

Report of the Inaugural Commonwealth Conference

# Citizenship and the Commonwealth The Active Commonwealth Citizen

10–12 November 2010  
Cumberland Lodge, Windsor, UK





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Conference:  
Citizenship and the Commonwealth**

**The Active Commonwealth Citizen**

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Institute of  
Commonwealth Studies

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY • UNIVERSITY OF LONDON



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## Contents

Introduction	5
Chapter 1: What is citizenship?	9
Chapter 2: Citizens and their rights	15
Chapter 3: Teaching citizenship	19
Chapter 4: Ethnicity, caste, gender and citizenship	23
Chapter 5: Citizenship, reconciliation and the marginalised	27
Chapter 6: Citizenship, the environment and the economy	31
Chapter 7: Science, technology and citizenship	35
Chapter 8: Young Commonwealth citizens	39
Chapter 9: The significance of citizenship in the contemporary Commonwealth	41
Chapter 10: Recommendations	45



## Introduction

What does citizenship really mean to the people of the Commonwealth?

It is possible to take a highly pessimistic view of the present, seeing a gradual breakdown around the world of 'traditional' bonds of loyalty and community, which leaves people disengaged and isolated. Many are unknown, unvalued and at odds with societies of which they do not feel a part. Rampant commercialisation has left companies unaccountable to the communities in which they operate and has made money the only measure of value.

Yet it is also possible to identify cause for optimism. People are coming together in new ways and demanding more of governments and global institutions than ever before. They are demanding to know the reasons why decisions were made, and they are demanding access to information so they can make informed decisions of their own. People and communities are asserting their right to be consulted and to have a say in decisions, as well as insisting that they must be involved in the delivery of projects and services if solutions are to be sustainable, understood and owned.

The Commonwealth's vision is one of values — it is a voluntary association dedicated to advancing democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and sustainable development. The Commonwealth is also a community of citizens tied together through history, language and, above all, shared hope.

All citizens have a right to decide their own future. This right is of course shared outside the Commonwealth, but the Commonwealth has incomparable networks to take forward its vision of democracy and development, through a genuine and equal partnership between people and governments.

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

Unique in the international landscape, the Commonwealth is the only association where citizen-to-citizen links under the auspices of the association pre-date the creation of formal institutions by member governments. Networks for education, language and law will be paramount in many people's minds. For 25 years the Commonwealth Writers' Prize has launched successful careers in fiction; for 50 years Commonwealth Scholarships have created leaders in all walks of life; and for more than 100 years Commonwealth parliamentarians have shared experience and ideas on governance. Professional networks of foresters, engineers, teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, local governments, judges, lawyers and many, many more, engage with thousands of people every day, meeting voluntarily and building the social capital that puts the Commonwealth's values into practice. The bonds we have through conflict are remembered by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission that manages 23,000 locations in 150 countries. And, the Commonwealth Games reminds us of the way in which sport has provided another important link. These are the citizens' connections and networks that make the Commonwealth special.

Jeffrey Sachs, in his book *Common Wealth*, says 'No major problem can be solved by government, or the business sector, or one community alone. Complex social problems have multiple stakeholders ... Gaining cooperation among [them] is the toughest challenge of all.' But the Commonwealth is pre-adapted to succeed in bringing stakeholders together to tackle problems by using its people-to-people links. It is time to recognise the power of this citizen engagement, and to re-evaluate the significance of the professions, cultural organisations, and citizens' groups in the Commonwealth. What our citizens need from their governments now is the opportunity to be heard, and the infrastructure to make these partnerships work. We need to re-assess the meaning of citizenship in the Commonwealth and hardwire the concept into the Commonwealth's future.

This conference did not produce all the answers. The debates on citizenship in the Commonwealth, and Commonwealth citizenship, will continue. But it is hoped that this report will be a launchpad for the development of new ideas and action.

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The Commonwealth Conference is an initiative of the Commonwealth Foundation and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, in partnership with the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission. It is hoped that the Commonwealth Conference will become a regular event, held in a succession of countries across the Commonwealth.

The aim of the conferences is to bring together academics, students, policy makers, members of NGOs and other civil society groups, to discuss an issue of central importance to the future of the Commonwealth. Special emphasis will be placed on engaging with the views of students, early-career researchers and other young people from across the Commonwealth.

This, the first Commonwealth Conference, held at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor in the UK in November 2010, explored what it means to be a citizen of the Commonwealth in the 21st century. The issue of citizenship received only passing mention in the Communiqué of the 2009 CHOGM. Yet the creation of effective forms of citizenship, which offer the maximum potential for the inhabitants of Commonwealth countries to play an active and informed role in shaping their lives and their countries is an important precondition for the achievement of the Commonwealth's stated goals in areas as diverse as democratisation, sustainable development, human rights, combating corruption and tackling climate change.

This Report will be presented to the Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) — the civil society gathering that takes place ahead of each Commonwealth summit, held every two years. The CPF will issue a statement to heads of government. It is hoped that the recommendations of this report will be captured in the CPF statement and that civil society representatives press Commonwealth leaders and foreign ministers to adopt and advance these ideas when they meet at the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in October 2011 in Perth, Australia.

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**The Commonwealth Foundation is an intergovernmental organisation set up in 1965 to make civil society stronger.** It empowers charities, non-governmental organisations, professional associations, trade unions, faith groups and cultural practitioners — the lifeblood of any healthy society. The Foundation equips these groups with the tools required to contribute

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

to national and international goals of democracy, good governance, sustainable development and cultural diversity. The Foundation rewards excellence in the arts and helps to influence key policy-makers. It also champions, develops and invests in activities that enrich and strengthen society. It acts as a vital resource for Commonwealth people, enabling them to raise their voice, instigate change, and fashion a better world.

**The Institute of Commonwealth Studies**, founded in 1949, is the only postgraduate academic institution in the United Kingdom devoted to the study of the Commonwealth. It is also home to the longest-running interdisciplinary and practice-oriented human rights MA programme in the UK. The Institute is a national and international centre of excellence for policy-relevant research, research facilitation and teaching. As a member of the School of Advanced Study, established in 1994, the Institute works with nine other prestigious postgraduate research institutes to offer academic opportunities across and between a wide range of subject fields in the humanities and social sciences. The Institute's library is an international resource holding more than 190,000 volumes, with particularly impressive Caribbean, Southern African and Australian holdings and over 200 archival collections.

The **Commonwealth Scholarship Commission** in the United Kingdom (CSC) is responsible for managing Britain's contribution to the Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Plan (CSFP), established in 1959. The CSC supports around 700 awards annually. Awards are funded by the Department for International Development (for developing Commonwealth countries), and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Scottish Government (for developed Commonwealth countries), in conjunction with UK universities. The CSC makes available seven types of awards, and also nominates UK citizens for scholarships to study in other Commonwealth countries under the CSFP.

This report was written by Daisy Cooper based on the presentations given by the conference speakers.

## Chapter 1: What is citizenship?

*(Speaker: Sharon Zivkovic, University of South Australia)*

There is no universally accepted definition of the term ‘citizenship’. In the most limited sense, it is about an individual’s membership of a state or a political community that gives rise to legal and moral rights and duties. But the concept has evolved and it is now so widely accepted that it includes not merely membership of a state but also membership of the global political community.

There are many reasons for governments to engage stakeholders: it can help them to understand the complexity and interconnectedness of problems; it can help them identify possible solutions; and it can help ensure that any required changes are understood, discussed and owned by the people to whom these changes apply.

The idea of ‘Active Citizenship’ is derived predominantly from the field of education. Some theories emphasise learning through volunteering and community service, whilst others emphasise learning through civic engagement and non-formal political participation. Essentially, the notion of active citizenship involves both decision making and community action — citizens should be supported to engage in deliberating about the world, to develop policies with governments, and to take collective action to change the world.

Research shows that people feel motivated to participate when they believe they can influence decisions and make an impact on society. Citizenship education programmes therefore need to equip citizens with the knowledge, skills and attributes to enable them to make a difference to the world around them — whether at the local, national, or global level, or in making connections between levels. Active citizens need the skills to access information themselves, a desire to build the capacity of their communities, the ability to consider issues from a variety of perspectives

and the skills to initiate collective action with diverse stakeholders including governments.

The positive impact of such citizenship education programmes is clear. Recurrent findings from research to determine the impact of the Community Capacity Builders active citizenship programme in the City of

### *Effective states require effective citizens*

Onkaparinga, South Australia ([www.onkaparingacity.com/onka/living\\_here/community/leadership\\_onkaparinga.jsp](http://www.onkaparingacity.com/onka/living_here/community/leadership_onkaparinga.jsp)) show that such programmes increase the political effectiveness of people, and create additional benefits:

- programme participants consider they are more confident in their ability to shape their lives and their communities
- they feel more confident to seek out and use information
- they have more confidence in political institutions
- they feel more able to engage in democratic processes and support the work of government
- they are eager to pass on the knowledge and skills they have gained to others in their communities

Effective states require effective citizens and the Commonwealth needs to help create conditions for active citizenship within its countries and institutions.

In 2005, 2,300 people took part in agreeing the United Nations Brisbane Declaration of Community Engagement. With the 2011 CHOGM taking place in Perth, there is an opportunity for Commonwealth governments and institutions to commit themselves to a programme of active citizenship engagement and education.

#### ***The British Council's 'Active Citizens' programme: a case study***

The purpose of the 'Active Citizens' programme is to increase the contribution of those adults who have a social network within their local communities. The programme aims to help people become active locally, to equip them with the skills and confidence to engage in decision-making process, and to talk about citizenship across cultures.

In order to achieve its goals, the Active Citizens programme is divided into three phases: local training, social action projects, and international engagement. This is broken down into a six-stage journey experienced over one week:

- Identity – explore the concept of ‘me’
- Culture – knowing ourselves and our community
- Dialogue – listening without assumptions; transmitting information about me to others
- Society and citizenship – learning about culture and decision-making
- Project planning and social action – developing an active community project
- International inter-cultural dialogue – through exchange trips or online

### ***Next generation reports: Pakistani youth speak out on TV***

A group of young people voiced their opinions about weighty topical issues highlighted in the Active Citizens report, *Pakistan: The Next Generation* (available at [www.britishcouncil.pk/pakistan-Next-Generation-Report.pdf](http://www.britishcouncil.pk/pakistan-Next-Generation-Report.pdf)), on the national TV programme ‘Dunya Today’. The programme focused on the issue of corruption in government, which the report revealed to be of great concern to young people for the future security of their country. The programme, which draws around 20 million viewers, was aired in a primetime slot on 9 November 2010 and was the first of a four-part series of seminars involving Active Citizens and the Young Parliamentarians’ Forum (YPF).

### ***Wales – Kenya community development exchange***

In March 2010, a group of young Welsh community leaders went to Kenya and Sudan and worked with Sudanese and Kenyan community leaders to gain an international perspective on positive social action and community development. In May, eight community leaders from Kenya journeyed to Wales where they carried out similar activities with community development project leaders. For instance, they met with the Welsh Assembly Government and witnessed how Welsh communities engage youth from deprived areas of Wales. They also visited Cardiff City Football Club, which runs community-orientated and youth-focused schemes that have since inspired the Kenyan Active Citizens to develop an under-14s championship back home in Diani (see <http://activecitizens.britishcouncil.org/content/wales-kenya-exchange>)



*Kenyan and Welsh 'Active Citizens' at the meeting with the Lord Mayor of Cardiff, Professor Delme Bowen. Mansion House, official residence of the Lord Mayor of Cardiff, June 2011. Photo courtesy of the British Council.*

### **Challenging illiteracy in Bangladesh**

Young people in Baniazuri village in Manikganj knew that illiteracy was a major concern in their community. Following the completion of leadership training under the Active Citizens programme, they decided to make positive changes by setting up a literacy centre for adults in their community. This will help 300 people overcome illiteracy. With the support of the elders of the community, the young participants decided not only to help educate people but also spread awareness on good health practices such as drinking safe water and washing hands. The centre will operate in shifts and a total of seven young people will teach at the centre voluntarily (see [www.britishcouncil.org/bangladesh-active-citizen.htm](http://www.britishcouncil.org/bangladesh-active-citizen.htm)).

***Citizens have a right to ask why things are not getting done***

A number of lessons have been learned from the 'Active Citizens' programme. First, there is a difference between an active citizen and a good neighbour: an active citizen will engage in civic processes and collective action, whilst a 'good neighbour' will do good deeds on a voluntary yet ultimately unsustainable basis. Moreover, active citizens can ask decision-makers what they will do and have a right to demand why things are not getting done.

A second lesson is that too many initiatives for young people are merely for the political elite, and activities too often teach these young people how to imitate decision-makers without being active in their communities. Third, citizenship programmes need to start looking at mechanisms to engage groups that would ordinarily find it hard to take part, such as women aged between the ages of 16 and 25 who have children. Finally, notions of citizenship are never final — ideas belong to people and people have the right to change them.





## Chapter 2: Citizens and their rights

### *Citizens' rights in the 21st century: a case study of the 2007 Jamaican General Election (Speaker: Amanda Sives, University of Liverpool)*

The results of the 2007 Jamaican general election were extremely close with less than two per cent of the vote, just four seats, separating the two main parties. Having lost the election, the opposition party sought to challenge the result by exposing the fact that four of the winning party's candidates had dual citizenship, three jointly with the USA. The opposition party claimed that these candidates, by virtue of having sworn allegiance to foreign countries, were in breach of constitutional provisions. This then prompted a national debate about who should be entitled to vote and stand for election in Jamaica, particularly as those rights related to dual citizenship and Commonwealth citizenship.

At the time of Independence, the Jamaican Constitution extended the right to vote in Jamaica to two types of citizens:

a citizen of Jamaica resident in Jamaica at the date of registration

and,

a Commonwealth citizen who is resident in Jamaica at the date of registration and who has been so resident for at least 12 months immediately preceding that date and has attained the prescribed age.

The right to be elected in Jamaica was articulated as:

A person will be qualified for appointment to the Senate or for election to the House of Representatives if he [sic] is a citizen of Jamaica or other Commonwealth country of the age of 21 or more

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

and has been ordinarily resident in Jamaica for the immediately preceding 12 months.

The problem was that four of the elected JLP MPs were technically in breach of the constitutional provision which disallows 'any acknowledgement of allegiance, obedience or adherence to a foreign Power or State'.

In June 2008, the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Bruce Golding MP, speaking at a Jamaica diaspora conference, described the situation as a 'constitutional absurdity.' He said,

They may have been born in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, you name it ... and once they have lived in Jamaica for one year can then become a Member of Parliament. I have a difficulty if that kind of person can sit with me in Parliament, but a Jamaican who born and grow part of the time here and do [sic] the rest of the growing somewhere else cannot sit with me in Parliament.

That same month, the leader of the opposition, Portia Simpson-Miller, said that the constitution should be amended to preclude Commonwealth citizens from holding political office in Jamaica.

The situation whereby Commonwealth citizens have the right to vote or become a member of parliament in another Commonwealth country is a historical anomaly. In fact, there are only 13 Commonwealth countries which provide voter rights for Commonwealth citizens, and there are only eight which provide candidate rights for Commonwealth citizens. Moreover, of the 13, all are in the Caribbean except for the UK and Mauritius.

The right of Commonwealth citizens to vote and be

*Bruce Golding*



representatives in a small number of countries is a historical anomaly and should be questioned. In the modern Commonwealth, citizenship needs to be redefined as a process of empowering individuals across a range of countries to demand their rights from governments and from the wider Commonwealth institutions. We need a shared and agreed understanding of what is meant by Commonwealth citizenship in the 21st century.

***That Commonwealth citizens can vote or be an MP in another Commonwealth country, is a historical anomaly***

***Citizenship, passports, and rights: ECOWAS community citizenship in perspective (Speaker: Edefe Ojomo, former research fellow at the ECOWAS Commission, Nigeria)***

In 2000, West African countries adopted a policy for a borderless Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Countries agreed to abolish the requirement that citizens needed a passport or a residence permit to travel between or reside within ECOWAS countries. In 'the spirit of equal treatment of Community citizens' the ECOWAS community adopted and introduced a single ECOWAS passport, giving political identity to all ECOWAS citizens. Their entitlements include the right of entry, the right of residence and the right of establishment.

Previously, in the 1979 Protocol Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Residence and Establishment, a 'citizen of the Community' was defined as meaning a 'citizen of any Member State.' A subsequent 1982 Protocol adopted for the purpose defines a community citizen based on 'nationality and ties to a member state. Citizens of the ECOWAS community therefore only have this regional political status, by virtue of their national citizenship. Indeed, this point is central to the debate on whether the concept of 'Commonwealth citizenship' can be defined, or has any real meaning. In a strictly political definition, 'Commonwealth citizens' can only have this status by virtue of their citizenship of a Commonwealth member country.

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

The political reality of this definition then is that citizenship implies exclusion for lots of people. In keeping with the Commonwealth's principles, the concept of Commonwealth citizenship should try to be inclusive, whether by encouraging active Commonwealth citizens to be an example to others, or by exporting ideas to the world.

Most of the populations of ECOWAS countries live in rural communities governed by social patterns. For many, 'the state' exists only in the capital. With over 200 ethnic groups in ECOWAS, people's sense of identity and belonging is stronger within their local community, than with the state and region.

Most of the Commonwealth's population lives in rural communities too — the Commonwealth needs to get to know these citizens. If Commonwealth citizenship is to mean anything, the Commonwealth must define the rights and duties of Commonwealth citizens to each other, and it must define the duties and responsibilities of Commonwealth institutions to Commonwealth citizens.

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## Chapter 3: Teaching citizenship

### *Citizenship education in English-speaking primary schools in Cameroon, for children aged 5–12 (Speaker: Charles Tante, University of Buea, Cameroon)*

Cameroon's two official languages are French and English: the legacy of its division into British and French-governed territories at the end of the First World War. Following unification at independence, Cameroon struggled to harmonise its educational system. In 1998, a law was passed that established two subsystems: English-speaking and French-speaking.

The first national syllabus for Cameroon's English-speaking sub-system was issued in the year 2000, 40 years after independence. One of its innovations was a shift in the content of the curriculum. The three Rs of 'reading, writing and arithmetic' were replaced with a much broader curriculum, which included citizenship education.

Today, the citizenship curriculum involves three subjects: civics education, human rights education and moral education. The course emphasises the skills and attitudes the nation-state would like its primary school pupils to develop. These relate to regional, national and global levels. Indeed, the influence of globalisation and the importance of being a 'global citizen' are evident in the preamble to the syllabus which states that,

... the primary school curriculum in Cameroon should not only focus on the traditional school subjects but must include global concerns such as human rights, environmental education, democracy, peace education, civil defence, moral education and HIV/AIDS.

The syllabus is based around objectives, topic and content. Importantly, the syllabus is drawn firstly to emphasise the type of young learner the nation-

state encourages, before setting out the content by which learners will become responsible in aspects of citizenship education at their level.

Citizenship education is taught in all six years of primary school. Of the three subjects, civics education is the most elaborate tier catering separately for each of the six year classes. From Class One to Class Four the content revolves around the relationship between the individual, home, school, the administrative context and the broader society. Direct mention is made of the Commonwealth in Class Five (there is further development of this in post-primary school). Classes Five and Six emphasise some of the ills in society such as gambling and bribery and teach children about their duties to the home, as well as developing their knowledge about local, provincial, national world issues such as types of councils, the various arms of government, international organisations and their relation with Cameroon. Other areas covered include: the constitution; duties of members of government; use of the highway; types of elections; and rights and obligations of self and others.

***The syllabus emphasises the type of young learner the nation-state encourages***

It has been hard to judge the effectiveness or impact of teaching citizenship. Whilst the nation-state of Cameroon is trying to encourage the English-speaking 'Young Learner' to develop a sense of the local, regional, national and global belonging, this is undermined by their experiences outside the classroom. Seeing corruption and bribery in their society may confuse the young learners, robbing them of any trust in the idea of citizenship and leading them to perceive it merely as a subject in which to succeed at school.

***Corruption and bribery may cause young learners to lose trust in the idea of citizenship***

Citizenship must not just be a school subject — people must translate theory into practice, in their professional, personal and political lives. Moreover, effective citizenship education must encourage collaboration between the state, schools, parents, local community and peers.

*Commonwealth citizenship through international and transnational education (Speaker: Balasubramanyam Chandramohan, Institute of Commonwealth Studies)*

It is important to distinguish between international and transnational education. In international education, institutions offer courses on their campuses to students from another country or countries. Transnational education programmes, by contrast, are developed and administered by an institution based on one country and offered in another country or countries. This can be done face to face in offshore campuses or via the internet.

Citizenship is generally defined by the passport(s) that one holds. While this idea of citizenship is easy to understand and administer, at a more complex level, citizenship is linked to values and principles and shared conceptions of rights, obligations and expectations rooted in history.

The Commonwealth is a 'voluntary association of sovereign independent states' and not a treaty-based organisation such as the European Union, for example. It adheres to fundamental values such as democracy, human rights, good governance and civil society and notions of Commonwealth citizenship revolve around adherence to such ideals rather than to



## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

any binding legislation and possession of a passport usable across the Commonwealth.

International and transnational education provides opportunities to compare and contrast citizenship ideas through exposure in a learning context to people and ideas from other parts of the Commonwealth, while supporting shared ideals. Different strategies need to be used to foster Commonwealth citizenship ideas depending on the circumstances and background against which inter- and transnational education is delivered.



## Chapter 4: Ethnicity, caste, gender and citizenship

### *Transnational mobilisation on caste-based discrimination in the Commonwealth (Speaker: Corinne Lennox, Institute of Commonwealth Studies)*

Minority groups excluded from national participation often appeal to international fora to bring attention to their concerns. More than 260 million citizens of Commonwealth states are subject to caste-based discrimination and a range of related human rights violations, including exploitation and violence. They live in India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Kenya, and Rwanda, as well as in diaspora communities in the UK, Canada and elsewhere.

Caste-based systems divide communities into rigid social groups, determined by birth and occupation, and place restrictions on, for example, intermarriage and social relationships. Low-caste groups are typically viewed as 'impure' peoples and are often relegated to 'polluting' occupations. In the Hindu caste system, for example, Dalits — the so-called 'Untouchables' — are the lowest ranking group, and are considered to be outside of and below the caste hierarchy. Low-caste groups have in common lower levels of human development and social segregation and even the violence that is targeted against them.

India, home to half the Commonwealth's population, has had a caste system for over 3,000 years. In India, some Dalits have achieved high political positions, but for the most part these individuals have so far failed to implement fully equality legislation and to raise the standard of living and dignity for other Dalits.

The International Dalit Solidarity Network (IDSN) works on a global level for the elimination of caste discrimination and similar forms of discrimination based on work and descent. Members of the network include national

advocacy platforms in caste-affected countries, Dalit solidarity networks throughout Europe, international associates and research associates.

Other international institutions looking at the issue of Dalits, include the UN Sub-Commission on Human Rights, the UN Independent Expert on minority issues, the 2001 World Conference Against Racism, and the UN

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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). The latter monitors standards against discrimination, receives evidence from diaspora groups and states, and asserts that the provision on 'descent' in the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination includes caste and analogous systems of discrimination.

The Commonwealth has committed itself to eliminating discrimination, notably in both of its landmark declarations: the Singapore Declaration of 1979 and the Harare Declaration of 1991, but it could do more.

The Commonwealth should work with its largest member, India, to overcome the country's opposition to international cooperation for the elimination of caste-based discrimination. The Commonwealth Foundation could create spaces for Dalit groups to meet; raise awareness and support for the UN Draft Principles and Guidelines for the Effective Elimination of Discrimination Based on Work and Descent, particularly amongst member governments and civil society; and support civil society organisations working against caste-based discrimination with funding and capacity-building.

***Rum, curry and cricket — multiculturalism and multi-nationalism in the Commonwealth Caribbean (Speaker: Kris Rampersad)***

Rum, curry and cricket are symbols of the multinational nature of the Commonwealth Caribbean and are all products of the process of colonialism and globalisation that developed into the Commonwealth of nations.

The process of building a sense of identity as a global citizen did not begin in the 1970s as is being touted in much international discourse; that process has been unfolding in the former colonies of the British, French and Dutch in the Caribbean since

***Commonwealth  
citizens should nurture  
transnational solidarity  
to fight justice issues***

the initial encounter between the old worlds and the new one. Research evidence from early English newspapers in Trinidad and Tobago reveals the colonies engaged in interrogating and pronouncing upon the multinational nature of their specific reality as well as the world. Kris Rampersad's book, *Finding a Place*, documented that process and provided evidence that shows, in relation to transplanted people from India to the Caribbean through British colonialism, that there was no conceptual conflict between being a citizen under foreign rule of both the new world and the old at the same time. People accepted their multinational character and were trying to find ways of having this accommodated within the political and social structures. And so, more than 200 years ago, Trinidad and Tobago became a microcosm of the process of globalisation, since the islands had already been populated by indigenous groups first from Europe, then from Africa followed by Asia (Indians, Chinese). As early as this, even before aeroplanes, mass communication and the internet, motherland and home could be several places at the same time. There was no conflict, for instance, in the idea of being simultaneously a son of India, a citizen of the Commonwealth, and a Trinidadian. The country became an incubator for diversity.

In October 2010, German chancellor Angela Merkel claimed that her country's attempts to create a multicultural society had 'utterly failed'. Since the term 'multicultural' entered the global vocabulary in the 1970s, UNESCO has introduced a number of awkward culture-based conventions to protect and preserve the 'diversity' of culture and heritage.

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

Multiculturalism is an awkward concept, and difficult to define. The idea of global citizenship is more meaningful.

Rather than leading the way, the Commonwealth's response has been largely reactive. Increasingly, citizens identify with many nationalities or different national experiences. Citizenship is changing through informal processes, including migration. The Commonwealth is ideally placed to present a borderless solution to the idea of citizenship. Drawing on their historical connections, citizens around the Commonwealth can nurture and build that reality. The Commonwealth must itself strengthen its institutions to recognise and act on that strength, rather than play at following suit to other international organisations that are functioning from theoretical as opposed to practical experience of the nature of multiculturalism and multinationalism.

The understanding that citizen power is not soft power would have to be among the most important of those changes.

## Chapter 5: Citizenship, reconciliation and the marginalised

### *Quest for citizenship — youth in post-conflict Commonwealth societies (Speaker David Mwambari, Syracuse University, NY)*

As many as 20,000 children have been abducted in the last 19 years to fight wars, 12,000 of them between 2002 and 2004. By virtue of being coerced into being political tools to create and sustain wars, these individuals are no longer treated as humans or citizens. Regarded as an enemy within the country, unwanted by any community, their basic rights are denied to them. In essence, they 'lose' their citizenship.

In a post-conflict situation, there has to be a process of transition to semi-citizenship and then full citizenship. Refugees and internally displaced

*Refugees from Democratic Republic of Congo at the border village of Busanza November 2, 2008 in Kisoro, Uganda.*



## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

peoples will initially find themselves stateless, living in a refugee camp. From there, many will enter rehabilitation centres before attempts to reintegrate them into a community where the new citizen will be accepted or rejected by the community. (In situations where women have been the targets of war, restoring the dignity of female citizens can be a crucial factor.) New citizens that are accepted into a community take part in community rituals which act as a cleansing process. Rehabilitation and reintegration are therefore key to helping those in post-conflict situations to become 'new' citizens.

With its commitment to helping the marginalised, the Commonwealth could have a role in helping these young people, who, if ignored, could become criminals and cause insecurity to other citizens. The Commonwealth is already working with young people formerly engaged in conflict, particularly in its Northern Uganda Youth Development Centre. The Centre's work on education and employment could be expanded to include education about young people's rights and responsibilities as citizens, as well as engaging them in campaigns to educate other citizens and end stigma for their children.

### *Citizens with dementia: the meaning of citizenship in the light of cognitive decline (Speaker: Ruth Bartlett, University of Bradford)*

Dementia literally means 'without mind'. Dementia is a collection of disorders, including Alzheimer's disease and affects a person's ability to think, reason, and communicate. It is incurable and is a global health problem.

***With the widespread use of the internet, people with disabilities and illnesses can be active citizens even at home***

People with a disability have received scant attention in citizenship discourse. For people with dementia, citizenship is as much about recognition as it is about access to rights. People with health problems are increasingly prepared to accept their diagnosis and use it as the basis for social action.

At the individual and family level, dementia is often feared and misunderstood. People with dementia can be marginalised and excluded, medicalised and mistreated. But, there is a rise in dementia activism. People with dementia have been protesting on the streets, speaking out publicly and creating networks on the internet to end dementia discrimination. Indeed, with the widespread use of the internet, people with disabilities and illnesses can be active citizens even at home.

In a study of dementia activism, the following questions were asked:

- What drives people with dementia to take social action?
- What tactics do people with dementia use?
- What impact does activism have on the person?

Participants were asked to keep a photo diary or an audio or written diary. Their inventory included: 1110 photographs (994 taken by participants, 116 by the research team); approximately ten hours of naturalistic video; and several written accounts. They said:

*Positivity is my greatest weapon* (charity ambassador, female).

*I can go straight to the top and give them a blasting* (member of self-help community group, male).

*Dementia is my flak jacket. We have to look into our arsenal and pick out the best weapons we can ... the rest of the world think we (the group) are rocket propelled* (Edward, who has a military background and frequently uses military metaphors).

The participants also disclosed that they use their identity as a person with dementia strategically — not always revealing their disability:

*When you tell [students] you've got dementia they nearly fall off the chair and they can't believe you can still talk.*

*I tend to use my own condition to bring people to their senses ... I won't tell them I've got a diagnosis, I'll tell them about an anonymous person and I'll list all the conditions that this person has had. And then I'll just hit them between the eyes and say, well I'm actually talking about myself. To shock them into paying more*

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

*attention to what I really want to say, which is about dementia*  
(charity ambassador, male).

It is clear that activists with dementia are fighting back. Defying cultural stereotypes is a defining feature of citizenship for people with dementia. The work that they are doing is transformative both for them and for civil society more broadly by breaking down social divisions based on disability.



## Chapter 6: Citizenship, the environment and the economy

*The '4P' approach: Public, Private, People Partnerships (Speaker: Dr Usha Jumani, management consultant, India)*

There are three institutional anchors in society — the state, the private sector and civil society. In each sphere, people are seen as citizens, consumers and communities respectively.

Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs or 3P approach) are a response to state and market failure and change the role of the state from 'provider' to facilitator and regulator. These PPPs have worked well in some infrastructure sectors like roads and ports, but their institutional architecture views people as consumers/clients/users to address citizenship entitlement problems and issues.

The Public-Private-People-Partnership (PPPP) or the '4P approach' of involving people is an improvement because its institutional architecture treats them as members of communities (not just consumers); it gives people a direct say in the decisions affecting them; and it enables them to become active stakeholders as owners and managers, as well as consumers/clients/users. The fundamental difference between '3P' and '4P' is that in the former, the private partner is the doer with help from civil society, whereas in the latter, the doer is the community with help from civil society and the private partner.

However, whilst state success/failure, and market success/failure are well understood, the dynamics and reasons for people's successes and failures are not yet understood in detail. Notwithstanding this, the involvement of people and communities provides more scope for scrutinising decisions and for exercising checks and balances to ensure that decisions contribute

to realising the rights and vision of communities. The framework of analysis, therefore, has to move from a two-dimensional one of state and market success/failure to a three-dimensional one of state, market and people success/failure.

Whilst communities and people's organisations will have local knowledge, they don't always have the skills to engage with public and private partners and their processes. Poor people and their organisations should not just be put in a circle amongst giants and be expected to engage them effectively. Governments and the private sector should follow the process of 'trust, train, transfer' when community groups are expected to be involved in the delivery of projects or services. That is, communities and people's organisations should be trusted to deliver the service; they should be trained in how to deliver them; and then responsibility should be transferred.

The challenge of development then is to strengthen the people's organisations, and to accept them as rightful partners of the state to address citizen entitlement issues. The word '**EMPOWER**' can become an acronym for '**E**nable and **M**ainstream **P**eople's **O**rganisations for **W**ealth, **E**quality and **R**epresentation'.

### *Citizenship, the environment and the economy (Speaker: Steve Bass, International Institute for Environment and Development)*

Rapidly growing economic activity is breaching ecological limits and poor people are suffering most. Adopted by world leaders in the year 2000 and set to be achieved by 2015, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) provide concrete, numerical benchmarks for tackling extreme poverty in its many dimensions. However, the environmental component of each Millennium Development Goal (MDG) is insecure.

Governments fight hard for rights to use forests and seas but don't fight hard to tackle climate change. They often usurp the rights of local and indigenous people whilst only fighting limply to protect nature and climate. Corporations exert a

***The environmental component of each Millennium Development Goal (MDG) is insecure***

‘footprint’ on nature and a ‘brainprint’ on people: ‘we are not born as consumers and employees, but that is what most of us become.’ (Professor P. Victor).

However, environmental experts see opportunities in the current economic crises to establish new economic models. The ‘green economy’ model could be the answer to many problems. A green economy is a fair and resilient one, which provides a better quality of life for all, achieved within the ecological limits of one planet.

Yet, the ‘Green Economy’ concept runs the risk of being a northern one only. There is also a danger of governments adopting green conditionality and protectionism; where corporations create ‘corporate greenwash’ where they encourage people to ‘consume more green stuff’; and where citizens become passive consumers of green products and green politics.

Citizens already play a central role in moving towards a Green Economy model, and their actions already add up to more than what governments are doing. Many are taking direct action, by establishing ‘forest communities’ and ‘green transition towns’. People are recycling and embracing low-cost transport solutions. They are learning the skills to change local authorities, and launch digital anti-brand campaigns.

Citizens in a green economy require:

- **Rights and voice:** people and countries to have equal global ‘eco-space’
- **Access:** to environmental information, decision-making, and justice
- **Choice:** available green options to meet needs and wants
- **Subsidies:** shifting from ‘bads’ (fossil fuels) to environmental and social goods
- **New finance mechanisms:** social stock exchanges, very long-term green bonds, Tobin tax
- **Means to hold governments and corporations accountable:** wellbeing measures (not GDP) and integrated accounts (translate environmental and social benefits into monetary accounts)

Citizenship education programmes should seek to provide citizens with the skills and knowledge to campaign for green economies.



## Chapter 7: Science, technology and citizenship

### *Technology and the nature of active citizenship (Speaker: Sir Roland Jackson, chief executive of the British Science Association)*

Technology has changed the nature of active citizenship. In the past, information technology was used for automating the internal workings of government by processing data. Today, information communications technologies (ICTs) have revolutionised the external workings of government. Research shows that access to advanced ICT is a key factor in the economic and social development of Sub-Saharan Africa and has facilitated the transfer of ideas from the west. Governments therefore have high expectations of ICT:

Communications technology has fundamentally changed the way people live, work, and interact socially, and we in Rwanda have no intention of being left behind or standing still as the rest of the globe moves forward at an ever increasing pace (President Paul Kagame in Williams 2010: 1).

Despite this determination, citizens' access to broadband internet has remained low. In fact, there is a deepening digital divide as the lack of skills and literacy prevents universal access. Also, these technologies are not universally available, so the large proportion of global citizens that live in rural areas are normally the ones to miss out. Additionally, developing countries lack ICT skills in the labour market, making the cost of using ICT very high. Notwithstanding these challenges, ICT is still being used to improve processes and connect citizens.

There are three models of interaction for which ICT can be used: managerial, consultative, and participatory. The managerial model is premised on one-way communication and is about the 'efficient' delivery of government/state information to citizens and other groups of 'users'.

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

The consultative model is about the use of ICT to conduct consultative processes. But this is still, essentially, a one-way process. The participatory model however is very different. Here, civil society exists away from the state. The internet is a hub of voluntary associations and spontaneous interactions and just having access is enough to encourage wider political participation.

### ***Botswana: a case study (Speaker: Molefe Phirinyane, Botswana Institute for Development Policy Analysis)***

Botswana is a good case study because it is an 'advanced reformer' in terms of embracing ICT, having rolled out ICTs to its entire public sector. It is also a middle income country, has a stable democracy and does not have a structural adjustment programme.



A recent survey to assess the extent to which ICTs were being used in citizen participation, asked two questions:

- 1) What strategies are being adopted to stimulate access to communication technology (especially broadband internet)?
- 2) Why has citizens' access to broadband internet remained low?

With regard to access to broadband and participation, the survey respondents noted the following:

- An exodus of trained experts to private sector
- Limited bandwidth as broadband is shared with Zambia
- The high cost of broadband internet (Botsnet)
- People prefer DSTV and cellular phones to internet access
- With only a small market, a large country makes service expensive

It is clear that, to date, Botswana has applied the managerial approach to ICTs. The approach is non-participatory and communication is one way. Centralisation and a lack of capacity hamper innovation.

Moving forward, traditional and non-expensive participatory methods should be strengthened. Governments must create incentives for online service transactions (e.g. discounts on online service levy payments, downloading of application forms) and civil society organisations must be strengthened to train citizens on using ICTs. Meanwhile, developed countries should put pressure on multinationals to lower marine cable connection costs and should create incentives for success — rewarding good performers.

***Science, technology and policy making (Speaker: Kirsty Newman, International Network for the Availability of Scientific Publications – INASP)***

Sometimes, people and evidence disagree. For example, in a series of tests on people's attitudes to medicine, participants were shown a tablet and a syringe and asked which one they thought would make them better. The respondents overwhelmingly said that the injection would, without any evidence with which to make an informed, rational decision.

***A pre-requisite for public participation in science is education***

Evidence-based research is of central importance to science and science-related policy-making. The role of scientists and social scientists is to give information to policy makers. When evidence suggests that people are not rational, the relationship between citizens and their participation in the policy-making process is challenged.

Evidence informs decisions, but it may not be the sole basis for them. Citizens may not agree with the evidence, and this is a very serious point in the context of major public health issues, such as the prevention and treatment of malaria and HIV/AIDs.

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

All aspects of science should be open and, where possible, people should be encouraged to be involved, for example, by tracking temperatures as part of a research programme on climate change. However, a pre-requisite for public participation in science is education. So, whilst science must be open to challenge, these challenges must in turn be properly informed.

Looking ahead to the future of public participation in scientific policy making, people interested in citizenship will need to grapple with a number of new questions, such as are there any core value statements which inform how to engage people? And, who owns technology developments?



## Chapter 8: Young Commonwealth citizens (*Speaker: Andrew Robertson for Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council – CYEC*)

Does the ‘young Commonwealth’ demonstrate a level of consensus that is lower, higher, or equal to the level of consensus demonstrated by the official Commonwealth? How far even are ‘the young Commonwealth’ and the official Commonwealth distinct from each other? In truth, it is hard to say. Commonwealth youth representatives consistently come out in favour of greater environmental protection and human rights. Whether or not they see homosexuality as a crime, they are at least willing to discuss it, especially in mixed fora together with young members of Commonwealth Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). Privately, some young citizens might accept poverty as the price of growth, or torture as the ‘price of security’, but a Commonwealth youth meeting is unlikely to do so. Equally, it will tend to refrain from criticising any government or head of state for such views (even if encouraged to by a non-youth figure). A middle ground is therefore the ‘steady state’. The Commonwealth Secretariat and its Youth Affairs function (including the Commonwealth Youth Programme [CYP]; [www.thecommonwealth.org/subhomepage/152816/](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/subhomepage/152816/)) is supported by National Youth Councils and, drawn from them, a body which was until recently called the Commonwealth Youth Caucus ([www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/152835/youth\\_caucus/](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/152835/youth_caucus/)). So, too, is the biennial Commonwealth Youth Forum (now jointly organised by the Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the host country; [www.cyec.org.uk/young-commonwealth/commonwealth-youth-forum/commonwealth-youth-forum-2011](http://www.cyec.org.uk/young-commonwealth/commonwealth-youth-forum/commonwealth-youth-forum-2011)). However, the Commonwealth’s youth ‘representatives’ are not representative in either a demographic or electoral sense. Typically, they are selected from the global middle class and are well-educated, often privately or in elite schools which have given them a certain perspective. Whether elected by their peers at sub-national, regional and/or Pan-Commonwealth level, entry to Commonwealth circles

as a country representative is in the gift of national governments.

As such there is confusion as to whether youth leaders are the spokespeople of civil society or government; to whom they are accountable; and how far they can credibly speak on behalf of their generation (and the marginalised in particular).

***It is not clear who benefits from 'youth leaders' that are hand-picked by governments***

Indeed, it is not clear who benefits from 'youth leaders' that are hand-picked and inculcated into the 'steady state' mentioned above. It remains to be seen whether reform of Commonwealth youth structures departs from this organising principle and harmonises with core Commonwealth concerns around democracy and pro-poor development.

Most young people are not interested in citizenship — they are interested in justice. Citizenship is a 'way in' to these more substantive concerns. Different stakeholders are divided on what the task is, but one thing is clear: compromising too far on fundamental values trains young leaders merely to reproduce the world and not to improve it.

## Chapter 9: The significance of citizenship in the contemporary Commonwealth (Speaker: Mark Collins, Commonwealth Foundation)

*The Commonwealth comes alive and visible by the efforts of thousands of individuals who, through their knowledge and expertise, help each other to grow. These networks and partnerships contribute to a global dialogue in which citizens from every part of the Commonwealth benefit from each other's knowledge and experience of the world (Rt. Hon. Don McKinnon, former Commonwealth Secretary-General).*

*The Commonwealth is very much defined by personal experiences. For the vast majority of people, it isn't about good offices or good governance workshops; it's about the fact that they got a scholarship, won an essay prize, (or) went to a Commonwealth country for their gap year because they spoke English there. This is the 'invisible glue' of the Commonwealth that people talk about (A Round Table scholar from Canada).*

We need to create a modern social contract for the Commonwealth that reflects the will and needs of Commonwealth people today and we need to empower citizens of the Commonwealth to make sure it is implemented.

The Commonwealth's reputation and standing is currently low. In part this is because the Commonwealth has been slow to recognise the fundamental and fast-growing importance of citizen engagement: to listen to what the people want

***We must get to grips with the idea that values and principles are transnational***

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

and need. This fundamental democratic deficit within the Commonwealth needs to be corrected.

We must get to grips with the idea that values and principles are transnational, that many of the great concerns of the day are much more than relations between one country and its immediate neighbour and that international forms of governance (and therefore of citizenship) are essential.

Citizens clearly have transnational responsibilities and citizenship itself must have an international dimension. We need to understand and explain what responsibilities and accountabilities we have as global citizens. We also need international institutions to be responsive to calls from internationally engaged citizens for new and emerging forms of governance and to take bold and courageous leadership in tackling global injustice.

Today humanity as a whole is living well beyond the planet's means and this is causing a wide range of economic and security problems. The natural ecological laws of sanitation and cleansing cannot keep up with the waste that we pump into the oceans and the atmosphere. The biodiversity that we depend upon for food and basic living materials is being decimated. Our

### *Open passage in pack ice*



economic systems are flawed and the road to recovery lies in a new green economic approach.

We are asking our governments to address these matters collectively and, frankly, they are not having much success. If we go on as we are, we will leave a legacy in this century of a warming climate, rising seas, water wars and forced migrations that will put development into reverse.

***Citizens clearly  
have transnational  
responsibilities***

A closely related matter is the weakness and fragility of governance of international spaces. Seventy per cent of the planet is outside sovereign boundaries, including most of our oceans and Antarctica.

The Arctic Ocean is already the subject of international dispute as the northern ice melts. Active international citizenship is essential to articulate the values and principles by which we as citizens wish to be governed in relation to such matters.

But in order to do any of this, we also need strong citizenship, good governance, democracy and rule of law within the boundaries of our sovereign states. So the Commonwealth must continue to press for human rights, freedom of expression, a free press, an end to discrimination and help for the vulnerable elements within our communities. And we must be quick and assertive in condemning fundamental breaches of the Commonwealth's values, to which the member governments have agreed. If we cannot do that, then we will be bogged down in national issues and never sort out the international ones. And we will have no chance of raising our eyes to the wider international horizons.



## Chapter 10: Recommendations

1. The Commonwealth Foundation, in partnership with other Commonwealth organisations, should embark on a major campaign to build active Commonwealth citizenship. Particular attention should be paid to countries where social capital, democracy and the rule of law need more help.
2. All Commonwealth countries should embrace the notion of active citizenship and incorporate citizenship education into the school curriculum.
3. The Commonwealth People's Forum should call on Commonwealth governments to reiterate their commitment to eliminating all forms of discrimination including that based on caste and analogous systems and on gender identity.
4. The Commonwealth People's Forum should call on Commonwealth leaders to establish a high-level expert group of environmental and economic experts to design new economic models that serve and protect citizens and the environment.
5. The Commonwealth Youth Programme's focus on engaging young people in political processes should be expanded to include collective action in local communities.
6. The proposed 'Commonwealth Charter', as suggested by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, should articulate the responsibility of Commonwealth institutions to the people of the Commonwealth. It should also articulate a vision of the Commonwealth that embraces and promotes active citizenship. The process of developing the Charter should be inclusive and opportunities should be given to all citizens to contribute.
7. During the dialogue between civil society and foreign ministers at the next Commonwealth Summit, civil societies should assert their right to

## Citizenship in the Commonwealth

ask decision-makers why certain recommendations have and have not been accepted and foreign ministers should respond openly.

8. The Commonwealth Foundation should extend its grant-making to organisations that provide citizenship education programmes and/or that enable others to engage in civic processes. Commonwealth governments should also be called upon to support such initiatives.





This booklet, based on papers presented at a conference held at Cumberland Lodge, Windsor in the UK in November 2010, explores what it means to be a citizen of the Commonwealth in the 21st century. It suggests that active citizenship is key to revitalising the Commonwealth, and it makes some challenging recommendations for the future.



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