

## Executive Summary

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### Youth mainstreaming

Youth mainstreaming is a critical part of pursuing a vision for an egalitarian world. It helps embed young people's aspirations into development planning and ensure equality between youth and adults. In its best form, it connects democracy initiatives to equitable development outcomes for young people and communities.

Young people constitute one quarter of the world's population, and one third of the population in developing nations. This signals a vibrant and hopeful resource for the world. But young people are more than numbers. Their struggles for social justice and equality are increasingly visible and articulate. They have demonstrated their progressive vision for the world in multiple ways, be it as citizens, as voters or in organised youth movements. They have the greatest stake in equitable and sustainable development, and are also well positioned to contribute meaningfully to this.

At the same time, we are witnessing global and national moves that work against young people's vision for themselves and the world. In the global north, young people are reported to be poorer than their parents. In the global south, while abject poverty has decreased, the dividends of economic growth has not reached poor young people whose actual numbers are increasing. In a context of rising inequality and diminishing social support systems, young people form a large proportion of the world's unemployed, and they have challenges accessing affordable education and basic services. Mainstreaming youth interests and capabilities are becoming even more critical in this context.

Youth mainstreaming is about:

- ensuring youth-centric institutions and processes in development planning within and across all sectors to realise equitable development for youth and society;
- ensuring youth participation in all spheres and levels of development planning, without which positive and equitable outcomes for youth are not possible; and

- acknowledging the implications of intergenerational relations among youth and adults, and young people's unique developmental rights and evolving capacities in conceiving and delivering policies and plans for them.

Implementation requires attention to:

- moving beyond youth projects, programmes or 'youth activities', to holistic attitudinal, strategic and financing shifts in engaging, planning and delivering for, and with, youth;
- strong partnerships across stakeholders including diverse youth groups and the youth sector, and an ability to involve and respect all stakeholders committed to youth rights;
- ensuring that youth mainstreaming does not reinforce inequality and injustice;
- local, national and international contexts and analysing global systems, ideologies, policies and practices, as well as the localised realities of our nations and communities, including the ways these influence our ability to deliver on youth-centric policy and planning; and
- youth data that allow the articulation of youth cohort involvement in sectors, and outputs and outcomes for youth, including for subgroups.

## The publication

*Youth Mainstreaming in Development Planning: Transforming Young Lives* aims to meet requests from member countries for timely, relevant guidance on integrating youth rights into institutional planning.

'Transformation' (a radical change for the good) suggests an ambitious goal, and often requires re-evaluating the ways we work, partners we work with, and the ultimate results we want to achieve for, and with, youth. By 'development planning' we mean all aspects of the planning cycle, including policy and strategy development and translating strategy into programmes, and thereby, outcomes for youth.

The publication echoes United Nations Resolution No. 70/1, which released the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), titled *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Agenda 2030)*. Global transformation is possible only if young people contribute to, and benefit from, this transformation. While we acknowledge that youth aspirations may go beyond the SDGs, they still provide a strong foundation for our work given the SDGs' central commitment to reducing inequality, the goal of mainstreaming.

The publication is divided into three parts:

1. **Part 1: Concepts and Discussions** defines youth mainstreaming and aligns it to broader human rights, legal and development frameworks including the SDGs, and to social and policy contexts. This section encourages pre-planning dialogue and discussion around youth mainstreaming that is critical for reaching consensus on process and goals.
2. **Part 2: Implementation** provides practical guidance for the implementation of youth mainstreaming through discussions of planning and operational imperatives, including analytical tools, checklists and short case studies, some of them based on experiences influenced by the Commonwealth's strategies. Public financing and the role of donors are also addressed.
3. **Part 3: Full Case Studies** complements the briefer case studies throughout the publication with fuller studies of youth mainstreaming initiatives in the sectors of poverty alleviation, health, employment, finance, justice and urban planning from across the Commonwealth and elsewhere. These help provide concrete examples of the concept in practice, including challenges.

## Use of the publication

The publication is a resource for the multiple stakeholders who will play a role in youth mainstreaming. These comprise the youth sector, including youth ministries and government planners, the non-governmental and voluntary sectors, academia, professional associations, youth collectives and youth-led organisations, the private sector, donors and others. It

balances conceptual discussions with practical implementation guidance to meet diverse stakeholder needs.

The significance of the three parts may vary according to the role of the stakeholder (in research and analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, playing a watchdog role) in the process. However, they are strongly interlinked, and should be cross-referenced to receive the full benefit of the guidance. The publication itself helps you do this.

### **The process: Consultations, considerations and review**

The development of this publication began with a roundtable discussion in 2013 involving youth development professionals, government officials, staff and young people via the Commonwealth Youth Council. It is also informed by youth mainstreaming practices in selected member countries as a result of the Commonwealth's strategic publication *The Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE)*.

Since then, the process has included the incorporation of the SDGs and UN commitments made in *Agenda 2030*. It is also informed by influential processes that resulted in *We the Peoples: Celebrating Seven Million Voices*, of which 58 per cent of respondents were young people, and the extensive process undertaken by the Department for International Development (DFID)-Civil Society Organisation (CSO) Youth Working Group for *Youth Voices for a Post-2015 World*. It reflects the interests of visible rights-based youth activism and the priorities set by the Commonwealth Youth Council. The publication has undergone professional review for relevance and utility by young people, senior independent consultants and public sector officials representing all Commonwealth regions.

### **A living document: Feedback is welcome**

This is an initial guide to draw in government officials and partners to engage in discussions and implementation of youth mainstreaming. It will be adapted and improved with learning from Commonwealth pilots and other initiatives. The Commonwealth welcomes stakeholders to communicate the strengths and challenges of this guidance, and ideas for

improvement. In particular, we are aware that the guidance is primarily targeting public policy processes, government and civil society. How could we better target the private sector, media partners or academic institutions for youth mainstreaming?