



**Cumberland Lodge**

exchanging views, inspiring minds

**Making an impact**

# **Commonwealth Futures: Youth Perspectives**

**February 2020**



[cumberlandlodge.ac.uk](http://cumberlandlodge.ac.uk)

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**In partnership with**



The Association  
of Commonwealth  
Universities



The Commonwealth

# Commonwealth Futures: Youth Perspectives

The Cumberland Lodge symposium, **Commonwealth Futures: Youth Perspectives**, held on 1-3 December 2019, in partnership with the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the British Council and the Commonwealth Secretariat, gave young people a platform to generate and present innovative ideas and recommendations for future projects across the Commonwealth.

This symposium responded to the fact that more than 60% of Commonwealth citizens are now aged under 30, by celebrating the positive role that young leadership can play in promoting social cohesion in the world today. It developed practical recommendations around two of the main themes of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) taking place in Rwanda in June 2020: **ICT and Innovation** and the **Rule of Law**.

## Diverse global gathering

The symposium gathered 58 young leaders and students from 28 Commonwealth countries, with 13 guest speakers and facilitators, for three days of open discussion and intercultural exchange at Cumberland Lodge, in Windsor Great Park. Participants represented a diversity of faiths and beliefs, and fields of study.

- 71** participants from diverse backgrounds
- 58** young leaders and students
- 28** Commonwealth nationalities
- 46** universities represented

## International influence

**Commonwealth Futures: Youth Perspectives** participants were selected from the Commonwealth Youth Council and Commonwealth Youth Networks, through the Cumberland Lodge and Commonwealth Scholarship schemes, and on the basis of their active participation in ACU activities and other Commonwealth events and projects, around the world.

Members of the **Commonwealth Youth-led Taskforce** were also present at the symposium, and will now take the ideas and recommendations that emerged to discussions at the **Commonwealth Youth Forum** in Rwanda, as part of CHOGM 2020, this summer.

Outputs from the Cumberland Lodge symposium will also feed into discussions at the British Council's **Going Global 2020** conference in London, in June 2020.



**Going Global 2020**





## Key findings and recommendations

**Commonwealth Futures: Youth Perspectives** generated the following recommendations for practical action, to help harness the interconnected power of **ICT and Innovation** and the **Rule of Law**, to drive positive change across the Commonwealth. These ideas will be presented by the Commonwealth Youth-led Taskforce at the Commonwealth Youth Forum in June 2020, to encourage international implementation.

The recommendations below were developed by participants working together in small groups. This means that there is some overlap, and they are not mutually exclusive. For example, it might be possible to link several of the ideas, in order to develop them further.

- Secure an agreement by all Commonwealth member states that the internet is deemed a basic public good**

This agreement should form the basis for a co-ordinated initiative to address 'internet poverty', within a specified timescale. The objective is to ensure that all Commonwealth citizens, including

those from marginalised communities, have the opportunity to achieve common standards of digital literacy and to benefit from the opportunities afforded by the internet.

**2. Develop standard ICT syllabuses, to equip all young people with the skills to positively contribute in a digital world**

These syllabuses should be tailored to the needs of individual countries and/or regions, and available through all mainstream and alternative educational institutions. Young leaders should be involved in their development, from the outset, along with relevant ministries of education and corporate partners. They should be supported by a robust legal and regulatory framework, and input should be sought from employers and internet providers. Funding could be sought from government ministries and/or from private investors and corporate sponsorship. Impact could be assessed on the basis of take-up by educational institutions across the Commonwealth, assessment of ICT skills attainment, and employer feedback on improved skills in the workplace.

**3. Create a mobile e-educational unit to provide physical resources, education and teaching for e-skills**

This unit should be run by youth volunteers, and aimed at supporting young people. A mobile bus would be used to bring ICT innovations and educational opportunities to remote or marginalised communities, in particular, and its resources could be adapted to suit particular local needs.

**4. Increase young people's participation in local and national governance, to help uphold the Rule of Law and promote accountability, inclusion and transparency in decision-making**

This would increase young people's influence, and empower them by giving them greater responsibility and a sense of agency over changes affecting their lives and futures.

Increased participation and representation could be achieved by:

- Encouraging financial and strategic investment into existing initiatives that support young people's involvement in governance, such as national student union groups or National Youth Assemblies
- Embedding civic education into educational curricula
- Actively involving young leaders in decision-making within national institutions.

## **5. Establish a Commonwealth Roots Academy**

This would provide accredited, online leadership training and personal development for young people across the Commonwealth, harnessing the power of digital technologies and working with grassroots organisations and senior leaders to engage both young adults and future generations. It would focus on developing young leaders in each of the main regions of the Commonwealth, and on establishing alumni networks to help share resources, ideas and mentoring opportunities.

## **6. Establish a Commonwealth ICT resource, knowledge and skills exchange, to improve safe access to the internet**

This consultative body would promote safer access to the internet and equal access to justice for all Commonwealth citizens, helping everyone to make best use of the opportunities afforded by digital technology. It could be implemented by research universities working in collaboration, across the Commonwealth, to facilitate the sharing of best practice, knowledge and infrastructure. Its impact could be measured by monitoring reported instances of online safety violations, such as cyberbullying and other forms of harmful behaviour or discrimination.

## **7. Establish a Commonwealth Youth Innovation Fund**

In order to tap into the innovation potential of young people across the Commonwealth (in developing countries, in particular), and to promote more solution-oriented cultures, this

fund would provide young entrepreneurs with start-up grants to convert their ideas into practice. The development of these ideas would be guided by ongoing mentoring support. This fund would be based on a scheme already operating in Botswana, but scaled up to operate across the Commonwealth, with input from public-private sector partnerships, academia, and voluntary and non-governmental organisations. Funding would be sought from member states, in proportion to their Gross Domestic Product.

#### **8. Build a 'Grassroots to Government' communication channel, between young Commonwealth citizens and policymakers**

This 'tech-led' initiative would harness the power of ICT to gather grassroots opinions and ideas from young people across the Commonwealth, to help inform policymaking and build a more informed and engaged citizenship. It could be implemented via mobile phone and online surveys, to ensure that even the most remote communities can participate. Results would then be consolidated by youth representatives and presented directly to governments. This initiative would be supported by ongoing mentoring and reverse-mentoring between these representatives and policymakers, to ensure mutual learning and effective communication.





## Exchanging views, inspiring minds

Cumberland Lodge is committed to promoting progress towards more peaceful, open and inclusive societies, by:

1. Providing **transformative experiences** for those who take part in our events
2. Generating **fresh thinking and new ideas** that inspire and equip practitioners and policymakers to drive positive change.

After the **Commonwealth Futures: Youth Perspectives** symposium, we asked all participants for their feedback, through an anonymous online evaluation survey.

### Transformative experiences

**91%** of respondents said they felt inspired to do things differently, after participating in the symposium

**100%** of respondents agreed that the conference helped to facilitate new networks amongst individuals and organisations

**100%** of respondents agreed that the event supported communication and learning between delegates from different sectors, backgrounds and professional roles



Feedback from participants includes:

'I felt personally **inspired and motivated** by all the discussions happening at Cumberland Lodge. The conference absolutely helped to facilitate **new networks**, and allowed for an **atmosphere of learning** and collaboration, conducive to discussion and innovation.'

'Engaging in meaningful discussions with **passionate young people** from across the Commonwealth left me feeling inspired, **energised and confident** about our future.'

'To sum up the experience, I would not be doing it justice to describe it as anything other than **life-changing and awe-inspiring**. I had always thought of the Commonwealth as a legacy of empire, rather than as a mechanism for **addressing inequality** or a platform for supporting other countries.'

'Cumberland Lodge changed my perspective on a lot of things: my **eyes have been opened**, my work ethic and drive has been **transformed**.'

## Generating fresh thinking and new ideas

**91%** of respondents agreed that clear recommendations and action points emerged from the discussions

'I had a great time... ICT, technology and the Rule of Law are all **pivotal** in shaping a future of **empowered young people**, and it was **a privilege** to contribute... [The] conversation doesn't stop here. **Let's move!**'

'I **learnt a great deal** from my fellow participants, on what we can do to ensure our ideas **make a real difference** to others... Looking forward to seeing what comes of our ideas in 2020.'

'Spending time with **passionate young people** from across the Commonwealth left me feeling **recharged and inspired**. It was **incredibly energising**... Likewise, the conversations within our focus groups also **broadened my thinking** and honed my creativity, as we shared our **unique perspectives** and worked together to formulate **innovative yet pragmatic** policy recommendations that will feed into the Commonwealth Youth Forum and CHOGM 2020.'



# Participants

## Speakers

The following guest speakers delivered presentations at the symposium, to guide and inspire discussions:



**Maddalaine Ansell**

**Senior Higher Education Advisor (Systems Reform),  
The British Council**



**Yasmin Batliwala**

**Chief Executive Officer, Advocates for International  
Development (A4ID)**



**Nicola Brentnall MVO**

**Chief Executive, The Queen's Commonwealth Trust**



**Louise Ellis**

**Acting UK Commonwealth Envoy, Foreign and  
Commonwealth Office**



**Alan Gemmell OBE**

**Chief Executive, Commonwealth Enterprise Investment  
Council (CWEIC)**



**HE Yamina Karitanyi**

**High Commissioner for the Republic of Rwanda to the  
United Kingdom, and non-resident Ambassador to Ireland**



## **Christine Ohuruogu MBE**

**Former British Olympic, World and Commonwealth athletics champion**



## **JP Rangaswami**

**Independent Non-Executive Director of Daily Mail and General Trust plc, and former Group Head of Innovation & Chief Data Officer, Deutsche Bank**



## **Jessica Simor QC**

**Barrister, Matrix Chambers**



## **Dr Arjoon Suddhoo**

**Deputy Secretary-General, Commonwealth Secretariat**

## **Facilitators**

The following guests helped to facilitate sessions, alongside Cumberland Lodge staff:

### **Helen Jones MBE**

**Trustee, Council for Education in the Commonwealth (CEC)**

### **Layne Robinson**

**Head of Social Policy Development, Commonwealth Secretariat**

### **Faye Taylor**

**Head of Strategic Partnerships, Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)**

## **Panellists**

The following panellists joined us for the group presentations by delegates on the final afternoon of the symposium, and provided input and feedback:

### **Maddalaine Ansell**

**Senior Higher Education Advisor (Systems Reform), The British Council**

### **Nicola Brentnall MVO**

**Chief Executive, The Queen's Commonwealth Trust**

### **Louise Ellis**

**Acting UK Commonwealth Envoy, Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

### **Alan Gemmell OBE**

**Chief Executive, Commonwealth Enterprise Investment Council (CWEIC)**

### **HE Yamina Karitanyi**

**High Commissioner for the Republic of Rwanda to the United Kingdom, and non-resident Ambassador to Ireland**

### **The Rt Hon the Baroness Prashar of Runnymede CBE PC**

**Chair of Trustees, Cumberland Lodge**

### **Faye Taylor**

**Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU)**

## Observers

The following observers also attended the group presentations on the final afternoon of the symposium, as official Commonwealth observers:

### **Marianne Haslegrave**

**Director, Commonwealth Medical Trust (Commat)**

### **Robby Hoffman**

**General Secretary, Commonwealth Jewish Council (CJC)**

### **Andrew Larpent**

**Chairman (Australia), CommonAge**

### **Shyam Thakrar**

**Youth Lead, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)**

### **Arif Zaman**

**Executive Director, Commonwealth Businesswomen's Network (CBW)**



## Young leaders and student delegates

**Elizabeth Itunuoluwa  
Abolarinwa**  
United Kingdom

**Jess Adams**  
New Zealand

**Ahmednur Ali**  
Canada

**Jonathan Andrews**  
United Kingdom

**Bakari Arabi**  
Nigeria

**Tracy Asamoah-Boateng**  
Ghana

**Vanessa Bariche**  
Ghana

**Nasir Bashir**  
Pakistan

**Kathleen Bennett**  
Antigua

**Purity Bolo**  
Kenya

**Subham Krishna Borah**  
India

**Marie Chan**  
Singapore

**Abena Dugan**  
Ghana

**Davidson Edwards**  
Dominican Republic

**Benedicta Essel**  
Ghana

**Catherine Ge**  
Australia

**Ellie Gomersall**  
United Kingdom

**Keasi Gonewai**  
United Kingdom and Fiji

**Zivana Hammond-Walker**  
New Zealand

**Eugen Harinda**  
Rwanda

**Heather Hatton**  
United Kingdom

**Jesse Itemere**  
United Kingdom

**Cyprian Kambili**  
Malawi

**Bora Kamwanya**  
Democratic Republic of the  
Congo

**Renee Kapuku**  
United Kingdom

**Jackie Yu Hon Lam**  
Canada

**Bonolo Madibe**

South Africa

**Esanju Maseka**

Zambia

**Fathima Mowlana**

Sri Lanka

**Emmanuel Mudaheranwa**

Rwanda

**Ernest Stephano Mulaya**

Tanzania

**Hayley Mulenda**

United Kingdom

**Lawrence Muli**

Kenya

**Anne Musisi**

Uganda

**Chrisostomos Muwonge**

Uganda

**Darrion Narine**

Trinidad and Tobago

**Sophia Ndibalema**

Tanzania

**Luke Neah**

Papua New Guinea

**Janice Joan Ng'ang'a**

United Kingdom

**Peter Ngimbwa**

Tanzania

**Greg Nunez**

Belize

**Kristin O'Donnell**

Canada

**Nwamaka Ogbonna**

Nigeria

**George Okeyo**

Kenya

**Selam Petros**

Zambia

**Harry Phinda**

Zimbabwe

**Amaan Ramzan**

Pakistan

**Eric Rucogoza**

Rwanda

**Jemmar Samuels**

Jamaica

**Hamidu Seki**

Tanzania

**Nimra Shahid**

**Chedza Simon**

Botswana

**Mellisa Ssanyu**  
Uganda

**Yentyl Williams**  
Trinidad and Tobago

**Roma Vedamuttu**  
Sri Lanka

**Osman Yansaneh**  
Sierra Leone

**Abhilash Vishwanathula**  
India

**Nafula Wafula**  
Kenya



Participants provided diverse representation from across the Commonwealth.

### **Gender**

There was an even gender balance amongst the international delegates:

**39%** female

**36%** male

**25%** preferred not to say

## Faith and belief

A wide range of faiths and beliefs were represented:

**59%** Christian   **14%** Muslim   **11%** Atheist  
**3%** Hindu   **3%** Jewish   **7%** preferred not to say

## Fields of study

Student delegates came from a broad spectrum of academic disciplines:

**53%** social sciences  
**30%** arts and humanities  
**17%** sciences

# Our partners

**We are grateful to our partners who supported us in realising the vision for this youth symposium.**



**The Association  
of Commonwealth  
Universities**

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) is an international organisation dedicated to building a better world through higher education. International collaboration is central to this ambition: by bringing universities together from around the world – and crucially the people who study and work within them – the ACU helps to advance knowledge, promote understanding, broaden minds and improve lives. The ACU champions higher education as a cornerstone of stronger societies, supporting its members, partners and stakeholders as they adapt to a changing world.

[www.acu.ac.uk](http://www.acu.ac.uk)



The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. It was founded in 1934 and incorporated by Royal Charter in 1940. It aims to create friendly knowledge and understanding between the

people of the UK and other countries. It does this by making a positive contribution to the UK and the countries it works with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

The British Council works with more than 100 countries across the world, in the fields of arts and culture, the English language, education and civil society. Last year, it reached more than 80 million people directly and 791 million people overall, including online, through broadcasts and publications.

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



## The Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 53 independent and sovereign countries. It spans the globe, including both advanced economies and developing countries, in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Americas, Europe and the Pacific. Its combined population is 2.4 billion, of which more than 60 per cent is aged under 30.

The Commonwealth Secretariat supports 53 member countries to build democratic and inclusive institutions, strengthen governance and promote justice and human rights. Its work helps to grow economies and boost trade, deliver national resilience, empower young people, and address threats such as climate change, debt and inequality. The Commonwealth Secretariat's youth development work is delivered through the Commonwealth Youth Programme, which has been supporting countries for over 45 years.

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



## Additional resources

A range of learning resources and audio-visual materials from **Commonwealth Futures: Youth Perspectives** can be found on the Cumberland Lodge website and social media channels, including live tweets and feedback, a highlights video, participant blog posts, and a podcast with Her Excellency Yamina Karitanyi, High Commissioner for the Republic of Rwanda to the UK and non-resident Ambassador to Ireland.

[cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/read-watch-listen](https://cumberlandlodge.ac.uk/read-watch-listen)

[#clCommonwealth](https://twitter.com/clCommonwealth)



## **Cumberland Lodge empowers people to tackle the causes and effects of social division.**

Since 1947, we have been breaking down silo thinking and building interdisciplinary, cross-sector networks that make a difference. We are an incubator of fresh ideas that promotes progress towards more peaceful, open and inclusive societies.

We actively involve young people in all aspects of our work, and our educational programmes nurture their potential as future leaders and change-makers. Students from across the Commonwealth have been meeting at Cumberland Lodge for more than 70 years.

Our stunning facilities are available to hire for residential or non-residential conferences, meetings and special events. Every booking helps to support our charitable work.

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