

Guernsey Commonwealth Youth Summit

Final Communiqué

Education

Heads of Governments expressed their concerns at the lack of funding for education in many areas of the world. In particular this led to problems regarding a lack of facilities and poor teacher training.

Governments also recognised that broader problems contributed to low attendance rates and high drop-out rates, including children having to stay at home and work, and a significant lack of access to education in rural areas. Child labour was a particularly pressing issue. There was also a problem with overcrowded schools in some countries.

As a result of civil wars in many countries, the loss of school facilities was also felt to contribute to low literacy rates. Immigration and emigration were also considered an important issue for both trained teachers and extra pupils. Governments also recognised the reliance on civil society organisations for the provision of education in many countries.

Furthermore, many countries expressed concern about variations in gender equality in education, as well as discrepancies in educational provision for tribal or aboriginal peoples. In addition to education needing to be free and compulsory, governments recognised the significant need to provide high quality education around the world.

Proposals

Governments proposed that shared partnerships should be developed to increase teacher training facilities and share teacher experience between MEDCs and LEDCs.

Several Governments pledged financial assistance to neighbouring countries; a great emphasis was also placed upon sharing surplus

resources between countries. Several countries set up a partnership to monitor and address child labour issues.

The provision of free and compulsory primary education was an important goal for all Commonwealth countries, and to achieve this aim Governments emphasised the importance of unity and the sharing of a Common Wealth.

Countries discussed the issue of debt relief and urged the Commonwealth to reduce the impact of heavy debts by cancelling, reducing and postponing debts while action was pursued to improve countries' prosperity and strong educational communities.

Health

Heads of Governments expressed concerns that rates of infant mortality are extremely high in many countries. This also related to maternal health issues. Diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Malaria were felt to be of particular severity and a crucial focus for the Commonwealth. Health was thought to be one of the most important Millennium Development Goals in terms of its effect on other areas. LEDCs recognised the contributions and cooperation from MEDCs in the improvement of general health around the world.

Lack of skilled medical staff including doctors, nurses and midwives was felt to be a huge issue in many countries. The accessibility of healthcare centres and appropriate infrastructure were felt to be important considerations, particularly in countries ravaged by war.

Heads of Government outlined the importance of raising hygiene awareness and standards and of implementing immunisation programmes. Domestic violence and mental health issues were raised as a concern for several countries. The severe lack of information and education regarding healthcare was noted and this needs to be addressed as a high priority.

Proposals

Heads of Government proposed that a Commonwealth Health Fund be set up in order to provide funding for healthcare throughout the Commonwealth. Contributions to this fund would be based upon countries' GDP. A basic standard of health should be agreed across the Commonwealth and supported by the Fund. A percentage of this fund could be reserved to provide relief in the event of a pandemic.

Partnerships were encouraged between neighbouring countries, sending qualified doctors, nurses and midwives to train local people. Medical centres and research centres would also be constructed through partnerships between MEDCs and LEDCs.

Heads of Government proposed that the prevention of disease is as important as providing cures and therefore provision of supplies such as mosquito nets was crucial for many countries. Education was thought to be a priority for the Commonwealth, in particular focusing on contraception, hygiene and general health. Health awareness should be integrated into the curriculum of schools across the Commonwealth.

Youth Voice and Participation

Guernsey young people raised the issue of government funding for higher education. In particular, where no choice was available on the island and students had to leave home to access universities, full government support should be given. The quality of school infrastructure was also considered a crucial priority, particularly relating to the provision of an adequate standard of school buildings and facilities.

Young people felt that climate change was a fundamental issue that needs to be tackled at the individual, community and global level. Methods of waste disposal were discussed as an important consideration, in addition to encouraging people to walk and use public transport rather than cars.

The image of British young people abroad was considered a controversial issue that needed to be addressed. It would also be important for youths to have a more comprehensive education on different cultures, particularly to reduce stereotyping and prejudice about immigrants.

Young people considered that lessons on how their government works, making politics interesting and relevant to young people, should be a major part of primary and secondary education, and deputies and government ministers should work with teachers to organise visits to schools, in order to show that they are interested in hearing what young people have to say.

Young people also felt that they should have increased opportunities to enable them to share ideas and to get young people interested and involved in politics. These could take the format of Facebook groups, Twitter accounts, an online youth forum or Youth Councils. A Youth Parliament was also discussed as a possibility for the future. Young people should think of themselves as empowered citizens who could make a big difference in society.