

## CHAPTER 4

# Co-operation in Youth Programmes

### International co-operation

118. Increasing possibilities were seen for international co-operation in the field of youth activities. Various existing programmes, international, bilateral and non-governmental were considered. The seminar felt that too little information was generally available about the possibilities for co-operation and the particular interests of the organisations concerned. These information gaps can be overcome at least in part by meetings at which the various interested agencies are represented. Too often, however, international conferences affect only policy-makers at the highest level and their value for those actually concerned in the operation of programmes tends to be limited. There is, therefore, a need for more international gatherings at practical working level, supplemented by a more widespread flow of practical information on new approaches to youth work to serve as a basis for working co-operation. This whole area could be usefully explored further by the Commonwealth Secretariat.

119. It is important also to realise that the countries of the Caribbean region can co-operate to their own advantage in the field of youth as well as in other fields. Already within the region there are reserves of expertise which might profitably be shared. The process has already begun of transferring suitably adapted approaches within the region, the obvious example being the spread of the residential youth camp from its country of origin, Jamaica. A parallel activity is the exchange of specialist personnel on short and medium term missions.

120. A common shortcoming observed throughout the region is the lack of programmes and strategies designed to reach the mass of young people, as opposed to highly selective programmes. The growing urgency of the youth situation underlines the need for ideas and activities related to local communities in local situations. Effective co-operation at a regional level depends upon the solution of the problem of excessive selectivity in the existing provision for youth. The immediate problem is, therefore, to consider how expertise and resources available in the region might be used in ways that are relevant to individual projects and applicable to young people in local areas. This general problem is even more exacting when international co-operation is considered. The goodwill of the various interested agencies was recognised, and there has been an encouraging realisation in recent times of the need to apportion aid to the informal as well as the formal sectors of education. It is apparent, however, in the Caribbean region and elsewhere, that there are special difficulties in devising appropriate forms of aid to the out-of-school sector, including youth work, because of the need to relate programmes in this field so closely to particular local situations. The educational export business in the out-of-school sector becomes for this reason much more difficult than, for example, assistance towards university development. Nevertheless, because of this difficulty, an opportunity is presented for the promotion of new attitudes to aid based on full co-operation between donor and recipient with the aim of identifying the best form of assistance for each specific situation. External assistance to local planning, in the form of financial assistance, equipment and professional expertise, can be of much value provided that the relationship described above is established.

### Overseas volunteers

121. Most of the problems of international co-operation in the youth field can be identified from an examination of the role and contribution of overseas volunteers, many of whom have played a valuable part in the development of existing schemes. It was important to consider carefully the posts in which overseas volunteers have been most useful and equally to consider less successful projects in order to determine how best to improve the recruitment and use of these young people.

122. Certain indications are already available of how volunteers can be used more effectively. Firstly, in terms of academic qualifications, certain established programmes tend to place too much emphasis on supplying volunteers who have undergone higher education or completed an advanced training. Such people are not always appropriate to the working needs of vocational training programmes for youngsters in developing countries where a volunteer with a more practical bent and with working experience might be more valuable. Conversely, some countries expect too much of volunteers. Frequently they are regarded as fully qualified personnel and given responsibilities beyond their experience and capabilities. On occasions they may rise to the situation and perform the duties required. If they do not, it should not be interpreted as a fault of the volunteer or a weakness in a particular programme. A further common weakness was lack of preparation of the volunteer both beforehand in his own country and after arrival at his destination. Greater attention should be given to increasing volunteers' understanding of the country to which they are posted. For its part the receiving agency should recognise that the volunteer is often inexperienced and must be educated in the ways of the country to which he is allocated.

123. Requests for volunteers should be framed in clear and precise terms and full job descriptions should be provided, thus avoiding the situation whereby a volunteer may find himself in a different post from that which he had envisaged.

124. Sending agencies should endeavour to recruit more volunteers with technical skills and aptitudes and some experience of management. These might be able to help young people more effectively especially in preparing for employment, the area of highest priority. It might also be possible to involve more experienced older persons in this particular problem. Doubts were raised about the value of short-term volunteer service. A minimum period of two years was regarded as essential.

#### A Commonwealth Caribbean Volunteer Service

125. There is a perceptible trend towards volunteering in the region. In Guyana and Dominica volunteers from other territories are already doing useful work. Within individual

countries also, community-related volunteer activities are beginning to emerge, although often without formal structures for the recruitment, despatch and support of volunteers. If the trend towards volunteering is to be reinforced, a formal organisation is needed. There are, however, obvious difficulties which would delay the emergence of such an organisation. These are, first, finance, and, secondly, questions relating to the administration, its location, and whether it should be independent or attached to some regional organisation such as the Commonwealth Caribbean Secretariat or the University.

126. The financial problem can be tackled through the provision within the region of a common pool of finance for the support of a regional programme. Some funds might be sought from the Regional Development Bank. Co-operation from business houses, industrial firms, service clubs and voluntary organisations should also be encouraged.

#### Commonwealth co-operation

127. Most suggestions applying to international co-operation generally could be applied also to co-operation within the Commonwealth. The advantages of a common language and long-established personal and operational associations, should mean that Commonwealth activities will prove both relevant and valuable, attuned to local needs and sympathetic to local sentiments.

128. The need was frequently expressed for an effective exchange of information about the development of youth programmes throughout the world and in particular about new ideas and projects in youth activities related to development. The Commonwealth Secretariat might help to satisfy this need. First, a periodical publication might be produced which would focus on Commonwealth youth and in particular document new approaches to youth work and special achievements. A more detailed clearing-house service might be provided for both governmental and non-governmental agencies. The possibility might be explored of the use of audio-visual media, particularly film, radio and television, to direct attention to the needs of youth in the Commonwealth and the scope for co-operative effort in supporting schemes designed to satisfy these needs.

129. The Commonwealth Secretariat might also make a constructive contribution in technical assistance. In areas such as programme planning, the preparation of project submissions, and evaluation there are often short-term technical assistance needs which call for a speedy response. The Commonwealth Secretariat should be equipped with the resources to provide appropriate services.

130. Information about low-cost tools and equipment is also essential. Some published material is already available from sources in the United States and Britain. Within the Commonwealth there are major developments in this field, particularly in the developing countries, and information about these could usefully be distributed much more widely. Examples include developments in leather work and textile work at village level in India; low-cost windmills in Australia; ceramics manufacture in Guyana and Jamaica. The Commonwealth Secretariat could provide a valuable service by collecting information on this type of development and communicating it to those endeavouring to promote labour intensive youth employment and training schemes.

131. The exchange of volunteers has already developed on a large scale within the Commonwealth. The contribution of programmes such as CUSO, AVA, IVS and VSO was reviewed and commended. The pattern of volunteering within the Commonwealth, however, consists largely of bilateral arrangements for sending young people from the richer to the less rich member countries. This neglects the fact that in some developing countries there are young men and women who might become involved in voluntary service. They could often offer skills more appropriate to the needs of other developing countries than those offered by volunteers from more developed countries. An example of this would be experienced leather and textile workers from India.

132. In view of this, the possibility of the introduction of a Commonwealth Volunteer Scheme might be further examined. Such a scheme would break away from the traditional patterns of volunteer sending and give real substance to the concept of the Commonwealth as a polycentric association of nations.

133. Finally, following the successful organisation of regional seminars on youth problems and youth training in both the Commonwealth countries of Africa and those of the Caribbean,

there is already abundant evidence of the high priority that member Governments are giving to the development of programmes for young people, particularly young people out of school and often out of employment.

134. In view of this increasingly urgent priority, Commonwealth countries should come together at Ministerial level in the near future to discuss how they might best co-operate in the youth field and to consider the development of a Commonwealth Youth Programme.