



COMMONWEALTH  
YOUTH  
PROGRAMME

PAN COMMONWEALTH YOUTH  
CAUCUS REPORT



Submitted by Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus  
Chairperson  
Mr. Mobafa Baker

# Introduction

The Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus is a dynamic group of dedicated, resilient and resourceful young men and women who represent and speak on youth issues from Commonwealth Countries around the world. Over the last two years this Caucus has been involved in unique projects, programmes and initiatives that have resulted in the development of a stronger body. This report captures a few of these activities and also recommends several initiatives to our successors.

## ***Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Executive***

Over the period 2006 – 2008 the Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Executive was made up of the four Regional Youth Caucus Chairpersons and the Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Chairperson. Below is a list of the members of the Executive as it currently stands:

Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Chairperson: **Mr. Mobafa Baker 2006-2008**

African RYC Chairperson: **Mr. Batsho Nthoi** (2006 – 2007)

**Mr. Sammy Kavuma** (2007- present)

Asian RYC Chairperson: **Ms. Nosheen Abbas** (2006-2007)

**Mr. Ahmed Mahloof** (2007 – present)

Caribbean RYC Chairperson: **Mr. Norman Gilbert (2006-2008)**

: **Mr. Kamal Powell** (2008- present)

South Pacific RYC Chairperson: **Ms. Elaine Howard (2006-2008)**

**Ms. Nukutua Pokura (2008 – Present)**

# **1. Representation:**

Regional Youth Caucus members represented their countries, regions and the Commonwealth at different events over the last few years with great distinction. This occurred from small in country events such as school discussions, live radio, television and print reporting, to major national events such as in Parliament and on Cabinet appointed committees, to international events on Commonwealth Observer missions and Committees appointed by the Commonwealth Secretary General. It will be too voluminous to list every single level of representation so this report will briefly highlight some key ones.

## ***a. Commonwealth Election Observation:***

Over the past two years RYCs participated in their own capacity on several Commonwealth Election Observer Missions in countries such as Zambia, The Gambia, Guyana, Solomon Islands, Uganda and Nigeria. Thus far all RYCs who have had the opportunity to participate in such missions have indicated that the experience was both life changing as well as eye-opening as they saw raw democracy at work.

## ***b. National Recognition***

The natural progression in some countries for youth ambassadors to take on national leadership continued with the appointment of Regional Youth Caucus representatives to positions of national development. Namely, we salute the appointment of Ahmed Mahloof to his National Parliament. The inclusion of several RYCS in the development of their countries national youth strategies is a welcomed achievement. Additionally, I wish to commend a number of RYCS who have since been named National Youth of the Year within their respective countries based on the work they have produced, for example, the former RYC of Sierre Leone.

## ***c. Commonwealth Committees/ Task Force***

Arguably one of the most important Commonwealth Committees appointed within the last two years was the committee on Respect and Understanding. The concept emerged directly from an initiative of Heads of Government to arrest the apparent breakdown of respect linked to misunderstanding worldwide. The Caucus was represented on this Committee by Ms. Elaine Howard, former RYC Chairperson from the South Pacific Region. Her presence there was supported by RYCs who provided information and updates as she relayed the youth voice at these meetings.

On a regional level, at the Caribbean Heads of Government Meeting held in early 2007 it was agreed that a Commission be established to review the status of Youth Development within the Region. RYC member Alberto Vallios from Belize was selected as a Commissioner to represent youth views on behalf of the entire region.

Regional Youth Caucus representatives from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Pan Commonwealth Chairperson represented the Caucus on the International Planning Committee at the recent Commonwealth Youth Forum in 2007. This Committee met formally on two occasions before the Forum once in London and then in Uganda to effectively plan for the participation of young people at this event. It also took on the overall management role at the actual CYF.

#### **d. Commonwealth Meetings & Seminars**

The opportunity to provide a youth perspective at meetings was afforded to the Pan Commonwealth Chair at the joint meeting to receive the World Youth Report 2007. This report was developed by the World Bank and launched at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London. Additionally, the Caucus was represented at the Youth Employment Summit held in Kenya by the Pan Chairperson in October, 2006.

Although not in his official capacity as Deputy Chairperson of the Pacific Region, Mr Kevin Grimwood from New Zealand, attended the Commonwealth Education Ministers Meeting held in South Africa in December, 2006. Similarly the former Chair of the African Region Bathso Nathoi participated in the UN Global Youth Summit held in New York in an unofficial RYC capacity but yet in both instances they shared their experience with the Caucus.

## **2. Advocacy**

Being an advocate is a major part of the work of Regional Youth Caucus representatives. Again, like much of our work, this advocacy has happened informally and around issues which are more community and nation specific rather than an overall Commonwealth level. For example work has been ongoing within the Commonwealth on issues linked to HIV & AIDS, access to education and health, environmental issues, human rights and the abuse of drugs

As a Commonwealth, there are countries amongst our membership with the highest level of transmission of HIV and AIDS. This has been identified by persons such as Dabesaki Mac-Ikemenjina from Nigeria as one of the major issues on which he has led a Pan Commonwealth lobby. Other members have also lobbied for more to be done on these issues. These have been identified by the work and inputs of the Pan

Commonwealth Chair, Mr. Baker as a guest of the Antigua and Barbuda Government as well as at the Caribbean Commonwealth Youth Exchange Forum. Additionally, the work of former RYC for Kenya Mr. Johnah Josiah and the current India RYC Ms. Sarika Kotch must also be recognised.

### **a. CHOGM 2007**

For many CHOGM 2007 was a critical experience for the Commonwealth Youth Programme and by extension the work of youth development in the Commonwealth. Youth delegates took a step forward in being able to have for the first time ever a youth dialogue with Heads of Government at the wings of their meeting. This was not only enormous opportunity for the young people but an excellent chance for the Commonwealth mandate and communiqué to reflect the issues of youth. At the end significant recommendations were made to affect the workings of the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

One of the many outstanding recommendations that were made, and it is hoped will be implemented is the inclusion of young people in other Ministerial meetings of the Commonwealth including key meetings such as the one for the Ministry of Health.

### **b. COMMONWEALTH MATTERS**

Additionally at the level of the Commonwealth, the members of the Caucus undertook advocacy initiatives that included the following:

- Letters sent to Heads of State of the Pacific Region on youth Human Rights Issues including child prostitution, incarceration conditions of young people and family values
- Press Releases on the issues affecting youth in several instances for example in Kenya, Uganda, Pakistan and Fiji. Also press releases sent on the occasion of International Youth Day and World AIDS Day.
- Letters to Heads of Government sent by the Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Chair on the occasion of International Youth Day as well as the conclusion of the last CHOGM, to remind them on youth mandates and responsibilities.
- A working group set up on issues related to the PAYE document. This working group submitted comments to CYP at their last Strategic Planning Meeting on youth perspectives on the PAYE document.
- Development of a Radio broadcast programme by the Australian RYC to broadcast issues affecting youth of that region.

### **3. Capacity Building – Linked to Democracy and Networking**

#### **Department of CYP**

Capacity building support to young people is one of the key tenants of the Commonwealth Youth Programme. Over the last two years significant effort and initiative has been done in this area which focused mainly on providing the skills and tools necessary for young people to do their work in communities.

#### ***a. Training Workshops***

Over the two years, Regional Youth Caucus Representatives benefitted from extensive training programmes offered by the Commonwealth Youth Programme's Regional Centres on a wide variety of areas. These training programmes included topics on advocacy, networking, HIV & AIDS, project management, peace building, ethics and accountability in leadership, youth participation, national representation and reporting.

#### ***b. Youth Leadership***

Additional examples of unique opportunities for RYC's to develop strong capacity building opportunities was that provided for the former Regional Chair of the Caribbean RYC Grenada Norman Gilbert, RYC for Antigua and Barbuda Ms. Kareem Payne and the Alternate from St. Lucia to coordinate and manage the Caribbean Commonwealth Youth Exchange. This was a great demonstration of support offered by the Regional Centre towards facilitating young people to manage programmes for young people.

Work has also been undertaken in the Pacific, African and Caribbean region in supporting, strengthening, revitalising and/or starting networks of youth organisations. These initiatives have been headed or supported by Regional Youth Caucus members who have taken on such efforts as special projects. In the Caribbean region for example RYC's are currently engaged in an audit of National Youth Councils in order to contribute to revitalising the failed Caribbean Federation of Youth, which acted as an umbrella body for youth organisations of the region.

The National Youth Congress organised by the representative of Brunei Darussalam that provided young people with the opportunity to express their views and have them presented to Ministers and Deputy Ministers should also be noted.

#### ***c. Internships***

As part of the role of Regional Youth Caucus representatives internships are provided by the Commonwealth Youth Programme at each of the Regional Centres and the Pan Commonwealth Office. During the period a number of RYC's including the Regional and Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Chairs enjoyed the opportunity to work out of the Regional Centre and to witness firsthand the work of CYP.

#### **d. Facilitations**

Regional Youth Caucus Members were not just passive recipients of capacity building workshops but they were also actively involved in the training and development of other RYC's as well as young people within their Regions and Countries. Some examples of these included the work done by Jonah Josiah former RYC for Kenya who provided training and facilitation support on matters related to HIV&AIDS as well as developing a National Youth Councils. His work was echoed by other RYC's including Kay Richie former RYC from the UK who also provided support on the workings of National Youth Councils from a British Youth Council model to RYC's as well as Dabesaki on his work in facilitating discussions in youth leadership towards the development of an African Youth Charter.

### **4. Institutional Strengthening**

Building a strong Caucus has been a major challenge and also demanded a major source of ingenuity over the last two years. Issues considered included the ability for the Caucus to function cohesively, which has been worked on aggressively over the period under review.

#### **a. Communication**

One of the crucial ingredients for the effective networking of the Caucus was the ability for us to communicate with each other. Over the last two years several strategies were employed to improve communication links between RYC's and they have been able to provide various levels of success. These included:

- Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Yahoo Group
- Pan Commonwealth Youth Discussion board linked to TakingItGlobal
- African and Asian RYC Yahoo groups
- BlogSpot by Kamal of the Asian Region
- Face book account and MSN opened by the Caribbean RYC
- Monthly progress report offered by the Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Chairperson

- Direct mail out to RYC members from Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Chairperson
- Youth Caucus Website.

The challenge experienced in most of them is providing sustained feedback from RYC members in each method but it is hoped that some improvement will be experienced

### ***b. Hand Book Revision***

The RYC handbook has often been referred to as a RYC Constitution and as such it should also be considered under periodic review by members of the Caucus to ensure that the information is current and reflects the realities of the Caucus at any given period.

During the period 2006-2008 a Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Review team was set up to take an extensive look at the Handbook and to make significant adjustments to it that would bring it in line with present realities. This initiative was spearheaded for the most part by the RYC from Australia Matthew Albert who provided guidance and support to this effort. In the end a revised and better formatted handbook was submitted to CYP and then to Regional Advisory Boards for their adoption. Some of the major recommendations contained in the revised handbook included:

- Electoral procedure for Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Chairperson
- Introduction of the Pan Commonwealth Youth Caucus Vice Chairperson
- Change of timing for the election of Regional Youth Caucus Chairpersons and Deputies
- Introduction of a new process for the elections of Regional Youth Caucus Chairpersons and Deputies
- Introduction of the concept of National Bodies involvement in the selection of RYC members
- Formal provision of administrative and communication budget for RYC Chairpersons both at Regional and Pan Commonwealth Level
- A change in the name of Regional Youth Caucus leaders from Regional Coordinators to Regional Chairpersons

### ***c. Funding***

Power without resources is meaningless, so too is representation without being provided with the appropriate tools. One of the major initiatives lobbied for over the last two years was the need to provide RYC members access to financial resources in order to implement projects within their countries. This has arguably been one of the challenges of the programme whereby capacity is built but there are no funds to facilitate the actual implementation of projects. After an extensive period of dialogue amongst the Caucus it was proposed to CYP that a budget line be identified to fully fill this gap. Thus far the