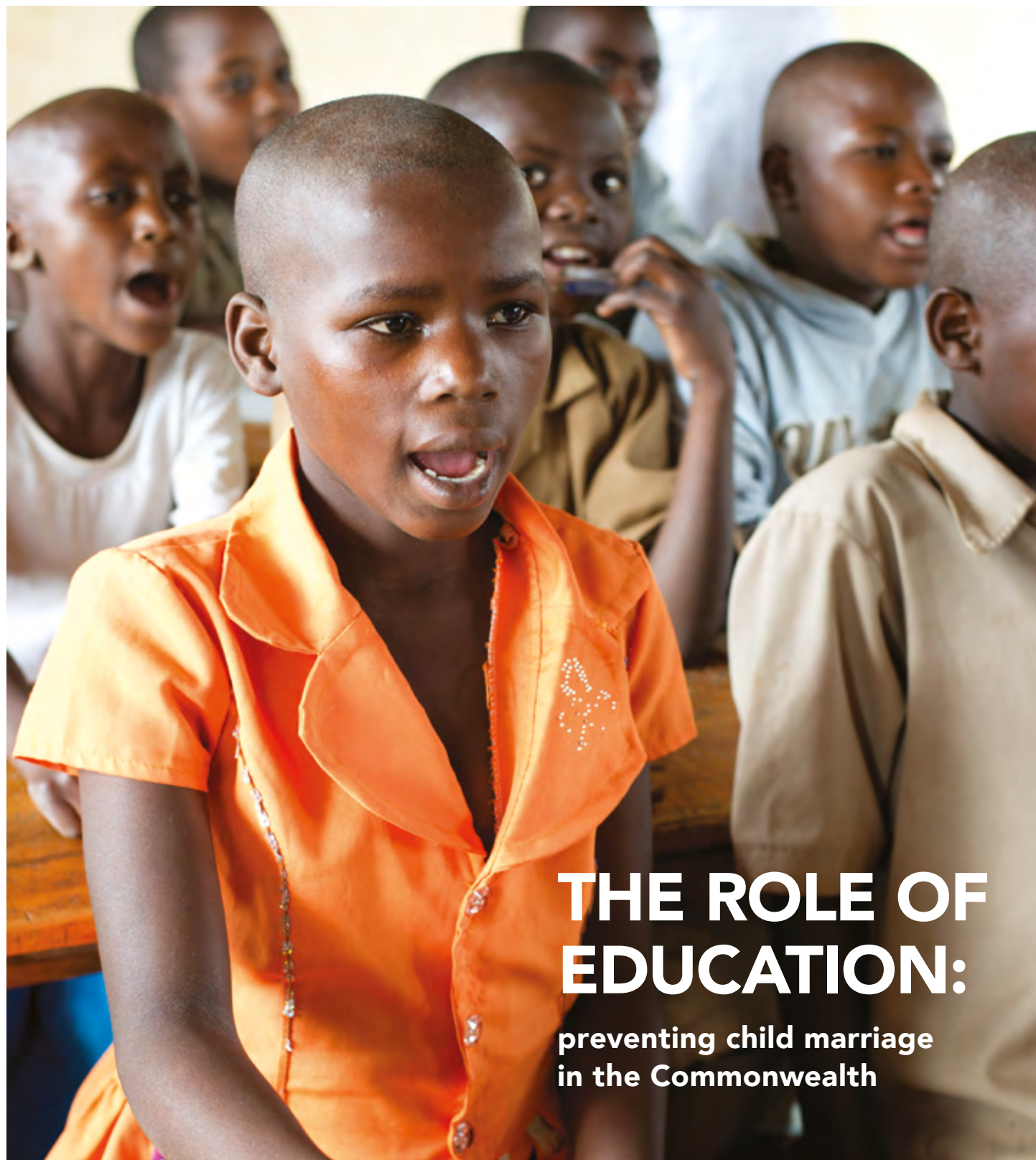


# VOICES



## THE ROLE OF EDUCATION:

preventing child marriage  
in the Commonwealth

 **RCS PARTNERSHIPS:**  
Summer 2015 programmes –  
giving voice to creativity

 **RCS LAUNCHES CYGEN:**  
The new Commonwealth Youth  
Gender Equality Network

 **A VIEW TO CHOGM:**  
Looking ahead to Malta,  
November 2015

# Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC)



The Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) is the official representative voice of the more than 1.2 billion young people in the Commonwealth, from Asia, the Pacific, the Caribbean, the Americas, Africa and Europe.

## Contact

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The CYC was established in 2013 with the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat's Youth Division. The establishment of the CYC was endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government in Perth, Australia in November 2011 and at their biennial summit in Sri Lanka, 2013, as an 'autonomous, youth-led' organisation.'

Led by a nine-member executive, the CYC acts as a coalition of national youth councils and other youth-led civil society and private sector bodies from across the 53 member countries of the Commonwealth.

It aims to further advance the youth development agenda by integrating young people into the development work of the Commonwealth at national, regional, and pan-Commonwealth levels. It also provides a sustainable platform for unified engagement with decision makers and youth-led development initiatives.

The CYC is a mechanism for facilitating meaningful engagement of young people in decision and policy-making across the Commonwealth, in keeping with article 13 of the Commonwealth Charter on the importance of young people in the Commonwealth. The nine Executive members play a key role, providing leadership and representing their peers in a transparent and democratic process.

The current CYC chairperson, elected in November 2013, is Ahmed Adamu, from Nigeria. Ahmed is a PhD student at Newcastle University, United Kingdom.

The CYC works to mobilise the voices of young people and advocate for governments to meaningfully engage young people. It partners with the Commonwealth Secretariat and other organisations with a focus on youth development.

# WELCOME



It seems fitting that I write this introduction on International Youth Day (August 12th), given that young people are a significant feature in this issue. The year 2015 has been designated 'A Young Commonwealth', a reminder that young people aged under 30 make up over 60% of the population of the Commonwealth, and their views and actions matter.

Such Days and Years provide an important opportunity to hear the voices of young people, understand the multiple challenges they are facing and listen to their ideas about how they can determine their own futures. Yet the vital role of young people in development now needs to be more constantly acknowledged and enabled than such one-off days and years might suggest. Certainly, young people themselves feel they can make a huge contribution to the political, economic and social development of our Commonwealth. In what is also a landmark year for people and planet, when global leaders are set to agree the new sustainable development goals, there is hope that this is the generation to end poverty and hunger by 2030 – if they are invested in and supported.

The RCS believes that youth engagement is more important than ever. We have prioritised our youth-serving role and seek to inspire, support and develop young Commonwealth citizens. We see providing opportunities for emerging leaders, such as the Queen's Young Leaders' programme (page 2) as very important. We also recognise the importance of networks and platforms for youth voice and action and have supported the development of the new Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN – pages 8-11), as well as our Youth Associates network. Child and youth advocacy is centre-stage in our policy and campaigns work (pages 12-13). We also welcome the development of new youth-led Commonwealth-focused organisations (page 18) We are grateful to our partner-funders for their investment in our youth development work.

**Helen Jones MBE**

Director of Youth Affairs and Education Programmes



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY

# CONTENTS

- 2 IN THE NEWS:** Queen's Young Leaders arrive in London
- 3 SPOTLIGHT:** Empowered youth as partners in gender equality
- 4 A VIEW TO CHOGM:** Reforming the Commonwealth
- 6 COMMONWEALTH CONCERN:** Civil Society in the Commonwealth – anticipating the new CHRI report
- 8 NETWORK LAUNCH:** CYGEN – a new voice for young gender experts
- 12 NEW REPORT:** Ending Child Marriage: The Role of Education
- 14 PROGRAMME IN PARTNERSHIP:** Out of the Blue: The Prince of Wales's Commonwealth Environmental Photography Awards
- 15 PROGRAMME IN PARTNERSHIP:** A Time for Rights – addressing the relevance of Magna Carta
- 16 COMMONWEALTH DEBATE:** How Commonwealth Citizens could swing the EU Referendum
- 18 RCS REGION-WIDE:** Engaging with Youth Networks
- 19 BRANCH FOCUS:** Ireland
- 20 COMING UP IN THE COMMONWEALTH**

# KEEP IN THE CONVERSATION

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# QUEEN'S YOUNG LEADERS ARRIVE IN LONDON

On the 22nd June, the first Queen's Young Leaders accepted their awards from Her Majesty The Queen at Buckingham Palace. In a ceremony that they will never forget, 60 young people from all over the Commonwealth were awarded for their work in improving their own lives and the lives of others in their communities.

The Queen's Young Leaders programme, guided by the values of the Commonwealth Charter, was set up to honour The Queen's 60 year contribution to the Commonwealth as part of The Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. The programme runs for four years and will, by the end of the programme, have a winner from every country in the Commonwealth.

As part of the ceremony, football icon David Beckham and former UK Prime Minister Sir John Major spoke to guests about the future of the Commonwealth and the value of the contributions being made by the youth across the 53 member nations.

**BELOW: Awardees meet David Beckham at Buckingham Palace**

David Beckham said: "I was fortunate to work with some incredible captains and

managers throughout my career each bringing their own qualities to leading a team. As a captain myself, there was no prouder moment for me than when I led my country into a major tournament. I'm honoured to be here today to celebrate your achievement; with people like you I have no doubt the world will be a better place."


Sir John Major said: "The Commonwealth is a unique institution. History has seen nothing like it, and the future is unlikely to have anything to compare with it. You exemplify the very best of what the Commonwealth is today, and our hope for what it will be tomorrow."

His Royal Highness, The Duke of York, Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice, Their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of Gloucester and Their Royal Highnesses Prince and Princess Michael of Kent all joined The Queen in congratulating the winners.

The Queen's Young Leaders award provides a year-long programme during which the winners engage in on-line training provided by Cambridge University, mentoring to assist with their projects, and a week in the UK with an awards ceremony, a two-day residential leadership course in Cambridge, a visit to Downing Street to meet the British Prime Minister, David Cameron, plus visits to businesses and the BBC World Service.

The search is now on for the 2016 Queen's Young Leaders Award Winners. The programme supports young people aged 18-29 from across the Commonwealth who have shown exceptional leadership qualities in transforming their own lives and the lives of others.

## MORE INFORMATION

 View the video of the 2015 award ceremony and find application information at [www.queensyoungleaders.com](http://www.queensyoungleaders.com)



# EMPOWERED YOUTH AS PARTNERS IN GENDER EQUALITY

**Ravi Karkara** serves as a Strategic Adviser Partnership to the Assistant Secretary-General/Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women. He has worked on gender main-streaming with UN Women, UNICEF and Save the Children.



There were 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 years globally in 2015; one in every six people worldwide. By 2030, the target date for the sustainable development goals, the number of youth is projected to have grown by 7 per cent, to nearly 1.3 billion. Youth can be a positive force for development when provided with the knowledge and opportunities they need to thrive. In particular, young people should acquire the education and skills needed to contribute in a productive economy, and they need access to a job market. However, some countries are struggling currently to educate and employ their young people, while also anticipating substantial growth in their number.

A deeper look at the global population brings out a striking image of the ever increasing gender disparities in the way societies treat young women and young men. On one hand, young women are still treated as subordinates in many parts of the world; they face multiple layers of discrimination; a range of interrelated challenges affect their leadership in economic, social, political, cultural and civil spheres; and those belonging to certain class and ethnic groups also face compounded levels of discrimination. On the other hand, their male peers are often seen enjoying better treatment, which further results in a higher status and an improved position in society.

There should be serious discussions about engaging both young women and young men in the action towards obtaining gender equality.

The approach must be four-pronged:

**Increasing investment in adolescent girls' and young women's leadership across the board:** This is a very important step to ensure that women are not only the leaders of tomorrow, but also the leaders of today. This will also mean that young women are able to assert their rights as laid out in the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the broader human rights framework.

**A serious conversation about the responsibility and accountability of young men and boys:** Their role is not only important as actors in attaining gender equality, but also as partners in creating a world that is equal if we want to achieve the goal of planet 50-50 by the year 2030.

**Discussion on youth and gender equality including all genders:** This discussion must break stereotypes and the silos that have been created through age-old systems of patriarchy and the hegemony of masculinities embedded in social institutions including the education system, organized religion, and political and financial systems.

**Serious effort to strengthen gender equality throughout the life cycle, and build inter-generational partnerships on gender equality:** There is a need to create a culture of continuous dialogue and mutual understanding amongst all generations through inter-generational partnerships. In this regard, children, adolescents, youth, adults, and elders can all become champions of gender equality today.

We need all youth-led organizations, youth-led initiatives, and supporters of youth movements to seriously engage in creating a planet that is truly 50-50 by the year 2030. Young women and men need to be on the frontlines of the partnership and fight for gender equality.

# REFORMING THE COMMONWEALTH

In Malta, in November this year at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), Commonwealth leaders will elect a new Secretary-General. He, or perhaps at last she, will be the sixth Secretary-General in the 50 year history of the Secretariat. **Matthew Neuhaus** looks ahead.



The Commonwealth itself has changed considerably over the last century, as the nations of the British Empire emerged into independence. The election of a new Secretary-General provides the opportunity for further change and reform, to ensure its continuing relevance to its members and the wider world.

What the Commonwealth needs above all in the new Secretary-General (SG) is a change agent, thought leader, motivator and manager. It also needs someone who can develop a shared vision for a Commonwealth facing deep divisions between its 53 members and in relevance, funding and commitment. The Chair of the CHOGM, the youthful Prime Minister Muscat of Malta, is alert to the challenge of fixing what he sees

as a 'sick' and dysfunctional organisation. Muscat as Chair could be a powerful combination with a dynamic new SG.

While the Commonwealth's future may depend much on the nature of the new Secretary-General, this is not the only factor for change and renewal. In fact it is its member nations, and its associated organisations and civil society, which will really determine the future of the Commonwealth. Only if they are prepared to take the decisions to make it fit for purpose in the 21st Century – including the sort of SG its leaders will choose – will this historic international organisation continue to exist, and provide useful service to its membership and the world.

Along with a new Secretary-General, the Commonwealth also needs to engage again with the big agendas of the world as it did when it helped lead international action against apartheid in South Africa in the 1970s and 80s. The Commonwealth has great convening power, across all regions of the world and from some of the world largest and most economically powerful G20 members to some of its smallest and most fragile island states.

Two of the world's most pressing challenges are addressing violent extremism and managing migration in an economically sustainable way which promotes international development. The Commonwealth has already done considerable work on both subjects with the Commission on Respect and Understanding chaired by Nobel Laureate Professor Amartya Sen in 2007, and the Ramphal Commission on Migration and Development in 2011.

Much also needs to be done to realise the promise of the Eminent Persons Group Report on Reforming the Commonwealth in 2011, strengthening its work in good offices and democratic development,



ABOVE: Panel members Mr David Concar, UK Envoy to the Commonwealth of Nations and Ms Francesca Danmole, 2013 UK candidate for Chair of the Commonwealth Youth Council at the RCS event, 'A View to CHOGM'

providing support to governance and development in developing members and building its engagement on youth and gender issues. There is a lot of work for the Commonwealth still to do for the good of the world. Its membership and above all its leaders bear a heavy responsibility to ensure it is given the guidance, resources and leadership at the forthcoming CHOGM in Malta which will fit it for the future and fulfil its continuing promise.

### A View to CHOGM

A recent discussion convened by the Royal Commonwealth Society at the Cypriot High Commission, 'A View to CHOGM' drew attention to CHOGM and the election of a new Commonwealth Secretary-General this November. It highlighted the need and desire amongst the Commonwealth community to establish a clear set of qualities that a new Secretary-General should possess in order to lead a contemporary Commonwealth.

It is the responsibility of the Heads of the Member States to both nominate and appoint a new Secretary-General. It is surprising therefore that an official job specification has not been put together. Indeed it is interesting that no significant discussion has taken place amongst the member governments and Heads of State as to the appointment, given the enormous influence the appointment will have on the future direction of the Commonwealth.

There is a general consensus that a new Secretary-General should be someone who is bold, energetic, diplomatic, able to lift the Commonwealth's profile internationally and help the nations develop a shared vision. Critically, it should be someone who is fully committed to promoting the values ingrained within the Commonwealth Charter. Furthermore, by using the contemporary and historical strengths of the Commonwealth, it should be someone who can achieve a sense of 'common-wealth' and 'family' amongst a broad diversity of nations experiencing their own circumstances, distractions and challenges at different times.

 **MORE INFORMATION**  
 A View to CHOGM Summary Report:  
 [www.thercs.org/our-work/research-and-publications](http://www.thercs.org/our-work/research-and-publications)

“

Right now, the Commonwealth needs more of a general than a secretary. This is not to take away from Mr Sharma's work – personally, I think he has done an admirable job with the resources at his disposal. However, the winner will face a number of challenges. The Commonwealth is in urgent need of a renewed purpose: there are clear strains evolving between developing nations – often referred to as the New Commonwealth – and wealthier member states. The new leader will also have to deal with the struggle for relevance in a modern world and understand the reasons why some of the Old Guard – Australia, New Zealand, Canada – are reducing their much-needed financial support that the Secretariat relies on to run important programmes.

To reverse this, the Commonwealth needs a leader who will do three things: bring a relevant but realistic vision to refresh the organisation, be able to unify the leadership and aspirations of Commonwealth societies and groups behind the work of the Secretariat, and, most importantly, be able to champion the Commonwealth and its values on the world stage. I want to see someone who will live and breathe the Commonwealth and know it inside out.”



**Aaron Hape**

*Pacific Regional Youth Co-ordinator for the Royal Commonwealth Society, founder and Executive Director of Commonwealth Youth New Zealand (see pages 18-19) and The Queen's Young Leaders Programme advisory panel member*

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The Commonwealth encountered rough waters at the time of the Sri Lanka CHOGM in 2013. This gave rise to anxieties among activists and enthusiasts about its future 'relevance', or even of its survival. Yet the Commonwealth is perhaps as much an organism, or an idea, or even a consciousness, as a structure. Perceptions at any particular time of the merits of its collective activities, official or non-official, are not the whole story. Links and affinities of all kinds count for a great deal. Nonetheless the collective activities remain of key importance, and need occasional rigorous review. Responsiveness to the priorities of the membership and flexibility are essential to the work of the Secretariat. The key relationship is that between the Heads of Government and the Secretary-General.”



**Sir Peter Marshall**

*Former Commonwealth Deputy Secretary-General, Chairman of Royal Commonwealth Society and the Joint Commonwealth Societies' Trust*



# CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE COMMONWEALTH

**Kai Reddy** is a lawyer specialising in International Human Rights, Criminal and Humanitarian Law. She has previously worked at the UN backed tribunals for Yugoslavia and the Special Court for Sierra Leone as well as The International Criminal Court. She has also worked on Minority rights in South Asia and is currently leading the Strategic Initiatives Programme at the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative.



From its founding in around 1867 to its modern incarnation in 1965 until the 1990s, the Commonwealth was an evolving organisation of considerable global reach and impact. However, in recent years, its relevance, value and worth have been consistently questioned. Now, some would argue that its relevance and value have always been in dispute; what is certain is that this debate has intensified since the new millennium, and more so since the decision to hold the last Heads of Government meeting in Sri Lanka. Holding a summit in a country where the Head of State was accused of war crimes, and with an appalling record of human rights violations and flagrant disregard for the independence of the judiciary, goes completely against the values the Commonwealth seeks to uphold.

Sri Lanka's CHOGM threw into sharp focus, the divide between the public declarations of the organisation's commitment to human rights and the reality – and crucially the Secretariat turning a blind eye. The Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence tightly controlled the People's Forum (CPF), the main civil society meeting amidst an atmosphere of intimidation and fear. This resulted in many representatives censoring themselves and speaking with trepidation. In anticipation of these restrictions, an alternative forum

was set up outside the capital to facilitate dialogue between civil society actors. The Secretariat, for its part, made no significant public objection to these clear violations of Commonwealth values and neither did the Foundation – values entrenched in the Commonwealth Charter adopted in 2013, the Affirmation of Commonwealth Values and Principles and a number of declarations agreed to by the Heads, including the Harare and Latimer House Principles.

The events in Sri Lanka are not the only recent instance of restricted civil society space within the Commonwealth. Others are Malaysia's anti sedition laws, Pakistan's blasphemy laws, Uganda's anti LGBT bill, restrictions on foreign funding and freezing the bank accounts of well known civil society organisations with no good reason (India and Kenya), counter terrorism laws in the UK and Kenya which are misused against their citizens, the curtailment of the Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Association, the deportation of researchers working on human rights issues against fickle claims of visa violations – to name but a few. These actions have sent ripples throughout civil society and have had an intense chilling effect on civil society activities.

These trends are in stark contrast to the pledges Heads of Government have made at the Commonwealth level. Pledges to values that states are obligated, by membership, to promote protect and uphold – values enshrined in the Charter (adopted in 2013 and signed by all member states). All of these violations are against civil society and The Charter specifically points out 'the important role that civil society plays in [...] communities and countries as a partner in promoting and supporting Commonwealth values and principles'. To stifle a partner goes against sensibility and acts as a hindrance to achieving long term goals



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which in turn puts the future of the organisation into jeopardy.

The failure of the Commonwealth to uphold its values has not gone unnoticed. In 2011 the Heads of Government themselves agreed it was time to 'build a stronger, more resilient and progressive Commonwealth'. In appointing a group of civilians as The Eminent Person's Group (EPG), they signalled a recognition of the variety, knowledge and expertise that existed within civil society; the importance and the need to consult with them in order to attain longevity for the Commonwealth. The resulting report was titled 'A Commonwealth of People, Time for Urgent Reform'. The title is extremely telling – The Commonwealth has long been considered an association of people, and the EPG clearly felt it was time the Commonwealth was reminded of this fact. Most critically, it demanded 'Urgent Reform'— part of which was for a values-driven, constructive and meaningful engagement with civil society, together with a renewed commitment to human rights.

What followed over the next three years, unfortunately, was gradual reform at best. Civil society organisations are growing increasingly discontented with the limited and inconsistent engagement offered by Commonwealth institutions. The Foundation, as the very body created to work with civil society within the Commonwealth has also taken a step back and it is, I would argue, absolute crunch time for the Commonwealth.

This backdrop of closing space, governments' inability or unwillingness to uphold the values agreed to and a once important and influential organisation in desperate need for reform, sets the scene for CHRI's upcoming report. The troubled relationship between civil society and the Secretariat is to the detriment of both. In a time of closing civic space in many countries, Civil Society organisations need a Secretariat that clearly and forcefully defends their role in democratic governance, and that can improve the links between the Commonwealth's diverse organisations. At a time in which it is being perceived as moribund, unprincipled and irrelevant by many of its citizens, the Commonwealth, and the Secretariat in particular, needs to engage with the vibrant network of Commonwealth CSOs to help achieve meaningful reach and impact, and truly live up to its values. CHRI's report offers a number of practical proposals that are aimed at strengthening and deepening the relationship between the Secretariat and civil society actors – and which would ultimately build a stronger, more powerful and effective Commonwealth.

This, in a snapshot, is what CHRI's upcoming report addresses and puts forward to the Heads of Government. The report is due to be launched shortly before November 2015.

**MORE INFORMATION**  
Visit [www.humanrightsinitiative.org](http://www.humanrightsinitiative.org)

**ABOVE: The Commonwealth People's Forum Launch, Malta June 2015**



# A NEW VOICE FOR YOUNG GENDER EXPERTS

May saw the launch of the new Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN) in Malta. The network provides a new platform for young experts to work towards gender equality in the Commonwealth...

The Commonwealth has a strong track record in empowering young people and providing a network that young people utilise to advocate for their priorities. The Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC), formed after the 2013 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), is a representative structure formed of young people who can speak to the priorities of their peers from across the Commonwealth. Other networks have been formed by young people to gather youth expertise and raise the profile of particular issues from climate change to human rights and democracy. Alongside the threats of climate change, repression of human rights and stifling of democracy, many young people face discrimination, coercion, harassment, violence and persecution on the basis of their gender. While women and girls are clearly bearing the brunt of this disparity, many men and boys, transgender and intersex people, and those of diverse sexual orientations, are heavily impacted by gender inequality. With no specialised gender network for young people in the Commonwealth, no dedicated executive member in the CYC working on gender inequality, and a gap in the Commonwealth Secretariat's gender plan of action (see the April issue of *Commonwealth Voices*), the time has surely come for young people to be supported in raising gender equality in the Commonwealth.

Part of this support has come in the form of the newly launched Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN).

The aim of CYGEN is to allow young experts from across the Commonwealth to share best practice from their work and co-ordinate advocacy within the Commonwealth to address the myriad of issues related to gender inequality. The forum was launched by the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS), with support from the Malta CHOGM task force and the Government of Australia, in a week long forum held in Malta between the 13th and 19th May. The forum brought together young experts from over 20 Commonwealth countries to discuss gender inequality, engage in intergenerational learning and plan how the network could be taken forward.

These inaugural members of CYGEN drew together a common statement: *The Gender Agenda: Youth Perspectives From Across the Commonwealth*. This document focused on five thematic areas that were of key concern across the Commonwealth: governance; child, early and forced marriage; sexual and reproductive health and rights; youth transitions; and sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Below are the 'Gender Five' – the network's priority policy recommendations, one from each of their five key themes:

1. All Commonwealth young people must have access to gender-inclusive quality education with relevant curricula, which prioritises holistic learning methods, and prepares young people for decent work, equitable employment opportunities and entrepreneurship.
2. The right of all women, girls and young people from marginalised groups must be recognised in order to successfully influence decision making, to hold leaders account, and enable them to be partners in peace and stability.

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I urge you to be bold and work towards change which is positive and inclusive.”

President of Malta H.E. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, opening the forum



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Today's session on Advocacy was amazing, and eye-opening. Many times we tend to lean towards speaking to the believers and supporters; to have the easier conversations. However, to create real change, difficult discussions must be had, and we must step out of our comfort zones. Grassroots organizing and engagement is the key to effective advocacy and impact creation, especially in women and girls' rights. The Youth Transitions framework is finally forming up and all the hard work and discussions are down on paper. I must say, I am very optimistic.”

A delegate from Kenya, Faith Wafula, sums up her experience of the fourth day

3. Commonwealth institutions must include an understanding of the needs of people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identities, gender expression and sex characteristics, developed in consultation with civil society, within the technical advice they provide to states in areas related to economic security such as education, employment and housing.
4. The Commonwealth Secretariat should commission a gender audit of all policies at Commonwealth and national government levels for all member states, including for child marriage.
5. Every country should respect the right of all young people to make safe and informed sexual and reproductive health decisions by allocating an appropriate health budget to develop a nationwide mobile application or hotline to disseminate youth-friendly information on sexual and reproductive health and rights, health care and services.

With its priorities set out, the network, in collaboration with the RCS, is busy pressing the Commonwealth and its member states to do more to address gender inequality and its harmful impact on young people of all genders. The network has already sent a member to the Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers held in the Bahamas (see pages 6-7) and network members are now advocating for gender inequality in other fora from the United Nations to national media. The network is growing and it will be sending representatives to CHOGM in November as a dedicated network of young people able to speak with authority on what more has to be done to address gender-based discrimination and disparity in the Commonwealth.

1: H.E. Marie Louise Coleiro Preca and RCS Chair, Claire Whitaker with Network members

2: CYGEN member, Faith Wafula



## MORE INFORMATION

Download *The Gender Agenda* and find out about CYGEN at [www.thercs.org/youth/commonwealth-youth-gender-and-equality-network/](http://www.thercs.org/youth/commonwealth-youth-gender-and-equality-network/)

3: Lord Howell, President of the Royal Commonwealth Society

4: Sarah Soysa and fellow delegate on the final day

5: Youth Co-chairs, Gulalai Ismail and John Loughton

6: The President of Malta, H.E Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, receives 'The Gender Agenda'

7: Members of CYGEN at the forum

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CYGEN was a need that was urgently called for. It was a great opportunity for me to meet amazing youth advocates around the world and come up with strong, solid asks or to our governments so that we are able to hold them accountable. Commonwealth has many influential platforms therefore it is indeed great to know that CYGEN outcomes are taken serious and passed on to the Commonwealth meeting specially collaborating with women's forum and youth forum which are the two most important forums to lobby for our Gender 5 asks.”

Feedback from CYGEN member, Sarah Soysa

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Today silence is not our option: we cannot remain silent anymore.”

Gulalai Ismail, Youth Co-Chair of the forum on the first day

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We're having a national conversation on that in Australia as it's critical that the issue is opened up. I think we can see that across the Commonwealth, across the Pacific, people are starting to talk about this issue. Part of it is education. Men standing up against violence against women is a very powerful tool to use.”

Penny Williams, Australian Global Fellow in Women, Peace and Security at the Geneva Centre for Security Policy discussed violence against women.

“

It's unbelievable that women put themselves through so much pain in order to please men.”

Senegalese artist and Female Genital Cutting/Mutilation campaigner Sister Fa on the practice which affects many girls in certain Commonwealth countries

5





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It is up to you to see that the Network lives up to its potential.

When true gender equality is achieved, people of all genders will be able to go to school and have the opportunity to prosper and experience wellbeing.

True gender equality will offer us the opportunity to enjoy the same employment rights, with equal pay and conditions.

Only then will we be in a position to reach our development goals, and benefit as one human family from global prosperity.

This is why your efforts over the past days and the launching of the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network are so important. They signal a change in the way we talk about gender, and the underlying structures that enforce rigid and coercive categories to the detriment of so many people. Your efforts will provide opportunities across the Commonwealth and beyond, so that sustainable solutions may be identified, explored, and implemented.”

**President of Malta H.E Marie Louise Coleiro Preca, from her closing speech**

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We are leading the issues and ideas that, quite frankly, other people in the Commonwealth are comfortable to put under the carpet or push to one side. We are shining a light into the dark corners of these conversations today. So let's show we have a voice when people call us voiceless. Let's make and safeguard a place when people feel placeless and let's engage those who are too easily disengaged. Gender and equality issues are human rights issues. They should be given by no one. They are not a treat or a charity. We are in the game of humanity.”

**John Loughton, Youth Co-Chair of the forum's closing remarks**

7



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Women's equality is not just a matter of fairness, and not just an ethical and social concern. It is the high road to sustainable economic progress and development... millions of women and girls are still oppressed, abused, forced into marriages, degraded, barred from a full life.”

**Lord Howell of Guildford, President of the Royal Commonwealth Society, on Women's equality**

# ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE: THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

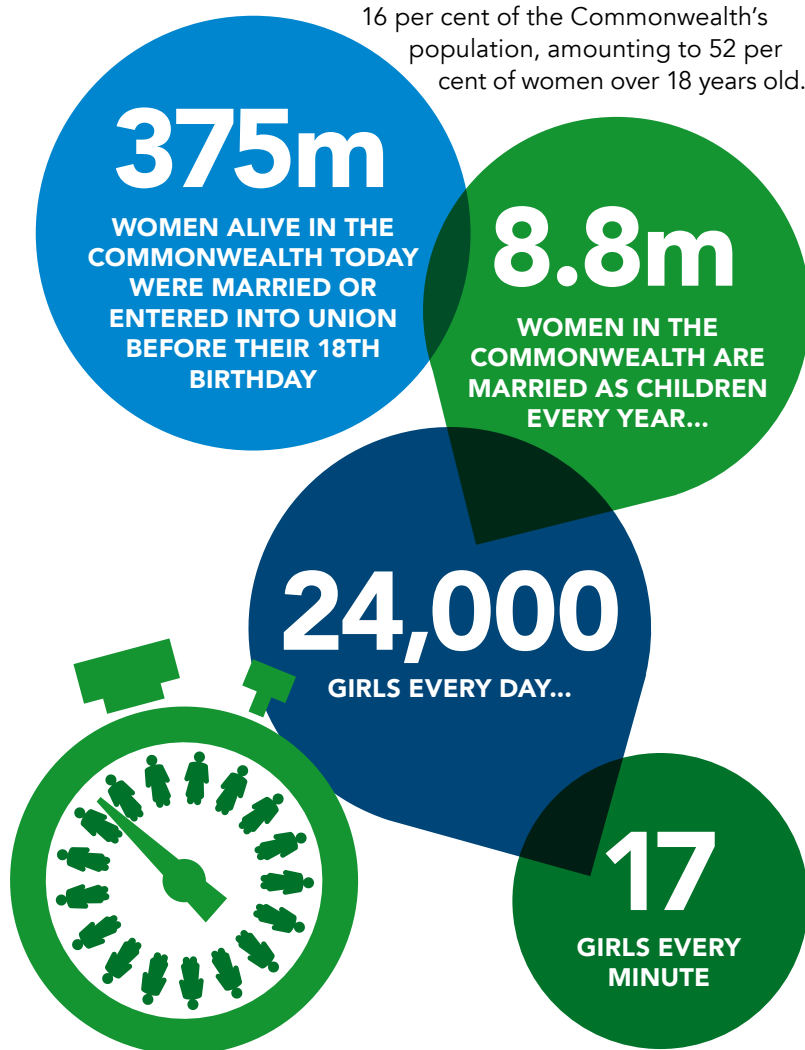
In June 2015 the Royal Commonwealth Society, with partner Plan UK, launched the latest in a series of reports on child marriage, 'Preventing Child Marriage in the Commonwealth: the Role of Education'.

The report, which was launched at the 19th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers in the Bahamas, unveils new statistics, calculated from UNICEF data, showing that in the Commonwealth approximately 375 million women alive today were married or entered into union before their 18th birthday. This is over 16 per cent of the Commonwealth's population, amounting to 52 per cent of women over 18 years old.

At current prevalence 43 per cent of women are married before they reach 18 years old, amounting to over 44 million 20-24 year olds married as children. Approximately 8.8 million women in the Commonwealth are married as children annually: 24,000 girls every day, 17 girls every minute. Given increasing populations, unless we do more to tackle this issue, the number of child brides in the Commonwealth will increase.

We have seen some tremendous gains on the issue of child marriage in recent years, with many Commonwealth governments, such as Zambia, Canada and Malawi, leading the way to ensure that child marriage is on the international agenda, and that states commit to ending the practice. However, these efforts haven't yet translated into actions that reduce child marriage prevalence. In order to combat this disconnect, there are calls for National Action Plans, under which several governmental departments within a given country would work together to develop policies that can combine to reduce child marriage prevalence. National Action Plans will ensure progress, accountability and transparency, and alongside Ministries for Women's Affairs, can involve Ministries of Justice and Health, Police and Social Services, and crucially, Ministries of Education.

Education is one of the most powerful weapons we can use to combat child marriage. The evidence shows that increased educational attendance and attainment directly correlates with decreased child marriage prevalence. Educated women are less likely to die in childbirth and their children are more likely to be healthy. Educated mothers are also more likely to send their girls to school. Furthermore, a high quality education can be critical in helping girls develop the skills, knowledge, confidence and abilities to make their own decisions, enjoy healthy and





positive relationships, and make informed choices about their health and well-being, and their lives. In contrast, girls forced to marry often drop out at the very point when education can guide them through the vulnerable period of adolescence. In the Commonwealth, as in the rest of the world, fewer girls than boys go to school, and as the levels increase, the numbers of girls decrease. Given the clear causal links between child marriage and education, Ministers for Education must recognize their role as part of the solution to end child marriage, and implement policies to enable girls to access a high quality education.

Access to education is still a central issue for girls across the Commonwealth. The underpinning factor is poverty: while education is widely free across the Commonwealth, associated costs for uniforms, books or travel mean that many families cannot afford to send their children to school. Where they do have a choice, families often choose to send their boys to school, keeping girls at home to help with household chores. This is because girls are seen as the wealth of others, as they will leave the family home when they marry. However, as demonstrated above, the returns on the investment of educating girls can be huge for social and economic development.

In rural areas the distance to school can be a barrier to girls' access to education – with longer journeys being unsafe or too expensive. This issue is also exacerbated at secondary level, where there are fewer schools than at primary level, thus they are further away. Another key barrier to girls' access to education is safety.

School-related gender-based violence is a global concern, and girls report abuse both on their journey to school, and in unsafe spaces in school – including in toilets, empty classrooms, or near the perimeter of school grounds. Furthermore, in Sierra Leone a study showed that almost a third of cases of forced or coerced sex at school were perpetrated by male teachers.

Where girls are able to access safe and free education, it is imperative that this education is of high quality, including a rights-based approach to learning, global citizenship and life skills, as well as comprehensive sexuality education. Curricula materials must ensure girls are represented in positive roles; girls must be consulted on their education through inclusive school governance mechanisms and teachers must be properly trained to ensure they can support all learners, as well as the shortage in female teachers being addressed.

The 19th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers, at which the report was launched, took place at a crucial time ahead of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals – which will include commitments on education. The Education Sector has failed to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and with a new set of priorities, efforts and spending must increase to have a chance of success. Education Ministers must make difficult decisions, and think innovatively, to be able to rise to the challenge.

**LEFT: Young advocates Mervis and Firhaana, with Dr Gerald Farthing, Deputy Minister of Education and Advanced Learning, Manitoba (Council of Ministers of Education, Canada)**

**RIGHT: Front: Firhaana Bulbulia (CYGEN representative) holds report, with Thoko and Mervis (Plan Malawi Youth Ambassadors). Back: Hon. Melanie Griffin, Minister for Social Services and Community Development (centre), with panellists (L-R) Fatimah Kelleher and Professor Pauline Rose. Right front, report author Leila Asrari**

#### MORE INFORMATION

Download the report from [www.thercs.org/our-work/research-and-publications](http://www.thercs.org/our-work/research-and-publications). For information about the conference see [www.thecommonwealth.org/media/news](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/media/news) and [www.bahamas.gov.bs](http://www.bahamas.gov.bs)



# OUT OF THE BLUE

Providing Commonwealth citizens with an opportunity to express opinion on the future of our waters, *Out of the Blue: The Prince of Wales's Commonwealth Environmental Photography Awards* was launched on 8th June, World Oceans Day.



© Ian Govendir for Aids Orphan UK Trust



**ABOVE:** Man collecting drinking water from Lake Albert

2015 is an important year for the Commonwealth, with the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) taking place consecutively. There is an immediate opportunity for all Commonwealth countries to show their support for efforts to address climate change.

The Commonwealth's natural environment is incredibly diverse. The livelihoods of many Commonwealth citizens depend heavily on its natural assets, in particular the oceans. Almost half of the Exclusive Economic Zones in the world are within the Commonwealth and nearly half of Commonwealth countries are Small Island States. These countries are dependent on the ocean for a sustainable and strong economy, for food security, tourism and transport. It is therefore of fundamental importance that current and future generations are able to continue to rely on a healthy marine ecosystem.

Launched in June 2015, on World Oceans Day, *Out of the Blue: The Prince of Wales's Commonwealth Environmental Photography Awards* offers Commonwealth Citizens the opportunity, through their photos, to express their views and engage

in discussions on the future of the ocean and the global Blue Economy.

At CHOGM 2015, *Out of the Blue* will have a very visible presence in the form of a special exhibition of the competition's winning images. Through the images citizens will showcase the importance of the oceans and highlight the need for urgent action to be taken to safeguard their future. In particular, with COP21 taking place directly after CHOGM, there is a significant opportunity to highlight collectively the impacts on the oceans of rising greenhouse gas emissions and the critical role of healthy marine ecosystems in ensuring resilience in a more volatile world. Photos can often speak louder than words, having the ability to communicate complex messages in a powerful but simple way.

For those who think they might be too late to make their voice heard, there is still a chance to submit a winning image! The competition closes on the 6th of September at 17.00GMT.



## MORE INFORMATION

- [www.outofthebluecompetition.com](http://www.outofthebluecompetition.com)
- The Prince of Wales's International Sustainability Unit: [www.pcfisu.org](http://www.pcfisu.org)
- COP 21: [www.cop21.gouv.fr/en](http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/en)



# A TIME FOR RIGHTS

Monday 15th June marked the 800th anniversary of the sealing of the Magna Carta by King John at Runnymede in 1215.



Over the centuries Magna Carta has gained huge symbolic influence being for many, the foundation of their constitution and the basis of their rule of law. Magna Carta is a document that safeguarded basic freedoms, and placed limits on the power of the crown, establishing the principle that 'to no one shall we sell, to no one deny or delay right or justice.'

Magna Carta is both a document and a set of ideas. It has influenced the legal systems of numerous Commonwealth countries including Australia, India, Canada, New Zealand and the Bahamas. Its principles have been echoed in the United States Bill of Rights (1791), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950). The 800th anniversary does however bring to the fore the question of what impact Magna Carta continues to have today.

**BELOW: Actors and local school children take part in the launch of 1215.today at Lincoln Castle Prison on 14 June 2015**



© Phil Crow

Magna Carta has led to the establishment of common legal systems, common rights, common responsibilities and common values. These are reflected within the Commonwealth Charter (December 2013) which emphasises the shared values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. It acts very much like the Magna Carta as a statement of aspiration. It aims to improve the lives of Commonwealth citizens and to protect their rights.

1215.today has been established to address the relevance of Magna Carta today. It is a virtual House of Culture which gives young people the chance to connect internationally, across borders, religion and race, to express their views on issues such as liberty, democracy and human rights. The launch, which took place at Lincoln Castle Prison, stressed the fact that globally people's human rights remain under threat. The launch, an interactive hub, combined the virtual and the real ending with a global call to arms, in a *Time for Rights*.

*Time for Rights*, the first commission of 1215.today took place on International Youth Day (12th August). It was a global opportunity for those aged 14-24 to make a statement about their human rights. At 12:15 on the 12th August, young people around the world recorded and uploaded videos which reflected their hopes, thoughts and feelings about a human right (or lack of it). This was done with the knowledge that others were taking part at exactly the same time as an act of solidarity.

1215.today runs for two years until the anniversary of the Charter of the Forest (5 November 2017) and will culminate in the creation of a new Magna Carta encapsulating the thoughts and demands of the youth of today.

It is through projects such as these that Magna Carta continues to be relevant. Magna Carta acts as a focal point encouraging people to think about what they want and what they value. Magna Carta exists today very much as a concept around which people can rally and address any injustices or discontent.

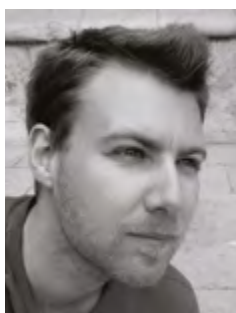


## MORE INFORMATION

Find out more at [www.1215today.com](http://www.1215today.com)

# COMMONWEALTH CITIZENS COULD SWING THE EU REFERENDUM

The eccentricities of the British political system allow for Commonwealth citizens resident in the UK to vote in our elections – including the forthcoming EU referendum. **Tim Hewish** and **David Howell** consider the implications.



A very conservative projected estimate based on the 2011 census shows 894,087 eligible Commonwealth voters. All of these are up for grabs, should the In or Out campaigns be willing to engage with them.

Those who think these numbers are insignificant are wrong. If we repeated the 2015 General Election turnout of 30 million, and all Commonwealth citizens in the UK voted, it would represent around 3 per cent. In a simple Yes/No vote that would offer up to a 6 per cent swing. In an unexpectedly close referendum on Britain's place not just in Europe but in the wider world, this matters.



Of course, Commonwealth citizens do not represent a uniform bloc, coming as they do from India and Pakistan as well as Canada, Australia, and dozens of other nationalities. They are not guaranteed to vote the same way. But the more the In and Out campaigns play to Commonwealth identities and interests, the more votes each side can collect.

Nor does appeal to the Commonwealth "constituency" stop just with Commonwealth citizens living here. If one were to include eligible Commonwealth-born people who have now become naturalised as British citizens, that would add an extra 1.3 million. Taken together, they comprise at least 2.2 million voters – over 6 per cent of the last election's turnout.

Both sides are prone to spasms of introspection, limiting their vision either

to the white cliffs of Dover or to the European horizon respectively, but without raising their eyes to look further. Yet Commonwealth concerns cut clean across this restricting European divide. There is also still a view lingering in Commonwealth minds that the UK turned its back on them when it joined the EEC in the 1970s. This has never really been addressed.

Interestingly, when the Prime Minister was in Asia recently to promote trade and investment deals, he said: "We must tap into markets outside Europe to look to the Commonwealth and beyond." Yet our research shows that after 70 months the EU-Singapore trade agreement is still not in effect. Meanwhile the European Free Trade Association took only 20 months to strike a similar deal; New Zealand 15 months, and Australia 25 months to complete a deal with Singapore. British businesses wanting free trade with Commonwealth markets should be agitated.

“

*Both the In and Out campaigns are failing to reach a huge bloc of internationally-minded voters who could, together, decide the contest.*”

This push for trade is blunted further by a confusing position on immigration policy. The Home Office is tightening visas for non-EU workers, the majority of which are from Commonwealth nations, yet EU citizens have a free ticket, while non-EU students are now being told to leave the UK as soon as their degree has finished. Sir James Dyson has said: "We take their money, we give them our knowledge, and then we kick them out." The Labour government abolished a two-year Commonwealth youth visa in 2008. The lack of a Commonwealth airport queue at Heathrow or Gatwick also grates.

These concerns matter to Commonwealth citizens worried about their place in Britain. This presents two questions – what can the EU do for the Commonwealth and what has the UK done for the Commonwealth?

“

*We take their money, we give them our knowledge, and then we kick them out.*”

Sir James Dyson

All this is not to say that the UK has a binary choice between the EU and the Commonwealth. This is a false distinction. Rather it is that Commonwealth citizens and the Commonwealth perspective amongst the electorate in the UK are going to matter significantly when it comes to the Referendum vote. If staying In meant ignoring the Commonwealth further then it would not be in those citizens' interests, while if Out wanted to close the borders and retreat then that would hardly incentivise Commonwealth citizens to vote this way. Neither pole would attract the large Commonwealth diaspora and constituency.

In truth, neither those Commonwealth citizen voters nor Commonwealth-minded or connected voters are being addressed effectively or in a relevant way by either side of the EU debate. For either camp to appeal to the large numbers involved they will need to show that they take the modern Commonwealth family seriously, that they can bring Commonwealth citizens real benefits and that they appreciate the whole 53-nation network's vast potential. So far neither side is showing much sign of doing so.

Commonwealth voters should remind the UK that it has latent global links, not just recent European ones. The battle for these million votes starts now.

#### MORE INFORMATION

**Tim Hewish** is Executive Director & Co-Founder of the think tank Commonwealth Exchange (CX). [www.commonwealth-exchange.org](http://www.commonwealth-exchange.org). **Lord Howell** is Chairman of Commonwealth Exchange, a former government minister and President of the Royal Commonwealth Society. This article first appeared in *The Telegraph* on 10 August 2015 [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk)



# ENGAGING WITH YOUTH NETWORKS

The Royal Commonwealth Society sees young people as a vital constituency and has prioritised work with young adults and the Commonwealth youth empowerment agenda. In all our work we aim to make Commonwealth values a real and lived experience for young citizens and to demonstrate their relevance to young lives in the modern Commonwealth.

With youth programmes that focus on Leadership, such as the Queen's Young Leaders Programme (see page 2) and the inclusion of a youth perspective in its Policy and Research programmes, the RCS ensures youth participation throughout its programmes. The Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition provides the means for young people to express their opinions about the world while partnership in 1215.today (page 15) provides them with opportunities for creative expression of their views on the rights of the individual.

The RCS also works with and promotes a number of youth organisations.



## **MYCommonwealth (MYC)**

MYCommonwealth (MYC) is Canada's official youth representative body to the Commonwealth. MYC is democratic, youth-run and led, and is the single source for the views of

Canadian youth on Commonwealth issues. As an active participant in the Commonwealth system of national youth representation, MYC advocates for the interests of youth in the Commonwealth, paying special attention to leadership, democracy and youth involvement in decision making. MYC's mandate is recognized by the Canadian Government and the Commonwealth.

[www.mycommonwealth.org](http://www.mycommonwealth.org)



## **CommonYouth Australia**

Launched in November 2014, 'CommonYouth' is a youth-led initiative that provides opportunities for youth engagement and a platform for discussion around Commonwealth principles. CommonYouth addresses Commonwealth principles by consulting with young Australians and providing a platform for youth engagement and deliberation on the important issues facing the world today. With issues ranging

from human rights to environmental sustainability, education and gender equality, CommonYouth endeavours to provide a program for the youth of Australia to work together in a variety of different media to help find a solution to the most important issues facing the global community today.

[www.facebook.com/  
CommonYouthAUS](https://www.facebook.com/CommonYouthAUS)



## **Commonwealth Youth New Zealand (CYNZ)**

Commonwealth Youth New Zealand (CYNZ) serves as a single source of youth views and opinions on Commonwealth issues. It seeks to provide opportunities for young New Zealanders to engage in meaningful diplomatic discourse and to nurture their role in their Commonwealth. CYNZ addresses the issues young New Zealanders find most important by consulting with, and presenting those views to, Commonwealth decision makers and government officials.

[www.commonwealthyouth.org.nz](http://www.commonwealthyouth.org.nz)



## **Commonwealth Youth Network of Sri Lanka**

Aiming to be the leading Youth Organization in Sri Lanka, the



network works with the youth organisations of Sri Lanka and connects its young people with others around the Commonwealth. One of its key objectives is to strengthen co-operation between young people of different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The network promotes the Commonwealth values of Gender Equality, Access to Health and Education, Democracy and Tolerance, Respect and Understanding while promoting volunteering among Sri Lanka's youth.

### Commonwealth-Youth-Network-of-Sri-Lanka

### RCS Youth Networks

In 2015, the RCS launched two networks. May saw the launch of the Commonwealth Youth Gender and Equality Network (CYGEN)

(see pages 8-11) which fills the gap within formal Commonwealth youth structures where youth voices on gender issues are not represented.

The Associate Fellows network was launched in April offering its members the opportunity to engage directly in the future of the Commonwealth. Through the Fellowship network, these young people are able to share their skills, knowledge and experiences, becoming a unique resource for each other and for promoting the value and values of the Commonwealth.

This year of A Young Commonwealth has provided momentum for organisations to engage with young people and to encourage collaboration with emerging leaders. Building on the energy and creativity of youth and enabling networking and development will make a significant contribution to post-2015 Commonwealth development.

“

*Acknowledging me as an associate fellow continuous to give me the drive to carry on with the task of improving the lives of our Commonwealth citizens. As I continue to put a smile in the faces of our Commonwealth citizens, I am proud to be a part of this association.*”

**Achinko Estella Endah, Associate Fellow**



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY  
ASSOCIATE FELLOW



THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY  
Ireland Branch

## BRANCH FOCUS: IRELAND



ABOVE: Trevor Ringland, speaking at the launch

We are pleased to advise that the RCS Ireland branch launched in April with an event held in the Mansion House, Dublin, kindly hosted by the then Lord Mayor, Christy Burke, who also gave an address. Other speakers included Lord Howell, Lord Rana, Carl Wright, Trevor Ringland and Patricia Campbell, representing RCS Ireland.

The branch aims to work to facilitate good relations and understanding between Ireland and the countries of the Commonwealth.

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thercsireland@gmail.com  
[www.rcsireland.org](http://www.rcsireland.org)

# COMING UP IN THE COMMONWEALTH

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**AUGUST 12**

International Youth Day 2015 – Youth Civic Engagement (The United Nations)

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**SEPTEMBER 1–4**

Pacific Region Youth Ministers Meeting, Samoa (Youth Affairs Division, Commonwealth Secretariat)

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**SEPTEMBER 5–11**

5th Commonwealth Youth Games, Samoa (Commonwealth Games Federation)

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**SEPTEMBER 6**

Closure of entries for *Out of The Blue*, The Prince of Wales's Commonwealth Environmental Photography Awards (ISU, Royal Commonwealth Society, National Geographic Pristine Seas)

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**SEPTEMBER 7**

Closure of nominations for the Queen's Young Leaders Award 2016 (Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust, Royal Commonwealth Society and Comic Relief)

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**SEPTEMBER 14–18**

55th Council Meeting and Conference, Nairobi, Kenya (Commonwealth Telecommunications Organisation)

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**SEPTEMBER 25–27**

Summit for the Adoption of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, UN Headquarters, New York (United Nations)

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**SEPTEMBER 30–OCTOBER 8**

61st Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Islamabad, Pakistan (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association)

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**OCTOBER 3**

Commonwealth Youth Summit London (Royal Commonwealth Society, Daneford Trust and Tower Hamlets Council)

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**15 OCTOBER**

Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition Awards Ceremony and Launch of 2016 Competition (Royal Commonwealth Society)

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**NOVEMBER 1–5**

7th Commonwealth Youth Parliament, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association)

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**NOVEMBER 27–29**

CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting), Malta. Theme: The Commonwealth – Adding Global Value

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**Also:**

Commonwealth Youth Forum (21–25)  
Commonwealth Women's Forum (22–24)  
Commonwealth People's Forum (23–26)  
Commonwealth Business Forum (24–26)

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**NOVEMBER 30–DECEMBER 11**

COP21 Paris 2015 – UN Climate Change Conference (United Nations)

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## KEEP IN THE CONVERSATION

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Council for Education in the Commonwealth

House of Commons - House of Lords

## The Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC) is a parliament based NGO



**Founded in 1959, the Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC) promotes:**

- 1 education in Commonwealth member countries, particularly in less-developed states and others confronting major challenges.
- 2 co-operation between member states in formulating policies to strengthen education and training systems, and related professional capacities.
- 3 educational policy through regular educational forums for public debate and related publications, website information and other advocacy.

Image: Commonwealth Scholar panel at Glasgow student mobility conference (2014)

### Chair of Trustees

Brenda Gourley

### Interim Executive Chair

Alastair Niven

### Official address

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Commonwealth Universities  
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Companies House: 4391999

### Membership

Rita Odumosu  
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CEC's vision is of learning opportunities for all Commonwealth citizens, assuring their potential to contribute to building democratic, inclusive and just societies, based on agreed Commonwealth principles.

With Commonwealth accreditation, CEC is a volunteer-led organisation that works with the support of UK Parliamentary colleagues and other Commonwealth partners in public, private and civil society sectors, in the UK and beyond. CEC is governed by a board of trustees and an executive management committee. Members share a long-term commitment to international development, particularly educational development. Many have had distinguished careers in these areas.

From 2014 to date, CEC has prioritised continuing advocacy to protect commitment to educational policy and

professional development in the Secretariat and across the wider Commonwealth Family. Events have included conferences on:

- International student mobility: Global and Commonwealth Perspectives (April 2014)
- Team Commonwealth and Goals in Education (July 2014)
- Private Finance and Funding in International Higher Education (February 2015).

In December 2014, the annual Gladwyn Lecture was presented in the House of Lords by Baroness Scotland on *The stream can run uphill. Educating girls and women: an unprecedented source of common wealth*.

CEC played a leading role in planning the recent 19th meeting of Commonwealth Ministers and organising its associated Stakeholder Forum (Bahamas, June 2015).

**[www.cecomm.org.uk](http://www.cecomm.org.uk)**



**CHOGM**  
Malta 2015

As an island state in the Mediterranean, Malta has served throughout history as a bridge between North Africa and Europe. In November, Malta provides a platform for Commonwealth countries to come together to build bridges of co-operation.

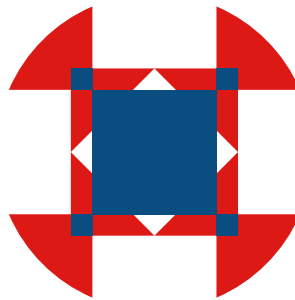
### Business Forum

The Commonwealth Business Forum (CBF) took place for the first time at the Edinburgh CHOGM of 1997; since then it has featured prominently as part of the CHOGM programme.



### People's Forum

The Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) will bring together civil society representatives from around the world to discuss key issues facing Commonwealth people under the theme of resilience.



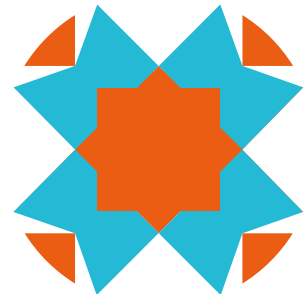
### Women's Forum

2015 will see the brand new Women's Forum which aims to raise awareness of women's issues in Commonwealth countries and show how women's contributions can have a positive impact politically, economically and socially.



### Youth Forum

With 60% of the Commonwealth population made up of people under the age of 30, the Commonwealth Youth Forum (CYF) is a crucial platform if the Commonwealth is to be revived and made more relevant on a global stage.



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**Editor:** Hilary Greengrass

**Design:** RF Design UK Ltd  
www.rfportfolio.com

**Print:** Impress Print Services Ltd  
www.impressprint.net

**Cover image:** Plan International/  
Jenny Matthews

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