

National Commonwealth Youth Summit 2011
Tuesday 19 and Wednesday 20 April 2011, Marlborough House, London

What Can Young People Do To Change the World?

Delegates from Glasgow, Cardiff, Cambridge and Oxford assembled at the Commonwealth Secretariat on Wednesday 20th April to debate issues they learnt after visiting High Commissions. The topics of discussion were around the Millennium Development Goals, specifically MDG 2, MDG 3, MDG 4 and MDG 5.

Challenges

Governance and MDG Awareness

Some delegates felt more awareness of the MDG's from Commonwealth citizens was needed as a lack of awareness perpetuated the problem.

There was a point made that some of the MDGs are too ambitious for some nations to achieve.

Some countries do not generate enough revenue to tackle MDGs or their budgets are misguided into ministries like defence. Countries may not possess contingency funds for disease outbreaks, climate change and other unforeseen issues often affecting developing countries.

Health

Social stigmas around sensitive issues like homosexuality or prostitution could affect who gets access to free health.

Transportation in rural areas may affect access to health and education for some Commonwealth citizens.

Education

The complexities of the MDGs means one cannot separate health and education and this issue needs urgent addressing.

There is a lack of teachers and oversized classes and this affects the quality of education.

A concern was expressed about what the situation would be the post 2015.

Solutions

There was a call for governments to consider reinvesting money spent on grand buildings, vehicles and conferences to more pressing international problems.

Delegates supported student and teacher gap years to volunteer and give time to community projects in Commonwealth countries. This can be one of the contributions toward trade, not aid for developing nations.

A proposal was made to have a Youth Government to talk to politicians on a periodical basis.

Delegates can do more by setting up links with schools like writing letters to their peers in other Commonwealth countries, they can write letters to businesses to help set beneficial schemes, incorporate helpful schemes at UK universities which would give students an opportunity to go out and volunteer. Lobbying can be made to donor nations to be aware of corrupt governments and hold them to account on where every penny is going in their budget. There was also a suggestion that young people in LEDCs could mobilise themselves and protest in favour of free education.

Regional Action Planning

The four regions in attendance discussed practical ways young people could have an impact on development issues and gave the following suggestions:

- Learn about Commonwealth and make it a more prominent part of the curriculum.
- Schools should go out to developing countries and help, and anyone musical should make a charity single.
- Aspiring medical students, doctors and sixth formers can go out and carry out simple medical procedures in order to give mass help
- A letter campaign from young people can have a greater impact on how leaders act towards pressing issues.
- School linking between UK schools and Commonwealth nations could be encouraged.
- On sports days, students can represent a Commonwealth nation to raise awareness of the Commonwealth.
- UK Young Parliament needs to have more publicity as this would encourage young people to volunteer.
- Wealthy nations should be more willing to give a larger percentage of their GDP to other nations.
- Education on politics should be emphasised in the curriculum so young people know what the different parties stand for.
- Each region in the UK should have a youth parliament which also meets together.
- Each region should explore having a Commonwealth panel of young people. The panel should aim to be representative of the communities within the region.