foundation – possibly whichever happens to have the more ready cash at the time (*National Review*, 29 June 1960).

The article originated through criticism by one of the YAC delegates of the political stance of some of the briefing speakers and was relayed via a Republican politician to the *Examiner*. It became the subject of a confidential memo from Bernice Bridges to Robert Bondy, but appeared to have no further repercussions.³⁹ It was not until 1967 that the issue became of national importance. At the beginning of 1967 it was made public (originally through *Ramparts* magazine and subsequently through TV, radio and the press) that the United States National Student Association had for fifteen years received funds, at one time as much as 80 per cent of its total budget, from the CIA through the Foundation for Youth and Student Affairs and various other foundations. Most of those

involved were unaware of the connection, though most presidents and international vice-presidents were given a security clearance and asked to sign a national security agreement. It was only after signing this agreement, which could result in a jail sentence of up to twenty years if it were violated, that an individual was made aware of the CIA–NSA connection. The National Supervisory Board of the NSA concluded that CIA penetration of the organisation was unjustified and CIA penetration into other organisations must be terminated.⁴⁰ The NSA was a member of the USYC and demanded the complete dissociation of the latter from the CIA as a condition of remaining in membership.

On 15 February, James Fowler, USYC president, issued a press release denying any knowledge of CIA interference in the USYC and demanding that any covert operations of government organisations be exposed and ended. This was followed by a report by C F Neil, director of the NSWA, to his board, also denying that USYC knowingly received funds directly or indirectly from the CIA or that activities were under the control, behest or suggestion of the CIA.⁴¹ At the Executive Committee of USYC and the Spring Council that immediately followed it, held over three days from Friday evening 3 March to Sunday 5 March, nothing else was discussed. Students for a Democratic Society had withdrawn prior to the meeting because of circumstantial evidence of a connection between USYC and the CIA. Michael Wood, a former NSA staff member who had taken the story to *Ramparts*, stated that he had been told that Jim Fowler, the USYC president, and Reed Martin, international secretary, had signed national security oaths, which both denied. Wood outlined in some detail how the CIA recruited youth leaders as agents and supported them in international roles.

The council clearly opposed any CIA funding or influence. A resolution was passed to that effect, declaring that 'it is inimicable to the nature of an independent democratic youth and student organization to have any covert relationship with government agencies'. John Kernodle of the University Christian Movement, cautioned against a witch-hunt, but maintained that he felt a 'lack of candor' by USYC officers. It would appear that he had reason. Joe Fallon, a former president, warned against the assumption that any connection existed between the USYC and CIA. Reed Martin, a staff member, gave a complex explanation as

to why FYSA's tax return was confidential. In the end, the council resolved to establish a commission to investigate all the questions that the CIA may have influenced the USYC.⁴²

The commission reported to a special meeting on 29 April. After considering testimony and documents, it concluded that in the light of cordial relationships between USYC and the foundation, it was reasonable to assume that the foundation had the opportunity to influence decisions. The commission refused, however, to state definitively that FYSA served as a conduit for the CIA. It did find that past or present officers and staff had dealt with the CIA. Gregory Gallo, International Affairs vice-president, admitted to signing the national security oath; James Fowler and Reed Martin denied it and the commission believed them, although a minority felt that there was evidence that the latter had signed. The commission also reported that the president and secretary general of WAY denied any knowledge of a relationship between that body and the CIA. The commission concluded that prolonged service by officers had led to too few people being involved in decision making. Staff should be appointed by the executive.⁴³

At the special meeting Eugene Groves of the NSA stated that he and other officers had studied the special commission report and found it unacceptable and its conclusions 'contrary to fact'. The NSA immediately suspended its participation in USYC, as did the University Christian Movement. The meeting resolved to accept no more funds from FYSA until the sources of income become clear. It was agreed to examine the international programme and to reappraise the USYC.⁴⁴

These events resulted in the loss of a significant proportion of the council's funding. Officers quickly moved to replace it. Council staffer Barry Jagoda proposed a 'massive effort' to enlist new member organisations. The NSWA's John Larberg suggested the revision of the constitution to include state and community youth councils. Yet this offered no speedy solution and in August 1967 NSWA director McNeil warned USYC president James Fowler that resources were available only for three months operation and that it would take that time to close down the council if need be.⁴⁵ Somehow the council survived. Negotiations for support were conducted with US Steel, which raised concerns at the 'anti-business'

attitude of young people.⁴⁶ Further approaches were made to member organisations such as the YWCA, which was approached for an increased contribution of \$500.⁴⁷

The US Youth Council's survival was finally only assured by the government. The Educational and Cultural Exchange programme of the Department of State provided \$36 788 from 13 December 1967 for study teams to go to Europe, Latin America and Asia and for participation in UN seminars. Included in this amount was \$17 233 for salaries and administrative support, maintaining its pre-crisis staff of five. This was raised to \$50 000 in 1970, following testimony given to the Senate Appropriations Committee by Terry Watson, the USYC president, who argued that this might rebuild goodwill lost through the Vietnam War. The US Youth Council was not a careful custodian of public money for in 1974 an audit by the Inspector General, Foreign Service, pointed to lack of documentation of expenditure, funds being used inappropriately for entertainment and expense ceilings being exceeded. In spite of this, the council maintained its government grants.⁴⁸ As will be seen below, it was the withdrawal of government funding that resulted in the demise of the US Youth Council in 1986.

The USYC failed to learn from history. As will be seen below, in the 1980s it remained under the control of a narrowly based group and dependent on State Department funding. When this was withdrawn, it failed to survive.

Youth autonomy versus adult control

What level of autonomy was afforded the YAC and its successor the US Youth Council, from 1963? To what extent was freedom of action curtailed by the national Social Welfare Assembly or by government or community constraints in the era of Cold War? Human or civil rights formed a strong part of the domestic and international programme of the 1950s and 1960s, reflecting the social and political change within the USA. The 1949 WAY charter included among the organisation's aims 'to increase interracial respect' (article III a, 1949). The Istanbul Council Meeting of 1950 incorporated recognition of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as the basis of WAY's action and services (article 11 b,

1950). The YAC established a Civil Rights Committee (later Human Rights Committee) early in its existence⁴⁹ and held its first conference in 1950 at Howard University, Washington.⁵⁰ In the late 1950s YAC supported school desegregation and published a resource guide to assist member organisations. This was followed by *The Democratic Aspiration* in 1958 (and distributed at the WAY Assembly), which published information on the activities of voluntary organisations in the field of civil rights. Conferences and symposia were held and in 1961 YAC listed the civil rights activities of all its affiliates.⁵¹ In 1963 the United States Youth Council announced the First Annual National Youth Conference on Human Rights.⁵²

Commitment to human rights did not include participation by communists or communist sympathisers at home or abroad. Bernice Bridges, as consultant to the YAC, was active in protecting it from any suggestion of un-American activity. She swore an affidavit attesting to the loyalty of Sylvia Miller, a State Department official who had served in a liaison capacity with the WAY General Assembly of 1951.⁵³ In 1955 she wrote a detailed report, hailed as 'conscientious' by its recipient in the State Department, outlining attempts by a 'bloc' of communist sympathisers, associated with the League of Labour Youth (identified by Bridges as a communist group), to establish a political front organisation within the YAC at the United States Assembly of Youth in Oberlin, Ohio. Ostensibly to support liberal candidates in the 1956 election, the proposed ad hoc committee was killed by YAC leaders to prevent it being manipulated by 'bloc' operators. Bridges' report to the State Department listed precautions to ensure that known communists were not admitted to the USAY and 'experienced and politically astute' YAC leaders occupied key positions. She also asked what YAC could do to protect 'democratically oriented' participants from future charges of guilt by association.⁵⁴

Bernice Bridges' private correspondence reveals a degree of control (exercised with some soul-searching and ambivalence) over the executive of the YAC that finally broke down in the early 1960s. In April 1960 Bernice consulted her superior, Robert Bondy, in confidence. She suggested that the success of YAC was a result of the backing of the National Social Welfare Assembly. Previous attempts to establish a national youth council did not have this backing and had fallen or blown

apart. Yet the NSWA had a policy of not taking a position on controversial issues. She had not attempted to explain this to the YAC as she considered that this might lead to a feeling of apathy. It had not proven a problem as the early delegates were conscious of representing their organisations. She had queried the mandate of later delegates, having controversial issues referred back where they died for lack of response. This action, she declared, was in conflict with her basic philosophy. In 1960 civil rights resolutions threatened to shake the structure which had worked well. Bridges canvassed some options which would give the YAC some opportunity to speak on its own behalf without committing the NSWA. Resolutions from the White House Conference concerning integration possibly made the issue less controversial. The YAC/NSWA relationship survived.⁵⁵

As YAC funding increased (for reasons outlined above) the YAC president, Jed Johnson, was appointed on a full-time basis. This brought some conflict for Bridges when Johnson asked her what her role was. Bridges stated that her major concern was the quality and standard of work. YAC submissions, apparently, were prone to inaccurate mathematics. Johnson stated that he wanted complete autonomy for the YAC and it is clear that he saw Bridges as exercising control. Bridges emphasised that the Assembly helped the YAC to weather weak leadership. Johnson was not weak, but she felt that he saw adults, 'especially any adult who disagrees with him', as a threat to be eliminated.⁵⁶

Bondy and Bridges retired from the NSWA shortly afterwards, but the US Youth Council remained associated with it until 1969, when in the aftermath of the CIA funding allegations and in the course of a restructure of the assembly, it was incorporated as an independent agency. Whilst this may have increased the autonomy of the USYC, it did not necessarily make it more representative of young people. Within a few years of achieving this status, the USYC abandoned its original *raison d'être* membership of the World Assembly of Youth.

Withdrawal from WAY

The YAC and its successor the United States Youth Council sent strong delegations to the General Assemblies of the World Assembly of Youth

which followed the inaugural one in Ithaca in 1951. Assemblies were held in Singapore (1954), New Delhi (1958), Aarhus, Denmark (1962), again in the United States at Amherst (1964), Tokyo (1966), Liege (1969) and Manchester, England (1972). Themes generally focused on human rights, development and disarmament. The Amherst assembly focused on world peace in the nuclear age and the Tokyo assembly passed a resolution for the cessation of military activities in Vietnam, the final version of which the US delegation supported.⁵⁷ This resulted in some conflict with African delegations which supported a motion condemning American aggression and supporting the National Liberation Front.

The usual pattern was for general assemblies to start with commissions or discussion groups which were often reported as unsuccessful through being too large to foster effective exchange.⁵⁸ In the mid-1960s the USYC became dissatisfied with WAY leadership and programmes but had a more positive view after the election of Jyoti Singh as general secretary in 1966. The issue which led to the breach in 1976 was the same one which had caused concerns in the initial meetings of WAY in the 1940s; the age of officials and delegates. The United States delegation anticipated this: the preparatory meeting held prior to departure informed delegates that the executive had determined that 30 would be the maximum age for delegates in 1971, but the Belgian council had submitted a proposal that half be under 30 and half under 35. This would be contested by 'underdeveloped countries' on the grounds that 'an age ceiling is discriminatory, that the youths of underdeveloped countries are less prepared for WAY assemblies than those from developed countries hence their charge that the USYC is guilty of "youth imperialism"'.⁵⁹

The Eighth WAY Assembly was held in August 1972 at a time when President Idi Amin had announced his intention to expel Asians from Uganda. This African-Asian tension prompted a walkout of all African delegates, supported by those from the Caribbean and the six Black American delegates. Four African delegations had been unable to travel to Manchester and this was seen as discrimination. WAY was accused of allocating 70 per cent of its resources to Asian countries and only 30 per cent to others. After discussions, the protesters rejoined the conference (*Guardian* 24 August 1972:4).

A few days later the United States delegation walked out, to be followed by all European delegates under 30 (*Guardian* 29 August 1972:4). The US delegation issued a statement objecting to finding themselves in the midst of a political convention. Instead of development and social justice the theme of the assembly was manipulation and control. Rather than a dynamic youth body, WAY was 'little more than an attempt on the part of some of our geriatric and professional youth to perpetuate their personal ambitions and powers'.⁶⁰ The *Guardian* reported that Africans and Asians had been accused of acting as political puppets and taking instruction from their governments. With their combined voting strength they were bent on 'taking over' the senior offices. It further pointed out that WAY was an international agency with expenditure reaching millions of pounds (29 August 1972). The under-30s delegates put up 20 candidates for office who were all defeated. Thomas Sandiford of Guyana, aged 42, was elected president and Carlos Carrasco of Bolivia, aged 36, was elected general secretary. The younger delegates had a victory, however, with the approval of a resolution that in future all delegates must be under 35 and half from every country under 30 (*Guardian* 31 August 1972).

The conflicts of the 1972 assembly and the rise in importance of more local relationships (significantly in Europe) resulted in the decline of support for WAY in the years following. Early in 1975 Larry Specht reported to the USYC executive that the continued existence of WAY was under threat. Recently Holland, Ireland and West Germany had withdrawn and significant funding had been lost. No national committee was willing to host a 1975 assembly. The executive of WAY encouraged the USYC to host an assembly in 1976, the United States Bicentennial. Without this, WAY would probably cease to exist. The situation made a much smaller assembly necessary in contrast to the 'gigantic youth festivals' of the past.⁶¹ A delegation for the USYC met with representatives of the Department of State to discuss funding for an assembly and official endorsement. The State Department representatives were clearly unsure of the viability and usefulness of WAY in spite of the arguments of the USYC officers about international contacts and the role of WAY in the Third World.⁶² The State Department support was not forthcoming.

Within a few months the USYC reversed its position on WAY and announced its intention to withdraw from membership. Justifying its decision, the Council stated that it considered that WAY could not serve the needs of young people without the support of the countries most able to support that work. The defection of most European countries made support unrealistic. Accusations of manipulation of WAY by the USA inhibited any American contribution. In addition, the Council considered that support of democracy and human rights had collapsed and the lack of a commitment to those principles weakened WAY. In spite of this, the USYC sent a single representative, James Brown, to the Ninth Assembly held in Nairobi, Kenya, in February 1976.⁶³

The Ninth Assembly was much leaner than its predecessor. In comparison with the 500 delegates from 75 countries who met in Manchester, 180 from 60 countries travelled to Kenya. The British sent only two with a brief to observe and not accept any office. The full council meeting of the British Youth Council voted to withdraw shortly after, as British membership of the European Economic Community made links with European youth councils a higher priority. Brown reported to the USYC with mixed feelings. He was disillusioned with WAY's effectiveness and commented on the sloppy way the meeting was run. On the other hand, he felt that the USYC should be present to challenge positions not in accord with democratic principles. Could the USA afford the luxury of not participating, he wondered?⁶⁴ In spite of this, the USYC confirmed its intention to withdraw.

The demise of the USYC

After withdrawing from WAY, the USYC focused on bilateral exchanges. It became increasingly narrowly based and right wing, which enabled it to retain government financial support in the Reagan era, mainly from the International Communications Agency (ICA). In 1981 an International Youth Year Commission was established and the following year this was recognised by the Department of State as the most appropriate body to function as the American non-governmental committee of IYY.⁶⁵ Prior to this a US Committee on International Youth Year had been established and had met on twelve occasions with over 50 national groups attending. The ICA funded investigations which suggested that the US

Committee on IYY would not be effective in countering anticipated Soviet propaganda. Conflict between the two committees ensued and the labelling by an ICA official of the YMCA as left wing suggested to many youth leaders that the government regarded them and the US Committee on IYY as un-American (*Youth Alternatives*, December 1982, SWHA). Attempts to merge the two committees failed in spite of the involvement of Congress. The Zorinsky Amendments of November 1983 required the IYY committee to be open to all US youth groups and its board of directors to be openly elected. In spite of this, the US Youth Council insisted on keeping the top jobs and held unannounced closed elections. *Youth Alternatives* reported: 'Hopes of severing American IYY activities from the American intelligence community have been dashed because of the continued influence of the National Strategy Information Center and the restricted US Youth Council's firm control over the IYY Commission's membership, election and leadership.'⁶⁶

The USYC survived until 1986. A struggle for control of the executive resulted in the losing faction complaining to Congress. An audit concluded that the USYC was unrepresentative and its exchanges were junkets. Funding was withdrawn (information provided by William Treanor, formerly of National Youth Work Alliance).

Autonomy or control?

The US Youth Council was founded in order to transmit American belief in democracy and human rights to the young people of other nationalities. Such an aim could not be implemented with the level of funds that could be raised by young people themselves. Government provided funds, at first secretly through a front organisation, later more openly through sections of the Department of State. Unfortunately those administering government did not trust young people to make their own decisions and were not prepared to allow challenges to the prevailing political view. Thus the USYC was manipulated and controlled by state power in the interests of state policy. WAY also was controlled, first in the interest of the CIA, later by Third World groups. Ironically in recent years WAY has been reformed and many European nations have rejoined. The United States has no national youth council through which to seek membership.

Is it a realistic aim for young people to be involved in democratically elected councils and through them in international agencies? There are obvious difficulties in making such structures representative but these are not greater than the problems of representation in adult institutions. The greatest problem is for adults to draw the line between support, information and advice and manipulation and control. Governments and youth agencies feared that national and international youth councils would fall under the control of the undemocratic left. Their attempts to maintain control resulted in the USYC falling into the hands of the undemocratic right.

Youth policies in the 1990s, in contrast to the 1970s, focus on youth in the economy and take a pathological view of those at the margins (substances abusers, the homeless, the unemployed and potential suicides). Citizenship has become a major agenda item in sociological and political debate, but this generally focuses on the inclusion of young people in society (is there an underclass?) and responsibilities of young people to contribute in return for rights to benefits. France (1998) argues that in Britain the stake in society and community by young people has been reduced by the expression of social power by adults, leading to fewer opportunities for young people through employment or community to enter the adult world. He concludes that without these opportunities many young people will not feel any desire to undertake social responsibilities to their local or national community. Participation in international councils was never available to more than a few young people. However, the denial of this level of participation to future leaders may well limit the desire to undertake social responsibilities in the international arena.

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AMANDLA AWETHU: a rural South African case study of raising awareness about HIV

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ABSTRACT

The impact of HIV/Aids in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, is increasingly being felt. This article describes experiences in the field by examining affordable ways in which to provide home care and explores experiential learning methodologies to raise awareness of HIV among young people in order to reduce the high incidence of HIV.

Introduction to the aim of the case study

Two reports, published respectively by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Kaiser Family Foundation, paint a stark and depressing picture of the Aids pandemic in South Africa. 'More than half the affected families in South Africa do not have enough food to stave off starvation, and parents are forced to watch their children go hungry' (Clarke 2002:4). The studies also highlight additional problems, such as the unwieldy red tape that prevents those who qualify for state assistance from being able to secure grants. The loss of income to a household owing to HIV/Aids has huge ramifications. A further finding is that almost 25 per cent of children under the age of 15 have already lost at least one parent. Finally, in the previous year Aids-affected households spent, on average, four times their total monthly income on a funeral. 'Everyone knows that Aids is a terrible illness, but [these studies show] its broader human impact – causing hunger and poverty' (Clarke 2002:4).

The 2002 WHO report (Clarke 2002:4) cites the top two major health risks in the world as lack of food and unsafe sex. The case study outlined in this article tries to address these two risks. Section 2 describes the background to the case study and sections 3, 4 and 5 focus on a small community-driven Aids pilot project. Section 6 is devoted to concluding remarks and suggests how the pilot initiative may be taken further in a

second phase. Full details of the training materials used in the case study are given in the appendix.

Background to case study

St Joseph's Catholic Mission is located 25 kilometres north-west of Ladysmith in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Approximately 700 people live on the mission property, which covers an area of 1 822 hectares. In KwaZulu-Natal 32,5 per cent of the population are HIV positive. Put very simply, this means that one in every three people is already infected with the HI virus (United Nations 2001).

The Mandla Project is a community initiative that has arisen from a rural development gardening project for elderly women living on the mission. The women grow organic vegetables in four door-sized, raised gardens at their homesteads. The gardeners meet once a month to learn about organic gardening; bottling, drying and preserving food; basic nutrition and cooking; and elementary project planning, management and financial skills. The project started in January 2000 and is funded by a private donor. A local accounting firm based in Ladysmith manages the finances, and the staff and volunteers work on an ad hoc basis.

The gardeners have elected their own committee, and are currently drawing up a constitution. They have opened a bank account for the money that they themselves have raised for garden inputs. Fund raising is an on-going process to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the project.

The gardening project aims to help elderly people grow sufficient vegetables for a de facto family of six throughout the year. The target group was specifically chosen, as these are the people who will have to care for children orphaned by HIV/Aids and unemployed youths, who may themselves be HIV positive. All of the women are volunteers and are not remunerated.

Initially, the project did not include HIV/Aids awareness training because other non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health provided such services within the Ladysmith dis-

tract. However, in 2001 the project team became acutely aware of the impact of the HIV/Aids pandemic. There had been on average three burials each month at the mission. (This figure excludes the customary burial of the dead within the homestead of the family.) A walk through the graveyard is a salutary reminder that, whilst the existence of the virus is often denied, its silent spread of terminal, tragic spin-offs is very real. All ages are infected and affected. In 2001 it also became apparent that neither HIV/Aids awareness training nor home-based care support was reaching the Mission community. Early in 2001 the Aids office, run by the Ladysmith Municipality, was closed for several months. All Aids testing was referred to a local private hospital. It is not clear whether pre- and post-test counselling or practical follow-up were offered to patients.

In July 2001 the field team visited a family in a remote part of the mission. Mama Khumalo,³ who is a member of the gardening group, was quite adamant that we should meet her son. He had Aids and his name was Mandla.⁴ We shook hands. She explained that the hospital had told her son that he should go home as nothing more could be done for him. Half of his head was covered with lesions; all of his limbs had dermatitis; he had constant diarrhoea; and was acutely thin. Our relationship grew out of listening, planting seedlings and sharing fruit. Three days later Mr and Mrs Khumalo buried their son.

In the next three weeks the project team consulted doctors, dentists, dieticians and community workers, and put together a box of basic ingredients that would help to nurse people with HIV/Aids-related symptoms. These included Jik, which is a household bleach; a pair of thick, heavy-duty re-usable rubber gloves; instructions in picture form of how to make re-hydration salt and sugar solution; bicarbonate of soda for cleaning teeth and washing the mouth of a patient with oral thrush; ready-mixed antiseptic solution; cotton wool; gauze dressings; calamine lotion for skin rashes; camphor cream for bed sores and to relieve chest pain; transpore dressing tape; soap; aspirin and booklets on home-based care and coping with HIV/Aids written in Zulu by Doctors for Life and Soul City. Each box costs R50.⁵ As there had also been cholera deaths in the district, the box included information on this disease.

On the next visit to the Khumalo family the field team listened to their grief and their concern about their son's two orphaned children. We asked if the items in the box could have relieved some of Mandla's pain. Mr Khumalo explained that the box would have helped, but that their son had died of an Aids-related chest infection. However, it was a good idea and he agreed to name the box after his son. 'Yes, then his death would not have been for nothing. Through the box we will remember him and one day we hope that there will be a cure for Aids' (Mr Khumalo 2001: personal communication).

The Mandla Project

The initial phase of the Mandla Project was a collaborative three-month pilot venture involving the Anglican Archdeaconry in Ladysmith; two local medical doctors originally from Uganda with work experience in community health and HIV/Aids related issues; and retired nursing staff involved in home care and lay leaders. In January 2001 the South African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) approved a donation of R4 000 to the Mandla Project. In addition, the St Joseph's Gardening Project donated R1 235. Finally, butterflies were made out of recycled materials and painted in the colours of the South African flag. These were attached to a letter of appeal asking for a donation of R50. Through this small fund-raising venture a further R3 395,55 was raised for the Mandla Project.

The goal of the pilot project was to meet interim existing needs arising out of the closure of the Municipal Aids Clinic in Ladysmith. Prior to the pilot project being designed the Anglican archdeacon had coordinated two meetings of interested people involved in small, individual HIV/Aids activities. These meetings tried to encourage people already working on HIV/Aids issues to network and work together so as to share resources, expertise and avoid unnecessary duplication. The meetings also informed the design of the pilot project plan. Three main practical gaps and foci were identified:

- ◆ the lack of HIV/Aids information in Zulu
- ◆ the lack of easy-to-use awareness-raising training materials in Zulu

and English for use in rural and urban communities amongst all age groups and literacy levels

- ◆ the need for basic first aid materials for home-based care

The first phase of the Mandla pilot project plan had five objectives:

- ◆ to design and make two sets of training materials in English and Zulu, which contain the facts about how the HI virus is transmitted; choices of sexual behaviour and how to care for people who are HIV positive
- ◆ to compile a liturgical response for use in parishes on International Aids Day 2001
- ◆ to draw up a list of local resources, people, addresses and telephone details
- ◆ to make 24 basic first aid boxes for home-based care that can be distributed through the St Joseph's Catholic Mission structures
- ◆ to make two Jesse trees⁶ for sale overseas to generate seed funding for future phases of the Mandla Project

All five of the objectives were to be completed within three months of raising the funding for the pilot project. Thirty participants would attend two workshops where they would compile the training sets, liturgy, resource brochure and basic first aid boxes. The initial phase of the pilot project formed a holistic process and plan of information dissemination, prayer resources and practical tools. It also encouraged networking, on-going monitoring and fund raising for the future evolution of the Mandla project.

Implementation and impact of pilot project by objective

The Aids letter game (appendix 1A) is a good icebreaker. It helps the facilitator to find out what people already know about HIV and Aids and their current concerns, fears and needs. The game is very simple and can be used by any language group. Likewise, the 'story with a gap' (Swag) material (appendix 1B) is versatile and can be used in a variety

of contexts. It provides participants with a basis for exploring sexual orientation and the broader societal issues that impinge on the HIV/Aids pandemic. It also challenges individuals to think about the implications of their own behavioural choices. Instead of duplicating existing materials, the Mandla Project used the Soul City English and Zulu comics: *Aids in the community* and *Living with HIV* as reference material on the facts about the transmission of the virus.⁷

During the three-month period of the pilot project 1 000 brochures and 50 posters from the Department of Health, 750 Soul City comics, 15 Soul City flip chart posters, 20 copies of the Aids letter game and 30 Swag poster series were distributed.

The second objective was not achieved as the funding arrived only in January 2002. Instead a booklet was made available, compiled by the Anglican Diocese of the Highveld, situated largely in Mpumalanga Province, South Africa, and providing a selection of prayers, litanies and liturgies for people living with HIV/Aids and their loved ones, care-givers and the church. A drawback of this booklet is that it is written entirely in English.

At each workshop a list of participants was compiled and this information was circulated. In addition, two sets of resource boxes were made up containing seven videos, (including the Strategies of Hope case studies), information from the Department of Health in English and Zulu and a booklet on home-based care.

The gardeners at St Joseph's Catholic Mission helped to pack and distribute 24 Mandla boxes. Subsequently, using the funds raised locally, a further 26 boxes were put together and given to families caring for people with Aids.

In the time available it was not possible to make two Jesse trees. Instead the project made 150 butterflies in the colours of the South African flag out of recycled materials. These were distributed with a flyer explaining the goals of the Mandla Project and requesting a donation of R50. This venture generated R3 395,55 and further donations may come in at a later stage.

Lessons of experience

The lessons of experience of the initial pilot phase of the Mandla Project fall into three broad categories:

- ◆ efficacy of training materials and access to video case studies in Uganda and Zambia
- ◆ networking the Mandla box per se

People participated actively in the workshops and enjoyed the interactive nature of the Aids Letter Game and Swag materials. Workshop participants of all ages and backgrounds could identify easily with the scenarios depicted in the Swag materials. Hence the training materials evoked personal responses to practical, real experiences and provided more than an intellectual learning opportunity.

Currently too much HIV/Aids awareness material fails to achieve the desired long term behavioural change. It is mostly a listing of factual biological data and largely a cognitive exercise. People learn the facts, but the likely effects of the pandemic leave them untouched (Berry, Davidson & Thormeyer 2002:2).

Swag draws out discussion on both cause and effect. In addition, it raises questions about how the HI virus fits into broader societal issues such as child abuse, violence, poverty, unemployment and drug addiction. Swag is a non-threatening way of talking about intercourse, and what can happen if you have multiple partners. It also encourages people to look at different perceptions of how the HI virus is transmitted, and what is happening in the local community of the participants. Swag helps people to talk about different behavioural options, but it is difficult to follow up and find out whether talk is put into practice.

The Strategies for Hope video series on the Aids orphan crisis in Uganda and home-based care in Zambia, available from Teaching Aids at Low Cost (TALC), was a useful component of the workshops. Besides reflecting the situation in sub-Saharan Africa, the case histories stimulated discussion about how to find local South African approaches to deal with the Aids crisis.

The Mandla Project encouraged group interaction and networking. At both workshops participants met people from other communities and projects, particularly the Options Centre and the uMngeni Aids Centre (uMAC). Although the Mandla Project was a pilot initiative, attempts were made to encourage continuity in the longer term. Workshop participants and project beneficiaries are now aware of organisations and resources in the province that they can approach for assistance.

The feedback on the Mandla box was very positive. People are now less afraid of touching and looking after people with Aids. It is possible to have the Mandla boxes refilled by obtaining items from the nearest government clinics free of charge. This can be done as long as the patient is registered at the clinic. Mothers and grandmothers are asking questions about the transmission of the HI virus and are keen to learn about practical issues, such as drawing up a will; coping with the stress of caring for someone living with Aids; and basic home remedies that can alleviate symptoms.

Concluding remarks: quo vadis

Based on the feedback from the first phase of the Mandla Project three particular issues need to be addressed in a second pilot phase of the project:

- ◆ Information in Zulu and interactive training materials need to be distributed more widely than St Joseph's Catholic Mission. Although the Soul City comics are available in Zulu, their distribution to rural areas is limited. The layout and presentation of the comics appeal to all ages, especially the youth. The training package put together in the pilot phase of the Mandla Project was well received and cost effective. The workshop participants are willing to share their knowledge with people living in other areas, and it is on this enthusiasm that the second phase of the project needs to be built.
- ◆ Mandla boxes met an existing need and more boxes need to be made up and distributed.
- ◆ From the first pilot phase it became evident that few people know how or seem to be able to apply for the relevant govern-

ment grants. In some instances this is because children do not have birth certificates, or do not have the details about their parents' identity numbers and death certificates. It would seem valuable to explore proactive ways of how families at risk can get duplicate certified copies of the relevant documents now. This should not be an expensive exercise and could well be a service which local lawyers, accountants, clergy or Rotary and Lions Clubs can offer. In addition, a user-friendly step-by-step pictorial English/Zulu handout needs to be compiled explaining how and where to apply for a grant, and who is eligible.

The Mandla pilot project is a simple, cost-effective and practical community initiative that can be easily replicated in adjacent areas. In conjunction with the St Joseph's organic gardening project it addresses the two top world health risks: a lack of food and education about the effects and affects of unsafe sex (Clarke 2002). An exciting and important component of the Mandla Project is that it evolved as a community initiative.

Since the completion of phase 1, the gardeners have raised a further R2 000 through a second fund-raising initiative of their own, which will be used to buy first-aid materials and make up more Mandla boxes.

Can this simple project give practical tools to ordinary, rural people in their struggle against the HIV/Aids pandemic? Let's hope that soon the liberation struggle slogan *Amandla awethu* meaning: *Power to the people* will be a reality in the fight against this terrible virus, which exacerbates hunger and poverty.

NOTES

- 1 Rural development consultant.
- 2 Chair: Sociology; Head: Development Studies Group, University of Port Elizabeth.
- 3 The surnames used in this article have been changed.
- 4 The Zulu word *mandla* means mighty, strong, and powerful.
- 5 The American dollar to South African rand rate of exchange at the time of writing this article was \$1=R8,34.

- 6 A Jesse tree is a Christian icon of a tree decorated with the symbols mentioned in the Old and New Testament scriptures for the period of Advent and Christmas.
- 7 Soul City is a comic series, which is also presented on radio and television. It is a community development project co-sponsored by British Petroleum; the South African Department of Health; Ireland Aid; the European Union; the Department for International Development (DfID) and the MTN Cellular Network. The comics contain information about HIV/Aids and can be used by parents, adults, young people, teachers, and health and community workers. Difficult words are underlined and explained in English, Afrikaans, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa and seSotho in a box in the left margin. In addition there are coloured blocks in the text of the comics which help the reader to remember important facts. These are marked in the text with the icon Remember! Special points to think about are highlighted in colour with a margin icon such as Did you know? or Community Information. Soul City can be contacted by telephone on the South African code +27+11-643-5852.

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Appendix 1a: The Aids Letter Game

Games help to create a relatively safe, non-threatening environment where everyone can feel free to participate and learn to be tolerant of differing viewpoints. The gaming method is interactive and helps people to learn about and respond to HIV/Aids. Young people particularly find

participatory learning a dynamic way of understanding different value systems.

The Aids Letter Game enables people to share their knowledge, feelings and emotions about HIV/Aids. It is a good introductory exercise for assessing people's knowledge about the HI virus and the levels of fear, stigma and denial.

Aim of the Aids Letter Game

To find out what people know about HIV/Aids and how they feel about the virus.

Resources

- ◆ four large pieces of paper, each with a separate letter of the word 'Aids'
- ◆ four different coloured marker pens.

How to play

Place the individual sheets of paper with the letters A I D S on different walls of a room. (Ensure that each of the four groups has a different coloured marker.)

Ask the participants to write down any feelings, or associations, that they have with the letters. For example, 'A' stands for acquired, or afraid or angry.

Once everyone has had a chance to record their responses to each letter, help the group to identify the positive, negative and neutral words. This process can lead into a discussion on feelings about the virus. It is also a means of clearing up misconceptions and myths. The game will help the facilitator to gauge the level of understanding and awareness of HIV/Aids within the group. Be careful not to condemn anyone's viewpoint or feelings, but use this exercise as a block upon which other learning can be built.



Appendix 1b: Using story with a gap (Swag) in Aids education

- ◆ Swag is a method where two or more pictures are used to encourage discussion about possible events that have caused a problem.
- ◆ This helps the group identify a problem, its causes, possible solutions and ways of making decisions and plans for constructive alternatives.
- ◆ The first picture shows the problem. The next picture(s) show the subsequent scene(s).

Aim of the story with a gap (Swag) exercise

To use the nine Swag pictures to:

- ◆ explore the kinds of relationships and responsibilities we encounter in life
- ◆ identify problems within our community that lead to the spread of HIV
- ◆ choose a way of living which will help to prevent the spread of the HI virus

Resources

- ◆ a set of Swag posters (the pictures are shown at the end of this appendix)
- ◆ Prestick
- ◆ newsprint
- ◆ name labels
- ◆ marker pens

Method

- ◆ Have people to sit in groups of four to six so that they can easily see one another and the pictures.
- ◆ Put the first picture in place.
- ◆ Ask the group to describe what they see happening in the picture. (Note that there may be several variations of interpretation. Contributions all have equal value.)
- ◆ Ask the group to imagine what the next scene might be.
- ◆ Put up the next picture. (Ensure that there is a gap between the

first and second pictures.)

- ◆ Ask the group what they think happened between the two scenes.
- ◆ Then discuss the following questions:
 - ◆ Why does this happen? (Analysis)
 - ◆ Where does it happen in our community? (Link with own context)
 - ◆ What problems does it lead to? (Implications)
 - ◆ What are the root causes of these problems? (Root causes)
 - ◆ What can be done to prevent the situation? (Taking responsibility and planning)
 - ◆ Summarise what has been said at the end of the discussion by using the words in brackets as headings for the summary.

Examples of discussions arising from the Swag materials

Using pictures 2 and 3 with a group of teenage girls from a wealthy urban environment

Picture 2 depicts three young men chatting to a young girl. The young man wearing the black collared shirt may be the girl's boyfriend as he is touching her hand. However, the boy in the patterned jersey seems to be trying to look rather cool and is possibly flirting with the young woman. She certainly has her eyes on him. But how does the third chap, partially obscured by the other two males, fit into the scene? Is he also gazing in admiration at the girl?

The scenario in picture 2 could be taking place in a rural or an urban setting. The four young people could be from different race, class, and educational or religious backgrounds. Or they could be a gang of young people who hang out together. It is not clear where the meeting is taking place – at a taxi or bus stop, a disco or a party. All of the young people are fashionably dressed.

In picture 3 the young woman appears to be in hospital. A nurse is caring for her. The three young men are distraught and horrified. But what happened after picture 2 that led to her being admitted to hospital? We can only surmise. Did a car hit her? Her face is gaunt and her arms are

thin. The same can be said for the young man standing behind the nurse. Could it be that all three young men have had unprotected intercourse with the young girl and are now fearful that she is HI positive and that they too have the virus? Or is the young man behind the nurse homosexual and HIV positive? He could have slept with the man in the black shirt who then slept with the young women. Thus the HI virus has been transmitted through homosexual and bisexual behaviour. Then the girl and the boy (in the patterned jersey) had unprotected intercourse and he too is HIV positive. A further option could be that all four young people were experimenting with drugs and using a shared needle and that this led to the transmission of the virus.

Pictures 2 and 3 are simply tools for generating discussion about behavioural choices and their implications. The potential scenarios that can be extracted from the Swag pictures may occur in the community where the participants live. Try to link the discussion with their environment. What consequences do different choices have? Why do people experiment with drugs and have unprotected sex? Possibly the young people did practise safer sex, but something went wrong. What could have gone wrong and why? What is the difference between safe and safer sex? Finally, ask each participant to address the questions: What is my choice of behaviour? Will it be easy for me to stick to this choice?

Using pictures 4 and 5 with a group of young rural women

In the background of picture 4 a women hawker gives a street urchin a scolding for stealing an orange. Or another interpretation may be that the young person with the orange behind his back is trying to get the attention of the female hawker as he rather fancies her!

The woman sitting in picture 4 is selling oranges to supplement her household income. She appears to be asleep or has her head averted from the scene playing out in front of her. Is this because the two children are her offspring and she has put them up to begging for money? Or perhaps she does not approve of the youngsters or their behaviour, but does not want to get involved in the situation. (One of the urban South African myths about HIV/Aids is that the virus is injected into the fruit and so it is not wise to buy oranges.)

What is the adult man doing? Is he giving a donation to two street children? A ten rand note seems a rather generous donation and so is there a more sinister motive? Perhaps the man is selling drugs or soliciting sex from the young boy. Notice that the boy is better dressed and is wearing shoes. The little girl paints a vulnerable and uncertain picture – why?

What happened after the scene in picture 4? This is up to the participants' imaginations. No answer is correct or wrong.

In picture 5 we see the street boy in the arms of a doctor. He looks as though he has been hurt or is very sick. There is a sense of urgency and the mother and barefooted little girl look on with apprehension. Has the little boy been involved in a hit and run accident, raped or taken an overdose of drugs. Whatever happened, the little girl looks very traumatised – what can be done to help her? What are the implications of what has happened for all concerned?

The discussion about the pictures needs to be linked with the context of the participants. Do these sorts of things happen in their community? Why? Are these reasons the result of poverty, child abuse, greedy drug dealers, homeless people or families who have lost a breadwinner through HIV/Aids? What can be done to prevent such situations?



Picture 1



Picture 2



Picture 3



Picture 4



Picture 5



Picture 6



Picture 7



Picture 8



Picture 9

COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME STRATEGY:

papers from the Commonwealth
Youth Ministers' Meeting

YOUTH WORK EDUCATION AND TRAINING: from training to professional education

CHANDU CHRISTIAN¹

ABSTRACT

This article explores perceptions of young people. The author uses his conclusions to advocate a new paradigm, which incorporates a rights-based approach to development and a shift to education based on methods and techniques associated with andragogy.

Introduction

At global level the role of education and training in promoting the growth of economy, social welfare and democracy is being increasingly acknowledged. Therefore, investment of resources in youth development training and education is increasingly considered mutually beneficial to young people and society. This article elaborates the concept of youth work training and attempts to make a case for some paradigm shifts in the existing philosophy and practice of youth work and, as a consequence, in youth work training.

The primary task is to stimulate thought and action about youth work training. Should it retain the narrower focus of 'training', or should it be recast as education? But before we can explore that question, we need to raise some questions on our perception of young people, since that perception informs us on how we should work with them, and how we should design training for youth workers. Therefore it asks for youth work training to make a paradigm shift from youth work training to professional education in youth work.

Nearly half a century ago Thomas Kuhn said that when an existing model is no longer adequate to solve the situations that confront us, we need to create a 'paradigm shift' (Kuhn 1962:85). Kuhn describes 'paradigm shift' as

... [t]he transition from [an old] paradigm, [which is] in crisis, to a new one from which a new tradition ... can emerge ... is a reconstruction of the field from new fundamentals, a reconstruction that changes ... theoretical generalisations as well as many of its [old] paradigm methods and applications (1970:84–85).

According to Kuhn then, we need to outline first the 'new fundamentals' for education in the profession of youth work, which will then help us to outline, second, changed theoretical generalisations and third, new methods and applications of youth work education and training.

- ◆ Is youth participation really a process in participation, or is it instructional and task oriented, in which adults devise, control and deliver the agenda for young people?
- ◆ If young people are to be prepared for their adult role, then how are they to be initiated into adulthood?
- ◆ How are they enabled to acknowledge and exercise their autonomy through which their adulthood is nurtured?
- ◆ Is the agenda for youth driven by political goals or by developmental and growth oriented goals?
- ◆ Is youth work for the sake of young people or is it for some means and ends devised by adult society?
- ◆ Are young people perceived as economic units or are they seen as citizens in their own right now, not in the future?

- ◆ Are young people the centre or periphery (see Chambers 1983:46)?
- ◆ Is a young life about 'doing', or is it about 'being'?

Working with young people: fundamentals of a new paradigm

Participation

The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) Strategic Plan sees a radical departure in the way that participation is perceived. It claims young people are development partners working against poverty, HIV/Aids and underdevelopment (CYP Strategic Plan 2003:6). In Indian philosophy, 'yoga' implies bringing together a union of the mind and body, the two working in harmony to create a higher consciousness, a new, refined being. Similarly, the first condition of participation is that we must acknowledge that we willingly become a part and join with another part to form a new whole. Good examples of this are health-focused participatory learning activities in the slums of Mumbai, which enable young people to think about their own health and welfare and increase their control over their own lives.

Autonomy

The story that a statue made of clay received the breath of life (Latin *spiritus*) and became human, with its own power for mental and physical abilities, is found in three religious traditions. The idea of accepting this power of the 'nomos' (a being, a thing) to be 'auto' – self-directing – is of timeless relevance, and prompts youth work to nurture and facilitate young people's power, their autonomy. Indeed, the Commonwealth subscribes to the view in the Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment that:

Young people are empowered [autonomous] when they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, are aware of the implications of those choices, make an informed decision freely, take action based on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of that action (PAYE 1998).

However, another prevailing orthodoxy is that young people are powerless rather than autonomous. What happens if we stand this view on its head? What if we perceive young people as powerful and participate

with them, sharing our power with theirs? Mahatma Gandhi did precisely that with the so-called powerless masses of India. He recognised their potential power and enabled them to release it. Can we do so with young people too? Can we, like the Mahatma, recognise the autonomous power resident in young people and facilitate its release? To do so would accord well with the Unicef view:

[The young person] is envisaged as a subject [rather than as an object], who is able to form and express opinions, to intervene as a partner in the process of social change in the building of democracy ... [Young people] can no longer be perceived as not-yet persons (Pais n d).

It is only when adults acknowledge the need to create a complementary view such as this that we can create a genuine participation from the two sides: young and adult. The Commonwealth Youth Programme endorses this view:

We believe ... [that a young person] has a right to chart his or her own future, and in the process, shape the entire community's future, taking part not just reaping ... but also sowing (Fely Rhixon, Philippines).

Closely linked with the notions of autonomy and dependency is the notion of whether young people are our clients or whether they are creators in their own right. The question has already been answered: as autonomous people they possess power, imagination and creativity.

This view gives us a mandate to partner young people in combating those maladies that prevent the application of their autonomy. It also lends support to the view that a parallel paradigm shift needs to be reconstructed in youth work training, a training that will enable youth workers and society to see young people as creators, not clients.

A stakeholder approach

It is useful to compare the old paradigm of *stockholders* with the emerging paradigm of *stakeholders*. Stockholders were people who backed a commercial enterprise and then expected returns on that investment. The enterprise thus primarily served the interests of the stockholders. Organisations (governmental and non-governmental) that finance youth

or development enterprises sometimes talk about 'our investment'. Both words, 'our' and 'investment', suggest that these organisations still pursue stockholder (rather than stakeholder) values. Even after they have passed on the resources, they claim ownership. They say that it is *their* resources that they have ploughed into development work, and further, they feel that they should have the satisfaction of seeing rewards on their investment. This stockholder paradigm perpetuates the donor-recipient relationship and confirms dependency of the recipient on the donor. In this model young people are not participants but some kind of venture.

The stakeholder model on the other hand asks a different question. Which groups (not just those that have provided the funding for the project) have a stake in the enterprise and its outcomes? The concept of 'stake' also widens to 'interest'. Unlike stockholders, stakeholders may seek a wider range of interest rather than just self-interest. The stakeholder model gives young people a stake, an interest in youth work practice, and thus genuinely promotes participation from them.

Unfortunately, it is easy to change our language yet keep intact attitudes from the old paradigm. For a genuine paradigm shift in practice, beliefs and attitudes have to change. Education based on a stakeholder model is evolutionary; it changes as the stakeholders' interests and needs change. The new model of youth work education and training therefore needs to be flexible, so that it can reflect the emerging interests and needs of the stakeholders.

Training, education and citizenship

If we view young people as economic units of the work force, this emphasis puts a premium on training which gives young people skills to make them economically productive. If we view young people as citizens of a democracy, not only in terms of governance, but also a whole way of life, we take account of a wider set of skills and a wider set of processes.

Training is a process in which people are given skills to perform specific tasks. Education on the other hand is a broader concept, it is 'life long';

and training is task-specific and time specific. But when a youth worker engages with a young person, it is essentially a process in which she helps the young person's rounded development, facilitating growth in mind, body and spirit. However informally delivered, this is an educational process. So if we think about youth work education only as training, we are limiting the scope of the processes involved. Education's impact is not always visible immediately because it matures in people's minds, in their own time. Training tends to be product oriented, whereas education retains the ethos of a journey, a process through which human beings rediscover themselves continually as they travel along.

Finally on the time aspect, a major shift needs to be made from thinking of young people as 'citizens of tomorrow' to 'citizens now'. The concept of 'citizens of tomorrow' postpones the exercise of young people's autonomy and power to some obscure future; 'citizens now' confers rights and responsibilities in the present, and invites participation to form a new society *now*.

We should add another facet. Youth work is a profession. Youth workers have values and a vision of a society they need to profess and practice. Youth work education therefore should be immersed in professional knowledge, attitudes and skills. On this rationale we make the case for youth work training to be reshaped into professional education in youth work.

Theoretical generalisations

Human rights and youth work training

The United Nations has cogently argued that development should be viewed as a fundamental right and as a process. It also makes a case for training in human rights:

... the Right to Development belongs to every human person. By virtue of this right, everyone has the right to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development (United Nations 2000:5.)

... development personnel should receive human rights training (United Nations 2000:8).

These two statements, taken together, give us reason for casting youth work training under the umbrella of human rights and development. For what are youth workers if they are not facilitators of human rights and development? This framework also makes youth work inclusive: every young person is entitled to participate in it, whether he or she is disadvantaged or privileged. That becomes our vision. It also gives us a mission: to work particularly hard at facilitating the autonomy (empowerment) of those who are discriminated against, particularly 'women, minorities, indigenous peoples, prisoners and others' (United Nations 2000:7). The old paradigm of youth work training has done its job, and now, as Kuhn suggests, the time may have come for a shift in which youth work and youth work training are inextricably linked with a holistic human rights enterprise with young people.

Andragogy, not pedagogy

Andragogy: the art and science of helping adults learn (Knowles 1980:42).

To work with young people in a participatory and developmental mode, youth work trainees themselves must experience self-development through a participatory process of learning, in which they are equal partners. This calls for the principles and practice of andragogy:

- ◆ Adult learners are involved in negotiation of their own learning needs. This complements subject-based knowledge with personal needs in learning. This process also enhances skills in identifying personal needs and negotiating about how they can be met – skills they need to pass on to young people.
- ◆ Learning is *an* internal process. Learning is something that happens inside a person. It is not something which the teacher 'does' to an adult. This reaffirms the view that youth work should move away from the 'client-supplier' relationship to a 'facilitator-learner' one, enhancing the autonomy of the learner.
- ◆ Adult learning is present centred. This view supports the paradigm shift mentioned earlier. Young people are participants now rather than in the future. Youth work practitioners need to experience this phenomenon by engaging in practice and reflection on their practice now rather than feel that their role as youth workers starts

after their education is completed. Reflection is an ongoing process, so subject-based learning and practice need to walk hand in hand.

- ◆ Andragogy acknowledges the importance of process. Many of the current models of youth work training (for example Connexions training in England) are product centred. The principles of efficiency (doing things with the least expenditure of energy and resources) and effectiveness (producing the largest possible outcome) have been given centre stage in product-centred models. As the current crisis about Iraq and the UN so clearly shows, processes can be slow and cumbersome, but without processes, people may disown the endeavour because it lacks genuine partnership.
- ◆ Andragogy enables people to think critically. Critical thinking is essentially a reflective activity in which the thinker begins to own the issue that requires clarity. Thinking also transcends subject boundaries and makes the issue or problem a holistic one.
- ◆ Andragogy can facilitate change. Reflective practitioners, because they own the problem, are keen to find an answer and therefore more willing to change attitude and practice. If youth practitioners are to facilitate flexibility of thought and action in young people, it is important that they themselves adopt and practise it in their own education (adapted summary from Reece & Walker 2000:11-13).

As can be clearly seen, the above characteristics call for a shift in curriculum content and processes that are commensurate with the paradigm shift we have developed. It veers the training away from an academic subject-based approach to a holistic rights and development-based approach. Having developed some generalisations (the 'what'), we now need to attempt to show how we can develop what Kuhn called 'methods and applications' (the 'how').

Methods and applications

Methods

Under methods we want to look at three elements: applying human rights and development into curriculum themes and processes; 'practicum' (defined below); and reflection and the use of mentors.

Applying human rights and development in the curriculum

For the United Nations, sustainable human development means looking at development in an integrated multidisciplinary way. Human rights are central to this concept of development (United Nations 2000:4).

The youth worker is engaged in human development, and the above quotation provides us with the impetus to ground it in the pursuit and achievement of human rights. This does two things: first of all it takes away the single subject, isolated, approach to youth work training and in its place creates issues that can be viewed from a multidisciplinary and holistic perspective. For example, when health is seen as a human right, learning about, or facilitating awareness of young people about HIV/Aids would acquire a holistic perspective. From this perspective, whether it was a one-day training programme or a long professional course, trainees would not see HIV, unemployment and poverty as separate problems with separate solutions. Regarding them as part of the inalienable human rights issues, they would tackle them as development issues, understanding deeper links between poverty and HIV/Aids, or poor shelter and illiteracy.

We need to reiterate the point which was made earlier. Just as autonomy of the individual is already resident within the person, so are human rights – both attributes are inalienable, even if their application is stifled by some malignant code and practice.

The way you define a phenomenon is largely determinative of the solutions you devise to address it (United Nations 2000:10).

A model developed by Kast and Rosenzweig (1985:114), although for a different purpose, serves our purpose well here. It helps us to see education and training, with a rights- and development-based approach fall-

ing within five subsystems, each interlocked with the other four to form a holistic understanding of our enterprise: training and education of youth workers.

The curriculum for youth work education needs to reflect the trends we have established in this article for a new paradigm. It cannot be a taught, subject-centred syllabus. Instead the framework that is proposed here is flexible and enables themes in youth work to emerge in the learning process. This idea concurs with Robert Chambers' (1983:46) observations about rural development: youth work curriculum should be devised as a bottom-up process rather than a top-down one, and its focus should move from the periphery to the core.² In that way it should be able to address themes and issues that young people and youth workers want to address. Of course there is a need for theoretical input from the cognitive domain. It is also important to go into the affective domain and explore attitudes, feelings and emotions. There is also room for mental and motor skills: how to think critically, and how to work with a group through a developmental process. But all the time the focus is on a holistic understanding. Kast and Rosenzweig's (1985:114) open systems approach is adapted here to create five 'subsystems' of curriculum, represented in the diagram below:



The five subsystems together form a complete flower. The model enables us to see that youth work training receives inputs from society and its outputs (trained professional youth workers) go out to work in society. Its main advantage is that it offers a way of moving away from a subject-centred training to a themes-centred training under the umbrella of rights and development. It can be used to equip youth work trainees with the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes, and to encourage youth workers to apply the multi-dimensional model in their work with young people.

The model is flexible enough to be applied to a day training event or an award making, longer course. However, every training model has its prerequisites, and this one would assume that flexible, modular, theme based materials are available for learners. A fine example of this is the materials developed for the CYP Diploma.³ Depending on the needs of the time, challenge, crisis or opportunity facing the situation, such modules could enable the youth worker to respond more effectively in a given situation. Further top-up modules may become necessary as new situations arise.

Practicum

The term 'practicum' was coined by Schon (1987:36–40). He defined it as 'a setting designed for the task of learning a practice':

She [the practitioner] must learn to recognise competent practice. She must build an image of it, an appreciation of where she stands in relation to it, and a map of the path by which she can get from where she is to where she wants to be ... She must learn the 'practice of the practicum' – its tools, methods, projects and possibilities – and assimilate to it her emerging image of how she can best learn what she wants to learn (Schon 1987:37–38).

Practice makes perfect. Practice also enables people to learn by trial and error, the best (some say the only) way to learn. They apply their learning and skills in practice; they recognise the errors they make and they eliminate them by modifying their practice. By so doing learners develop a unique blend of theory and practice. Yet sometimes practice is seen only as an appendage to academic learning. But theoretical learning and practice have to come together as equal partners.

Mentors and practicum settings therefore should be given the same vigorous scrutiny as the theoretical content of the course.

Reflection and mentors

Reflective practice is more than an examination of personal experience; it is located in the political and social structures which are increasingly hemming professionals in ... [Professional practitioners] are being reduced to technicians, their skills to mere technical competencies ... In order to retain political and social awareness and activity, professional development work needs to be rooted in the public and the political as well as the private and the personal (Bolton 2001:3).

This quotation grounds the reflective practitioner clearly in a wider context than simply reflecting on personal experience. The context of youth work is as clearly social and political as it is personal, so youth workers must link their practice and reflection on it with social and political dimensions as well: participation, democracy, citizenship, diversity and so on. It follows then that youth work education cannot be based on academic subjects alone. These may have to be learned, but primarily as tools that facilitate reflection on the more generic themes of human rights and development. Issue-based youth work targets specific issues such as Aids, and concentrates attention on a narrowly defined field of intervention. In this article we are asking for a shift in the paradigm in which a youth worker is educated to view, reflectively, why he or she should regard all pressing issues (such as Aids) in a holistic context of poverty, lack of autonomous participation, and lack of hope, among other things.

Today we have mentors in industry and helping professions. Mentors for students of youth work could perform a vital service in enabling them to reflect on their work, their application of knowledge and skills and how their affective side (feelings and emotions) influences their work. Equally importantly, it will set them up with a model of reflection as a practitioner, just as Mentor did with Telemachus in the Greek legend, which they can then replicate in their work with young people. Following Schon (1987:15), this article recommends that the best practitioners work as

mentors alongside tutors and facilitators to help youth work students integrate a holistic concept of youth work.⁴

Applications

- ◆ The first point of application is a change of beliefs and attitudes. Providers of training and learners will have to engage in the enterprise as equal partners. Students must learn to exercise their autonomy by identifying their learning needs and then working actively with facilitators, mentors and others to meet those needs. That is the way of affirmation of their rights and development as an individual.

In one youth work training institution, individual learners spend time with their mentors in identifying learning needs. Often this involves a 'problem tree analysis' where reflection helps learners to identify the root of their needs - the problem. Then they design (with help from others) programmes which enable them to work for the solution. They are encouraged to keep reflective journals which are explored and shared with peers. Learning is thus shared and enhanced.

- ◆ Similarly, sharing reflections with a group of peers engaged in a similar enterprise becomes extremely valuable, where a facilitator can encourage the group to probe deeper through reflection. Further learning needs may become apparent, including subject-based knowledge, which can then be facilitated. One institution offering the CYP Diploma in Youth Development followed this route with much appreciation from the participants.

A group of trainee youth workers want to know how poverty can be eradicated. The facilitator (tutor; mentor) may well help map out the different ways through which a greater understanding of the problem may be achieved. The group could carry out a participatory research; they may read appropriate supportive material such as the CYP Diploma study packs. They may share their thoughts and feelings in a discussion. This may lead to acquiring greater skills in needs analysis, project planning, and so on.

- ◆ Thoughtful and compassionate mentoring is one of the most effective ways of enabling learner to develop learner autonomy. It also enables reflection and analysis. 'Holistic mentoring is when the mentor is a highly skilled, possibly professional, person deploying the full range of helping behaviours to [help their mentees development]' (Miller 2002:271). 'Full range of behaviours' would naturally include supporting, questioning, holding back, not instructing or controlling, and demonstrating respect for the human rights and development as core values. In the remote parts of a country skilled mentors may not be available locally. This is where the concept of 'mobile mentoring' is being introduced in which a skilled mentor visits several locations. Telementoring and Internet mentoring enable people to transcend the barriers of distance and access expertise from around the world.
- ◆ Trained youth workers could make a significant contribution in the other three programme areas. Indeed one could risk saying that the enhanced success of the (other three) areas would be largely dependent on the performance of youth workers in their roles as agents of change. It is therefore important that the CYP uses education and training as a 'midwife' to deliver the proposed outcomes of the strategic plan. To give a specific example, the Youth Entrepreneurship Development Programme can bring together stakeholders from commerce, industry, youth service and young people. 'Poverty eradication through youth enterprise' can be debated and fashioned within the human rights approach.
- ◆ The CYP already holds a treasure chest of resources that would enable it to devise a variety of short-term and long-term training events. It has a considerable wealth of literature on the subject through its diploma. It has a cadre of trained youth workers through the diploma who could act as facilitators and mentors for a variety of training events in the future. And it has cross-national credibility with educational institutions for its pioneering role in youth work training.

- ◆ The diploma created an effective network of stakeholders – the Pan Commonwealth Office, the regional centres, the universities, national and local NGOs and government departments. An expanded league of stakeholders, which includes banks, industry, religious organisations and so on, could revitalise interest and commitment in the cause of youth development. There are so many success stories to draw on, where different stakeholder groups have been able to overcome suspicion of one another. The stakeholder discussion in this article suggests that the range of stakeholder groups needs to be widened.

For many years, young people of an ethnic minority group and the police viewed each other with much suspicion. The youth worker arranged for the young people to visit the country of their origin. They need to raise money for the trip. This involved mastering skills of communication (nearly all of them were school drop-outs) to inform others about their project. Just about that time, the police wanted to mount a car theft awareness campaign. The youth worker suggested that some of their representatives contact the police to help them with their funding campaign. The outcome was that the young people devised and distributed car stickers in the ethnic language, and the police gave them a substantial grant for the trip. The relations between the two parties improved enormously, and one of the young people joined the police force after completing his education. The trip to the country of their origin was an enormous success too because of the newly found confidence, skills and a better relationship with the police.

- ◆ Through its regional centres, CYP could encourage development of a code of practice for youth development. This could be a very practical and effective way of enshrining human rights and a development-based approach in youth work practice. It could also highlight and incorporate any specific issues (such as gender in equality) into sharp focus through the code. (The Community and Youth Workers Association, and the Social Work Council in Britain could provide useful models.) The proposed code would give a visible articulation to the fact that youth workers have a code and values to profess through their practice. The youth worker

needs to be treated as a professional on a par with practitioners from other helping professions. The CYP is strategically placed, through its regional centres, to persuade national governments to give youth work practitioners a professional status equivalent to that of the teachers and social workers. Acquiring such a status would increase esteem for youth work practice and strengthen their resolve. It would also give youth work allies from the other two professions. There would be possibilities of training across the professions (as in UK at present), increasing job mobility and enhancing career prospects.

- ◆ Spirituality (as distinct from religion) in youth work is something that could be more conspicuously incorporated into youth work training, so that it could find its way into youth work. Spirituality is a unifying force. Together with the mind and body, it forms the third facet of the holistic human personality. Perhaps it is by kindling the spirit in young people that many of the missions of youth work will be accomplished by young people, in partnership with the other stakeholders. Enabling young people to activate their own spirit for their own fulfilment is also a better terminology than the one which talks of giving power to them. ('How you define a phenomenon is determinative of how you devise a solution'.)

Conclusion

This article can do no better than offer the following quotation as a concluding remark:

It is important to view the self as an emergent and changing project, not a stable and fixed entity. Over time our view of the self changes, and so, therefore, do the stories we tell about ourselves. In this sense, it is useful to view self-definition as an on-going narrative project (Goodson 1998:11).

And, we might add, to see not only the self as an emergent and changing project, but also young people, community and the whole of humanity.

NOTES

- 1 Contact details: chanduchristian@hotmail.com
- 2 Chambers was making an observation about rural people, in any given location, as the true centre of attention and learning. Here an analogy has been made about young people from his observation. The core in Chambers' case was the villagers; here it is young people.
- 3 Commonwealth Youth Programme: *Human resource development for the new millennium* (1997)
- 4 Schon describes the skills of such practitioners as the 'artistry of extraordinary practitioners'.

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YOUTH PARTICIPATION: taking the idea to the next level: a challenge to youth ministers

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ABSTRACT

Youth participation has become a buzzword and one of the key slogans in development efforts worldwide. However, the lack of a coherent theoretical base and the absence of a shared conceptual framework make it difficult to develop strategies aimed at participation by youth to assess outcomes. This article explores key concepts contained within the contemporary discourse and barriers to youth participation. It contributes to debate by exploring ways in which governments can stimulate participation and improve its quality.

From international consensus to local impact

I do not believe that the decision to involve the young can be postponed ... perhaps the question to the older generation is: what do you plan to do without us? (Mulako Mwanamwalye, former chairman, Commonwealth Youth Caucus).

The vision of youth participation has long been at the heart of the Commonwealth Youth Programme's (CYP) work. Since the 1980s Commonwealth youth ministers have accepted youth participation and/or youth empowerment as a driving mandate. The democratic ideals enshrined in the Harare Declaration, carried over into the Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE), have been the touchstone of discussions by youth ministers in Kuala Lumpur (1998), the World Youth Ministers Meeting in Portugal (1998), and the Youth Ministers Meeting in Solomon Islands (2000). These ideas and perspectives have also informed discussions at Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings (CHOGMs).

The CYP has also actively influenced other organisations at global, regional, and national level. Today the CYP is respected internationally as a key instigator of a progressive vision for change and development.

We have a vision – We have a dream of young Commonwealth citizens who will actively participate and contribute to the transformation of their livelihoods, and to the socio-economic development and governance processes that shape the present and future destinies of communities and societies in which they live (CYP Strategic Plan 2002).

In the main, youth ministers within the Commonwealth have been at the forefront of pushing this change in thinking. The growing international common ground is evidence of the work of the CYP and its network.

Today, the challenge for ministers of youth is to push the frontiers of the discussion to another level – local impact. The effectiveness of our strategies and tools should have a visible impact in our countries and in the different communities that make up our societies. Therefore it is opportune for us to be more evaluative and ask: how effective [or not effective] is my country in enhancing the full citizenship of young people?

How can we build on international consensus to achieve local impact?

To achieve this, this article lays the foundation for a conversation based on an analysis of the concepts and ideas behind youth participation. It also provides some pointers for action.

But what is youth participation?

Youth participation has become a rallying cry across the world:

Young people must have a voice! Youth should be empowered to determine their own fate! Youth are a resource! Young men and women should have the opportunities and tools to make a contribution! We must build strong partnerships between youth and adults! We must empower the youth!

These are just a few of the impassioned phrases that have come up in the many discussions on youth participation. These are captured in the compelling statement that came out of the United Nations Youth forum in Lisbon:

Youth are a positive force in society and have enormous potential for contributing to the development and advancement of societies ... (Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, United Nations 1998).

This vision has generated a flurry of activities (some more effective than others), from inviting young people to serve on a boards, to establishing community service programmes, youth leadership programmes and youth forums, to supporting youth-initiated activity, to convening international youth conferences.

Youth participation is a double-sided agenda. It is a vision of a 'new' and democratic world. It is also a process that is indispensable for achieving that vision.

Participation is an essential part of human growth, that is development of self confidence, pride, initiative, creativity, responsibility, cooperation, ... this is whereby people learn to take charge of their lives and solve their own problems, is the essence of development (Burkey 1993).

Yet like many compelling ideas, youth participation has caught on like wildfire and has overtaken attempts to build a coherent theoretical base. As a result, the youth sector is now without clear definitions, evidence, implementation strategies and evaluation criteria for youth participation (Pitman 1995). 'Youth participation' runs the risk of being abused and under-substantiated, and whatever consensus surrounds it remains rather shallow. Almost everyone nods approvingly when the phrase is mentioned. However, definitions are split in all sorts of directions as people take cover behind whichever concept is closest to their work. Like the great elephant we each hold on to the part we know best and never get a sense of what the entire beast looks like.

There is nothing intrinsically wrong with having different motivations and strategies for promoting youth participation. There is a lot to be said for focused attention on issues that are important for practitioners. Nonetheless, without an understanding of the concepts, we do not know where to look and what to look for. Without a shared conceptual framework, it is difficult to articulate clear goals, to develop sound strategies and measure outcomes. Not only is it hard to figure out where we are

going, we may never have a way of telling if we have arrived. In its eagerness to get something done, the youth sector seems to have avoided the fundamental question: what is youth participation and what does it have to do with youth development and social change?

Core concepts in youth participation

Four core concepts undergird a genuine youth participation framework. By taking an in-depth look at these concepts, we can set a common basis for understanding and evaluating youth participation.

It is a question of power

The first key concept is power. Young people experience the world in relation to adult-created and adult-run institutions including the family, the school, religious institutions, and government structures. Therefore, young people's participation in society is mediated by adults – parents, older relatives, neighbours, teachers, religious leaders, administrators.

The relationships between these adults and young people are underlined by inequality. In this context participation is fundamentally about the equalisation of power relations and the creation of more horizontal relationships between young people and adults in institutional and non-institutional settings.

Consequently, one of our goals should be to change social values and attitudes from authoritarianism to partnerships between young people and adults. This they see as a basic requirement of building a democratic society.

Through our governments and the work of the Ministry of Youth Affairs, in what ways do we encourage the exercise of equal power by young people? Do they have a voice in the determination of policy (beyond youth policy)? Do they have adequate representation in all structures that shape society, especially those that discuss matters that affect them directly? Are there any policies that actively discriminate against young people (that shut them out)?

The right to participate

Work around young people's right to participate draws justification and impetus from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC provides a framework for the promotion of participation within a legal context. Although the word 'participation' is not explicit in the convention itself, there are several clauses that concern the right of children and young people to have a 'say' in all matters that affect their lives. As the most widely ratified international convention, the CRC provides a useful instrument for governments and civil society organisations to protect and promote children's rights to participate. The convention underscores the idea of children as partners in the process of social change and in the building of democracy. As Marta Santos Pais of Unicef points out: 'The Convention has provided a new vision of children while acknowledging that [children and young people] are vulnerable human beings that require protection and assistance from the family, the society and the state. The child is envisaged as a subject, who is able to form and express opinions, to intervene as a partner in the process of social change in the building of democracy ... children [young people] can no longer be perceived as not-yet persons' (Pais n.d). Although the convention has been implemented unevenly and with varying degrees of success, it remains a powerful advocacy tool (Ivan-Smith 1998).

In addition to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, many countries have developed a right to participate through youth policies. Such policies often provide a broad commitment to integrating young people's contribution to national development. It is also fairly common for them to create an infrastructure through structures such as youth councils, commissions or forums as a way of facilitating young people's active involvement in the policy-making process. Although the discourse on youth participation as a right has gained much currency over the years, there remains significant resistance to the realisation of participation rights. This is mainly because of 'common-sense' perspectives on child-rearing and on the role of young people as having to be seen and not heard.

What legal frameworks and innovations have we implemented? Is our youth policy fully understood and effectively implemented? Do we have

progressive policies in areas such as voting, and youth representation in political structures such as parliament?

Citizenship

The ideal of full participation by young people alongside other members of society is perhaps the most compelling concept that undergirds the discourse on youth participation. It is premised on the idea that young people have the right to have opinions and exercise choices as part of their communities and society. As citizens, young people should be accorded the space to share in the burdens and benefits of citizenship (Cole 1995; Ennew 1999). Participation includes the notion of full inclusion in society through education, work and political life. Citizenship therefore is more than just the granting of civil and legal status (at the age of 18 in most countries) which entitles one to vote, marry, carry a gun and do other things without parental consent. Evidently there are no easy answers as to how to realise this ideal, given the enormous social, cultural and political differences between and within societies (Cole 1995). In addition, it is also realised that young people's exercise of their rights requires support from adults and major social institutions, and acquisition of certain skills and attitudes (Owen 1996). Nonetheless, for a number of reasons, including sheer demographics, it is no longer feasible or wise to look at young people as citizens sometime in the future. Citizenship cannot be seen as something one acquires once one has 'grown up'. The challenge is to create the capacity of young people to participate today (Ewen 1994).

In what ways do we actively engage young people as citizens? What platforms and initiatives do we have in place?

Governance: being at the table

When decisions are made about their lives or their communities, young people should be there ready to contribute and not as an afterthought (Hoover & Weisenbach 1999).

Another key element of the youth participation discourse is the role of young people in formal decision-making processes – in schools, community bodies, programmes, national governments, and international bod-

ies such as the Commonwealth itself. This is based on the notion that young people, like adults, have fundamental political rights to determine how power is allocated and exercised. They also have a right to influence the allocation of resources in society. Proponents of the inclusion of young people in governance argue that instead of looking at young people as a liability, communities and organisations can benefit from the unique experiences, perspectives and resources that young people bring with them to the table. The truth is that in spite of recent changes that have created opportunities for young people to participate, the idea of inviting youth to sit at the table is not one that all people embrace. For example, adults frequently sit together to discuss young people without even questioning why youth are not part of the discussion. Entire conferences are focused around youth issues, where not one young person speaks, sits on a panel, or leads a workshop. Often young people are not even invited to attend. In today's world it would be unthinkable to hold a conference or have an initiative on women, black people or disabled people without having them at the table. This indicates that many organisations are either ignorant of the need for young people to participate or they simply resist it. But many have come to acknowledge that as institutions they do not appropriate policies and the staff (however well meaning) do not have the skills and resources to integrate young people meaningfully in their governance structures. It is not always true that those chosen to be at the table represent sizeable constituencies to whom they are accountable and who have an input on what they say and do once incorporated into boards and other decision-making structures.

Do we have adequate mechanisms to ensure that young people are always at the table? How do we ensure that the young people around the table represent the ideas and feelings of their peers in a real way?

Marginalisation: dealing with social and economic exclusion

Fundamentally youth participation is about making sure that all young people, especially those that are outside the social mainstream, have opportunities. Policies and programmes should be about the overriding objective of getting young people (or selected groups of young people) integrated into the social and economic 'mainstream'. In this context

participation is not simply about giving young people a voice in organisations and institutions, it is about making sure that such groups of young people can access the skills and opportunities they require to have autonomous and sustainable livelihoods – to become part of society in a full and real sense. In many developing countries, only a small proportion of young people can gain access to jobs in the formal sector. Economic exclusion or marginality is a fact of life for many young people. Many societies cannot assume that there is a 'natural' and equitable path towards adult status for all young people. For many young people their growth path is fragmented and unstable, and for some it is also treacherous. (Mokwena 1999). So to the extent that full participation in society depends on having a legitimate and sustainable livelihood, many people (young and old) can be said to be marginal (White & Wyn 1997).

It is important to mention that 'marginalised groups' such as homeless young people, rural youth, young people living with terminal illnesses such as Aids and young people with disabilities are the hardest to integrate. Many programmes adopt targeted approaches that are intended to serve such 'special populations'. Many also take on the related mission of broader social transformation through poverty eradication and cultural change. Some of the most innovative programmes in this area do not see themselves as just providing assistance and services to young people in distress, they find ways of working *with* young people, as agents, to overcome their circumstances.

Given the different challenges facing young people in our country, do we have adequate policies and programmes aimed at economic and social integration?

Closing the gap with community development

At the risk of stating the obvious, young people do not live in projects or programmes, they live in communities. It is only by looking at the situation of young people through the prism of community life that young people's peripheral role in society is adequately understood.

It is possible to build better relationships between young people and other sections of the community. This requires both provision of adequate physical and social spaces within which they can congregate, and a baseline recognition



that young people are members of the community not merely threats to it (White, Murray & Robbins 1996).

Work from Australia demonstrates that young people's citizenship is often undermined most potently when it comes to the allocation and use of public space. White, Murray and Robbins (1996) demonstrate how community bodies, especially local governments, often neglect the needs of young people. Their research points to ways communities openly discriminate against young people on the basis of how they look, dress and 'hang-out', even tending to criminalise young people's activities. As a possible solution they propose four useful strategies:

- ◆ Develop stronger lobbies for young people within local government and community structures.
- ◆ Recognise the role of local government.
- ◆ Institutionalise youth planning in local government.
- ◆ Consult with different sub-groups of young people on the design and planning of public spaces..

With these issues in mind, the Australian Youth Foundation sponsored the implementation of the Melton Youth Access Audit Project. The project mobilised young people in an effort to document the differences between youth-friendly and youth-unfriendly spaces and conduct youth-friendliness ratings of local businesses, community agencies and public spaces. This highly participatory process was then used to provide feedback to businesses, local government and other stakeholders as a way of assisting them to develop youth-friendly spaces in the Melton Community. This project provided the young people who participated with valuable skills in research and community engagement and led to the formation of a local youth group. It also provided a number of useful recommendations about future planning.

This is one example of the need to think local. Another is provided by the situation of education systems across the world. Accepting that education and socialisation of young people takes place in many different spheres, schooling is perhaps the most important institution in the preparation of young people for meaningful roles in society. Some researchers

have questioned the extent to which schools equip young people for citizenship and engagement by merely teaching civics and having mock elections at school.

There is compelling evidence that young people in schools and other educational settings learn more effectively when they are involved and engaged. Many educators have been arguing for more participatory methodologies that are based on the idea that young people bring experiences and perspectives into the learning environment that must be acknowledged and built upon (Holdsworth 1999).

In addition to making the learning process more participatory, there is growing realisation that educational institutions can do better when they create avenues for young people to be involved in the decision-making process of the school through its governance structures. Writing about the South African experience, Kumi Naidoo argues that the inclusion of young people in school decision-making processes can greatly enhance learning and overall school effectiveness:

School governance offers many possibilities for engaging young leaders in decision making. Given that young people spend a great proportion of their lives at school, there are many opportunities for harnessing the [youth] participation in decision-making. This presents a powerful opportunity to model and institutionalize democratic values and behaviour in a country grappling with a history of authoritarianism. In most parts of the world, governments and school authorities tend to be authoritarian and conservative. Models of participatory-democratic schooling are very rare indeed (Hart: 1998).

Youth participation is about social change

Participation is a precursor and an outcome of the youth development process. When young people are fully engaged, they tend to be more eager and willing to take part in other activities in their families, communities and broader society. There is compelling evidence that political skills of participation acquired during one's youth are a part of a process of identity formation that becomes part of the individual's self-

definition and shape their relationship to society in later life (Youniss & Yates 1999). Participation begets more participation.

An analysis of youth participation work in different countries demonstrates that there are common values, strategies and benchmarks. However, important differences arise mainly because of differences that exist in various countries. Each country responds to opportunities and needs that arise from its context. And each has to address different levels of acceptance or resistance. In addition each has different resources and expertise at its disposal.

The various country conditions also determine where resources are invested. For example, is promoting youth involvement in civic life more important than carving out a space for young people in the governance structure of an institution? Is promoting the recognition of youth rights more or less urgent than facilitating the economic integration of unemployed youth? In the final analysis it is more important to work towards finding a synthesis. So what are often put forward as seemingly divergent perspectives can be seen as interrelated pieces of a puzzle. But there is a need for a synthesis of sorts that should inform the work of Commonwealth countries as a like-minded group. It is not enough to agree on a broad definition and not go to the next level of making the principles and strategies cohere into a practical strategy. So how do these strands weave into each other? Here is a preliminary synthesis emanating from a distillation of the salient features of the core concepts discussed above. It is hoped that these can be a starting point in a dialogue aimed at informing the development of a coherent theoretical framework on youth participation.

- ◆ Youth participation presents a radically different and progressive perspective on the role of young people in society. Through participation, young people cease to be passive recipients of services or passive victims of indomitable social and political forces. Within this progressive perspective, young people are seen as stakeholders with distinct and legitimate interests and they are entitled to share in the exercise of power at all levels.

- ◆ There is a symbiosis between the goals of youth participation and those of fostering development in young people and in society in general. Youth development is inextricably tied to young people's capacity and willingness to participate at a micro level (in programmes) and at a macro level (society in general).
- ◆ The level and nature of young people's participation is in itself a marker for a society's development. The capacity of a society or community to maximise young people participation as citizens in the social, political and economic life indicates the extent to which that society can flourish. Young people are a barometer through which we can measure the level of social cohesion, democratisation or lack of it.
- ◆ Youth participation is a precondition for effective strategies of working with young people at all levels of society, from families, to schools, communities, governments and so on.
- ◆ Youth participation is about social transformation. It lies at the core of creating compassionate, sustainable and equitable societies. It forces programmers and policy makers to think beyond the provision of targeted serviced at integrating relatively small number of young people into a social mainstream ... it is about engaging young people in the creation of a new mainstream.

Taken as a comprehensive package, these core concepts are the foundation of the development and social change agenda whose basic premise is to create optimum conditions to ensure that all young people regardless of where they live should have the competencies and opportunities to become full and competent citizens with the capacity to have sustainable livelihoods and also contribute to the prosperity of their communities and society in general.

Youth taking action: leadership, organising, activism and entrepreneurship

Although much of the discussion on youth participation tends to concentrate on what adult-run institutions can do to include young people



or to facilitate their participation in society, youth participation is also about how young people can take independent action. Youth do exercise leadership, and self-direction on a range of issues. As Chadran (1995) reminds us:

With their energy, enthusiasm, strong wills and open minds, young people have been at the heart of many social movements in the past and the present.

There is ample evidence of how young people have taken part in popular political movements. Anti-war demonstrations, the environmental movement and the anti-apartheid struggle are just a few examples. These and other youth-based movements demonstrate that young people are able and often ready to carve out political space independently and with little direction and control by adults. In this process participation is not something given to children, but something created and claimed by young people. It is important to mention that youth-initiated activities are not always large scale and dramatic. For the most part they tend to be localised. They occur in youth clubs, cultural groups, religious groups – spaces where young people associate. Although these are often invisible and largely ignored by policies, they play an important part in the development of the young people and contribute towards the development of communities. Recognising this power and enthusiasm, some organisations have provided resources that enable young people to take self-directed action to seek positive change in their communities and in society in general. Some of the strategies that emerge under this these include leadership, activism, organising and entrepreneurship. Again these strategies are not mutually exclusive.

Youth leadership is often used to describe processes that enable young people to take up action as leaders. This also involves the provision of skills that young people need to communicate, organise, advocate, and so on. Youth leadership provides a core of skills that are essential to individual development while tapping into the resources of young people to take action.

Another key theme is youth activism. This refers to the processes where young people see themselves as social actors, decide to join and par-

ticipate in the activities of chosen groups and, within those, advocate and advance courses that are important to them. These range from political courses to environmental movements, religious groups and other equivalent groups.

There is an increasing trend to support youth organising as a distinct strategy of getting young people to participate. Organising is linked to youth activism and involves leadership. However, youth organising is a strategy that targets young people and galvanises them (sometimes through membership organisations) to take direct action for change on a range of things that are important to them.

Another key example to consider is youth entrepreneurship. Youth entrepreneurship typically points to activities that are involved in supporting young people to set up their own businesses or to create jobs. It is important to state that entrepreneurship is not limited to youth businesses. It is sometimes used to cover innovative actions by young people in social development.

Although these are examples of how young people take independent action with limited or no intervention or direction by adults, it is not unusual for some of these strategies to be pursued under the auspices of adult-run and initiated strategies and programmes. They represent the possibility of adult-youth partnerships where adults do not manage the process or control the outcome. In fact the majority of youth activities are non-formal. They happen outside the auspices of families, schools, youth programmes and other adult-controlled structures. Informal friendship networks are an important source of support for young people. In this space they interpret and frame the world for themselves. Youth cultures represent how young people make sense of the world around them. Different groups of young people develop and use unique symbols, styles, dress codes and language, and have unique musical and aesthetic preferences. It is important to mention that youth cultures draw from and clone aspects of parent culture and at the same time influence how adults think and behave. It is only by studying youth cultures that we come to terms with the creative ways that young people deal with their social exclusion in both positive and self-destructive ways.



Barriers

Despite many compelling arguments made in support of young people's participation, there is still considerable resistance. Simply stated, if participation is such a good thing, why is it not practised more widely? A review of the programmes and the literature points to the certain issues (below) as key impediments to young people's full participation in society and in programmes and services that are aimed at them (Boyson 1998; Senderowitz 1998).

Fear by adults of losing power or diluting control: As already pointed out, adults mediate young people's relationship to society. In many instances, full participation implies that adults have to relinquish their power and engage in more horizontal relationships. Many social institutions would have to change fundamentally. Quite simply families, schools, residents associations, religious organisations and governments cannot embrace youth participation and remain the same.

Absence of democratic/participatory models and practices within an organisation and/or society: When organisations and institutions operate within an environment that does not value and promote democratic values and practices it is hard to see how young people's participation can become a priority. In such context young people are up against very powerful forces.

Perceptions about young people as being incapable of participating: Much of the work with young people is grounded on the assumption that young people are 'in the process of growing'. They are viewed as vulnerable and needing adult supervision and control. Granted young people need services and opportunities to develop but this is often used as a justification for exclusion (Boyden 1999). Young people are denied the opportunity to work alongside adults as partners or take on responsible roles in society. For many this role is deferred indefinitely.

Perceptions of young people as being deficient: Unfortunately there are strong and pervasive assumptions (even by some well-respected organisations) that young people are irrational, untrustworthy, unpredictable and prone to delinquent behaviour. The effect is that young

people cannot participate as equals and they cannot exercise their rights to full citizenship until they are fixed (Pitman & Irby 1997).

Professional resistance to intrusion, and a belief in the merit of doing things in traditional ways among programme administrators: Many government and non-governmental organisations that provide services for young people rely on the role of trained professionals and 'experts' to deliver their services to young people. Bringing in young people as partners in the design, implementation, governance and evaluation of such activities is seen as inappropriate, as young people are often regarded as 'having no knowledge and skills'.

Lack of experience with involving youth in leadership roles: Even those organisations that value young people and work towards their development may not have the skills and experience to integrate youth participation in their work. And without such experience even the best advocates can flounder and lose interest. In the end it seems more sensible not to try.

Youth participation is costly and time consuming: Including young people as full partners in an initiative requires additional resources. It also requires a change in organisational culture. As Senderowitz (1998:11) states, 'both youth and adults require special training for this collaboration, and supervision of young people requires time and patience'. There is considerable turnover as young people leave to pursue their studies or careers. Some organisations become weary of training new groups of young people at regular intervals.

Disingenuous use of youth participation rhetoric to secure donor funds: There are several unfortunate examples of how young people are involved only as way of creating a semblance of participation. This leads to staged activities that manipulate young people and put them forward in window-dressing exercises. This erodes trust between young people and adults. It also puts off potential allies of youth participation who can easily see through these exercises.

How to advance youth participation

The barriers to participation are both structural and attitudinal. Over the years, many advances have been made. More importantly, there is a growing body of knowledge about what can be done practically to set basic standards for evaluating participation levels within a country and within specific programmes. The following are useful areas where programmes can prioritise young people's participation. We suggest that each government could review its work by looking at the following issues.

Promote youth participation as a public idea: At country level, it is important to locate the concept as a public idea. It must find general acceptance in the day-to-day discussions about young people. In fact, it should always be seen as a fundamental part of the solution-seeking process (especially in developing countries and poor communities).

Design and planning: It is important to bring in young people right at the beginning. In doing so young people shape the content and structure of the strategy. The current approach to national youth policy development within the Commonwealth encourages young people's participation at all levels.

Implementation: Some programmes, such as the Youth Enterprise Programme, require that young people come in as partners from the start. The various HIV/Aids initiatives, especially the Young Ambassadors of Positive Living programme, have created avenues for young people to play appropriate roles in the implementation of the programmes. These can take various forms. In some instances young people are brought in as volunteers, peer counsellors and even as members of staff.

Assessment and evaluation: There is growing evidence that young people can play a critical role in evaluations and assessment of programmes through participatory research methodologies. This means more than merely asking young people a series of questions. Young people can be involved in defining the areas that need investigation, providing useful question and ways of going about asking them, and interpreting the data.

Decision making and governance: Many organisations have grappled with strategies for including young people in key decision-making structures of their organisations. The current governance structures within the Commonwealth make room for young people to participate in different ways at pan-Commonwealth, regional, and national level. The challenge really lies in the consistency and quality of participation at country level.

The next level: improving the quality of youth participation

Many Commonwealth countries have made significant strides in understanding and supporting youth participation as a concept. It is also significant that the governance and management structures of the Commonwealth cater for the participation of young people at all levels. The challenge today is to deepen participation by improving the quality of youth participation at country level. Here are some pointers.

Create a progressive ideology: Youth ministries and governments in general should use their position to popularise youth participation as a commonly held idea. They should also challenge forms of discrimination against young people.

Democratise youth structures: Ensure that youth structures and agencies that represent young people remain democratic. Many youth representatives are hand selected to be the voice of young people. They often do not have the support of their peers or the ability to communicate and represent their peers.

Provide training and support for youth representatives: It is also important to make sure that young people have the skills and support to do what they need to do. Through common training programmes across the Commonwealth, young people can acquire the core skills they need to be effective in their roles.

Diversify participation options: Not all available avenues cater for the interests of all young people. Over and above the normal channels and mostly formal channels of participation, it is important to create different avenues for young people to express themselves. Some of these

opportunities can be found easily in areas such as arts, culture and recreation.

Highlight and support localised participation: Governments should also emphasise young people's participation where they live. There are clear opportunities in local government and community development.

Put money into youth programmes (especially those that emphasise self-directed youth action): A key indicator for youth participation is the number of programmes and activities available for them to engage in various activities. It is possible to start experimenting with providing funds directly to groups of young people.

Democratise schools: Ensure that mechanisms for young people's representation in school governance are effective and respected. Schools present the greatest possibility for young people.

Conclusion

Many now agree that the realisation of young people's citizenship challenges the deep-seated structural and attitudinal aspects of our various countries. The irony is that at the level of rhetoric there is broad acceptance, which is backed by many international declarations.

The challenge today is to move our discourse to the next level by prioritising our ability to obtain results at a country and local level. So to keep the momentum, it is important to pose a more positive challenge and ask ourselves how different would our country be if we realised the full participation and citizenship of young people?

As part of answering that question, we must seek a deeper understanding of the processes as well as the outcomes of youth participation. Such a knowledge base should be accessible, relevant and practical. Without this level of commitment, youth participation may just fade as an idea once fashionable in the 1990s, to be replaced by the next unsubstantiated buzzword.

NOTE

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YOUTH NETWORKS AND GOVERNANCE

AMANDA SHAH¹

ABSTRACT

Partnerships and networking are crucial components of an enabling environment within which youth can contribute meaningfully towards establishing the 'good society'. This article explores the importance of youth networks and organisations and barriers in effective collaboration. Using a rights-based framework, the author explores concepts such as accountability, relevance and ownership, and examines various spheres of youth involvement in matters of governance. She puts forward a number of recommendations that would enable youth to be actors for positive rights-based development.

Introduction

Successive communiqués tell us that the Commonwealth is about respect for human rights, sustainable development, democracy, and equitable provision of the rule of law. By choosing to join in the Commonwealth effort, actors of all kinds are trying to bring about a world where all citizens, regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion or age, can say: 'I live in a good society; I enjoy good governance and I'm part of it.'

What is a good society?

When the Commonwealth Foundation asked 10 000 citizens in 47 countries for their ideas of good governance, they replied that in essence a good society had three main components: meeting basic needs, associational needs and participation-based needs. Such findings demonstrate the importance placed by citizens upon both networks and participation in governance.

Associational activity, the relationships formed with others as part of families, neighbourhoods, organisations and social networks, was seen as a key pillar of a good society, leading to a culture of togetherness, and a heightened sense of belonging and identity. This physical, emo-

tional and cultural support provided by networks can be especially important to young people during what can be turbulent life changes from childhood to adulthood. The importance of association to young citizens sends a clear message to governments about the need to create enabling environments in which such social capital can develop.

Likewise, the emphasis placed by citizens, young and old, on participation, based on responsive and inclusive governance, equal rights and justice, shows the importance they attach to participating in the public sphere and contributing towards the common good, as well as the expectations they have of government to nurture such activity. (Adapted from Knight, Chigudu & Tandon 2002)

Can young people say that of their local and national societies? Can they say it of youth structures? Can they say it of Commonwealth structures? It is particularly relevant for the 2003 Youth Ministers Meeting to consider these questions while a Commonwealth Expert Group on Democracy and Development is continuing its work prior to the Heads of Government Meeting in Abuja.

It is also important to strategise Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) and youth ministries' collaboration in a way that best attracts young people's involvement in the governance of the youth sector and beyond. To achieve meaningful development and democracy we need to think more strategically about partnerships that are inter-generational and multi-sector, and that harness the activism of a wider number of stakeholders. CYP needs not only assist individual structures, which have been the focus of programming in previous years, but improve networking among them. And while there have been great achievements within government structures and national-level youth organisations, more can be done on all sides to respond to young people currently outside formal structures.

Youth Networks and Governance is by definition an area of work that cannot succeed without wholehearted engagement with civil society. This is a matter of inclusiveness and efficient use of the Commonwealth's modest funds. Whilst the income of accredited Commonwealth NGOs for 2000/01, for example, was over £27.8 million, for the same period the

budget of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation came to less – £20.5 million. (As we know, the CYP fund is much smaller still.) In this climate the official Commonwealth has to look outside itself and draw on the range of resources available to the association, not least through the non-governmental and business communities. A joining up of the Commonwealth and its resources in this way is long overdue and could seriously enhance the member governments' ability to reach out to young people.

What is governance? Who is involved?

Societal decision making used to be the domain of governments. However, the idea of governance being what government does is now widely contested. Commonwealth citizens, young and old, are reassessing whether their societies are working for them and re-evaluating the roles they, and other societal actors, should play in bringing forth 'a good society'.

This is clearly the experience of large numbers of young people whose disenfranchisement is evident in their failure to vote, and who are mistrustful of both public and private sectors. Young citizens have indicated that a brush with 'democracy' every few years through the ballot box is not enough. They want to live in responsive and inclusive societies that recognise their rightful place as actors for social change and partners for societal development. Nor does a one-size-fits-all approach to market democracy serve the needs of all citizens in our different communities. Participants at the Citizen You 2002 Commonwealth Youth Summit tell us 'many visions of a good society are available to us'. However, there is wide convergence about the core Commonwealth values that are central to the creation of societies that work for all: equity and equality, justice, accountability, participation and (fundamentally) human rights.

Most analyses of the forces shaping societies concentrate on a trinity of players: government, civil society and the private sector. In recent years their roles have been 'morphing', with the later two expanding into areas traditionally taken up by the public sector, but this is not necessarily a pattern that citizens are happy with. For example, when the



Commonwealth Foundation asked citizens what they saw as the requirements of a good society, they replied 'both a strong facilitative state and a strong active civil society'. It is also clear that while the state does have un-derogatory responsibilities for providing citizens' basic needs, the full gamut of young people's rights will not be met without the facilitation of other actors and, crucially, their own active involvement.

A cross-sectoral approach lies at the heart of CYP's Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE), which calls upon Commonwealth governments to 'strengthen ... collaboration between key stakeholders in youth empowerment [and] create innovative partnerships between governments, intergovernmental organisations, NGOs and the private sector' (PAYE 1998:12). It is an approach that recognises all actors as rights bearers as well as being responsible for upholding rights. The PAYE requires us to critically re-examine how organisations and sectors can work together as partners for people-centred development, placing young people at the heart of this process, and how those closest to young people (families, community members, schools, youth organisations, young people's peers themselves) can be empowered to support their development and engagement.

In the same year as endorsing the PAYE, Commonwealth Heads of Government recognised the importance of citizens' decision-making roles in the 1999 Fancourt Declaration: 'good governance requires inclusive and participatory processes at both national and international levels'. This message was reinforced at Coolum three years later when Heads called 'on the many intergovernmental, professional and civil society bodies which help to implement our Commonwealth values to join with us in building closer Commonwealth "family" links, and strengthening consultation and collaboration'.

In fact, the history of the Commonwealth itself shows it to have been most successful when different sectors of the Commonwealth family have worked together towards joint goals, such as the end of the apartheid regime or increased debt relief. Building on this premise, recent research by the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit called on the official Commonwealth to underscore the importance of participatory

decision making 'not just in written words but by taking practical steps to ensure round-table dialogue between the different sectors of the Commonwealth community' (Shah 2002).

The place of youth networks

Youth organisations are about creating networks of young people, providing opportunities for them to associate with others, and gaining strength from their associational activity and the social capital this creates, to bring about change in themselves and their communities.²

From governments' points of view, National Youth Councils are increasingly being recognised as helpful points of contact with subsidiary organisations, and a two-way channel of information sharing and resource mobilisation. However, some National Youth Councils remain in effect government bodies and thus forfeit the additional advantages of strengthening pluralism and democracy, and building tiers of leadership. Similar weaknesses are shown in fly-by-night NGOs that emerge to tap donor funding but lack a constituency or programme of work. Accountable youth participation in governance lies in transparent partnerships between government and youth networks where they can add value to each others' work.

It seems that nowadays we all work in partnership, but is that what we really mean? While many governments and civil society organisations speak the language of governance and networks, traditional rivalries, suspicions and misapprehensions too often colour the quality of engagement. A partnership might be defined as a relationship of solidarity or dialogue with another sector/organisation, where both sides are equally resourced, informed and empowered to voice their opposition to violations of legitimate expectations. But in intergenerational arrangements, levels of capacity, experience, information and resources can be skewed in favour of older adults.

Organisational failure to meaningfully involve young people can stem from ignorance or an unwillingness by adults to shift existing balances of power. What does seem clear is that without a commitment to actively confronting inequalities in the relationship, it will not run smoothly



and sustainably. Without such an effort there is a tendency for financial power and experience to take over, leaving young people marginalised. YouthActionNet.org suggests establishing a memorandum of understanding when youth groups are working with youth-friendly adult groups that lays out who is responsible for what. Again, there is value in allowing independent youth organisations to partner with a variety of stakeholders, so that they can compare track-records and build realistic expectations.

Why work through networks?

'We have a saying in my country: if you have one broomstick, you can break it, but if you have a whole bunch, they're very hard to break – just like if we're all working together towards a certain goal.'

'It's difficult to know where to start, and just one person on their own is quite insignificant. It's different if you're with a big organisation – then you can definitely make a change.'

(Source: Young participants in a globalisation conference organised by Worldaware.)

- ◆ **Keeping spirits up:** Trying to bring about change in societies can be a long and tiring business. Working with other like-minded individuals and organisations is a way of counteracting emotional and physical fatigue.
- ◆ **Gaining different perspectives:** Working with others, especially those from different sectors or spheres of governance, can bring fresh ideas to old problems.
- ◆ **Increasing potential for change:** There is power in numbers. Messages gain strength and are harder to ignore if they are taken up by multiple actors, leading to powerful momentum for change.
- ◆ **Nurturing activism:** Being part of a network for change is empowering. It can help counteract apathy and encourage activism. Youth leaders are of particular significance in nurturing the engagement of their peers. Initiatives to support the develop-

ment of youth leaders – such as those embedded in the Youth for the Future Initiative (YFF) – should be valued not just for their investment in the individual, but for the contribution youth leaders can make to the involvement of their peers in governance.

- ◆ **Organisational capital:** Youth organisations and ministries all suffer from fast turnover of human capital. Working in networks can help increase sustainable institutional memory.
- ◆ **Legitimacy:** Questions about the legitimacy of initiatives – ‘Whose voice is it anyway?’ – are less likely to arise where organisations are part of a network with a wide representational base. Youth networks are often unfairly subjected to greater scrutiny than their adult equivalents (When are adults sitting on boards ever asked to speak on behalf of *all* adults?) but need to consider issues of representation, accountability and democracy in their workings.
- ◆ **Supporting the individual:** It is human nature to form associations with others. Youth networks can provide support and encouragement to young people in a positive environment and counteract the appeal of ‘uncivil’ society such as gangs, vigilante groups and cults. The International Youth Foundation identifies ‘connect- edness’ as one of four prerequisites for young people to be able to contribute to society. Youth networks that value their members and help them gain self-respect are essential safety-nets for young people, offering peer support during a stage of life that can be overwhelming.

Reaching unaffiliated young people

Agencies such as National Youth Councils cannot abdicate responsibility for supporting young people as partners for development just because they are not engaged in easily identifiable youth structures. They need to consider how to increase dialogue with young people outside structured organisations and develop the capacity of these young people to build up networks and increase their visibility on different spheres of governance, particularly on the community level.



Vast numbers of young people are not involved in structured associational activity. A European Commission opinion poll in 2001 found that one in every two young Europeans 'spontaneously claims not being affiliated to any organisation or association', and these findings tally with Unicef claims that 51 per cent of 8–19 year olds in Western Europe and 48 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean are not involved in organisational activity.

The European Youth Forum considers that one of the key challenges to youth organisations has always been how to extend and broaden their membership and thereby increase the outreach of their organisations.

Lack of resources can prohibit young people's involvement in anything other than earning an income and caring for their families. As the Commonwealth Foundation's research highlights, the cornerstone for citizens' associational and participatory activity is the provision of basic needs. Opportunities for participation in decision making need to be brought together with action for sustainable employment.

Perhaps the key actors in reaching out to young people beyond structural networks, especially those in vulnerable or marginalised situations, are young people themselves. Young people's lives do not rotate around concepts of structured and unstructured youth – those engaged in youth organisations associate with youth outside organised structures through informal networks at school, at work and in their communities every day. The Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy recognises that:

... young people and youth NGOs are the best agents for delivering change for other young people, with volunteerism being a key tool that should be promoted among youth organisations in order for them to take the lead in peer-to-peer training to stimulate, support and facilitate the role of marginalised and vulnerable youth in the wider society.

This focus on peer outreach and support is found in the Youth for the Future (YFF) initiative. Two out of four components of YFF – youth mentoring and youth volunteering – concentrate on peer-to-peer activity to tap youth 'skills and knowledge for development across the

Commonwealth' to reach the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. Within this context YFF should prioritise mentoring and volunteering programmes that enhance the skills and capacity of young people to reach out to their disengaged peers, build networks, and enable their voice to be heard in societal decision making.

Barriers to associational activity

- ◆ **Logistics:** Unwittingly, organisations' logistical arrangements can be youth unfriendly. For example, the timing and location of meetings can prohibit youth participation if they are held during school or working hours, far from local communities or late at night.
- ◆ **Awareness:** Are young people aware of opportunities for them to join associational networks? Some organisations may not go far enough in reaching out to young people, particularly those in vulnerable or marginalised communities, or may do so in inappropriate ways.
- ◆ **Support:** Lack of support from family, communities or peers can stifle young people's engagement. The reality for some young women is that social norms, and/or household responsibilities, hinder their associational activity, particularly in sport. For young people whose peers are involved in gang culture it is difficult, and sometimes dangerous, to break away and join more positive social networks.
- ◆ **Resources:** The financial costs of participating in organisations, both direct (membership fees, transport costs to meetings etc.) and indirect (lost earnings) can prevent the involvement of young people with fewer resources.

In 2003 the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit found these were factors in low youth participation in Commonwealth NGOs (Shah 2003).

Governance principles

It is no good ploughing energy and resources into new decision-making structures and cultures if there are no tangible and positive outcomes from doing so. Engaging youth networks in governance can only bring win-win benefits if that engagement is targeted and guided by certain principles. As has been suggested, the core concept behind governance, with young people at its heart, is human rights. It is only through the practical manifestation of human rights in our developmental and democratic structures that we can create societies that work for all.

Using a rights framework to support the empowerment of young people in societies is useful because the approach is concerned with the following:

- ◆ **Rights as entitlements:** Rights are not unenforceable needs, or charitable hand-outs but legally enforceable commitments made by states (through national constitutions, international treaties and so on) that young people are entitled to. This recognised framework can help give young people the confidence, capacity and channels to claim their rights.
- ◆ **Obligations to uphold rights:** States, the international community, and increasingly non-state actors such as the private sector and civil society have enforceable obligations to promote and protect rights. The rights framework is therefore a peg on which to draw in a multitude of actors all of whom have responsibilities for the development of young people and societies.
- ◆ **Rights matched with responsibilities:** Just as young people are entitled to rights by virtue of being human, so they have responsibilities to uphold the rights of others. The exploration of this dichotomy can help young people examine their place in society as valued rights entitled individuals who also have responsibilities to uphold the entitlements of others.
- ◆ **The indivisibility of rights:** Rights can encourage a holistic view of young people and their development, instead of youth in governance being addressed programmatically or in isolation from wider developmental concerns.

A rights-based approach is therefore a practical framework to advance the development both of young people and their societies, giving it particular currency for our discussion on youth as partners for development. The impact of young people claiming these rights has been an increase in the quality of young people's development as well as the quality of national democracy and development.

Benefits of rights-based governance – a means and an end

Because a rights approach does not create hierarchies, it prioritises rights achieved through collective end goals, such as the right to development, as much as individual rights that contribute towards these goals, such as freedom of expression, the right to education, self-determination, health and food.

Accountability/transparency

Commonwealth countries have made commitments that national resources should not serve the interests of the few at the expense of the majority. The involvement of various sectors of society in the formulation and monitoring of public policies helps provide a check against slides towards unaccountability, lack of transparency and even corruption. Youth organisations have a role to play by bringing a youth perspective to monitoring budgets, ensuring government expenditure priorities meet national and international commitments towards young people, in the same way that women's groups have helped pioneer gender-sensitive budgets in 40 countries. The Youth Power Project, part of the community-run organisation Make the Road by Walking (MRBW), co-founded by youth activist Oona Chaterjee (a Rebook Human Rights Award Winner), helped redirect \$53 million to youth development projects from funds originally slated in the New York City budget for expansion of juvenile jail facilities. Such monitoring can take place in all spheres of governance, including the allocation of debt relief and poverty reduction strategies.

Ownership of young people

As YCare International argues, 'a new approach is needed which empowers young people to address and express their concerns as partici-

pants in society rather than as a minority to be controlled or as passive recipients of welfare' (YCare International 2002). Young people are more likely to buy into, and be willing to help implement policies, if they have been involved in their formulation. The involvement of young people in governance is also more likely to attract the engagement of their peers, thereby increasing the sustainability and effectiveness of programmes. This approach enables young people to become active stakeholders in their societies with responsibilities to ensure developmental and democratic progress.

Relevance of policies

The history of development policy is littered with failures that result from decisions made and implemented by a narrow section of society (or by external agencies) without the involvement of the people they are meant to serve. Unless young people are consulted and involved in the design of development strategies they are not necessarily going to be youth relevant or accurately factor in the contribution of youth to national development. The participation of young people in decision making concerns more than integrating young people's issues into existing policy paradigms. The scenario if we do not involve young people in governance is bleak: the potential for further wastage in development policies and another generation of young people living in poverty.

Spheres of governance

Governance processes take place in many spheres – local, national, regional, international and, of course, Commonwealth. Kumi Naidoo (Foster & Naidoo 2001) identifies three levels on which young people participate. Youth engagement in different spheres of governance requires different mechanisms, skills and approaches.

Macro level engagement: identifying substantive changes that need to be made to how our world is run.

- ◆ **CYP governance structure and Youth Employment Summit 2002**
The governance structures of CYP leading to CYMMs and the Youth Employment Summit (YES) 2002 have integrated young people into decision-making processes with government minis-

ters in making substantive decisions about young people and their world. A different approach is taken by Commonwealth Youth Fora and their relationship to CHOGMs (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings). Here a separate forum is run for young people who make recommendations to the adult summit.

◆ **UK anti-war demonstrations**

In 2003 young people in the UK, who could not find structures through which they can speak and feeling that their voices were not being heard, took to the streets to protest at their government's position on Iraq. Sachin Sharma, suspended from school for organising other students to join the rally, told the BBC: 'We have no means by which to express [ourselves, we] do not have a voice in real terms ... so the only way that we as minors can express ourselves is through demonstration, through protesting.' While lively debate and peaceful protest about the war among the adult population was seen as showing the strengths of the UK governance system, many commentators treated youth protest as somehow deviant, strange or frightening.

Meso level engagement: participating in current democratic processes

◆ **International Care and Relief (ICR) and Civicus boards**

Many youth-serving organisations are creating space for young people to sit at the decision-making table in existing structures, usually by appointing young people to their boards. This has been the case with ICR and Civicus which, as a result of its strategic partnership with CYP, has a member of the Youth Caucus on its Board of Trustees.

Micro level engagement: participating in specific projects

◆ **Bal Vikas Bank: Butterflies Youthbank**

The Youthbank, supported by the Centre for Innovation in Voluntary Action, is run from the Butterflies Night Shelter at Delhi Railway Station for young people living and/or working on the street. From the start young people have been responsible for all the



rules and decisions, resulting in strong ownership. Those involved talk about a strong sense of working together on something positive for each other.

Recommendations

Provide a safe environment where rights are protected

Human rights are the bedrock of a society that works for all and that values young people's central place in governance. Recognising this, young people have called for national and international action to protect their rights and their place in rights-based governance:

- ◆ **National action**

The Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy urges national governments to 'implement legislation to protect human rights as they relate to youth including protecting rights to participate in decision making, access to quality education fostering responsible citizenship, and access to human rights education' (PAYE 1998:14).

- ◆ **International action**

Youth participants at the Citizen You summit also demanded that Commonwealth governments make good their commitments to human rights, justice and equity at the international level and focus 'on the implementation and communication of policies that are currently sitting on the shelf' so that citizen engagement can flourish.

These recommendations relate directly to a government action point within PAYE to 'promote a democratic, stable and peaceful environment in which the human rights of young people as defined in international covenants are fully implemented and in which they can fully accept their responsibilities' (PAYE 1998:5). All of the enabling conditions PAYE identifies for youth empowerment should be examined on a national level through a rights-based lens, particularly the need for 'political will, resources and legal and administrative frameworks' and 'equality, democracy and peace' (PAYE 1998:5).

Not only do governmental actors such as Youth Ministries and CYP have a duty to protect young people's rights, they have a duty to prevent other actors (including the private sector) from abusing rights, and to empower young people to claim their rights. This includes protecting the autonomy and independence of civil society, including youth organisations. Partnership building is not an excuse for takeover.

Strategists should be cognisant of the particular difficulties young people can face in claiming their rights

◆ **What are rights?**

Knowledge is power and if young people do not know about their rights they are unable to stand up for them. Human rights education in school curricula and informal education programmes are key if the PAYE action point to 'ensure young people are fully informed of their human rights' (PAYE 1998:14) is to be realised.

◆ **Rights are for adults**

The perception that young people are adults in waiting, unable to take an active part in society until they have 'grown up,' also promotes the idea that rights are for adults and are something young people will inherit when they reach the age of majority.

◆ **How do we claim them?**

Youth-friendly explanations of legal and administrative structures for rights protection in all spheres should be widely disseminated. CYP together with UNICEF has produced excellent youth-friendly literature on youth rights in the past.

◆ **Multiple discrimination**

Young people can experience the double bind of being discriminated against because they are young and because of their gender, disability, race or social status.

Provide an example of good governance

The human rights principles at the heart of good governance are just that – principles that need to be applied to all actors regardless of

whether they are governmental, non-governmental or private sector. Those agencies promoting good governance in youth networks must practise what they preach. This means critically examining their own workings and taking steps to rectify any practices that inhibit rights-based governance and the involvement of young people. PAYE recommends youth ministries include strong consultative mechanisms with young people. The vertical links in CYP's governance structures, from pan-Commonwealth level down to local involvement of youth in national youth ministries, should be strengthened and the Commonwealth Secretariat should consider how it can better integrate the voice of young people across its divisions.

Encourage good governance in youth network partners

Youth organisations need to look in the mirror. Are the principles young people expect of government evident in their own organisations? Are they applying a rights-based approach to governance? Are they being democratically run? Are they serving the needs of young people or are they serving the needs of an exclusive few?

Addressing these questions will strengthen the institutional development of organisations and the personal development of the young people involved in them. The lessons learned by young people in the governance of their civil society organisations (CSOs) will sustain them as good democratic leaders throughout their lives.

CYP and others have a role to play here by providing training for youth leaders and resourcing youth networks to come together and craft standards of good governance that are shaped by, and applied to youth organisations at local, national or even Commonwealth level. For example, CSOs in India have come together under the 'Credibility Alliance' to create self-imposed charters of good governance from within the sector rather than wait for governments to impose standards from above.

Facilitate engagements of networks with other branches of government

Youth ministries and CYP have a catalytic role to play in ensuring that youth networks are plugged into a wider range of government connections. PAYE recommends governments 'set-up machinery to mainstream a youth perspective in relevant government policy areas' (PAYE 1998:12) so that youth development is mainstreamed into wider national development strategies and the needs and experiences of youth are not compartmentalised or seen as an add-on.

If organisations are serious about mainstreaming a youth perspective in their structure and programmes it requires substantial changes and shifts in power relations. This is not always easy for individuals or organisations to do. Youth mainstreaming would be a good focus for CYP and other Commonwealth technical assistance, drawing on experiences gained in National Youth Policy processes.

Raise awareness about successful youth partnerships and networks

There is a need to document youth successes to promote positive examples, share knowledge and stimulate national dialogue on partnering and the responsibilities of different sectors.

Employ information and communications technologies

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) can be a powerful tool in enabling young people to strengthen their networks. Online, a young person's network, is no longer bound by physical communities. 'Interchill', a UK cyber drop-in centre, organised a 'chatback' initiative between young people and city councillors:

... the good thing about doing it over a chatroom is that the councillors can't make judgements about the young people based on age, gender, race, class, look, dress or any of those things ... equally, the young people are not put off by a 55 year old bloke in a suit in a very formal environment (quoted in C21citizens 2002).

Many young people's grasp of ICTs makes them leaders of today, with ICTs a valuable area for intergenerational skill transfer from young people

to older generations. However, ICTs remain in the grasp of the few rather than the many. Infrastructural capacity, access, cost, training and literacy all prevent many young people in Commonwealth countries from entering the Information Superhighway. PAYE recommends governments 'seek donor and private sector partnerships to increase levels of computer literacy and access to ICT' (PAYE 1998:15). Lessons from innovations such as ComputerAid International (recycling computers from the UK private sector for development projects) and CYP's technology empowerment centres can be built upon.

Conclusion: another world is possible

If we need to be convinced of the urgent need to support young people as partners for development, one look at the reality of Commonwealth commitments to the millennium development goals should be enough. Based on current data, 12 Commonwealth members seem unlikely to meet 2015 targets for Goal 1 (eradicating extreme poverty and hunger) and two members are not on course to meet any of the eight 2015 targets. Our collective inability to tackle poverty will fall disproportionately on the shoulders of young people who comprise two-thirds of Commonwealth citizens, a proportion that is set to rise by 2015.

And yet young people are not passively waiting to be lifted from poverty or for their societies to develop around them. Through their networks and with the facilitation of peer leaders and supportive adults they continue to be actors for positive rights-based development.

Our discussions have shown how young people are not obstacles, but invaluable resources for national development. If facilitative agencies can play a supportive, encouraging, nurturing role, while respecting the independence of young people and their networks, they can unleash the resources, ideas, experiences and energy of youth towards societal change. Rethinking governance structures and placing young people at their heart is one way of empowering young people and encouraging their engagement in the development of their societies, whilst simultaneously investing in themselves.

The foundation of our discussion in linking young people's place in democratic structures and development processes has been human rights. A rights-based approach offers a powerful tool for young people, governments, civil society and the private sector to partner on the basis of common understandings of rights, responsibilities and, increasingly, roles. While partnership is not a panacea, 'in the right context tri-sector partnerships appear to produce better results for sustainable development, and each partner, than alternatives' (Business Partners for Development 2002).

Another world is possible – and involving young people and their networks in governance is one step along the way.

NOTE

- 1 Amanda Shah is a project officer at the Commonwealth Policy Studies Unit, Institute of Commonwealth Studies.
- 2 The value of networks in generating societal change is clear from the experiences of Jubilee 2000, the campaigns to ban landmines, and the campaign to establish an International Criminal Court.

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