

# commonwealth students' association



**Strategic Plan  
2012 - 2015**

**csa**  
commonwealth  
students  
association

# The Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is an association of 54 countries which is united by shared values and principles. This association works towards shared goals in democracy, development, and respect for diversity. It lists its shared values as peace and security, democracy, human rights, respect and understanding, rule of law, freedom of expression, development, gender equality, access to quality health and education, good governance and increased partnership with civil societies (Commonwealth Secretariat, 1991). The uniqueness of the Commonwealth is not only its shared values but also its diversity, as it consists of developed and developing countries, rich and poor, large and small. The Commonwealth is home to two billion citizens of all faiths and ethnicities, of which over half are 25 years old or under, and a quarter are under 5 years old (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2012c).

The mission of the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) is to “engage and empower young people (aged 15 to 29) to enhance their contributions to development.” Youth empowerment is, therefore, at the core of the CYP’s work and it was in this spirit that the Commonwealth Students’ Association (CSA) was established.

The Commonwealth Heads of Government and its Youth Ministers have endorsed the following definition of youth empowerment:

**“ Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which they can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others. ”**



The CYP strives to ensure that enabling conditions are created under which young people get an opportunity to decide for themselves on matters that concern them, or at least be part of the decision making process at all levels. The CYP seeks to accomplish this by building the capacity of young people, and in this case students, and their networks, through facilitating greater interface between themselves and those in charge of policy formulation and decision-making. While advocating for and working towards youth empowerment, the CYP recognizes the fact that youth are not a homogenous group. They belong to different age groups with different needs and different aspirations. They can also be categorized as urban and rural, student and non-student and several other classifications within this demography.

# Background

Students are the primary stakeholders in the education system and as such should be involved in the decision making processes of improving education, especially in terms of quality and standard access. This necessitates for an organised students' vehicle to articulate these issues.

In June 2009, the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (17CCEM) was held in Malaysia where students stressed the need for greater focus to be given to the role they should take in the decision-making processes of the Commonwealth. The student delegates also recommended that the "Commonwealth [should] develop standards for the governing of student bodies and organisations", thus making it the remit of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the CYP to support the strengthening of student youth organisations.

Through its Strategic Plan for 2008-2012, the CYP committed itself to "contribute to the re-activation of democratic student movements by coordinating secondary and tertiary student representatives and involving them in decision-making about education policies".

During this, regional and pan-Commonwealth consultations focused on enhancing greater participation of students in the Commonwealth. Youth and student leaders across the Commonwealth strongly advocated that they should be meaningfully engaged in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring.

The following were the outcomes of the consultations:

- provided a clearer idea about the status of student engagement within each region;
- provided an understanding of the needs and aspirations of tertiary students and helped to identify and share best practices;
- explored the possibility of building and strengthening regional and national networks;
- identified the capacity challenges faced by student youth organisations and proposed steps to support an enabling environment for student youth organisations to function with independence, legitimacy and respect;
- discovered there was consensus among the four regions that a 'student association' was necessary and would have their full involvement and unwavering support.

As a result of the consultations a draft constitution and concept documents were developed for the idea of a student body.

The 18th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (18CCEM) Youth Forum was held in Mauritius in August 2012. Student leaders aged 18-29 from across the Commonwealth gathered to make recommendations on the current issues in education, enhance their capacities, and strengthen their role in the Commonwealth Education Sector. The 18CCEM Youth Forum provided the space for the draft constitution and draft concept papers to be tabled and debated. As a result of a rigorous deliberation process, the Commonwealth Students' Association was launched and a steering committee was established with a two year mandate to operationalise the organisation.

# The Commonwealth Students' Association

The Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA) is the coalescence of the student organisations within the Commonwealth. Its role is to be an independent advocate of students throughout the Commonwealth, which bringing student concerns to the forefront of educational development. The CSA will engage and empower student organisations in an effort to influence key education decisions and policies at different levels in the Commonwealth.

## Mission:

Upholding the values of the Commonwealth, the CSA will unite students, represent them, build their capacities and provide them with opportunities across the Commonwealth to address issues within the fields of education and global development. The CSA will advocate for and to contribute to a world where students have the opportunities to address issues within education and fields of development.

## Vision:

The CSA works to see a world where students across the Commonwealth are empowered to effect change in education and contribute to their societies; students are engaged as valuable partners in effecting the change that they seek in education; and where students have a credible and representative voice in education.

## Visible:

The CSA aims to raise the profile of student associations and bodies across the Commonwealth. The CSA will amplify the voice of students in the Commonwealth and promote greater recognition of the role of students as partners in education development.

Under its visibility work the CSA will:

- Propel students' voices to prominence and significance in policy and decision making.
- Ensure results of work are evident across the Commonwealth.

### **Sustainable:**

The CSA aims to mobilize resources and diversify income that will help it reach its overall strategic objectives. The Commonwealth Students' Association will also collaborate with partners and stakeholders to help meet these objectives. Under its sustainability work the CSA will:

- Develop a strong network of partners and stakeholders helping to deliver its work
- Develop diverse income streams

### **Engaging:**

The CSA will create opportunities for students and members to be active in the delivery of its work. Under its engagement work the CSA will:

- Build a strong, regional presence
- Broker opportunities to enhance the capacity of student in the Commonwealth

### **Credible:**

The CSA recognizes the voices of all students within the Commonwealth. As such, the CSA will work to build strong partnerships with student associations and bodies across the Commonwealth. The CSA will also support them by advocating their concerns and offering services to develop the capacity of students to participate in decision making.

Under its credibility work, the CSA will:

- Work at the nexus of policy, advocacy and development for students.
- Conduct research and provide reports (including statistics) on the state of student concerns and development work.

# Visible

- Propel the students' voices to prominence and significance in policy and decision making
- Ensure results of work are evident across the Commonwealth

Sub Objective	Outputs	Activities
<p>Represent the voice and concerns of students in the Commonwealth</p>	<p>CSA communication plan inclusive of developing a website and usage of social media platforms</p> <p>CSA representatives / officers provide information on student concerns to the public or any other relevant bodies</p> <p>CSA policy papers and reports</p>	<p>Commenting on international student issues formally and informally - i.e. social media and official media</p> <p>Regularly updating online spaces</p> <p>Participating in regional and pan-Commonwealth events focussed on students and education</p>
<p>Promote and support the work of students in the Commonwealth</p>	<p>Recognition of the work of students / leaders / student bodies through online platforms and printed material</p> <p>Collaboration with partners to develop an award category for Commonwealth Students</p>	<p>Commonwealth Student Leader of the Year Award / Commonwealth Students' Association of the year</p>

# Credible

- Work at the nexus of policy, advocacy and development for students
- Conduct research and provide reports (including statistics) on the state of student concerns and development work

Sub Objective	Outputs	Activities
<p>Recognised as an official student voice in the Commonwealth</p>	<p>A database of national and regional student bodies, leaders and organisations</p> <p>A membership database representative of students in the Commonwealth</p> <p>Convenors / Coordinators of the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers Student Forum</p> <p>Developed policies and procedures</p> <p>Contribution to major education development discussions within the commonwealth</p>	<p>Mapping Student bodies and organisations within the Commonwealth</p> <p>Contacting student bodies / associations within the Commonwealth and promote membership benefits</p> <p>Forums</p> <p>Thematic Workshops</p> <p>Online surveys and reports</p> <p>Report on the status of students in the Commonwealth</p> <p>Convenors of the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers Youth Forum</p> <p>Participation at the Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers</p>
<p>Improving the capacity of students to become partners</p>	<p>Students trained in advocacy, influencing policy and engaged in development work</p>	<p>Workshops</p> <p>On-line module developed</p> <p>Student leader / voice toolkit developed as used by students in the Commonwealth</p>
<p>Measure the impact of CSA work</p>	<p>Reports (including statistics) detailing work carried out by the CSA (pan-Commonwealth and Regionally)</p>	<p>Regional reports</p> <p>Online surveys</p> <p>Student evaluation of CSA work</p>



# Credible (continued)

Sub Objective	Outputs	Activities
Support the development of student bodies / associations in the Commonwealth	New student bodies / associations developed in countries where they do not exist  Student leaders trained to improve the capacity of their student bodies / associations	Provide technical assistance for development of student bodies / associations  On-line module developed
Ensure quality assurance of student bodies	Legitimising student bodies / associations / 'stamp of approval'  Student body / association checklist	Research best models with The Commonwealth  CSA membership / Paragon criteria developed





# Engaging

- Strong regional presence
- Broker opportunities to enhance the capacity of students in the Commonwealth

Sub Objective	Outputs	Activities
Empower students to participate in education development work	Regional Working Group create opportunities for Students to participate in CSA work	Regional campaigns / projects Contribute to social media Workshops Webinars / seminars Facilitate student / student association exchanges
Raise awareness of issues highlighted by students in the Commonwealth	CSA Campaign	Online Survey Provision of campaign kit Working with students to develop campaign materials
Work with Partners to build capacity of students	Broker of opportunities for students - i.e. Internships, work placements, employment opportunities	
Educational and other relevant research	Endorse and promote research undertaken by Students regarding CSA focus areas	Develop research areas from policy position papers or in consultation with students

# Sustainable

- Develop a strong network of partners and stakeholders helping to deliver its work
- Develop diverse income streams

<b>Sub Objective</b>	<b>Outputs</b>	<b>Activities</b>
Diversified income	Contracts for services offered Developed various income streams	Develop chargeable services
Established fundraising and sustainability plan	Fundraising and sustainability plan	Finance and sustainability mapping exercises Research funding opportunities
Have strong partnerships	Developed database of partners Developed partnership plans Capacity of CSA improved Collaborations with partners to deliver work	Partner mapping exercise Projects Funding Workshops and training





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