COMMONWEALTH ALLIANCE OF YOUTH WORK ASSOCIATIONS CHARTER

Introduction
The Commonwealth Youth Program has a clear agenda to professionalise Youth Work throughout the Commonwealth. This is recognition of the value and impact that Youth Workers, Youth Ministries and Youth Development Workers have in communities. The Commonwealth refer to it as the theory of change. In essence, providing Youth Work education and professionalising Youth Work will improve systemic responses to young people; provide them with quality services to enact change.

On Sunday 6th March 2016 a dedicated group of representatives from Youth Work Associations around the Commonwealth met in a pre-meeting to the 2nd Commonwealth Youth Conference with the aim to form a Commonwealth Alliance of Youth Work Associations. The agreement was struck and as such an interim steering committee came together to build the Alliance. The forming of the Alliance is both symbolic and practical. It is symbolic to establish a Commonwealth alliance that sends a clear message of the importance and status of Youth Work. It is practical because the Alliance will build resources to support National Youth Work Associations. We will learn from each other what we should be aiming for and gain confidence in our own professional status.

Our mission
To raise the standard and status of youth work by connecting, strengthening and championing youth work professionalisation across the Commonwealth.

Strategic Priorities
- To establish the Commonwealth Alliance as a professional peak body supporting the development of national Youth Work professional associations.
- To provide strategic advice to the Commonwealth Youth Program on the Professionalisation of Youth Work.
- To advocate on behalf of Youth Work and Youth Work Professional Associations in international forums.
- To build resources and tools to assist the establishment of National Youth Work Associations.
- To establish a network of National Youth Work Associations where strategic advice and activities can be shared.

Our Values
Empowerment; Participation; Non-discrimination and Human Rights – the values of Commonwealth Youth Work

Practitioners of youth work have long held the view that most young people are disenfranchised from mainstream society, and are not treated equally by virtue of their age. Some young people are further marginalised by the social, political and economic contexts in which they live. It is the powerlessness associated with the socioeconomic and political
marginalisation faced by young people that links youth work to social justice, to human rights and, more broadly, to the concept of participation embedded in the idea of active citizenship. Youth workers believe that it is the right of all young people, based on their common humanity, to participate in the making of a civil society, and to reap its benefits. In this sense, professional youth work is underpinned by human rights, and by a commitment to enable the active participation of young people in the decisions that will affect them, particularly those made by governments and legislators on their behalf.

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 1948, the International Bill of Human Rights of 1966 and the Conventions on the Rights of the Child (CROC) of 1989, consider young people to be fully human (rather than their merely becoming human upon reaching the age of majority), and that as such they should have access to human rights. Encouraging the advancement of young people’s human rights and citizenship – through full and active political participation and engagement with the democratic processes and governance of their countries – has long been a core commitment of the Commonwealth of Nations found in the Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles 1971 (No. 6). This ‘right to participate by means of free and democratic political processes in framing the society in which one lives’ was re-affirmed in 1991 in the Harare declaration of Commonwealth principles and, in relation to young people, has been built upon and expanded in various Commonwealth forums, such as the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting and through the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

The Commonwealth’s Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment 2007-2015 (PAYE) builds upon the UN Millennium Development Goals and the Global Human Rights Agenda and is committed to a human rights-based approach to youth work involving the following elements: ‘Express linkage to human rights; Accountability to all stakeholders; Empowerment; Participation; Non-discrimination and attention to vulnerable groups’. The PAYE defines youth empowerment as ‘both an end and a means’ stating that:

Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather that at the direction of others (Commonwealth of Nations 2007:15).

The implications for Commonwealth youth workers are clear: development is a human rights entitlement. As such, youth workers across the Commonwealth take on the role of advocates, facilitating access to human rights, the democratic participation of young people in all levels of decision-making, and partnering with them in the development and transformation of their societies. The CYP emphasises this view by repeating the rhetorical question posed by youth work advocate Chandu Christian: For what are youth workers if they are not facilitators of human rights and development? (Commonwealth of Nations 2006:4).

Youth work as a recognised professional occupation in the Commonwealth is dealt with by PAYE goal 12, point 12.3, which specifically calls for the youth sector to “draft codes of professional ethics with express linkage to human rights”. It goes on to suggest that a critical pathway to developing the occupation of youth work and to delivering outcomes for young people should begin with the creation of “a code of conduct to guide it, as well as structures to monitor and regulate it”. A professional association of commonwealth youth workers
achieves this goal and will provide a vehicle for the promotion of codes of practice based in human rights.

Our commitment

- As an alliance we are committed to:
- Supporting the development of a professional qualification structure for youth work practitioners
- Supporting the development of continuing professional development programmes for youth work practitioners
- Supporting the creation, development and evolution of organisations supporting youth work practitioners across the Commonwealth
- Supporting, promoting and publicising the work of youth workers across the Commonwealth
- Undertaking research into youth work and young people's issues that is relevant and beneficial to the work of the CW
- Upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other relevant human rights covenants and international instruments.
- We are committed to equality and respect for the protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development all without discrimination on any grounds as the foundations of peaceful, just and stable societies. We note that these rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and cannot be implemented selectively.
- Opposing all forms of discrimination, whether rooted in gender, race, colour, creed, political belief or other grounds
- We are committed to peaceful, open dialogue and the free flow of information, including through a free and responsible media, and to enhancing democratic traditions and strengthening democratic processes, within the Alliance’s member organisations.
- Recognising the importance of information and communication technologies as powerful instruments of development, as well as promoting education, learning and the sharing of culture. We are committed to strengthening its use while enhancing its security, for the purpose of advancing our Alliance.
- Recognising the positive and active role and contributions of young people in promoting development, peace, democracy and in protecting Commonwealth values, such as tolerance and understanding, including respect for other cultures. The future success of the Commonwealth rests with the continued commitment and contributions of young people in promoting and sustaining the Commonwealth and its values and principles, and we commit to investing in and promoting their development, particularly through the creation of opportunities for youth employment and entrepreneurship.
- To support an approach to lifelong learning by being a learning organisation that promotes ongoing professional development.

Commonwealth Values

we the people of the Commonwealth:
Recognising that in an era of changing economic circumstances and uncertainty, new trade and economic patterns, unprecedented threats to peace and popular demands for democracy, human rights and broadened economic opportunities, the potential of and need for the Commonwealth as a compelling force for good and as an effective network for co-operation and for promoting development – has never been greater,

Recalling that the Commonwealth is a voluntary association of independent and equal sovereign states, each responsible for its own policies, consulting and co-operating in the common interests of our peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace, and influencing international society to the benefit of all through the pursuit of common principles and values,

Affirming that the special strength of the Commonwealth lies in the combination of our diversity and our shared inheritance in language, culture and the rule of law; and bound together by shared history and tradition; by respect for values and principles and by concern for the vulnerable,

Affirming that the Commonwealth way is to seek consensus through consultation and the sharing of experience, especially through practical co-operation, and further affirming that the Commonwealth is uniquely placed to serve as a model and as a catalyst for new forms of friendship and co-operation in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations,

Affirming the role of the Commonwealth as a recognised intergovernmental champion of small states, advocating for their special needs; providing policy advice on political, economic and social development issues; and delivering technical assistance,

Welcoming the valuable contribution of the network of the many intergovernmental, parliamentary, professional and civil society bodies which support the Commonwealth and which subscribe and adhere to its values and principles,

Affirming the validity of and our commitment to the values and principles of the Commonwealth as defined and strengthened over the years including: the Singapore Declaration of Commonwealth Principles, the Harare Commonwealth Declaration, the Langkawi Declaration on the Environment, the Millbrook Action Programme, the Latimer House Principles, the Aberdeen Agenda, the Trinidad and Tobago Affirmation of Commonwealth Values and Principles, the Munyonyo Statement on Respect and Understanding, the Lake Victoria Commonwealth Climate Change Action Plan, the Perth Declaration on Food Security Principles, and the Commonwealth Declaration on Investing in Young People,

Affirming our core Commonwealth principles of consensus and common action, mutual respect, inclusiveness, transparency, accountability, legitimacy, and responsiveness,

Reaffirming the core values and principles of the Commonwealth as declared by this Charter:

1. **Democracy**
   We recognise the inalienable right of individuals to participate in democratic processes, in particular through free and fair elections in shaping the society in which they live. Governments, political parties and civil society are responsible for upholding and promoting democratic culture and practices and are accountable to the public in this regard. Parliaments and representative local governments and other forms of local governance are essential elements in the exercise of democratic governance.
We support the role of the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group to address promptly and effectively all instances of serious or persistent violations of Commonwealth values without any fear or favour.

2. Human rights

We are committed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant rights covenants and international instruments. We are committed to the protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, just and stable societies. We note that these rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated and cannot be implemented selectively. We are implacably opposed to all forms of discrimination, whether rooted in gender, race, colour, creed, political belief or other grounds.

3. International peace and security

We firmly believe that international peace and security, sustainable economic growth and development and the rule of law are essential to the progress and prosperity of all. We are committed to an effective multilateral system based on inclusiveness, equity, justice and international law as the best foundation for achieving consensus and progress on major global challenges including piracy and terrorism. We support international efforts for peace and disarmament at the United Nations and other multilateral institutions. We will contribute to the promotion of international consensus on major global political, economic and social issues. We will be guided by our commitment to the security, development and prosperity of every member state. We reiterate our absolute condemnation of all acts of terrorism in whatever form or wherever they occur or by whomsoever perpetrated, with the consolation and severe damage to political, economic and social stability. We reaffirm our commitment to work together as a diverse community of nations, individually, and collectively under the auspices and authority of the United Nations, to take concerted and resolute action to eradicate terrorism.

4. Tolerance, Respect and Understanding

We emphasise the need to promote tolerance, respect, understanding, moderation and religious freedom which are essential to the development of free and democratic societies, and recall that respect for the dignity of all human beings is central to peace and prosperity. We accept that diversity and understanding the richness of our multiple identities are fundamental to the Commonwealth’s principles and approach.

5. Freedom, Respect and Understanding

We are committed to peaceful, open dialogue and the free flow of information, including through a free and responsible media, and to enhancing democratic traditions and strengthening democratic processes.

6. Separation of Powers

We recognise the importance of maintaining the integrity of the roles of the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. These are the guarantors in their respective spheres of the rule of law.
law, the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights and adherence to good governance.

7. Rule of Law
We believe in the rule of law as an essential protection for the people of the Commonwealth and as an assurance of limited and accountable government. In particular we support an independent, impartial, honest and competent judiciary and recognise that an independent, effective and competent legal system is integral to upholding the rule of law, engendering public confidence and dispensing justice.

8. Good Governance
We reiterate our commitment to promote good governance through the rule of law, to ensure transparency and accountability and to root out, both at national and international levels, systemic and systematic corruption.

9. Sustainable Development
We recognise that sustainable development can help to eradicate poverty by pursuing inclusive growth whilst preserving and conserving natural ecosystems and promoting social equity.
We stress the importance of sustainable economic and social transformation to eliminate poverty and meet the basic needs of the vast majority of the people of the world and reiterate that economic and social progress enhances the sustainability of democracy.
We are committed to removing wide disparities and unequal living standards as guided by internationally agreed development goals. We are also committed to building economic resilience and promoting social equity, and we reiterate the value in technical assistance, capacity building and practical cooperation in promoting development.
We are committed to an effective, equitable, rules-based multilateral trading system, the freest possible flow of multilateral trade on terms fair and equitable to all, while taking into account the special requirements of small states and developing countries.
We also recognise the importance of information and communication technologies as powerful instruments of development; delivering savings, efficiencies and growth in our economies, as well as promoting education, learning and the sharing of culture. We are committed to strengthening its use while enhancing its security, for the purpose of advancing our societies.

10. Protecting the Environment
We recognise the importance of the protection and conservation of our natural ecosystems and affirm that sustainable management of the natural environment is the key to sustained human development. We recognise the commitment and collective action, in particular by addressing the adaptation and mitigation challenges of climate change and facilitating the development, diffusion and deployment of affordable environmentally friendly technologies and renewable energy, and the prevention of illicit dumping of toxic and hazardous waste as well as the prevention and mitigation of erosion and desertification.
11. **Access to Health, Education and Food**
We recognise the necessity of access to affordable health care, education, clean drinking water, sanitation and housing for all citizens and emphasise the importance of promoting health and well-being in combating communicable and non-communicable diseases. We recognise the right of everyone to have access to safe, sufficient and nutritious food, consistent with the progressive realisation of the right to adequate national food security.

12. **Gender Equality**
We recognise that gender equality and women’s empowerment are essential components of human development and basic human rights. The advancement of women’s rights and the education of girls are critical preconditions for effective and sustainable development.

Importance of young people in the commonwealth
We recognise the positive and active role and contributions of young people in promoting and protecting Commonwealth values, such as tolerance and understanding, including respect for other cultures. The future success of young people in promoting and sustaining the Commonwealth and its values and principles, and we commit to investing in and promoting their development, particularly through the creation of opportunities for youth employment and entrepreneurship.

13. **Recognition of the needs of Small States**
We are committed to assisting small and developing states in the Commonwealth, including the particular needs of small island developing states, in tackling their particular economic, energy, climate change and security challenges, and in building their resilience for the future.

14. **Recognition of the needs of vulnerable states**
We are committed to collaborating to find ways to provide immediate help to the people and most vulnerable including least developed countries, and to develop responses to protect the people most at risk.

15. **The role of Civil Society**
We recognise the important role that civil society plays in our communities and countries as partners in promoting and supporting Commonwealth values and principles, including the freedom of association and peaceful assembly, and in achieving development goals.

We are committed to ensuring that the Commonwealth is an effective association, responsive to members’ needs, and capable of addressing the significant global challenges of the future.

We aspire to a Commonwealth that is a strong and respected voice in the world, speaking out on major issues; that strengthens and enlarges its networks; that has a global relevance and profile; and that is devoted to improving the lives of all peoples of the Commonwealth.