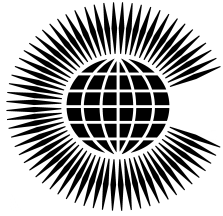


Commonwealth Secretariat

---

---



**Commonwealth  
Youth Ministers Meeting**

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 27-30 April 2008

---

---

**Provisional Agenda Item 3C**

**YMM(08)3C-2  
PAP-YPB-CAR**

**YOUTH AND PEACE-BUILDING:  
A CASE STUDY FROM CYP CARIBBEAN CENTRE**

Commonwealth Secretariat  
Marlborough House  
London SW1Y 5HX

March 2008

# CONFLICT AND CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH CARIBBEAN: MAKING THE CASE FOR YOUTH EMPOWERMENT.

*“There are many causes I am prepared to die for, but no causes that I am prepared to kill for.”  
(Mahatma Gandhi)*

## **Conflict: an overview**

There are some schools of thought which contend that the concept of conflict precedes the existence of human beings, while others insist that conflict and manifestations of conflict are synonymous with human existence. Indeed the concept of conflict and manifestations of conflict is now a common feature of human socialization, an integral component of human development theories and news features chronicling the daily experiences of individuals, communities and societies.

While conducting research for this paper many definitions of conflict were examined. The central theme of most if not all of the definitions identified revolved around disagreement between individuals or groups of individuals, contrasting opinions and ideologies and the pursuits of diametrically opposed interest and agendas. However, for the purpose of this study we found the definition of conflict as a disagreement through which the parties involved perceive a threat to their needs, interests or concerns. As in any problem, conflicts contain substantive, procedural, and psychological dimensions to be negotiated. In order to best understand the threat perceived by those engaged in a conflict, we need to consider all of these dimensions.

From the Caribbean perspective any examination of the concept of conflict and manifestations of conflict will be incomplete without some examination of their interpretation within the realm of the rich cultural traditions of our own Caribbean civilization. Many of the leading icons<sup>1</sup> of Caribbean popular culture have all treated with the issue of conflict and provided their own interpretations in the various art forms. Winsford Devine, the prolific Trinidadian song writer shared his unique interpretation of causes and effects of world conflict in his ‘River of Tears’, some of which is excerpted below.

*While politicians living it up, Institutions become more corrupt  
Vagrants and destitutes on the streets, Infants with simply nothing to eat  
It’s arming, disarming, Alarming, droughts and famine  
The overlords and a chosen few, Making the whole world blue*

*Capitalism and Apartheid, Communism on the other side  
Every system have their axe to grind, Bringing despair to the human mind*

---

<sup>1</sup> Caribbean artistes such as The Might Sparrow, David Rudder and Winsford Devine (Trinidad and Tobago), Bob Marley, Peter Tosh, and Beanie Man, (Jamaica) Gabby (Barbados) and the Mid Night Grovers (Dominica), have all explored Caribbean and world conflict themes in their music.

*It's ruction, destruction, Invasion, assassination  
Government troops and government spies, Putting water in people eyes*

*People crying, Crying the world a river of tears.*

In this and other populist explorations of conflict, its manifestation is pervasive, as there is no social class, strata, community or society which is immune to its impact. However empirical evidence confirms that conflict impacts on the vulnerable and dispossessed, including young people, in a profound and disproportionate manner.

### **Conflict – the Caribbean experience**

Unlike many other parts of the world, the Caribbean has with very few exceptions escaped the anguish, trauma and atrocities of major armed conflicts, civil unrests and territorial disputes.

Generally, the Caribbean is considered as having a rich democratic tradition and a relatively stable political climate. However, that is not to say the Region is immune to manifestations of conflict such as social and political exclusion, the increasing manifestation of violence within our political culture, physical and emotional abuse especially against women and children, the perceived discriminatory practices and abuse of authority on the part of state and parastatal organs, and serious incidents of criminality and vandalism.

### **Crime and violence – the paramount challenge**

Crime and violence, justifiably so, seems to be the one social issue with which the Caribbean is most preoccupied. In his 2006 New Year's address the then Prime Minister of Jamaica P.J Patterson said "*Without a doubt the high level of violent crime remains our most troubling and pressing problem*". A few months earlier, in his address to the opening of the Parliament of Republic of Trinidad and Tobago in September 2005, President Maxwell Richards said the country was in crisis due to the escalating crime rate.

Through multiple channels, crime and violence threaten the welfare of Caribbean citizens. Beyond the direct effect on victims, crime and violence inflict widespread costs, generating a climate of fear for all citizens and diminishing economic growth. The 2003 World Bank Country Study supports these assertions. "*Based on homicide rates, the Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) Region as a whole is the most violent region in the world. At 22.9 per 100,000 people in 1990, homicide rates for the Caribbean are almost double the world average of 10.7 per 100,000 -and as in the rest of the LAC Region, available data indicate that homicide victims and perpetrators are disproportionately young men. Within the Caribbean, Jamaica's homicide rates are the highest (35 homicide per 100,000) and levels for the Dominican Republic and Trinidad and Tobago exceed the world average.<sup>2</sup> (11.7 and 12.6 homicide per 100.000, respectively) (Ayes 1998).*

---

<sup>2</sup> World Bank Country Study, Caribbean Youth Development Issues and Policy Direction, 2003

Violence also appears to be mounting in the larger islands; for example, it increased sixfold in Trinidad and Tobago from the early 1990s. Violent crimes tend to be geographically concentrated in poor urban communities (Ayres 1998). Murder rates in the Caribbean—at 30 per 100,000 population annually—are also reported to be higher than for any other region of the world and have risen in recent years for many of the region’s countries. Assault rates, based on assaults reported to police, are also reported to be significantly above the world average.<sup>3</sup>

### **The scope of Caribbean youth crime and violence**

*It is an illusion that youth is happy, an illusion of those who have lost it; but the young know they are wretched for they are full of the truthless ideal which have been instilled into them, and each time they come in contact with the real, they are bruised and wounded.* Somerset Maugham (1874 - 1965), ‘Of Human Bondage’

The formal survey on the impact of the 2000-2005 Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE) on national programmes for youth, asked governments and young people to comment on most critical issues facing young people. The Caribbean Region cited “violence and crime” over all other social and development issues. As established in the foregoing pages, the number one consistently reported social issue for much of the Caribbean is crime and violence<sup>4</sup>. Accordingly to the World Bank, its only serious rival is economic development.

The March 2007 UNODC and World Bank Report on Crime and Violence in the Caribbean<sup>5</sup> critically cites crime and violence as a development issue and shows the relationship between high rates of crime and violence to human welfare and social development, business and investment, and overall economic development. Poverty features as a key factor for youth aggression. The UNODC 2007 Report indicated that the majority of the youth offenders polled from a non-Commonwealth country reported that they resorted to crime to combat their poverty. Young sex-workers from South America who were arrested in Trinidad and Tobago in late 2006 and threatened with deportation also cited poverty as the main issue driving their choices.

The implications of youth crime and violence to social capital development are important. Most governments are quick to affirm that “youth are our future”. However, according to WHO, the

---

<sup>3</sup> Report No. 37820 -Crime, Violence, and Development: Trends, Costs, and Policy Options in the Caribbean, March 2007. Joint Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Latin America and the Caribbean Region of the World Bank Report No. 37820 -Crime, Violence, and Development: Trends, Costs, and Policy Options in the Caribbean, March 2007. Joint Report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Latin America and the Caribbean Region of the World Bank

<sup>4</sup> The open-ended question “What would you say is the single most serious challenge facing our country today?” was asked to a representative sample of the population of the islands of St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and Antigua and Barbuda in Spring 2005. “The crime rate” was the most popular response, with 45 percent of respondents mentioning it as a first or second priority. World Bank, 2005a

<sup>5</sup> Report No. 37820

rate of Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)<sup>6</sup> lost to violence in almost all Caribbean countries is above the worldwide average. Available data indicate a majority youth cohort in the criminal justice system, that is for: The Bahamas 18 – 24; Belize 20- 23; Grenada 28; Guyana 18 -30; St Kitts 21; St Lucia 20-29 and St Vincent and the Grenadines 25<sup>7</sup>. If we further extrapolate the reported statistics of youth involved in crime<sup>8</sup>, youth who are victims of homicides<sup>9</sup>, and other physical or psychological damage as a result of crime, the implications for our “future” social capital are devastating. This is further exacerbated by the evidence pointing out that violent behaviour in youth has a strong tendency to continue into adulthood (WHO, 2003; Levitt, 1998).

Youth development professionals have a clear understanding of the factors that contribute to risk taking and risky behaviour among youth. Positive youth development establishes that young people will rely on a proven range of competencies for the development of self-esteem and life coping skills if they are to be well-rounded and adjusted. These include social, creative, personal, cognitive, civic and employment competencies and physical and mental health. The factors which influence these competencies are at four levels, the individual, peer and family and community levels. Societal factors such as cultural norms and economic conditions play an integral role.

These four levels similarly influence criminal and violent behavior. The accepted “risk factors” for youth crime and violence are the wider issues of poverty, marginalization, and the absence of informed decision-making. In the latter case, the economist theory of criminal behavior holds that a rational decision was made having weighed the expected benefits compared to the expected costs, that is the relative returns of crime versus legal activities, the probability of being apprehended and convicted, and the punishments and life-long implications. Young people, however, are often not possessed of full and accurate information on which to assess the implications of crime. In this same vein, messages to youth from both regional and international (U.S.) media and music in particular, are often “hyped-up” and inaccurate expressions of rage or alienation—anti-women, pro-drugs, pro-violence, and materialistic—that influence the negative and violent decisions in youth in the Caribbean. (World Bank, 2003a).

While improvements in education have been reported to reduce the risk of violence among youth, a Caribbean Health Survey found that teenagers with difficulty learning in school were more likely to fight with weapons and attempt suicide.<sup>10</sup> The absence of informed decision-making is a significant risk factor that can also be regrettably linked to the Caribbean’s limiting

---

<sup>6</sup> DALYs are the standard international health measure of the burden of disease used by the World Health Organization (WHO).

<sup>7</sup> From Professor Ramesh Deosaran, *A Portrait of Crime in the Caribbean: Realities and Challenges*. In I.L. Griffith (Ed.), *Caribbean Security in the Age of Terror: Challenges and Change*. Mona, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of the UNODC Report, *youth violence* is defined as homicide and non-fatal attacks perpetrated by or against a person aged 10-29 years of age. This age range coincides with globally comparable data available on youth violence from the WHO.

<sup>10</sup> PAHO: *Youth violence in Latin America: current situation and violence prevention strategies*, Katherine Weaver and Matilde Maddaleno

education system which, while recognizing the need to address special needs and the acquisition of personal and life skills, does not currently provide the necessary mechanisms for implementation.

If we look at the societal level in the Caribbean, there are specific dynamic attributes or *criminogenic needs* that can be linked to offending - such as financial status, emotional problems, substance use, unemployment and underemployment, drug-dealing, early sexual initiation, abuse, forced intercourse, adolescent pregnancy, early school leaving, low-self-esteem, poor family support and adopting a gang to fill the place of “family”; ambivalence and hopelessness, and high rates of weapon and gun possession. The fact that the Caribbean is heavily affected by the international scourge of drug trafficking, urban migration, and ineffective policing also constitute risk factors to youth.

In some countries, there is also a tendency for political parties to manipulate young people into partisan groups to secure their votes. This has led to conflict situations and greater marginalisation of some youth populations that last long after elections and significantly damage social cohesion.

When we look at the gender dimensions of crime and violence, abuse of girls and young women feature prominently, especially if the violence involves sex (PAHO, 2000). *“Violence against women affects a significant percentage of women and girls in the Caribbean. Police statistics offer only a very imperfect picture of violence against women, since the majority of these incidents are not reported to police and increased trust in police will increase reporting. To get a more precise idea of prevalence rates, one must use victimization surveys that focus on violence against women. One such regional victimization survey revealed that 48 percent of adolescent girls’ sexual initiation was “forced” or “somewhat forced” in nine Caribbean countries”*.<sup>11</sup>

There is also another gender dimension of crime and violence that is a grave cause for concern. The presence of large populations of young men is known to be associated with higher crime rates in communities. For example, while young people were reported to make up nearly two-thirds of those found guilty of crimes; males were four times more likely than females to be found guilty of a crime, with the sex differentials having increased every year since 1960<sup>12</sup>.

One may therefore seek to assign a co-relation between male involvement in crime and the increasingly high incidences of male under-achievement, school drop outs and male social and economic exclusion. Indeed the OECS reported that the typical characteristics of youth ‘at risk’ is that they are predominantly male, 15 to 19 years of age; come from families and communities dealing with unprecedented challenges; have some secondary education (incomplete) or little formal education; and ascribe to subcultures marked by substance abuse and criminal activity”.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to all of the foregoing, given all the emotional and psychological issues that are associated with the state of youth and seeking to belong, we must also factor in the tremendous

---

<sup>11</sup> Report No. 37820

<sup>12</sup> Caribbean Youth Development – World Bank 2003

<sup>13</sup> Report of the 1<sup>st</sup> OECS Conference on Youth Crime and Violence, October 2006

psychological dimensions of “dissing” or public humiliation often witnessed by peers that have become predominant triggers of retaliatory and premeditated youth-on-youth violence.

## **Responses to crime and violence**

### **Regional**

Public opinion on youth crime and violence across the Caribbean has become harsh and unyielding. The media in the Caribbean, for the most part, provides extensive reporting on all crime thus bringing it to the attention of families, kinships, young people themselves and their networks, the non governmental sector, development planners and governments. It is now the major subject of the print and electronic media.

Cases involving youth are further sensationalized to breed fear and reactionary punitive solutions to what is marketed as escalating violent crimes by younger categories of offenders. There is no reliable practice of providing analytical and investigative follow-up on crime involving the very young, such as can be seen in the US, UK, Canada and other countries. This has effectively placed the locus of blame squarely on the young perpetrators without any attempt to situate the social, economic and political root causes.

CARICOM adopted a regional approach to the issue of violence and crime in 2001 when the CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government established a Regional Task Force on Crime and Security. The task force was mandated to examine the major causes of crime, and to recommend a framework for coordinated action for crime prevention and security, the challenges of the drug trade, improving interdiction, tackling the proliferation of illegal weapons and enhancing the Region’s capacity to tackle crime.

CARICOM also established a Commission on Youth Development in March 2007. The Commission comprises youth representatives, academics and technocrats, and originated out of a mandate from the 2006 Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government held in St. Kitts and Nevis to “provide a full scale analysis of the challenges and opportunities for youth in the CARICOM ... and to make recommendations on how to improve their well-being and empowerment.”<sup>14</sup> This mandate implied recognition of the link between empowerment and a reduction of risk taking and risky and deviant behaviour (criminogenic needs).

At the inaugural Meeting of the Commission, the Chair directly posited the need for the Commission to “explore the role of violence in defining young people”, to make the link for informed polices and programmes that factor in the role of violence “as a sub-culture which gives young people a sense of self”.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> CARICOM Press Release 54/2007

<sup>15</sup> Press release 61/2007 – Inaugural Meeting of CARICOM Commission on Youth Development explores cross-cutting issues.

The Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), a sub-grouping of the CARICOM launched a Youth Initiative in 2007 with a focus on establishing a framework of Economic and Social Justice for Youth to counteract the prevalence of crime and violence, among youth, which is “a challenge to the small economies of the OECS”.

It is instructive that discussions on crime and violence again featured prominently at the March 2008 Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Heads of Government Meeting in The Bahamas, prompting a decision to convene a special summit of Head of Government in Trinidad and Tobago in April 2008 to discuss the issue of crime and violence in the Caribbean.

### **Youth Networks and Civil Society Organisations**

Youth violence has also become a high-priority and high-visibility concern for civil society. In Guyana for example, a highly vocal and well connected Peacebuilders Network has been promoting dialogue for social inclusion, social cohesion and citizens’ participation in governance as a means of transforming conflicts and averting recourse to open violence. Young people and women, who are viewed among populations with highest socio-economic vulnerabilities, are specially targeted in these efforts. Special interest NGOs and CBOs have a critical role to play to ensure that these populations are represented at decision-making fora, and to advocate for the interests of special sub-sectors including women and youth with disabilities.

Like NGOs, young people and their networks in the Caribbean, in particular National Youth Councils (NYCs) have also traditionally served as the social conscience of the society, and as excellent barometers of positive social change. The current crisis of leadership and strategic vision in the regional youth movement, however, has implications for young people’s ability and availability to take strategic and value-adding roles in the peace-building and social cohesion process. The vital advocacy and catalytic role, previously played by youth leaders, has been largely reduced to symbolic gestures on violence reduction and conflict transformation, such as rallies and marches and so on, which have little chance of influencing systemic positive change in youth themselves and in the development of government policies and programmes. There is clearly an important causal link between the strengthening of youth networks and active youth participation in the peace-building process. NYCs, NGOs and CBOs, all have to be critically assessed and supported to ensure that they optimize their reach, relevance and effectiveness as agents of conflict transformation in the communities.

### **National Youth Policies**

Most national Youth Departments of the Commonwealth Caribbean have drafted national youth policies. For the most part, these policies refer to crime and violence as a key factor impacting youth and their development, and cite the deleterious effects of the drug trade, the availability of guns and the “gun culture” on youth. Conventional and organised crimes are therefore recognised as impacting significantly on youth populations.

Jamaica's Youth Policy reports that about 15 percent of students ages 10 to 18 carry a weapon to school, one in six adolescents belong to a gang at some point during their youth and "youth are arrested, jailed, and murdered at twice the rate of the general population".<sup>16</sup> Youth under the age of 25 were also responsible for 51 percent of all murders and 56 percent of all major crimes in 2000 (World Bank, 2004). There is an important link made to crime and violence as a risk factor for health and other social problems. The Policy responds to these negative impacts, among other things through education and training; employment and entrepreneurship, participation and empowerment; and care and protection.

Dominica and Anguilla in recognizing that one of the major challenges is to reduce "the level of crime and violence committed by and towards young people", acknowledge that "structural weaknesses in the social and economic systems, and lack of financial and other resources"<sup>17</sup> are significant factors that impede more appropriate responses to the dangers of crime and violence among the young.

In Turks and Caicos and Antigua and Barbuda, there is focus on holistic development of youth to respect the rule of law, and counteract risky and deviant behaviour, including through second chance programmes to re-integrate young offenders into mainstream development.

In Trinidad and Tobago's Policy, the attempt is made to address "crime and violence through programmes of participation and inclusion and targeting of 'at risk' youth recognizing that crime and violence pose serious challenges for the youth policy because the age group 14-16 are active participants in criminal activity"<sup>18</sup>.

Most youth policy documents point to the need for youth-led approaches for violence reduction and conflict resolution at school and in other community based institutions, as well as for other preventive and rehabilitative measures. The attempt is also made to envision the kind of national society and civilization in its most pure sense that the country is seeking to create and empower youth people to take up key roles for the process.

While the overall national response to crime must be diverse, youth policy would need to address crime and violence by tackling and preempting the root causes and sub-causes that most impact young people. Young people themselves are aware that many of the root causes are not *de facto* youth issues. The Chief Justice of the Caribbean Court of Justice put this in context when he commented that it may prove difficult to convince the youth "that we the older generations, who must accept responsibility for the society as it now exists, are serious about wanting to change it."<sup>19</sup>

Notwithstanding the useful platform afforded by youth policies, it is evident that many are not being fully implemented. There is also a more systemic problem caused by the failure to

---

<sup>16</sup> Jamaica Youth Policy

<sup>17</sup> Anguilla Youth Policy

<sup>18</sup> T&T National Youth Policy

<sup>19</sup> See <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/news/152865/154171/169250/judge.htm> - "Promoting Respect and Understanding is two-way street": Feature Address of the Right Honourable Mr. Justice Michael de la Bastide, President of the Caribbean Court of Justice to the Opening Ceremony of CYPCC Regional Advisory Board (RAB) meeting in Trinidad and Tobago on August 20, 2007

effectively integrate cross-sectoral policy approaches to achieve reductions in youth violence and pathological behaviour in youth development, in education, sports, security and justice. The combined result is that there are minimal benefits and less significant impacts on positive behaviour and change for youth.

The development of Youth Policies has also not been adequately bolstered by capacity building for young people and for youth workers to lead the implementation effort. Further, the absence of implementation units in many countries has contributed to youth development remaining a peripheral issue not systematically managed as a critical human and social capital investment.

## **Recommendations**

Youth violence in Caribbean societies demands concerted and sustained action. There is a clear need to reduce situations and environments at the levels of the individual, family, community and society, which can be criminogenic and to implement related policies that will bring positive impacts to youth at all the contributing levels.

Addressing youth violence should be a development priority that is inextricably linked to youth empowerment. The Commonwealth concept of youth empowerment can be likened to a double coincidence of wants. Youth have the capacity to be well informed, positive societal influences and responsible contributors to individual, community and national development. Governments have capacity to create the all encompassing social, economic, and political environment that equip young people to think and be responsible, well-informed, well-rounded and self-actualised.

The rationale for youth empowerment is effectively detailed in the PAYE. It is a clear effort to mainstream youth issues and to engage national public policy in a wider conversation that fully integrates a youth perspective. While the linkage has been long stressed between unemployment, poverty and the marginalization of large parts of youth affected by “drug and substance abuse, violence, including gender-based violence, neglect, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation; youth involved in armed conflicts... young offenders... and other disadvantaged and marginalised young women and young men”<sup>20</sup>, Caribbean Governments still have not for the most part, managed youth development as a well coordinated and strategic requirement of national development agenda.

Interventions to reduce poverty and increase hope can reduce the incidence of violence and crime. As such, the point needs to be further emphasized that reducing conflict, managing youth crime and violence and building a safe and secure civilization is about youth empowerment. For empowerment to take place, governments must leverage a fully mainstreamed approach to youth development that aggressively measures the policies and programmes across all sectors that target development needs of youth and adjust them systemically for beneficial impacts. This means that each Government must accept the responsibility to customize policy and programmatic responses that both target at-risk factors and re-enforce and sustain positive behaviour.

---

<sup>20</sup> See Proceedings of the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, Lisbon Portugal, August 8-12, 1998

Empowerment strategies will transect a range of professional disciplines, including those of public health, education, life skills training and youth income generation. Strategies for conflict transformation, for peace building and for reducing the incidence of youth crime and violence must therefore fully and effectively engage a wide range of stakeholders.

Empowerment for peace-building must necessarily involve and sustain a rights-based approach and be firmly rooted in education. This education is the life-long process from childhood through adolescence and young adulthood that will develop the capabilities necessary for young people, individually, within their families, with their peers, and as a member of society to create their life choices and understand the implications and make informed decisions, fully understanding their consequences. Education in this context and consistent with the development framework of the PAYE will produce (cognitive) knowledge and job skills; personal and social skills, and life skills, values and attitudes. This education will rely on schools and institutions of learning, as much as on family and kinship networks, strong role models and social systems, culture and traditions and affirming peer support.

Empowering youth to reduce the incidences of youth crime and violence must engage and sustain the participation of young people at all levels of the process, including at the level of action research, in particular social assessment. Currently, there is a dearth of such research to inform youth policy. However policy and programming responses to transform conflict and youth crime and violence must be developed on the basis of research informing the risk-needs of young male and female offenders and conversely the factors driving positive development and achievement.

The value of applying the social assessment methodology led by young people themselves in reaching grass-root communities, clubs, and a variety of locations frequented by youth with criminogenic needs cannot be overstated. Such research would be pivotal in designing policy and programmatic responses that truly address those aspects of youth functioning that are risk factors for violence and crime and those aspects of youth functioning associated with a high need for achievement. In addition young people will also need a range of tools to include advocacy, conflict transformation and mediation, communication, anger management, life skills, democracy and governance, human rights and gender sensitivity to become effective agents of conflict transformation and peace-building.

The non-negotiable role of young people in the process is central to Commonwealth principles of youth engagement. This position is also reflected in the 2004 UN statement which emphasized that youth 'should be engaged as central actors in identifying issues that concern them and in formulating solutions. The many initiatives of young peacebuilders around the world are evidence that youth are also agents of peace; with the right educational tools for crisis prevention and peace building, they can develop the skills needed to help prevent violent and arm conflicts.'" (United Nations 2004)

## Conclusion

A range of practical programmes and interventions have already been presented at other fora to prevent youth violence. Having made the strong and inextricable link for empowering young people to ensure and sustain their role as peace builders for reducing crime and violence, the following practical approaches are presented for discussion:

1. Mainstreaming PAYE into National Development Policy and Plans. We have already alluded to the inextricable link between Youth Empowerment and the creation of a culture of peace and harmony. Unfortunately though Governments, Youth Networks, Civil Society and Youth Development stakeholders in general have not demonstrated adequate urgency and political will in creating the strategic framework for implementation. Consequently we propose the following: (A). Convene national stakeholder consultations to create greater awareness of PAYE and forge agreement on national strategic frameworks for effective implementation. (B) Implement Capacity building workshops on PAYE implementation strategies for key public policy officials. (C). Train a cadre of Youth and Civil society leaders, Youth development professionals and media personnel to become PAYE “Experts”. Their task will include creating public awareness, and assisting with the implementation and monitoring implementation of PAYE action points at the national level.
2. Creating a Commonwealth Youth Champions of Peace Initiative (CYCOPs). Regional Youth Caucus representatives, past and present will be specially trained and certified in international human rights, conflict transformation and leadership to advocate for peaceful solutions and behaviour change and to transfer learning to wider numbers of youth in schools and communities. By the end of June 2009, the Commonwealth Caribbean will have trained and certified 30 CYCOPs for trickle down impacts to an estimated 4,000 plus<sup>21</sup> youth annually.
3. Taking action for evidence-based National Youth Policies. In collaboration with regional universities, a research study will be developed and piloted in schools and communities in at least three (3) countries to evaluate the risk factors for crime and violence in adolescent and youth cohorts, on the one hand, and for achievement motivation factors on the other. Youth Ministries and Departments and National Youth Councils will be supported to enhance national capacity to manage the research and evaluation process in order to create and sustain a credible body of knowledge over time. This will be useful in the medium and long run in informing whether youth policies and programmes address the determinants for youth violence prevention or for high achievement.
4. Developing the Young Men in Action Project (YMAP) The prevalence of large numbers of Caribbean young men who are not constructively engaged is as well documented as is the growing concern over male under participation and achievement. This pilot will target at least 3 young men from each country in the Region who are high-risk or offenders to benefit from a structured 3 month residential programme that will impart life coping skills, achievement motivation, conflict transformation, leadership and

---

<sup>21</sup> Assuming 6 interventions a year in each country targeting at least 40 school students and youth per session.

entrepreneurship skills. This programme will be heavily contingent upon Government support for candidate selection and preparation, for sharing costs for candidate placement and residential training; to guarantee equitable access to jobs or micro-loans and concessions for the programme graduates who want to start up businesses; and to provide ongoing mentorship and support to the young men. Lessons from this programme can be useful to help Governments develop strategic interventions for young men over time.

Beyond the specific interventions presented herein the relevance and impact of more profound reforms at the political, economic, and social and criminal justice levels cannot be over emphasised. The interventions involve a longer-term process and commitment that will create a Caribbean culture and society that is based on peace-building and which successfully reference and leverage Commonwealth principles, tools, methodology and capacity.

Addressing political alienation, economic marginalization and the social exclusion that impact various strata of societies (especially young people) must become central to the psyche of each country. Governments must proceed with much urgency to effectively engage and empower all citizens in the effort to create a climate of peace, harmony and stability. In this way, each person can acknowledge and accept proportionate responsibility for creating a safe haven for all. In this regard the words of renowned Guyanese poet the late Martin Carter resonate with much relevance. “*This I have learnt: today a speck, tomorrow a hero, hero or monster...all are involved, all are consumed*”<sup>22</sup>.

---

<sup>22</sup> See Martin Carter’s “*The Kind Eagle*”, 1951