



Embracing Commonwealth Values in Youth Development

Introducing Commonwealth Values

Introduction

Welcome to Unit 1 *Introducing Commonwealth Values*. This unit introduces the notion of Commonwealth values, putting them into the context of the history of the Commonwealth as an association of nations that has moved from colonial to co-operative relationships. It looks at how Commonwealth structures support these values in practice.

The unit begins with a look at the rich diversity of the member states of the Commonwealth. As you work through the unit, you will be introduced to the origins of the Commonwealth in the British Empire and its evolution into the multilateral organisation it is today. You will look at the Commonwealth's mandate in relation to its member states and its impact in the global arena. Finally, you will be given the opportunity to reflect on what the Commonwealth and its values mean to you and to explore the organisation's stated key principles and values: co-operation and consensus, equality and human rights, pluralism and democracy, participation, empowerment and citizenship and how they are carried out through multilateral projects and meetings.

This unit will challenge your understanding of Commonwealth values and how they can be put into practice in youth development work. It will take you roughly 7 hours to review and reflect on the material.

Learning Outcomes

When you have worked through this unit, you should be able to:

- reflect on factors that have affected your development (e.g. values, religion, tradition)
- understand how the Commonwealth is organised and how it operates
- be conscious of Commonwealth values and principles
- consider what values we share as countries and as individuals.



A Commonwealth of Diversity

Equality and respect for protection and promotion of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights for all – without discrimination on any grounds – ... are foundations of peaceful, just and stable societies.

– Commonwealth Secretariat

This course is designed on the basis of the core values and principles of a remarkable organisation—the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 independent sovereign states, bound together not only by shared history and tradition but also by an ethos of respect for all states and peoples, of shared values and principles, and of concern for the vulnerable.



The Commonwealth was once an empire run by a colonial power. As the British colonies, or dependencies of these colonies, emerged from colonialism, they developed a unique model of how the world's peoples can live together after conflict and exploitation.

The Commonwealth has slowly put together a supporting framework of social and humanitarian principles that have enabled very different nations to live co-operatively. Your fellow students taking this course could be from any of the Commonwealth member countries. Their homes could be in developed or developing countries, large or small in size and population, landlocked or island states, and located in Africa, Asia, Australasia, the Caribbean, Europe, North America or the South Pacific.

While all your fellow students will be able to read and speak English, it is probably not their first language. Almost two billion people live in the Commonwealth, making up nearly one-third of the world's population. They represent many different religions, races, languages and cultures. You might ask: 'What brings us together? What values do we share as countries or as individuals?'

Sheikh Hasina, Prime Minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh thinks that "the strength of our Commonwealth lies in its unity of vision of pluralism, liberalism, democracy and political institutions amid the diversity in race, ethnicity and religion."

Our Values as Individuals

Our values are our beliefs about what are the right ways to behave. When we decide to act in the world, if we have clear values we take them into account first. For example, if I consider that a crucial value for me is not to bring any more harm to the environment than I have to, I may well decide to cut my consumption of anything that is luxurious and unnecessary. If we consider our values to be objective, we believe that our choices should be guided from some independent standpoint, for example by religious or humanitarian principles.

Our 'values', then, are our standards or principles, the things that we consider to be of real and lasting worth and importance in life, even though we cannot physically touch them or buy and sell them. If we consider our values as personal, we may feel that that they are so important that we must defend them, even against rational argument. Each one of us has these subjective or personal values, but the communities we live in usually have shared values, or shared understandings about important goals and principles of behaviour. These might well overlap with many people's personal values, but equally they might sometimes contradict them.



Our Values as Communities

Examples of individual or community values might include respect for elders, honesty in trade, kindness to strangers. These three tend to be general across many communities because they have been shown to enhance the quality and security of collective life. We are taught about values from many sources: our parents and elders, from teachers, from leaders and people we admire, from our religious communities, from our cultural traditions, and from our own experience of how values work in our own lives.

Values provide us with a sense of direction or judgement that we can apply to our actions; when we adhere to them they allow us to feel that we are 'being true to ourselves' and 'doing the right thing'.

Some people distinguish 'values' from 'principles', where the former are seen as more abstract, and the latter as a more concrete or specific guide to action – like the difference between a 'sense' of morals or goals (values) and a written code of conduct or set of rules (principles). How you see this distinction is a personal decision. In this module, the terms 'values' and 'principles' will both be used collectively to refer to the ideals that the Commonwealth as an association tries to pursue and uphold.



Reflection

Think about your own personal values, and also the values of your community. What are the key points that summarize your personal and community values?



Reflection Activity for Certificate Students

eJournal Reflection Activity 1.1 (about 15 minutes)

Log in to the [Mahara ePortfolio Website](#). Click on the "Content" button and then on "Journal". Click on "New Entry" and record your thoughts. Title the entry, "Reflection Activity 1.1".

If you need help writing an eJournal, please refer to the [Learning Journal](#). If you need help posting your reflection, please refer to the [Mahara Learning Journal Guide](#).

What Values Bring Us Together?

A society may have some values that contradict those of its neighbour, but both may be prepared to abide by a core set of values from which each can benefit.

At first glance, in the Commonwealth there would seem to be little to bring such diverse peoples and nations together in a voluntary association. Yet the Commonwealth has grown and flourished. In part, it works because virtually all its members have a shared history, common institutions and a common language – the legacy of past colonial relationships with Britain, ironically the source of considerable conflict in the history of some countries.

What is interesting is that the key figures among the colonisers and the leaders of the independence movements eventually managed the independence process together in most of these countries. This enabled the common institutions that had once been severely challenged to be accepted, though always in a somewhat new form to suit the new social context. An example of this is the co-existence of formal judicial systems and traditional village justice in parts of the Pacific region.

By themselves these institutions are not enough to keep the Commonwealth relevant and respected as an organisation. There were enormous social and political problems when colonialism ended, such as the existence of the violent apartheid regime in South Africa. In finding ways to deal with these problems without the descent into permanent civil war, the organisation developed crucial principled methods. This approach is what has made the Commonwealth acceptable to its members and important as an example for the rest of the world. These supporting principles make up the Commonwealth values that are the focus of this module.

As we have already mentioned, the Commonwealth was born out of potentially troublesome circumstances. Before we can go

further in understanding the impact that Commonwealth values have had in maintaining the relationship between countries, we should also have some understanding of the history or its creation. We will take a brief look at this now.



Reflection

Think again about your own values and the image that you like to reflect to your community, your country. What image does your country or region try to project to the rest of the world? Can you think of any examples in the Commonwealth where there might be conflicts between individuals and societies that are overcome by Commonwealth values?



Reflection Activity for Certificate Students

eJournal Reflection Activity 1.2 (about 15 minutes)

Log in to the [Mahara ePortfolio Website](#). Click on the "Content" button and then on "Journal". Click on "New Entry" and record your thoughts. Title the entry, "Reflection Activity 1.2".

If you need help writing an eJournal, please refer to the [Learning Journal](#). If you need help posting your reflection, please refer to the [Mahara Learning Journal Guide](#).

The Commonwealth as an Association

I have behind me not only the splendid traditions and the annals of more than a thousand years but the living strength and majesty of the Commonwealth and Empire; of societies old and new; of lands and races different in history and origins but all, by God's Will, united in spirit and in aim.

– Queen Elizabeth II

The Commonwealth is an institution that has evolved considerably over time. Its roots lie in the history of the British Empire, but the structure and interests of the modern Commonwealth really emerged after the Second World War in the post-colonial period.

While the achievement of independence marked an end to the colonial relationship, it also marked a new beginning – the challenge of political, social and economic development, which became central to the objectives of the Commonwealth as an association.

The Commonwealth is described as a "family" of nations building on their common heritage in language, culture and education, which enables them to work together in an atmosphere of greater trust and understanding than generally prevails among nations.

All nations of the Commonwealth accept HM Queen Elizabeth II as the symbol of their free association and thus Head of the Commonwealth.



The Focus of the Commonwealth

The focus of the Commonwealth from the late 1940s has been co-operation and consultation on both political and economic affairs. Of these two main areas of interest, economic co-operation has proven the less controversial one. The Commonwealth was the impetus for the first significant development assistance programme in 1950 – the Colombo Plan, providing capital and technical assistance to countries in South and South-East Asia. It was followed in 1958 and in 1960 by Commonwealth assistance programmes targeted first to Caribbean and then to African developing countries.

Inevitably, as a greater variety of viewpoints assembled around the Commonwealth table, the achieving of consensus on political issues became more challenging. But there is considerable value in communication and consultation among states, even when discussions do not result in complete unanimity or agreement. In principle, consultation provides for greater mutual understanding between countries, and the hope that they can support each other's development.

The ability to maintain friendly relations while 'agreeing to disagree' is crucial for securing international peace. This facility is often upheld as the Commonwealth's greatest contribution to world affairs. It has proven useful in broader contexts such as the United Nations, where consultation among Commonwealth countries was able to circumvent some of the 'East-West' divisions of the Cold War, as well as the 'developed and developing world' divisions in debates about creating a new international economic order.

The Establishment of the Secretariat

In 1965, the Commonwealth Secretariat was formed and a Secretary-General appointed. Senior staff were drawn from a wide range of Commonwealth countries and were instructed to discharge their functions impartially whatever their origin, and to place their loyalty in the Commonwealth as a whole. Every two years, the Commonwealth Heads of Government meet to discuss their problems and suggest possible solutions.

The establishment of the Secretariat shifted the Commonwealth from being dominated by Britain, to being a genuine multilateral institution. The Secretariat was given a mandate to support and facilitate the exchange of views among member countries on political and economic affairs and to work for and represent all member states equally. This was in order to help individual countries promote and pursue their own development, while also strengthening the understanding and the ties between them.

Member countries recognised that long-term co-operation needed to be based on a set of agreed principles which would provide a framework for avoiding or constructively settling disagreements. These principles emerged from the 1971 Heads of Government Meeting.

The Commonwealth Values

The Commonwealth values, which include the promotion of democracy, human rights, good governance, the rule of law, individual liberty, egalitarianism, free trade, multilateralism and world peace, emerged in independence movements and the

struggles for self-government.

In the immediate post-war period, the Commonwealth served as a kind of facilitator and forum for decolonisation, helping independence to be achieved in the former British colonies in a comparatively peaceful and friendly manner. As a result, most of the newly independent states opted to join the association. The first Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr Arnold Smith, described this decision as at once pragmatic and forward-looking:

When statesmen who have led their nations to independence have decided to seek membership in the Commonwealth, they have not appeared to be motivated by sentimentality about the past, but by a constructive vision of the future and by realistic assessments about their country's national interest. For many of them the past included memories of racial discrimination, political struggle and jail. The decision was taken because these leaders saw practical value for their countries and for humanity, in retaining and building on the positive aspects of an association that linked races and continents, and in surmounting past inequities, rather than in using unpleasant memories and resentments for nation building based on the perpetuation of suspicions and divisions, as lesser politicians have so often done.

Annual Report of the Commonwealth Secretary-General, (1966)
Commonwealth Secretariat

Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent struggle for independence in India inspired a generation of great, visionary, indigenous leaders like Nelson Mandela. Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamallesh Sharma said "Nelson Mandela represents the highest values and ideals of humanity – freedom, equality, tolerance, compassion, and putting society above self." Nelson Mandela famously said: "The Commonwealth makes the world safe for diversity."



Reflection

Leaders, heroes and role models. A hero is an individual who is idealized or admired for superior qualities, deeds, or actions of any kind. Words that may describe a hero are: determination, courage, honour, and excellence. A role model is someone who is emulated because they have set an example for the behaviour of others – usually in a positive way. Who is a hero, role model, or leader that has been influential to you?



Reflection Activity for Certificate Students

Certificate Students: eJournal Reflection Activity 1.3 (about 15 minutes)

Log in to the [Mahara ePortfolio Website](#). Click on the "Content" button and then on "Journal". Click on "New Entry" and record your thoughts. Title the entry, "Reflection Activity 1.3".

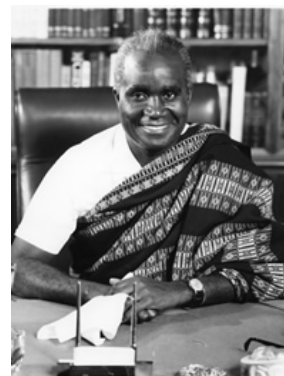
If you need help writing an eJournal, please refer to the [Learning Journal](#). If you need help posting your reflection, please refer to the [Mahara Learning Journal Guide](#).

The Declaration of Commonwealth Principles (1971)

The 1971 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Singapore was a landmark for the association. Prior to the meeting, Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda drafted a statement of principles for discussion. He took the lead because he believed that the African members needed to take a strong position against racial discrimination. Yet he was also concerned to prevent further splits in the Commonwealth. The Declaration of Commonwealth Principles that was adopted in 1971 (also known as the Singapore Declaration) can be seen as the first formal statement of Commonwealth values.

Heads of government agreed to promote actively the following goals:

- racial equality
- liberty and equality for all citizens
- democratic values and participation
- decolonisation and self-determination
- elimination of global disparities in wealth
- peace through international co-operation.



The Harare Commonwealth Declaration (1991)

In 1989, the Commonwealth began its own review of its record. It examined the continuing relevance of the *Declaration of Commonwealth Principles* in a changing world. The East-West tension of the Cold War was over, the popular revolutions in Eastern Europe were strengthening the global acceptance of democratic principles and values, and the racially segregated regimes of southern Africa were in the process of being transformed. The final product of this period of self-reflection was the *Harare Commonwealth Declaration*, published in 1991.

The *Harare Commonwealth Declaration* was issued by Heads of Government at the end of their 1991 meeting in Zimbabwe. It begins by accepting the principles of the Singapore Declaration from 1971. However, while the 'old' Commonwealth values were reinforced in Harare, the meeting considered the new issues that had emerged. In 1971, environmental sustainability, gender equity and combating drug trafficking and abuse were not significant concerns of the international community. By 1991, this had changed.



Strengthening Commonwealth Principles at Harare

The Harare Declaration pledges the Commonwealth and member countries 'to work with renewed vigour' in the following areas:

- o protecting and promoting the Commonwealth's fundamental political values, including democracy, democratic processes and institutions which reflect national circumstances, the rule of law and the independence of the judiciary, just and honest government and fundamental human rights
- o equality for women
- o universal access to education
- o ending apartheid and building a new South Africa
- o promoting sustainable development and alleviating poverty
- o extending the benefit of development within a human rights framework
- o protecting the environment
- o combating drug abuse and trafficking, and communicable diseases
- o helping small states with their economic and security concerns
- o promoting peace, disarmament and effective arms control.

Since 1971, the *Declaration of Commonwealth Principles* from Singapore, reinforced and extended at Harare, has been the moral framework for co-operative action by Heads of Government. It underpins the technical assistance and other programmes of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and also many of the Commonwealth civil society organisations

While the Harare Declaration was not intended to be a legally binding document, adherence to its principles is now considered a prerequisite of membership for countries aspiring to join the Commonwealth. In the next section of this unit, we provide a basic summary of these principles, and reflect on their place within principles and values around the world.

Commonwealth Values and Citizenship

Reflect now on the words 'citizen' and 'citizenship'. To be a citizen of a country is much more than having a passport. Citizenship is about being included in a society and participating in it, about equality of opportunity for all, and about rights and responsibilities that can be developed to ensure better economic, political and social conditions.

All of these are present in the principles that form Commonwealth values. The rights of citizens include the right to:

- o own property, marry etc., without discrimination
- o have freedom of opinion, speech, association, movement and assembly
- o choose who governs
- o vote and/or participate in electoral or governance processes
- o have a minimum standard of living
- o gain equal protection under the law

- o have the right to a fair trial before an independent court
- o have access to basic public services and primary education.

Citizens also have these responsibilities: to

- o pay taxes and other legally imposed levies
- o obey laws and behave in a socially acceptable manner
- o respect the needs and rights of others
- o uphold individual and group rights
- o protect the environment
- o play an active part in citizenship and service, both in the local community and wider society.

Commonwealth values and the concept of citizenship are intrinsically related. Therefore "the existence of citizens' rights and responsibilities are a prerequisite for the achievement of Commonwealth values" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2004).

Commonwealth Values Declared

The Declaration of Commonwealth Principles and the Harare Commonwealth Declaration contain many admirable statements, goals and objectives for the Commonwealth as an organisation. Entailed in these declarations, the Commonwealth declares its values to be:

- o **human rights** as the foundation of democracy and development
- o **equality** of all human beings, regardless of gender, race, colour, creed or political belief
- o **empowerment** pursued through education and participation
- o **equity** or fairness in the relationships between nations and between generations, and protection of vulnerable groups
- o **democracy** to allow everyone the opportunity to express their opinions and to allow citizens to participate in decision-making
- o **development** based on principles of sustainability
- o **diversity** of views and perspectives in both national and international forums
- o **dialogue and co-operation**, building common ground and consensus
- o **peace**, without which these other values are unobtainable.

In many ways, the Commonwealth values stand like a challenge, not just to the Commonwealth, but to the world. They capture some of the most stirring and pressing concerns of our times. They are part of an abiding value system of the modern world, and may well have to be protected from the depredations of the global economy.

Commonwealth Values in the World

In the 1990s, the United Nations organised a series of major world conferences on urgent global issues such as education, the environment and sustainable development, human rights, population growth, social development, gender equality, urbanisation, food security – most of these themes are central to the Harare Commonwealth Declaration.

The same values have been embraced by other international bodies. In 1995, for example, the report of the World Commission on Culture and Development calls for the acceptance of a new 'global ethics' i.e. a set of common rights, standards and responsibilities for all peoples and governments. They suggest that the foundations of global ethics are human rights, democracy, pluralism and the protection of minorities, a commitment to peaceful conflict resolution, and equity within and between generations.

You can also see Commonwealth values being reflected in many new global movements, such as the 'anti-globalisation' protests that have been dogging meetings of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and other events. The roots of these protests on the current international economic order include:

- o a desire, even a demand, that the benefits of economic growth must be shared more widely
- o an assertion of the injustice of growth strategies that result in small pockets of enormous wealth, while 40 per cent of the world's inhabitants live on less than \$1 per day
- o a call for the cancellation of long-term debt, to stop the negative resource flow from developing to developed countries
- o a call to support and strengthen cultural and economic diversity through local enterprise, local job-creation, and local

products, rather than promoting or standing by in the face of the globalisation of one small set of multinational brands and images.

Commonwealth Heads of Government have raised many of these same concerns in their own meetings, and during their deliberations within international trade bodies and UN agencies. (We will go on to look in more detail at these universal values in Units 2 and 3.)

We conclude this unit with a section which provides some examples of the mechanisms that help the Commonwealth put these principles and values into action.

Putting Commonwealth Values into Practice

Values have little impact if you fail to act on them. One of the interesting features of the Commonwealth is that the ways in which it acts, or the means through which it operates, must reflect the values it strives to uphold. For example, at both Singapore and Harare, Heads of Government affirmed their belief in the liberty of individuals under the law, in equal rights for all citizens, and in an individual's inalienable right to participate in framing the society where he or she lives. What does this actually mean in terms of the Commonwealth's various activities?

First, principles about equal rights and participation mean that every effort is taken to ensure that all participants at any Commonwealth forum have an equal opportunity to voice their perspectives, whether they represent large industrialised states or tiny, developing island economies. Since decisions are taken on the basis of consensus developed through dialogue, each member can contribute equally to the decisions taken, and no member can use a veto to control proceedings.



Second, the right to shape society through participation also means that the member states themselves fully determine the agenda of the Commonwealth through their inputs and contributions. Furthermore, members also contribute the funding to allow the Secretariat to take action in agreed areas.

The Commonwealth and the World

The Commonwealth gives its people strength and support, and in an ever changing world, provides them with a purpose, stability and a voice. The innovative way in which the Commonwealth works is uniquely relevant to the global challenges of the future. And as the Commonwealth continues to grow, changing with every generation, its importance to the world and its members grows too.

<Video File>

The following three examples show how the Secretariat, Heads of Government and member states have worked together to promote the principles of the Singapore and Harare Declarations:

- o The Commonwealth and Apartheid
- o The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)
- o The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP).

The Commonwealth and Apartheid

Probably the best example of the Commonwealth's commitment to principles of equality and empowerment was the continuous effort that was made over a period of more than 30 years to bring about an end to apartheid – white minority rule – in South Africa.

Dialogue and debate on apartheid and how it could be opposed took place in every Heads of Government Meeting after South Africa quit the association in 1961, until it rejoined in 1994 after its first non-racial elections. While there was universal abhorrence of the apartheid policies, not every state had the same view on the solutions that would be effective in promoting change.

Most Commonwealth states strongly supported strict economic, trade and military sanctions, including in particular those states in Southern Africa who were most affected by economic sanctions. Even strong disagreement in regard to sanctions on the part of Britain, the former colonial ruler and largest contributor to the Commonwealth's budget, could not interfere with the clear

consensus on this matter among the other members, reflected in the Okanagan Statement and Programme of Action on Southern Africa, from the 1987 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM).

There is no question that the vocal and principled stance of Commonwealth countries was instrumental in encouraging other countries like the United States to uphold the sanctions, which was essential to ensure their effectiveness.

While state-to-state contact with the apartheid regime was severely curtailed, the Commonwealth continued to promote dialogue and to try to create space for change. For example, an 'eminent persons group' was established to try to urge the South African government to begin negotiations, and another expert group formed to have a close look at the impact of economic sanctions on the South African economy. In addition, training programs were established to provide educational opportunities for South African refugees.

Finally, a Commonwealth Observer Mission to South Africa was put in place in 1992, shortly after the National Peace Accord, which worked actively to stop violence, reconcile communities and initiate social and economic reconstruction. And the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) moved in quickly with technical assistance on community policing, building the capacity of the free press and strengthening the election machinery, all of which were intended to help the transition to majority rule in 1994.

The Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG)

The second example of Commonwealth values in practice is the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group on the Harare Declaration (CMAG). This was formed in 1995 at the Auckland CHOGM, as the mechanism for the association to deal with serious or persistent violations of Commonwealth principles.

Foreign Ministers from eight Commonwealth countries are appointed to the CMAG and tasked with investigating any serious infringements of the Harare Declaration and recommending measures for collective Commonwealth action aimed at restoring democracy and constitutional rule.

The CMAG works by:

- o collecting information and assessing all sides of a situation through correspondence with high level government representatives
- o calling for written and sometimes oral presentations from experts and interested parties
- o undertaking missions to the country in difficulty, to meet officials from the military, opposition groups, community leaders and, if possible human rights activists.

The CMAG also tries to meet with detained leaders (such as Chief Moshood Abiola in Nigeria or Nawaz Sharif in Pakistan). However, since all their activities in-country are possible only with the permission of the rulers (and in cases like Sierra Leone the agreement of rebel forces), the CMAG is often unsuccessful in getting access to detainees or seeing all stakeholders or observing all elements of the situation.

Initially, the CMAG focused its attention on the three Commonwealth countries that were still under military rule in 1995: the Gambia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone. By mid-1999 each of these countries had at least formally returned to democratic rule. In Sierra Leone, assistance with consolidating the return to civilian rule came from a Commonwealth Police Development Task Force and Commonwealth technical assistance for capacity building and electoral management. And in the Gambia, a CFTC-funded expert in elections management was provided to the Independent Electoral Commission.

As you can see, there is a strong linkage between the analysis provided by the CMAG, the decisions taken by Heads of Government, and the technical and advisory assistance provided by the Secretariat and the CFTC.

The CMAG's attention expanded beyond these first three countries in 1999 with the agreement of Heads of Government, and now it is considered routine for the CMAG to investigate and monitor any military overthrow or breakdown in democracy. Since 1999, the CMAG's remit has included Pakistan, Fiji, Zimbabwe and the Solomon Islands, as well as continued attention to consolidating democracy in both Sierra Leone and the Gambia.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP)

Young people are vital to the processes of development, democracy and participation. We as citizens of the Commonwealth, have the responsibility, as well as the right, to participate in making change.

~ (Citizen You Commonwealth Youth Summit 2002)

Since its foundation in 1974, CYP has worked to promote youth empowerment through



education and training, expanding employment opportunities, and increased participation in decision-making. As some of the early discussions leading to the formation of CYP took place at the Singapore CHOGM in 1971, it was quite natural for the Commonwealth principles enunciated there to be proposed as a key focus for the youth programme.

One of the overarching principles that the Commonwealth Youth Programme has adopted to guide its work is to 'promote the Commonwealth values of social justice, democracy and human rights amongst the young people of the Commonwealth.'

CYP's mission

The Commonwealth Youth Programme's 'mission statement' is as follows:

CYP works to engage and empower young people to enhance their contribution to development. We do this in partnership with young people, governments and other key stakeholders.

Our mission is grounded within a rights-based approach, guided by the realities facing young people in the Commonwealth, and anchored in the belief that young people are:

- o a force for peace, democracy, equality and good governance
- o a catalyst for global consensus building, and
- o an essential resource for sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Currently, the Commonwealth Youth Programme pursues this mission through three strategic areas of work: Youth Enterprise and Sustainable Livelihoods; Governance, Development and Youth Networks; and Youth Work Education and Training.

The CYP has four strategic goals:

1. To empower young people to ensure that they are provided with and have access to opportunities that enable them to achieve sustainable livelihoods, and for them to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from good governance and development processes at national, regional and international levels.
2. To work with governments, young people and other key stakeholders to mainstream a youth perspective into development planning.
3. To advocate for the professionalisation of youth work in collaboration with educational institutions, governments and other stakeholders.
4. To promote the use of applied and participatory research in youth development in order to contribute to the creation of a credible body of knowledge.

CYP regions

The CYP is unique among all the programmes of the Secretariat because of its regional base. There are four Regional Centres: in Zambia (Africa), India (Asia), Guyana (Caribbean), and the Solomon Islands (Pacific). As a student in this course, you are probably already at least slightly familiar with one of these centres. They enable CYP to reach a wider spectrum of young people than would otherwise be possible, and to offer a wider variety of training programmes and projects tailored specifically for the needs of young women and men in each different region.

The Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment (PAYE)

In 1998, Commonwealth Youth Ministers meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, adopted the *Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment (PAYE)*. The PAYE defines youth empowerment as having two dimensions:

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 on that decision and accept responsibility for the consequences of that action.

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: an economic and social base; political will, adequate resource allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks; a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy; and access to knowledge, information and skills, and a positive value system. (PAYE p.11)

The PAYE lays out 13 strategic objectives for governments, aimed at helping to create these enabling conditions for youth empowerment, and provides a wide range of suggestions for appropriate action.

Youth participation in CYP

Youth participation represents a progressive new outlook on the role young people can play in society. Young people are no longer seen as passive recipients or victims of social and political forces. In their new role, they are seen as stakeholders in society, with vested interests and a role to share in the exercise of power at all levels.

The CYP's approach to youth participation supports and relies on young people's full inclusion in society – in social, political and economic life. It aims to ensure that all young people (especially marginalised groups) have access to the skills and opportunities they require to make a living, become full citizens and contribute to progress in their communities.

The CYP has four Regional Youth Caucuses and a Commonwealth Youth Caucus which provide a mechanism to ensure that young people are involved in consultations and decisions about the shape of the CYP's own programs. These enable youth representatives to make recommendations to Ministers for Youth Affairs at their triennial meetings. Each region also supports youth networks and exchanges between young people so that they can learn from each other and collectively try to influence national and regional policies.

For example, in Africa there is an HIV/AIDS Network that includes ten 'Ambassadors for Positive Living' who take a high profile role to talk openly about HIV spread and prevention, and about the impact of HIV on young people, while visiting schools, churches and mosques, youth groups, government officials and politicians.



Reflection

What are the urgent issues affecting young people in different parts of the Commonwealth today?

Think about the issues that are the most troubling for young people in your country (e.g. unemployment, environmental destruction, drugs, access to education, HIV/AIDS or any others). Which one concerns you the most?



Reflection Activity for Certificate Students

Certificate Students: eJournal Reflection Activity 1.4 (about 30 minutes)

Log in to the [Mahara ePortfolio Website](#). Click on the "Content" button and then on "Journal". Click on "New Entry" and record your thoughts. Title the entry, "Reflection Activity 1.4".

If you need help writing an eJournal, please refer to the [Learning Journal](#). If you need help posting your reflection, please refer to the [Mahara Learning Journal Guide](#).

Unit Summary

In this unit, you have covered the following main points:

- an overview of the history of the Commonwealth (including official statements of Commonwealth principles from heads of government)
- the diversity of the Commonwealth member states, and also what the Commonwealth countries have in common – some common history, institutions and language
- how the Commonwealth originated with the British Empire, and the legacies of colonialism
- the evolution of the modern Commonwealth and its roles – including co-operation and assistance to member states
- the establishment of Commonwealth principles and ways in which these principles are put into practice.

In the rest of the course we explore various aspects of Commonwealth values, and look at examples of how these have or have not been put into practice by the Commonwealth and other organisations.



Reflection

To check how you have got on, look back at the learning outcomes for this unit and see if you can now do them.



Reflection Activity for Certificate Students

Certificate Students: eJournal Reflection Activity 1.5 (about 15 minutes)

Log in to the [Mahara ePortfolio Website](#) and review your Learning Journal to remind yourself of what you have learned and the ideas you have generated. Click on "New Entry" and summarize your thoughts about this Unit. Title the entry, "Unit 1 Summary".

If you need help writing an eJournal, please refer to the [Learning Journal](#). If you need help posting your reflection, please refer to the [Mahara Learning Journal Guide](#).



Unit 1 Quiz

1. How many countries are voluntarily associated with the Commonwealth?
 48
 54
 154
2. What do community values commonly include? Select all that apply.
 respect for elders
 honesty in trade
 kindness to strangers
 all of the above
3. What do the Commonwealth values include? Select all that apply.
 the promotion of democracy
 human rights
 good governance
 the rule of law
 individual liberty
 egalitarianism
 free trade
 multilateralism
 world peace
 all of the above
4. True or False - The Commonwealth is described as a "family" of nations building on their common heritage in language, culture and education.
 True
 False

5. Which facility is often upheld as the Commonwealth's greatest contribution to world affairs?
- The ability to maintain friendly relations while "agreeing to disagree" is crucial for securing international peace
 - Economic co-operation
 - Achieving of consensus on political issues

References

Achebe, Chinua (1994) *Things Fall Apart*, Anchor

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (1987) *Okanagan Statement and Programme of Action on Southern Africa*

Commonwealth Secretariat (2005) *Introduction to citizenship for young people in the Commonwealth*

Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia (2005) *The Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth Empowerment (PAYE)* Available from the Templates section of the Commonwealth Secretariat website, at: <http://www.thecommonwealth.org> (Accessed 26/2/07.)

Smith, A. (1966) *Annual Report of the Commonwealth Secretary-General*, Commonwealth Secretariat, London.

Commonwealth Foundation <http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/>

Commonwealth Secretariat <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/>

Commonwealth of Learning <http://www.col.org/about/Commonwealth/Pages/default.aspx>

Young Commonwealth <http://www.youngcommonwealth.org/>

COPYRIGHT © COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT