



The Commonwealth

# Background Paper

## COMMONWEALTH NON-FORMAL EDUCATION ALLIANCE FOR QUALITY YOUTH LEADERSHIP

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The Commonwealth, in partnership the leading youth organisations globally is preparing to launch a bold alliance to promote and expand youth leadership in all member countries working with key stakeholders to join efforts and focus action on three main priorities:

1. Ensuring quality youth leadership skills for all young persons under 30,
2. Promoting meaningful civic and political participation and,
3. Connecting the skills needs and trends in the labour market with non-formal education and learning approaches.

Commonwealth Education Ministers at the 20CCEM acknowledged the contribution of non-formal and informal learning in building the resilience of young people and the role of youth and community workers in delivering non-formal and informal education<sup>1</sup>.

The recognition and validation of competences gained in informal and non-formal education and learning is essential in the empowerment of the young people of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth's Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (2015) takes an assets-based approach to youth development: recognising young people as an asset to their societies; building on young people's capacities and agency to overcome poverty; engaging young people in decision-making, as partners in democracy and development.

Young people are empowered 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 those actions:

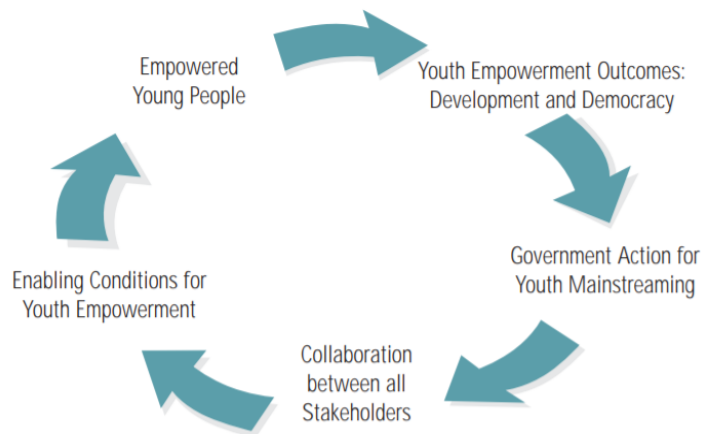
Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. These enabling conditions fall into four broad categories: i) an economic and social base; ii) political will, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks; iii) a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy; and iv) access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Nadi Declaration, 2018, 20<sup>th</sup> Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers, Nadi, Fiji.

<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2007-2015.

### The Dynamic Cycle of Youth Empowerment:



The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment

Article 13 of the Commonwealth Charter acknowledges the importance of young people:

*We [Heads] recognise the positive and active role and contributions of young people in promoting development, peace, democracy and in protecting and promoting other 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<sup>3</sup>.*

There are 1.2 billion young people under the age of 30 in the 53 members of the Commonwealth. Young people have a proven capability to lead change, and are a vital and valuable investment for now and the future.

The modern Commonwealth celebrated seventy years in 2019. In the last CHOGM in 2018, ‘Heads agreed to mainstream youth priorities into national development policies and plans and to promote the participation of young people at all levels of decision making’.<sup>4</sup> CHOGM 2020 in Rwanda is about delivery of initiatives that are achievable, comprehensive and meaningful that provide continuity as well as change. By building on the Commonwealth’s achievement and implementing new ideas that add value, we elevate our collective ambitions<sup>5</sup>.

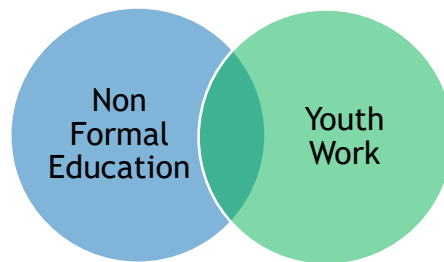
<sup>3</sup> Commonwealth Charter 2013

<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting Communiqué “Towards a Common Future, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> High Level Policy Paper, Commonwealth Foreign Affairs Ministers Meeting, 10 July, 2019.

## The Promotion of youth work and non-formal education in the Commonwealth

Youth work is defined at the Commonwealth Secretariat as ‘all forms of rights-based youth engagement approaches that build personal awareness and support the social, political and economic empowerment of young people, delivered through non-formal [education and] learning within a matrix of care’<sup>6</sup>.



The defining characteristic of non-formal education is that it is an addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It caters for people of all ages, but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway-structure; it may be short in duration and/or low intensity, and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars. Non-formal education mostly leads to qualifications that are not recognized as formal qualifications by the relevant national educational authorities or to no qualifications at all. Non-formal education can cover programmes contributing to adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, as well as programmes on life skills, work skills, and social or cultural development<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Commonwealth Secretariat (2017). Youth Work in the Commonwealth: A Growth Profession. (London) p1

<sup>7</sup> ISCED 2011

**Table 1. Keywords for Recent Definitions from the Literature**

	<b>Formal</b>	<b>Informal</b>	<b>Non-Formal</b>
Coombs <i>et al.</i> (1973)	Formal <b>Education</b> : in the initial education and training system	Informal <b>Education</b> : true lifelong learning process, daily experience (friends, neighbours etc.)	Non-Formal <b>Education</b> : organised but outside the formal sector; serve identifiable clientele and has learning objectives
ISCED 97	Formal <b>Education</b> : in the initial education and training system, below age 20/25...	Informal <b>Learning</b> is intentional, but it is less organised and less structured...	Non-Formal <b>Education</b> : Organised and sustained; all ages; within and outside education institutions; education programmes for adults (literacy...)
EC (2000)	Formal <b>Learning</b> : in education and training institutions and leads to a qualification	Informal <b>Learning</b> : from everyday situation; not necessarily intentional	Non-Formal <b>Learning</b> : alongside mainstream system of education; does not lead to a qualification
EUROSTAT (2000 and 2006)	Taken from ISCED 97	Informal <b>Learning</b> : intentional, less organised, less structured than formal learning	Taken from ISCED 97
CEDEFOP (2005)	Planned and intentional <b>learning</b> activities	Not planned and non-intentional <b>learning</b> activities	Planned and intentional activities, no learning objective
OECD (2007a)	Formal <b>Learning</b> : in and educational institution, adult training centre or in the workplace	Informal <b>Learning</b> : from daily work, family or leisure activities. Not organised or structured. Unintentional	Non-Formal <b>Learning</b> : programmed but not assessed and does not lead to a qualification; intentional
CEDEFOP (2008)	Formal <b>Learning</b> : in a school, a training centre or on the job	Informal <b>Learning</b> : from daily work, family or leisure activities. Not organised or structured. Unintentional	Non-Formal <b>Learning</b> : planned activities but no learning objectives; intentional

Source: UNESCO

The Commonwealth initiated its commitments to the profession of youth work through its support for the implementation of the Commonwealth Diploma in Youth Development Work in the 1970s. The 2007 Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting (CYMM) committed to the Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE), the framework that renewed and expanded this commitment to youth development work. The contributions of the Commonwealth to professionalising youth work has subsequently been endorsed by member states including at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) 2013 and the Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting 2017 where youth ministers agreed "to promote youth work as a profession through education and training for sectors where youth engagement is important." (CYMM Communique, 2017).

## The Role of Youth Work and Non-Formal Education

Receiving quality youth work and NFE services from trained youth work professionals, practitioners and volunteers is the right of young people. Youth work is a relational profession built around the skills and competencies of engaging young people to enhance their self-esteem, social connectedness, productivity and

employability, emotional and intellectual maturity, and autonomy. It supports young people's journeys of self-empowerment within caring and supportive environments.

NFE and Youth work benefits young people, but it also benefits institutions and society. When adequately funded and resourced, and when comprehensive training is provided to practitioners, youth work is shown to have greatly contributed to reducing youth-related demands on social services, enhancing public service efficiency, and, more broadly, promoting inter-generational equity and national development.

## The Policy Issue

It is commendable that youth development and youth empowerment are now accorded high priority in global, regional and national development agendas. There is also broad international consensus around young people's contributions to society and global development.<sup>8</sup> However, in spite of incremental policy advances, the critical mediators that support young people's self-empowerment -- youth workers -- are often invisible in these discussions and mandates.

Youth workers function in many shape and forms, in both governmental and non-governmental contexts, to support young people reach their own personal, social and political aspirations. Yet there is little recognition of this work as a distinct professional practice, requiring specific professional skills and institutional support for professional growth.

## The 35-country Youth Work Baseline

The Commonwealth has been promoting the establishment of youth work through education and training for several decades. More recently, we have begun engaging governments and youth workers' associations on advancing the professionalism of youth work. *Youth Work in the Commonwealth: A Growth Profession*, the Commonwealth's 35-country<sup>9</sup> baseline<sup>10</sup> completed in 2017, is the latest example of this commitment.

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<sup>8</sup> Office of the Secretary General's Envoy on Youth (2016), 'How Leaders Brought Youth to the 71st United Nations General Assembly', United Nations, New York, available at: <http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/2016/10/world-leaders-brought-youth-71st-un-general-assembly/>

<sup>9</sup> The countries in the study were: **Africa:** Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia; **Asia:** Bangladesh, India, Maldives, India, Pakistan, Singapore, Sri Lanka; **The Caribbean:** Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, St Lucia, St Vincent, Trinidad and Tobago; **Europe and Americas:** Canada, Cyprus, Malta, United Kingdom, **The Pacific:** Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu.

<sup>10</sup> See end of document for access information.

Key criteria used in the baseline to assess the status of youth work included

a. A collectively formulated and understood definition of youth work
b. Country-level legislation and policies that recognised youth work as a distinct profession
c. Existence of national/regional professional associations that helped ensure the integrity and quality of the profession
d. Existence of competency standards, ethical standards and other practice regulators
e. Existence of clearly-defined qualifications pathways for youth workers from short courses to PhDs
f. Professional validation of youth work education and training that ensured the relevance of education and training to youth workers' needs in the field
g. Supervision of youth work practice that ensured accountable and responsible practitioners
h. Adequate public investment in professionalising youth work, and youth work spaces, as well as adequate remuneration of youth workers

Out of the 35 countries in the sample, (the sample included countries that have achieved the greatest advances in the status of youth work), 12 countries (34 per cent) had taken significant steps<sup>11</sup> to professionalise the youth work sector. Only 11 (31 per cent) countries had distinct national-level policies that recognised youth work as a distinct profession. 12 countries (34 per cent) had youth workers' associations that help safeguard the integrity and quality of the profession, and 25 (71 per cent) could claim at least a diploma-level qualification for youth work professionals. This is considering the contributions of all youth sector players.<sup>12</sup> In Africa, Asia and the Caribbean, many of the advances have been directly and indirectly attributed to the Commonwealth's efforts.

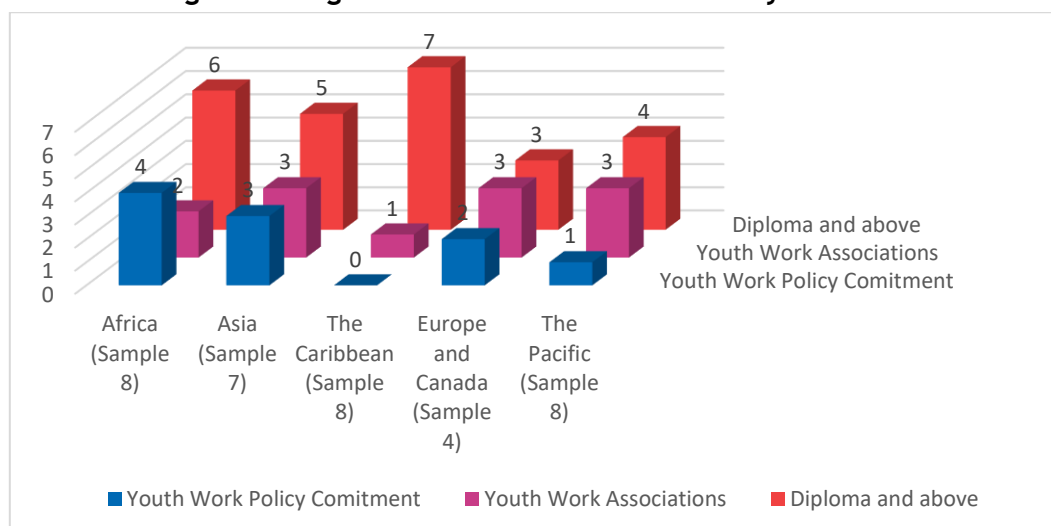
There is somewhat of a correlation between policy commitment and actioned progress in education and training and the establishment of youth workers' associations, even though in some regions/countries, progress in developing commitments to professional practice has occurred despite a lack of supporting legislation and policy.

**Figure 1** demonstrates commitments identified in the survey for the five regions/regional groups of the baseline:

<sup>11</sup> For the purposes of this study, 'significant steps' were identified as: policy commitments to youth work, existence of professional associations for youth work, and the availability of at least a diploma-level qualification for youth work.

<sup>12</sup> The youth sector comprises all players who have youth empowerment/development as a major strategic area of intervention and can include ministries and departments, university departments, professional associations, networks and so on.

**Figure 1. Regional trends - commitments to youth work**



Findings indicated that it was not always State legislation or policy that drives dynamic youth work. Systematic, guided and supervised youth work was often supported by practice networks, youth workers' associations and education and training institutes. Moreover, commitments to youth work in policy did not always correlate with commensurate investment and implementation of policy, nor adequate remuneration of youth workers.

However, in countries such as Malta, youth work legislation and policies explicitly paved the way for greater investment in youth work, both for training and practice. The legislative backing for the profession in Malta is in fact broadly seen as the foundation of this cohesive education and training pathways for youth workers and youth work delivery mechanisms in the country. So, by extension, where effective youth work exists, a State's policy commitments can clearly spread and amplify the quality and impact of this good work.

### Key Tenets of Youth Work

The key tenets of youth work are based on the Commonwealth's *Professional Youth Work: A Concept and Strategies* that sets out the ethos of youth work that the Commonwealth advances and supports.

The concept note elaborates these as follows<sup>13</sup>:

- a. **Professional care:** The delivery of youth work services in environments providing professional, detached care for young people. This is based on an associative, rather than personal, relationship with young people. Youth

<sup>13</sup> These key tenets reflect, and elaborate/ expand on the key criteria for professional youth work set out in the Commonwealth document *Professional Youth Work: A Concept and Strategies* (Commonwealth Youth Programme, Asia Centre, 2012) .



workers support young people in order that they might **represent themselves better**.

**Figure 2: Tenets of youth work**



- b. **Building personal awareness and expectation:** Building young people's personal awareness of their strengths and helping them deal with personal challenges, while building their expectation of themselves. This requires that youth workers are able to support young people to detect interest in/care about their wellbeing and that they might develop the motivation to have expectations of themselves.
- c. **Social and political education:** Developing intellectual, personal and ethical means to interact, think critically, and develop in a social context. This can also be extended to mean the development of a collective consciousness among young people in order that they contribute to their advancement and the advancement of their communities, nations and the world. This requires both youth work practitioners, and young people they work with, to develop the ability to take and manage responsibility, as well as deal with the consequences of action.
- d. **Making professional judgement:** The youth worker needs to be able to make sound, evidence-based and non-partial judgements based on practice experience around each and every context of their interaction with young people.
- e. **A rights-based approach:** Human rights principles and the Commonwealth Charter frame all aspects of youth work advanced by the Commonwealth, including recognising young people as agents in determining the best youth

work initiatives for them and ensuring that young people's rights are the main priority at all times.

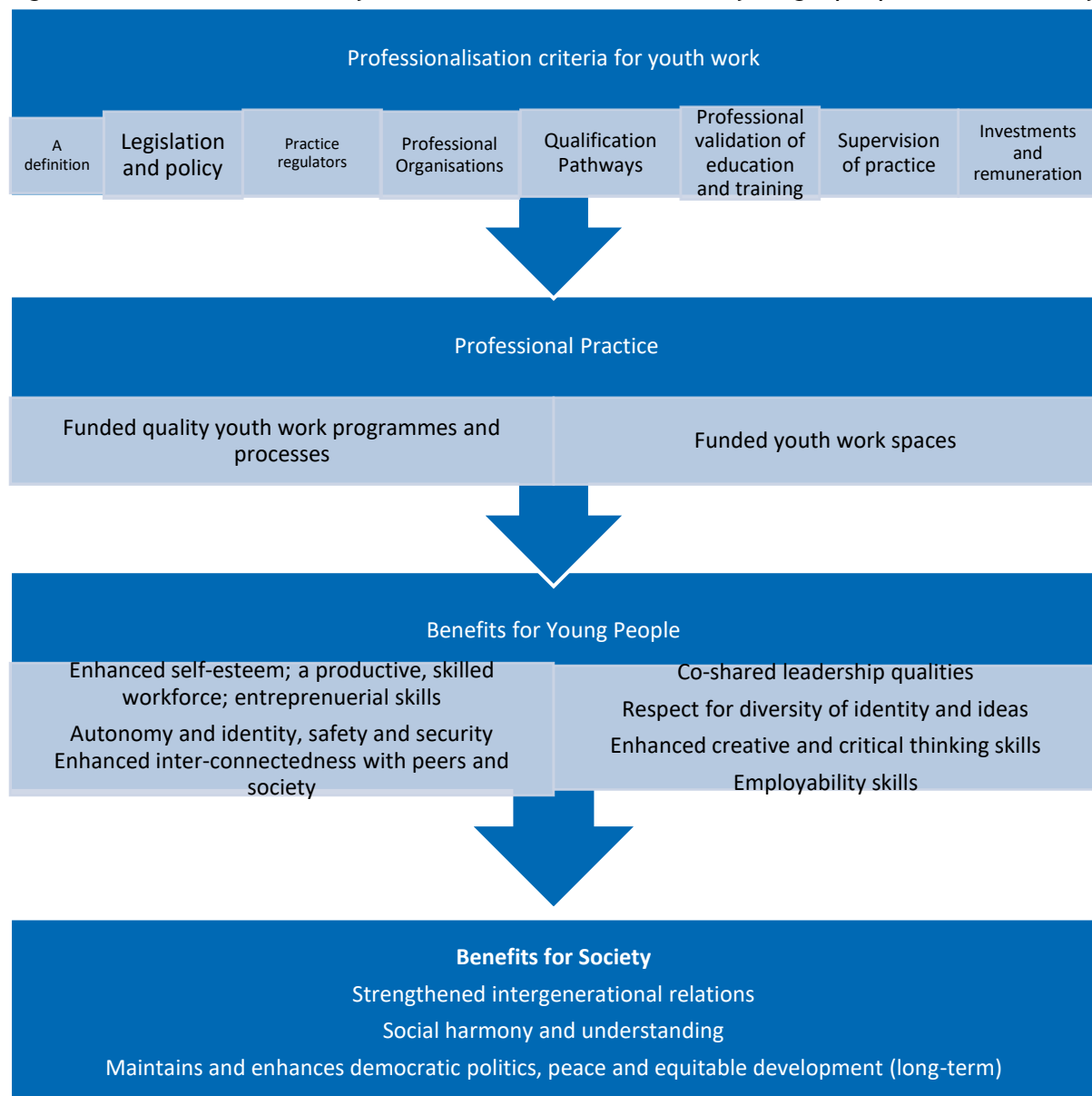
- f. **Youth participation:** Ensuring that youth work promotes young people's agency and they are enabled to participate in every aspect of decisions around youth work provision, and monitoring and evaluation of youth work outcomes.

Youth work has core practice principles, but it has needed to be fluid and adaptive because the young people it serves, and the social situation they find themselves in, are also continually changing. Youth work serves no one situation or young person. It has grown and transformed because of its inherent responsiveness; like the young people it serves, it is becoming more than what it is, looking to be all it might be. But also like young people, while youth work has commonalities in any given circumstance, it is necessarily shaped by local, cultural and social considerations.

## The Dividends of a Professional Youth Work Cadre

**Figure 2** relates these professionalism criteria to a. their bearing on practice, b. benefits for young people, and finally c. for society.

Figure 2: Dividends of youth work and NFE to young people and society



Investing in young people is a moral and ethical prerogative. But it is also a strategic prerogative that helps nations work towards attaining development objectives by making young people empowered development partners who are also receiving the full social, political and economic benefits they are entitled to.

Using non-formal learning approaches, the Commonwealth Youth Programme has been training youth and student leaders at the national, regional and Pan Commonwealth levels since 2013. The training targets the leaders of national youth/student organisations, regional youth councils and Commonwealth Youth Council. The training is focused on equipping the youth leaders with the skill the need to successfully deliver on the policy, advocacy and communication programmes recommended by Commonwealth young people.

In addition to the Commonwealth youth leadership training programme, there have been other programmes such as the Queens Young Leaders programme.

The Queen's Young Leaders Programme was established by The Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, in partnership with Comic Relief, The Royal Commonwealth Society and The University of Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education, in honour of Her Majesty The Queen's lifetime of service to the Commonwealth.

Launched in July 2014, the programme set out to discover, celebrate and support exceptional young people from every Commonwealth nation who are leading the way in transforming their own lives and the lives of those around them.

Each year for four years, 60 Awards were given to exceptional young people aged between 18 and 29 each year, with the last cohort awarded in 2018, to honour those who are addressing the urgent challenges facing their communities - including mental health, education, climate change, employment opportunities and gender equality.

As part of the Award, winners took part in a year-long online leadership course from The University of Cambridge's Institute of Continuing Education and received one-to-one mentoring support.

Thirdly, there is also the Commonwealth100 programme. Commonwealt100 is a free, online leadership programme from Common Purpose that equips the next generation with 21st century leadership skills. It is the first of our Legacy Programmes to be run online. It introduces the idea of Open Source Leadership, co-created by young leaders, to maximize their impact in both their professional and civic lives.

Using an interactive platform, you will work with a diverse group of young leaders from across the Commonwealth to explore Open Source Leadership - a new leadership model co-created with over 1,000 young Commonwealth leaders. Everyone who completes Commonwealth100 receives the Open Source Leadership Badge.

## **A new approach CHOGM 2020**

With only 10 years to 2030, the Commonwealth seeks to accelerate youth leadership training to reach a larger number of young people under using non-formal education and leaning approaches. With over 1.2 billion young people in the Commonwealth, there is need for an approach that will have a significant impact on this large youth population.

Tried and tested formal education models have been helping to prepare young people for their futures for generations, in many societies. In some, access to school remains a challenge. New technologies and advancements see this continuing to evolve. However, many are now recognising that a less structured form of learning (though still with defined objectives and outcomes) delivered through what is known as non-formal education and learning, also needs to play a key role in the development of young people.

Non-formal education and learning, such as that offered by the International Award Association, focuses on developing the wider ‘soft’ or ‘core’ skills - such as resilience, adaptability, problem solving, decision making and communication - which can help young people to ensure they are ready for the world<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Changing Lives in the World, The social value of the Award as a non-formal education and learning framework, International Awards Association 2019.

**Non formal education organizations, have a number of characteristics that give them the unique ability to make a contribution to the lifelong educational process of an individual.**

First, they usually are people-centred and place a strong emphasis on the commitment and responsibility of each individual in pursuing his or her personal growth process. Second, they all have in common several or all of the following characteristics that distinguish them from other organizations and reinforce the individual's motivation to take an active part in the learning process.

**Volunteerism.** Youth organizations are voluntary. Whoever decides to join such an organization does so from his or her own free will or, if some pressure has been exercised at the time of joining by family or peer pressure, a time soon comes when a free personal decision is made to stay or leave. This voluntary involvement strengthens the individual's motivation and commitment and has a positive impact on the shaping of his or her character.

**Experiential learning.** Non formal education organizations offer a practical field of experience in their particular area of focus. Learning comes as the result of the practical experience of the individual and not only from a theoretical explanation. The development of relationship skills will, for example, result from a direct experience of living with others. Discovering one's own abilities and limits will come as a result of direct involvement in the implementation of a project or an attempt to meet a real challenge.

**Progressive Programmes.** Most educational youth organizations have a progressive dimension in their programmes. This is a way of helping a person measure his or her own growth over a period of time in a flexible manner and without the rigidity of a fixed curriculum. The individual starts, implements and completes steps in a programme when he or she is ready to do so according to his or her own level of development and mental preparedness. Linked with the voluntary nature of the organizations and the individual commitment, the progressive dimension becomes a very powerful development tool.

This is particularly true when it is conceived as a way for an individual to check his or her own progress as compared to a previous stage rather than in competition with others.

**Peer Groups.** Young people naturally desire group involvement. Non formal education organizations have found ways of harnessing this natural trend to enrich it with an educational dimension. A group of peers provides an ideal framework in which the individual, in association with others, can plan and implement projects, undertake responsibilities, experience relationships, take specific roles, reflect and evaluate with others, receive and provide feedback and learn from the experience. Furthermore, the peer group plays an extremely important role in the process of the acquisition of values by young people. The opinion of peers is particularly influential when a young person has to make choices, particularly those which are value based (such as drugs, sexual relationships etc).

**Youth - adult relationship.** Educational youth organizations offer opportunities to establish a real partnership between young people and adults in a situation where both are volunteers and recognise that they can learn from each other. This partnership implies reciprocal appreciation and mutual respect. There are very few places where such a youth-adult relationship can develop in a non-authoritarian manner and voluntary youth organizations are the most significant of such places.

**Leadership Development.** Educational youth organizations almost invariably provide, as part of their programmes, opportunities for young people to take leadership roles. This enables them to acquire leadership skills and to gradually develop and use these skills without having to wait until they have "grown up". As a result, they will have important practical, "hands on" experience in the process of democracy, of decision making and of responsible democratic leadership which is rarely provided in a structured way by other educational agents.

**Development of a value system.** All organisations are based upon and reflect a set of values which are normally those reflected in the organization's ethos. These are an integral part of the fabric of the organisation and exercise a strong influence on its activities, methods of operation, style and external relationships. They therefore offer young people an opportunity to discover, analyse and understand values and their implications, and to build over time a personal set of values that will guide their lives.

## **Partnership with the Big 6+ to accelerate youth leadership training in the Commonwealth**

The world's largest youth organisations have joined forces to work together - focused on the positive development of young people.

The '**Big 6**' consists of the five largest youth movements in the world (YMCA, YWCA, WOSM, WAGGGS, IFRC) and a leading programme for youth development the international Awards Associations (IAA).

Collectively, they reach over 100 million young people in over 200 countries and territories.

The Big Six are:

**IFRC**: The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is a humanitarian institution that is part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement along with the ICRC and 186 distinct National Societies. It coordinates activities between the National Societies in order to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity.

**IAA**: The International Award is an exciting self-development programme available to all 14 to 25 year olds. Over 6 million young people worldwide have taken up the Award challenge.

In addition, the partnership would also include other well-established programmes who are focused on using NFE approaches to engage and empower young people including:

**YMCA**: The Young Men's Christian Association ("YMCA" or "the Y") has grown to become a worldwide movement of more than 45 million members from 124 national federations affiliated through the World Alliance of YMCA.

**YWCA**: The Young Women's Christian Association is a movement of women working for social and economic change around the world. It advocates for young women's leadership, peace, justice, human rights and sustainable development, both on a grassroots and global scale. It is the oldest and one of the largest women's organizations in the world.

**WOSM**: The World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) is the Non-governmental international organization which governs most national Scout Organizations, with 28 million members. The mission of WOSM is to contribute to the education of young people, through a value system based on the Scout Promise

and Scout Law, to help build a better world where people are self-fulfilled as individuals and play a constructive role in society.

**WAGGGS:** The World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts represents Girl Guiding/Girl Scouting associations in 145 countries in the world, providing non-formal educational programmes enabling 10 million girls and young women to develop life and leadership skills through self-development, challenge and adventure, so that they can develop their fullest potential and contribute to developing their community at all levels of society.

**Nehru Yuva Kendras (NYKS)**, launched in 1972, is one of the largest youth organisations in the world. NYKS currently has about 8.5 million youth enrolled through 300,000 Youth Clubs/Mahila Mandals in India. The objective of providing rural youth avenues to take part in the process of nation building as well providing opportunities for the development of their personality and skills.

**Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)** is a predominantly youth lead organisation with a vision for a ‘world without poverty’. Its mission is to bring people from around the world together to fight poverty. VSO recruits students and professionals to work as volunteers, living and working alongside local populations in developing countries. Founded in 1958, VSO has so far sent over 50,000 volunteers to over 140 developing countries, doing important work and impacting thousands of lives.

**AIESEC** is a global network of young people that simply believe that youth leadership is not an option, but our responsibility. AIESEC is a non-governmental not-for-profit organisation in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). AIESEC believes that youth are the key to shaping a better future.

#### **Expected outcomes of the Commonwealth Alliance for Youth Leadership:**

1. Acknowledgement that NFE approaches are integral to education outcomes for young people;
2. Increase in the number of young people in the Commonwealth accessing NFE and youth work programmes by 2030.
3. Promotion of alternative flexible learning pathway for youth leaders;
4. Promotion of systematic approaches to NFE and Youth work that are evidence based.
5. Promotion of a system of recognition, validation and accreditation of youth leadership outcomes acquired through NFE approaches



## **Next Steps**

1. Partnership agreement signed at CHOGM between youth leadership organisations and the Commonwealth.
2. Coordinating and implementing committee established to enhance country level implementation.
3. Data system in place to monitor progress.
4. Identification of Youth Leadership Champions (Heads, Ministers Etc.) for NFE and Youth Work.
5. Country level support to expand the scope and reach of these youth leadership programmes;