



Commonwealth
Youth Ministers Meeting

Colombo, Sri Lanka, 27-30 April 2008

Provisional Agenda Item 6

YMM(08)6-4
PAP-COE-PAC

**CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE:
PROGRAMMATIC AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS,
PACIFIC**

Commonwealth Secretariat
Marlborough House
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March 2008



**CYP Pacific Centre of Excellence (CoE)
in youth-led research, knowledge gathering and information sharing
Draft Proposal**

Background

According to the UN World Youth Report 2007: “assessing the impact of interventions and investments made in youth development remains difficult because youth-related age-disaggregated data are not always available. Where these data do exist, they are often part of a larger compilation on other population groups and youth-specific issues and trends remain hidden or are glossed over...Many gaps remain that need to be filled through new data collection. Further, even existing data are often not fully reliable.”

The document ‘Centres of Excellence – Working DRAFT 2 (12th October 2007) states that CYP’s central plank for youth empowerment is built upon the rights-based approach to development where the participation of young women and men across the Commonwealth is a fundamental asset in the development process. CYP believes that: “development and human rights are inter-related” and that “meaningful youth engagement is built on the recognition that every young person has something to contribute to the active improvement of a society”. Importantly, research shows that those youth who are actively participating in their development and the development of others have a much better expectancy of navigating their way into adulthood and succeeding as contributing citizens in their communities and nations. Further, they have the ‘tools’ from their learned experiences to handle life’s stresses and make the right choices.

Youth must acquire – and not just require – specific skills to assist them to realise successful youth development outcomes. A snapshot of youth suggests that researchers must take into account where youth are situated. The lens might capture young people going about their business, going places, seeking new experiences, hanging with peers, playing sports, learning new skills and striving for difference from others. An analysis of youth across the Commonwealth can only be a fleeting endeavour (and reminder) to the fluidity and speed at which young people can simply outstrip the researchers’ lens and focus; what is researched and recorded today can be redundant tomorrow. While there has been some very good research on youth in development there is not a lot of research about youth carried out by youth. Who better then, to capture periodically youth in development; their issues, their place in families, their communities and their respective nation’s development?

Initially through Programme Manager enquiries the opinions from RAB and RYC representatives in the Pacific region provided the support to further explore the concept of a CoE being accommodated at the Pacific Centre. In late October 2007 the idea was mooted between RAB, RYC and CYP staff concerning good practice youth development in the South Pacific region. Critique was sought from ‘informed professional people’ in the Pacific region. The feedback was very positive and what stemmed initially from informal discussions in the wings of the RAB meetings in the Cook Islands has developed quickly so that the Pacific Centre staff might act to support those discussion’ outcomes and the current discussions concerning the CoE. Further dialogue at the PI&ERM meeting in Sydney, Australia resulted in a proposal for the establishment of a Project Working Group (PWG).

Objectives

The main aim in establishing a CYP Pacific CoE is to facilitate learnings that critically inform youth stakeholders in their practice together with youth across the Commonwealth. The CoE initiative proposes utilising empowerment with an emphasis on youth as researchers engaged in participatory / action research:

- To research, highlight and strengthen various components of youth development theory and practice.

- To contribute significantly to the discourse on youth development, and add to the body of knowledge
- To increase the pool of youth as researchers and their ability to access funding for research endeavours.

Youth Participation

Young people will be involved in all aspects of planning, designing and implementing research. The research undertaking aims to provide case studies; those shared ideas and practices that have worked across the four regions of the Commonwealth over time; as validated by youth recipients and those agencies delivering youth development programmes / services. This will further extend the current knowledge of good practice in youth development across the Commonwealth to better serve the interests of youth and youth stakeholders in a sustained and informed approach.

Support for CoE at the CYP Pacific Centre

The CYP Pacific Centre has taken the lead and is looking to form a project working group (PWG) comprising RAB/RYC and CYP representatives to meet every six months. Initially the PWG would meet around March 2008 as this would lend positively to cost savings given that this is also the time that discussion has centred on bringing the new RYC membership together for induction / orientation and training. The PWG would provide ongoing advice to the CYP around CoE design, development and implementation. Initially there might be a focus on 'good practice youth development in the Pacific region' and the "professionalisation of the youth work sector in the Pacific region". The cross-cutting opportunities would lend to securing a good interface and relationship between the RAB members and the new RYC members and perhaps become a model for enhancing the RYC/RAB and CYP interface.

Logistically, the PWG is not difficult. Members would be interchangeable from a RAB/RYC standpoint and CYP would be seen to be enhancing good youth development practice by building capacity in the ability for representatives with the delegated authority of the RAB / RYC to meet and strengthen their relationships and enhance support for CYP Programmes in the region. This further addresses issues raised at the RAB 2007 where delegates suggested RAB, RYC and CYP come together more regularly to keep relations current and be informed of new developments.

Pacific CoE: Guiding Principles

The Pacific CoE will be guided by the following principles:

- Promotion of youth participation and youth empowerment at all levels of society
- Addressing the broad spectrum of youth trends, issues and outcomes
- Avoid duplication of endeavour and be willing partners to complement existing and emerging research initiatives.
- Focus on researching issues of national and regional significance, build on existing research expertise, and link community-based and academic sectors
- Work to ensure that important knowledge from any research endeavour is broadly disseminated across all Commonwealth countries facilitating ready access for those who develop and deliver youth programmes
- Support research activities that enhance good governance, accountability and transparency and reinforce monitoring and evaluation in the youth and youth worker sectors.
- Enhance the role and profile of the youth sector; augment the research body of knowledge for youth development to give greater support to practitioners and in doing so extend the range of expertise available to facilitate innovative service delivery to youth.

Dedicated Space

The physical manifestation of the proposed CYP Pacific Centre's Centre of Excellence (CoE) is the Youth Empowerment in Research and Resources Centre (YERRC) based at the Pacific Centre, Solomon Islands. From here it is proposed that research activity including developing young people as researchers will occur. While there will be a physical base in the Pacific region this is not to minimise the fact that the CoE will service the four regions of the Commonwealth; Africa, Asia, Caribbean and the Pacific. Leveraging resources to enhance the success of the CoE includes:

- Working with the Solomon Islands Government to host the CoE in partnership with CYP;
- Working together with tertiary institutions around the Commonwealth to facilitate a repository of resources encompassing the 'youth aspect' with an emphasis on youth in development;
- Working with international agencies and youth ministries in a collaborative endeavour to ensure that the CoE meets the needs of countries both in general and specific to each country;
- Working with existing Partner Institutions that deliver the Diploma in Youth Development to enable access for students requiring research materials and other resources to complete their studies, and students / graduates being considered for research training opportunities;
- Explore support from internet gurus "Google" and "Microsoft" on repository online services and routing materials to youth workers and students and in doing so to consider intellectual property arrangements;
- Establish project working committee comprising RAB/RYP and CYP staff with 1-2 professionals with expertise in IT and Youth Development;
- Identify and potentiate youth with research ability to be first cohort of trained youth in participatory / action research and together with the youth;
- Identify conjoint youth research projects across all four regions of the Commonwealth;
- Consider funding opportunities both direct and in-kind for research training activities including 3 month intensive research training internships for youth at identified research institutions across the Commonwealth;
- Explore funding opportunities together with International Agencies, Youth Ministries and Corporates.

A CoE provides an important learning and development resource and a 'laboratory in action' where the working relationship between CYP and youth as researchers in itself requires research in real time.

The physical YERRC will "enable the development of evidence-based practice, the application of critical methods of learning, enquiry and practice development in order to enhance the capacity, knowledge and skills of youth in each specialised field of endeavour". The Pacific CoE will focus on effective strategies for engaging youth in meaningful participation in decision- making. One of the key principles of the CoE would be to commit and to engage youth directly in planning, designing and implementing the Centre's activities in partnership with a number of other stakeholders. DYD graduates as one example might be sought to provide input.

Partnerships in Creating the Pacific CoE

CYP Pacific acknowledges that there is a limited resource base and that there needs to be good working relationships with agencies and organisations in order to complement one another and support youth development across the Commonwealth. It makes good sense to partner to effectively minimise duplication of effort and waste of resources. It is also advantageous leveraging off one another to address each partner's key goals and objectives in the youth aspect. A list of working and potential partners appears in Appendix 1.

Conclusion

Youth as researchers, knowledge providers and conduits for the dissemination of good information to youth must be a serious proposition, albeit ambitious. The Commonwealth has made good progress in the past through its abilities to partner with and to embed in their partnering the core Commonwealth values that are essentially values that most peoples commit to. The CoE initiative will facilitate training and capacity building for RABs, RYPs and other youth stakeholders in consideration of the key youth issues highlighted

by the situational analysis in the three programme areas, in the Commonwealth countries as identified in partnership. Examples might include governance and human rights training; training on translating youth policies into action; leading to more effective and efficient implementation of government policies, mainstreaming of the youth aspect in policies in all spheres of government decision making.

APPENDIX 1

PHASES OF CoE and BUDGET

Phase No. Objective Title	Objective Leader	(£000s)
<p>Phase 1: Ground work/Preparation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion together with RAB and RYC members along with partnering institutions representatives and external moderators for the DYD; • Identify project working group / committee to provide advice / oversight; • Seek buy in from the Solomon Islands Government; explain the concept and how a Commonwealth focus will have benefits for the Pacific and for the Solomons; • Scope / Identify national research institutions; initially the Pacific Commonwealth countries, then in collaboration with the other three Commonwealth regions, those research institutions in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean; • To engage with cohort of young people from youth organizations to seek their views as to the design and implementation of a CYP Pacific Centre for the four regions, collating their views as to how youth might have some significant input into research design, actual research, monitoring and evaluation of research findings; • Emphasis on the participation of young people in research (e.g. RYC members, Diploma students / graduates, youth workers in country); • Emphasis on the need to identify a pool of young researchers in each country • Emphasis on the importance for the provision of training in participatory / action research • Emphasis on the need for the research to support 'youth mainstreaming' into the research communities / institutions • Short proposal and Long proposal • Emphasis on identifying initial pool of potential youth researches in each country; • Engaging internet gurus "Google" and "Microsoft" to explore youth development repository opportunities with intention to leverage off their huge capacity to host website in partnership with CYP • The appropriation and sharing of knowledge gained from the programme through a series of forums and seminars that may include publications • Refurbishment of YERRC at the Pacific Centre 	<p>CYP Pacific Centre (OL) RYC (OL) Solomon Island Govt. Regional Centres / PanCom UN Agencies EU SPC NZAID AusAid Oxfam Youth Ministries Partnering Institutions / Other tertiary institutions CSO / NGOs IT / Internet 'Gurus'</p>	95
<p>Phase 2: A Situational Analysis of each Country</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An external person plus one youth training as a researcher to carry out a situational analysis on the mandated Commonwealth countries specifically to examine the following: • the identification of national research institutions in the Pacific countries with an existing youth research aspect; • the identification of potential youth researches in each of the Commonwealth countries; • the role of institutions in partnering with the CYP Pacific Centre to become a COE; this includes the discussion of an MOU with the respective research institutions; • Current status of governmental / youth Ministeries existing research capacities in-country; • To meet with young people and youth organizations on the idea for a CYP CoE and their role as partners in inputting into it especially as researchers themselves and contributing to designing, implementing and monitoring research projects • Developing a report which clearly portrays the expectations and objectives of the situational analysis exercise and also to map out a plan of action and to develop a report. 	<p>CYP Pacific Centre (OL) RYC (OL) Regional Centres / PanCom UN Agencies EU SPC NZAID AusAid Oxfam Youth Ministries Partnering Institutions / Other tertiary institutions CSO / NGOs IT / Internet 'Gurus'</p>	60

<p>Phase 3: Planning and Designing Research Programmes / Activities and Monitoring and Evaluation</p> <p>Research programmes will be identified through the following means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>CYP Strategic Plan, it's Strategic Programme Areas and its Cross Cutting Themes</i> – Utilising our strategic plan and our three strategic programme areas plus the cross cutting themes in consultation with all stakeholders to identify the themes for research. • <i>Building on Existing Research work across the Commonwealth</i> – all potential research programmes / projects will require a research Stocktake to ensure that there is not research duplication. Where there is an identified need and another research entity has been identified as undertaking the research; look at partnering / co-authoring arrangements • <i>In country youth organization priorities and outcomes of youth consultations in country</i> – feedback from these will open up research opportunities as undertaken in phase 2. Youth initiated research will take priority especially where there is clear alignment with the goals and objects of the CYP • <i>Emerging global youth development trends</i> – as they arise. This takes into account the fluidity of the youth aspect and how trends change in youth sector very quickly; what is a current body of knowledge today can so easily be relegated to history as being 'out of date and out of touch'. • <i>Sharing / Disseminating Findings</i> CYP CoE will on a regular basis provide updates especially concerning findings in a draft / summary form. <p>In Summary Costs include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Research plan, design and implementation 2) Consultancies – youth, youth stakeholders (as listed) 3) Travel – where possible 'piggy backing' on existing work travel plans 4) Training – initially tied to the March PWG / RYC orientation / induction 5) Capacity building to partners (e.g. govts, NGOs, youth stakeholders) 6) Communications (including Publications of research reports, media reporting by Intern and EZINE development). 7) Resources/Equipment – tied to EZINE development in YERRC 8) Logistics 	<p>CYP Pacific Centre (OL) RYC (OL) Regional Centres / PanCom UN Agencies EU SPC NZAID AusAid Oxfam Youth Ministries Partnering Institutions / Other tertiary institutions CSO / NGOs IT / Internet 'Gurus'</p>	<p>55</p>
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