

REPORT ON THE  
**9<sup>TH</sup> COMMONWEALTH YOUTH MINISTERS  
MEETING (9CYMM)**



**31<sup>ST</sup> JULY 2017 – 4<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2017**

**MUNYONYO, KAMPALA UGANDA**

**COMMONWEALTH ORGANISATION FOR  
SOCIAL WORK DELEGATES**

**Mr. Okiria Gerald – Uganda**

**Mr. Nyoroge Stephen - Kenya**

## INTRODUCTION.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Minister Meeting (9CYMM) took place from 31<sup>st</sup> July 2017 to 4<sup>th</sup> August 2017 in Kampala, Uganda, under the theme; ***"Resourcing and Financing Youth Development; Empowering Young People."***

The meeting brought together Youth Ministers, leaders and stakeholders that also included international



*Commonwealth countries flags flying high in Kampala*

organizations from the 52 Commonwealth countries. 2.4 billion people are estimated to be citizens of the Commonwealth countries within 1.8 billion people estimated to be youths in the age bracket of 15 years – 35 years.

The 9<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Minister Meeting (9CYMM) main objective was to enable government ministers and senior officials to share good practices, debate emerging issues, take stock of pioneering Commonwealth initiatives and forge new partnerships for resourcing youth development.

Within the meeting was the Stakeholders' Forum which provided space for youth sector stakeholders to influence policy-making across the Commonwealth through engaging Ministers and youth sector stakeholders in a bid to ensuring multiple perspectives are included in the decision making. It's from the decisions made that documents are developed and presented to Commonwealth Heads of Government at their Meeting.

The Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW) was honoured to have actively participated in the 9<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Minister Meeting (9CYMM) both as presenters and also participants at the different sessions and high level meetings held. COSW was represented by young carers from National Social Work Associations of Kenya (Mr. Nyoroge Stephen) and Uganda (Mr. Okiria Gerald).

The meeting was convened by the Commonwealth Secretariat and hosted by the Government of Uganda, with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development taking the lead.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CONFERENCE AND MEETINGS

The meeting was officially opened by the President of the Republic of Uganda, H.E Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2017. He emphasized the need to locally mobilize resources and also promote trade and market of youth made products so as to reduce the donor dependence syndrome. He also encouraged youths to take advantage of such forums not only to socialize but also create economic benefiting relationships as one of the ways



*From Left is Stephen Njoroge (Kenya) and Okiria Gerald (Uganda)*

to strengthen the Commonwealth fraternity as their incomes also grow. The President also encouraged youths to be disciplined as the world today was built by disciplined people, though it is currently dominated by undisciplined people.

Before that, the Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Hon. Patricia Scotland, thanked youth workers for their unwavering service in supporting the youth. She encouraged all youth workers to learn the practices shared by other youth workers and use them to holistically support the youths. She also noted that investment in young people's development is key towards their development and none of them should be left behind. She added to this saying that *"it's through the youth that we step into the gates of promises."*

She encouraged youth ministers without youth friendly policies to work towards establishment of policies that boost youth potential and also help them benefit from opportunities within their different communities.

There was great emphasis on the need to have programs that reflect the need and will of young people, which will ease program implementation and evaluation. The need to mentor young people, helping them not only to get resources but also to put them into proper use, was highlighted. Stakeholders were also encouraged to have youth engaged from the initial stage of program development of planning, budget, implementation and evaluation.

It was noted that the three E's (Empower, Educate and Employ) are key principles in building a quality and sustainable youth work force. Education specifically is one of the key investment means to transformative development and thus to overcome social evils that hinder them from achieving their ultimate goals in life.

## PRESENTATION BY OKIRIA GERALD ON YOUNG CARERS

Okiria Gerald on, behalf of the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW), presented a paper on the need to support young people (young carers) below the age of 18 years who take care of their siblings and for some their parents or caregivers as a result of the primary caregivers passing on, or being chronically ill, or due to displacement as a result of natural disasters or wars.



*The team during the open session at the Commonwealth Speke Resort Hotel – Munyonyo, Kampala*

The presentation gave a general overview of how such groups of youth are exposed to competition for the limited government resources and how they are affected in accessing and meeting the different social services.

A case study on the success of the Young Carers Festival was presented which was also among key recommendations put forward to policy makers and other stakeholders on how to support youths in this category, by giving them opportunity to live a meaningful life in society, while easily accessing other social services with education included.



*Mr. Okiria Gerald (Right) with fellow presenters from other countries pose for a photo with the Commonwealth Secretary General Hon. Patricia Scotland*

## **ACHIEVEMENTS**

1. We were able to participate effectively in the meetings, mainly at the stakeholders' forum where a presentation on young carers was made.
2. Through the different discussions and interactions, we were able to share the presence of young carers in our communities and thus advocate for inclusive budgeting.
3. The meeting also exposed us to learning about better practices, how to address young carers' problems and address them from the local to international level.
4. We were encouraged to keep promoting the voice of the young carers until it is heard and responded too.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Our participation in the 9<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting gave us a great opportunity to share our approaches in helping young carers in the East African region but also provided many opportunities to learn about good practices from others. Below are some of the recommendation we present for consideration for effective intervention into the young carers lives.

1. Extensive research need to be commissioned by the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW) and conducted by National Social Work Organizations / Associations in Commonwealth countries. This will present more evidence and add more weight as we keep popularizing our case for the young carers and highlighting their needs.
2. There is need for COSW to continue supporting young carers and for other stakeholders to use all available structures in creating more awareness campaigns.
3. More stakeholders (both government and Non-Government Organization) need to be incorporated as we collectively intervene and support young carers.
4. The principle of equity needs to be integrated in our intervention into addressing young carers' issues. This during the forum was emphasized with a major need to have inclusive budgeting.
5. Organize stakeholders forums that can be helpful in addressing both the case for preventative and remedial interventions into young carers lives.

## FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT THE MEETINGS

News reports and videos can be found on the Commonwealth [website](#).

Ministers pledge to mainstream youth priorities and address gap in financing – [news report and communique](#).

New Commonwealth youth worker alliance endorsed by governments – [news report](#)



*Table 10. With delegates from the Caribbean, Singapore, COSW, Kenya after the stakeholders and senior ministers session.*

## FINANCES

The delegates received funding of £395.00 from the Noel & Thea Jones Fund and £200.00 from the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work to cover travel, accommodation, subsistence and miscellaneous expenses.

## **CONCLUSION.**

The 9<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, under the theme of "***Resourcing and Financing Youth Development; Empowering Young People***", exposed, for the Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work, that there are agencies willing to support our cause and we just have to tap into those opportunities with evidence.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We in conclusion would wish to express our sincere gratitude to our National Social Work Association through our members.

To Mr. David Jones of Commonwealth Organization for Social Work for the being available and for liaising with the Noel and Thea Jones Fund and COSW to ensure that we got both the financial and emotional resources towards a successful participation in the meeting.

To Mr. Charles Mbugua of the Commonwealth Organization for Social Work and the Kenyan National Association of Social Workers for effectively coordinating the pre-conference activities, actual and post conference activities.

To Mr. Charles Draecabo and the National Association of Social Workers of Uganda (NASWU) for working closely in having a great support into the presentation.

More thanks goes to the East Africa Regional Young Carers team for the unwavering support and service to the young carers.

To the young carers who meet during the Festival in December 2016 to share their challenges and hopes for the future.

## **REPORT COMPILED BY:**

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**August 2017**

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COSW is an organisation for citizens of the Commonwealth who are interested in supporting social work and social development. It is registered in the UK as a company limited by guarantee. There is an informal membership arrangement with meetings held at biennial world social work conferences. It is supported by a number of social work associations in the Commonwealth.

It aims to promote and support communication and collaboration between social workers and social work associations of Commonwealth countries, and to uphold and promote the code of ethics of the International Federation of Social Workers.

**Foundation:** In 1994, at a meeting of social workers from Commonwealth countries during the biennial conference of the International Federation of Social Workers in Colombo, Sri Lanka. The constitution was signed by social workers from 11 Commonwealth countries in Montreal in 2000.

**Governance:** COSW is registered in the UK as a company limited by guarantee. It has a formal constitution. The Board is elected every 2 years at a General Meeting held in the wings of the IFSW World Conference. Board members reflect the 5 global regions identified in the IFSW and COSW constitutions. COSW is accredited by the Commonwealth Secretariat. Formal reports are submitted to Companies House and the Commonwealth.

**Officers:** Chair: Ai Hua Teoh (Malaysia); Honorary Secretary: Monique Auffrey (Canada); Treasurer: Fiona Robertson (New Zealand), Representative to the Commonwealth Institutions in London: Terry Bamford (UK), Board members: Nigel Hall (UK), David N Jones (UK), Civil Legodu (South Africa), Charles Mbugua (Kenya), KS Ramesh (India), Daisy Romanus (India), Naomi Spencer (Australia).

**Activities:** COSW provides a Commonwealth network for information about social work and social development, sharing technical knowledge and expertise between and among social workers in Commonwealth countries. It is keen to work closely with other Commonwealth organisations with similar objectives, such as the organisations involved with health issues and those involved in the youth and Habitat agendas.

COSW has a priority focus on supporting the development of social work in Africa. A young carers project, linking young people who care for adults and siblings in a number of Commonwealth countries, aims to provide support to help them with education and employment whilst also linking social workers involved in providing support for them.

COSW is a formal partner of the International Federation of Social Workers and promotes active involvement of Commonwealth social workers in international social work and social development organisations.

<http://thecommonwealth.org/organisation/commonwealth-organisation-social-work-cosw>

<http://ifsw.org/what-we-do/partners/>

## YOUNG CARERS PROJECT

Young carers in sub Saharan Africa face numerous challenges due to the extensive damage to their family structures because of the HIV pandemic and a range of other factors<sup>1, 2</sup>. Problems include taking over family responsibilities at a young age, caring for sick parents and younger siblings, inability to attend or make effective use of school, risk of loss of family possessions and land to extended family members who usurp ownership, social isolation, physical and psychological health problems, lack of emotional support, lack of opportunity for employment and risk of falling into illegal income generation such as crime and prostitution.

The COSW project grew out of a Commonwealth Professional Fellowship in 2003. It was launched at a conference in Nairobi in 2006 for young carers from the UK and several African countries and professionals funded by the UK Department for Education, jointly organised by Commonwealth Organisation for Social Work (COSW), Kenyan National Association for Social Workers (KNASW), Children's Society (UK) and Council for British Teachers (CfBT)<sup>3</sup>.

Three further 'festivals' have already been organised in 2009, 2012<sup>4</sup>, 2016. These are weekend 'camps' for young carers from different parts of Kenya, with participants from Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda and sometimes from the UK.

Three Kenyan young carers were funded by the Noel and Thea Jones Fund (NTJF) to participate in the UK annual young carers' festival, organised by The Children's Society, and to meet young carers. A Commonwealth Fellow from Kenya worked with the Children's Society in 2009 to support this work. There have been several visits between the UK and Kenya and regular contact to sustain and develop the project.

The 2006 consultation with young carers told us they need: employment chances with reasonable pay; social care for their families; health care, sanitation and nutrition; end to child labour and exploitation by upholding children's rights; promotion of the term 'young carers' as opposed to 'orphans and vulnerable children' (o.v.c)<sup>5</sup> and formation of networks of young carers, especially in Africa, to raise issues and engage in activities to improve their welfare. These issues have been confirmed in all subsequent consultations.

The young carers work is linked with the Kenya National Association of Social Workers (offering extensive national networks) and guided by learning from our partnership with the Children's Society (UK charity with extensive experience of running similar activities) and COSW (source of international expertise). We have continuing funding for local youth advocacy and exchanges from the NTJF.

Following the 2006 consultation with young carers and professionals in Nairobi, Kenya, young people were recruited as young carer advocates and have developed basic support programmes. One completed basic social work training. Three have been funded to visit the UK for structured personal development and to participate in the young carers'

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<sup>1</sup> Becker, S. (2007). "Global Perspectives on Children's Unpaid Caregiving in the Family: Research and Policy on 'Young Carers' in the UK, Australia, the USA and Sub-Saharan Africa." *Global Social Policy* 7 (1): 23-50

<sup>2</sup> Mukherjee, A., M. Waring, M. Shivdas and R. Carr (2011). *Who cares?: the economics of dignity*, London, Commonwealth Secretariat.

<sup>3</sup> A video on the first young carer conference in 2006 and work with young carers can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kn2VV9WECsw>.

<sup>4</sup> Mwangi, E. and D. N. Jones (2013) "Overwhelmed young carers face the same issues worldwide" *Guardian Professional*. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/social-care-network/2013/jun/28/young-carers-same-issues-worldwide>

<sup>5</sup> Lombe, M., H. Mabikke, N. V. Enelamah and Y. Chu (2017) "Conceptualizing the African child as orphan and vulnerable: a label in need of redefinition?" *International Social Work*, (June 2017).

festival/camp (run by the Children's Society and YMCA) on which this project is modelled. Three Commonwealth Fellowships have enabled mid-career professionals to visit the UK for professional development on issues related to young carers. Two churches in England have provided funding for local projects, including school buildings, water and sanitation. There has also been contact with YMCA (involved in the UK young carers' festival), Christian Children's Fund in Kenya and Child Welfare Society of Kenya.

The project vision has been to develop local young advocates providing local services and activities, thereby laying the foundations for the launch of a regular international camp. The model for this event is based on very successful annual young carers' festivals which have been organized by the Children's Society UK and YMCA in England for more than ten years.

The objectives of the festivals are to;

- a) Develop networking and shared identity and thereby to enhance self-confidence
- b) Engage opinion leaders – Politicians, journalists, advocates etc.
- c) Develop shared advocacy themes.
- d) Provide an atmosphere for fun, relocation and affirmation for young people who are frequently isolated and exhausted because of their family responsibilities.

With the numerous challenges and problems faced by young carers, in sub-Saharan Africa, the festival provides a much-needed platform for them to raise their issues and concerns and also to inform the relevant authorities and persons in forums to advocate for policy formulation, implementation and change. In this light, the festivals is intended to:

- 1. Empower young people to raise awareness of their situations and to influence public attitudes, national policy and service delivery.
- 2. Extend awareness of young carers responses to HIV/AIDS and other challenges in building solidarity among those infected and affected, influencing public policy and promoting a positive change in attitudes.
- 3. Improve young people's understanding of their rights and their involvement in cascading this.
- 4. Break the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion experienced by young carers under the age of 25 years, by empowering young people to become self-sufficient and to improve their standards of living, thereby avoiding risk of involvement in prostitution crime or other forms of child labour.
- 5. Improve the physical and emotional well-being of the young carers reducing isolation and stress, increasing peer support and friendship circles and improving emotional well-being, resilience and self-esteem.

The NTJF also supports very local activities for young carers, such as after school clubs which provide the same opportunities for a greater number of young people in a local area. Reports indicate that schools find these activities assist teachers and young carers to better understand each other and to support their education.

## **NOEL & THEA JONES FUND**

NTJF has been supporting work with young people caring for young carers in East Africa and more widely since 2007. The Fund supports after school counselling and recreation groups, international festivals for groups of young carers, and political lobbying and public awareness campaigns.

It was created to celebrate the life and Christian service of Noel (died 2007) and Thea (died 2017) Jones. Significant achievements can be facilitated with enthusiastic commitment, effective networking and modest resources.



## MEMORIES FROM A DECADE OF YOUNG CARER EVENTS 2006-2016



Young carer in  
a Nairobi slum



A Kenyan young carer meets  
Princess Anne at a UK carers  
conference



Young carers and politicians from Kenya and UK at the 2006 conference in Nairobi



Young carers in group discussions at the 2009 festival in Nairobi



Some participants from the 2016 festival in Nairobi

