

CYPAN PROGRESS REPORT



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Young people around the Commonwealth are continuing to have a positive influence and change in the direction of a more sustainable, just, equitable, and peaceful society, despite the repercussions of the COVID pandemic. In the challenging year of 2021, we have nonetheless witnessed great progress in the meaningful engagement of young people in decision-making, policy formulation, and all facets of peacebuilding as a result of their steadfast tenacity and advocacy. As a consequence, we're becoming more widely recognized as engaged global citizens and champions for human rights, peace and security, humanitarian aid, and long-term development.

Progress despite lost access to community networks

Despite ongoing failures and obstacles, it remains vital that we recognize the relentless lobbying led by youth, civil society, and other stakeholders for more inclusive decision-making spaces in which young people engage and contribute as equal partners. While acknowledging the achievements appreciated under the umbrella of Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network (CYPAN), the reality of young people's persecution, discrimination, and human rights abuses, which the COVID-19 epidemic has aggravated, must be addressed in the upcoming endeavors.

Christine Odera
Global Coordinator



FOREWORD

We live in a world where power is at the center of the debate and peace is pushed to the sidelines. The Covid-19 pandemic ravages millions of lives, although humanity has everything it needs to conquer the cosmos. To attain a peaceful world, there are still many things that need to be done. Valid goodwill isn't always there, despite this fact.

During the Covid-19, many young people were urged to join the front lines since the powerful lacked purpose. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to work with so many of these young people, who are the actual peacemakers our world so needs right now.

2021 was a pivotal moment for CYPAN. Executives worked tirelessly to consolidate all the organization's previous assets and rebrand them after years of working on CYPAN for years.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the CYPAN organization and its members have achieved several notable accomplishments. CYPAN's database of members has been revamped, and the organization's network has grown to 31 countries and 1200 participants. CYPAN will also develop collaborations with more than 15 other groups in 2021 to further its peacebuilding work.

Sincerely, from the membership and partnership committee, I thank every one of the active CYPAN members. Despite their limited resources and a myriad of challenges caused by the Covid-19 epidemic, they are working to bring peace to their communities.

I hope that the efforts of all CYPAN members, including its flag-bearer, will lead to a peaceful and connected Commonwealth of Nations in the long run.



Tushar Kanti Baidya
Chair
Membership & Partnership Committee
Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network

To attain a peaceful world, there are still many things that need to be done.

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CYPAN POSITIONING FOR THE YEAR 2021

The 2021 Agenda



Strengthening Protection & Safeguarding of Youth Across the Commonwealth

- Our aim for the year was to have concrete guidance, strategies, and procedures designed to safeguard young people's acts by expanding UNSCR2250 domestication.
- Because many young people actively support peace through lobbying, nonviolent protests, policy advocacy, community development, and political engagement, this has been a key issue. However, they are never safeguarded.

Resourcing Youth Leadership Within the Commonwealth

- Increasing access to financial resources for young people to assist their Youth Peace and Security activities.
- This was to be accomplished by establishing a framework and process for funding Youth Peace and Security activities throughout the Commonwealth.

Strengthening CYPAN Membership & Support Nationally

- Increase national-level alliances and young participation in a larger youth, peace, and prosperity agenda at the national level.
- This was to be accomplished by engaging with other Commonwealth Youth Networks to create synergy and mutual support.

Strengthening Protection & Safeguarding of Youth across the Commonwealth

MEASURING PROGRESS

We commenced the year with the development of a concept note on the effects of Covid 19 on Youth Peace and Security in the Commonwealth, alongside the action plan for 2021. We recorded an upsurge of activities in the month of May, even with COVID 19 pandemic still waging war. In view of this, almost all CYPAN activities have remained online with little to no physical engagements.

St. Vincent and Grenadines on the other hand has had to fight COVID as well as survive a natural disaster and this has greatly affected its ability to organize events for its members while countries such as South Africa though enjoying some level of freedom to organize events that members can physically interact, with restrictions and adherence to all protocols. For instance, on the 9th of April 2021, the La Soufriere Volcano erupted in Saint Vincent and Grenadines (SVG) where it was reported that over 20,000 people from a population of about 110,000 in SVG were displaced. Due to the volcanic eruption and its many adverse effects on the country, CYPAN members were focused on assisting persons affected by the La Soufriere Volcano. CYPAN SVG has also been using social media, particularly Instagram, to share information to help others affected by the volcanic eruption. They have also utilized their social media profiles to actively promote events other organizations may be hosting and may be beneficial to its members and other interested persons.

In Fiji, the Young Fijian Warriors Team was initiated to help in economic recovery activities. They identified Citizen Empowerment as the key tool to help curb the spread of the virus which will transcend into business going back to a semblance of normalcy. By creating awareness and empowering Fijian Citizens, they supported the reopening of businesses in Fiji to enable low and middle-income-earning Fijians to return to work, earn, and provide food for their families. The Children's Lockdown/Containment Drawing Competition was organized frequently to keep children active at home and well informed about the virus. This has also culminated in many children joining the Young Fijian Warriors Team. In a bid to address child hunger, The Meal Bank for Fijian Children was created with a goal to raise \$4000 for 50 most vulnerable Fijian children experiencing hunger due to the second wave outbreak of the COVID virus and provide each child with one balanced nutritional meal per day for 15 working days (3 weeks). This initiative was targeted at children living in the Lami, Suva, and Nausori COVID Containment Zone. A deposit of \$5 was made into the Meal Bank for the Fijian child with the beneficiary children having access to withdraw his/her meal by answering the COVID Safety question of the day.

Strengthening Protection & Safeguarding of Youth across the Commonwealth

MEASURING PROGRESS

In India, hunger has remained the major consequence of poverty. CYPAN India in collaboration with “We for the Cause” conducted multiple food distribution drives every Sunday starting from May 2, 2021. The main objective of these drives was to support the people whose economical life got affected due to COVID-19.

In the Gambia, CYPAN members attended voter registration training organized by the Civil Society Coalition on Elections through the West African Peacebuilding Network (WANEP) facilitated by the International Republican Institute (IRI). The training was tailored to equip participants on voter registration, observation, data collection, and data analysis on electoral processes, reporting critical incidents in the form of impromptu activities that possess the tendency of frustrating the entire electoral process. This trained team is to be deployed to the field to observe the forthcoming Presidential elections in December 2021.

Pakistan on the other hand continues to fight for peace, COVID reduction, terrorist attacks, and border insecurity. Red alerts have been implemented after a bomb blast incident and border issues to limit the further possibility of blast threats. Currently, due to the unstable climate in Pakistan, the country's CYPAN coordinator has been relying on word of mouth to engage people on CYPAN, its mission, and vision, and why young people and other social activists must partner to assist in peace promotion.

We have made great strides to ensure the safety of youths across the Commonwealth in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and remain hopeful that the foundations set within this year shall inform the forward-moving strategies on the same agenda.



MEASURING PROGRESS

Strengthening CYPAN Membership & Support Nationally



With limitations on physical convening, we have made much-needed transitions of CYPAN's communication structures throughout the year, especially on social media platforms, websites, and emails in liaison with the Secretariat. We began the year with an obvious need to invigorate the country and regional structures and make sure that countries are able to form stronger national coalitions that inform the region.

We commenced by putting out a membership drive for more youth to join and share their expertise and solidarity in the Youth peace and security agenda. This was arrived at as most members had either dropped out along the way with no contact. The membership drive took us so much time because we wanted to finally get it right and to also ensure that members get to receive communication and well coordination for a stronger national coalition that will remain stronger, even with future changes in leadership, learning from the challenges of the past CYPAN experiences with membership and lack of transitional structures and guidelines and for ownership by the members and their individual organizations. Some countries had an overwhelming number of members however only 1-2% of them are active.

During the year, we partnered with the UN Peacekeeping, running social media campaigns to celebrate the efforts of young peacekeepers in Africa and also let more young people across the continent know about the role of peacekeepers and how they can support the work of young peacekeepers across Africa. The Nigerian team actively participated in this campaign and completed the first phase which was the creation and posting of country videos. The International Peacekeeping Day Project continues to create awareness about CYPAN and the work of young peacekeepers and peacebuilders in Nigeria and across Africa while also educating young people on the role they can play to contribute to building peace in the society to support Peacekeeping missions. CYPAN Botswana also participated in activities towards the United Nations Peacekeeping celebrations. They were able to produce and share videos on Youth, Peace, and Security as well as take part in posting quotes on Peacekeeping.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Strengthening CYPAN Membership & Support Nationally



In the month of May, CYPAN Gambia commemorated the annual United Nations International keeping day with a peace video challenge by which members expressed their divergent views of what peace means to them individually. CYPAN Ghana in partnership with candle night global in a partnership held a round table With the Board on the topic of Addressing Barriers to Mental Health Care. Key issues addressed included the concept of mental illness, its causes, disorders among the youth, depression, and barriers to mental health care. Stigma was identified as one of the main reasons why many do not seek or visit mental health facilities, as well as limited accessibilities to mental health facilities and the cost of mental health services. It was also realized that depression is the leading cause of suicide cases recorded in the country and the world at large and some members shared their experience and journey to recovery. CYPAN Gambia also continues to do a remarkable job in helping to eradicate electoral violence to promote good governance and stable democracy.

We also participated in the celebration of Pride Month under the theme ***“Decolonizing LGBTQ+ Existence through Resilience and Human Rights”*** which was widely shared on our social media platforms.

CYPAN Cameroon, with the support of a Kenya-based organization, also managed to secure US\$20,000 funds from Save the Children International. This went into efforts of training for members with peer-to-peer learning sessions for Country Coordinators to ensure its members are impacted through capacity building on different issues and topics.

CYPAN Uganda partnered with INUA to host a webinar on communication skills under the theme; ‘How to Effectively Communicate Your Way to Visibility’. Another webinar was hosted in partnership with the Centre for Constitutional Governance on Activism and the Law.

The various CYPAN countries went all out on September 21st in celebrating this year’s International Peace Day. From Gambia’s webinar to Uganda’s social media peace campaign, September was a fruitful month despite a few challenges. With increased access to vaccines, African networks are especially looking forward to fewer restrictions on social gatherings. CYPAN Gambia to celebrate International Peace Day held a 2-hour webinar with experts on youth peace and security as guest speakers. The speakers spoke on themes including criminal justice, the role of women in peacebuilding, and the role of parliament in ensuring sustainable peace and security, resulting in an increased understanding of the role of youth in entrenching sustainable peace. CYPAN- Nigeria in conjunction with the Centre for Peace Advocacy and Sustainable Development (CEPASD) hosted a global virtual event in commemoration of International Peace Day 2021.

The drive to revive and increase CYPAN’s membership in 2021 has been a great success, working on the sidelines of the COVID-19 restrictions by leveraging the strengths of social media convening.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Resourcing Youth Leadership within the Commonwealth

During the year, there have been several transitions of leadership and planning meetings in efforts to understand how best to engage, where to focus our energy, mapping out stakeholders, and operationalization especially on the new structure of leadership and recruitment of new members and leadership. We realized that in most countries where CYPAN draws its memberships, there were no transition procedures for the National Coordinators who finished their term, hence the need for induction of many new coordinators who didn't really understand their Terms of reference. We opted to have a more transparent and inclusive selection process of people who are willing to work and take CYPAN to the next level.

On confirming the County Coordinators and sharing the country membership databases, we realized that more members needed to be recruited from other regions within a country and the Country Coordinators have been very instrumental in the recruitment process.

The first quarter was quite challenging, however, we finally figured out country teams and are continually seeing members more vibrant and willing to engage. On managing expectations, the expectation of getting a stipend for being a member and meeting high-profile Commonwealth officials still remained. Financial support/structure was also a consistent ask from the Country Coordinators and members, with most still struggling with the notion of not having country Bank accounts. The prior coordinators also sought to be recognized for the work they did while they were coordinators, but it has been hard to track their work and how long they have served.

The executive team was able to meet up with the United Nations Development Program officials from the New York and Africa office to discuss ways to partner on Knowledge Management training of the members, especially from East Africa. In a bid to foster collaboration with other peace-building civil society organizations and youth groups, CYPAN Gambia the months of May and June formally wrote to 8 relevant institutions requesting meetings, of which 6 subsequently granted the request for meetings via emails and phone calls. The aim of these scheduled meetings was to identify potential areas for partnership and in the areas of advocacy in tandem with their work plan to attain the peace and security agenda of young people.

MEASURING PROGRESS

Resourcing Youth Leadership within the Commonwealth

We also held a session for the CYPAN Country Coordinators in October on the subject of the Commonwealth Peace Connectivity Initiative, a novel project by the Commonwealth Peace Desk. The Project seeks to create a portal that will proactively deal with issues of violence and largely promote peace amongst member states. This discussion was first amongst many phases of consultations with global partners and stakeholders. The meeting at the plenary sort to discuss ideas aimed at making the Peace Connectivity Initiative a success. Looking at innovative means to adopt, suggestions included deliberate steps by the project ambassadors and volunteers to have a target group, that is, the Youth, and focus on explaining to them the need for peace and make them agents of peace within their very own circles, and actively using social media and regular online engagements.

The use of Music, Arts, Culture, and Entertainment was also discussed at the plenary. Members were of the view that Music is a universal language and the use of it will go a long way to help with the initiative. Also, the power of Celebrities within the entertainment circle can be used due to the number of followers they have.

The success witnessed in this year on resourcing the youth leadership within the Commonwealth has been made possible by the resilient support of the youth at the grassroots who have shown much more strength and willingness to engage during these uncertain times in the backdrop of COVID-19.





WHAT'S NEXT FOR CYPAN IN 2022

Areas for Improvement

Drivers of Recovery and Resilience

- The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected youth with significant repercussions on mental health and well-being, education, employment, and entrepreneurship. **There's much more to be done to help youths across the Commonwealth with innovative and effective response and recovery solutions for maintaining resilience during the pandemic.**
- Youth in fragile and conflict-affected areas will be particularly at risk of permanently dropping out of education during the pandemic period. **Technology should continue being leveraged to make education more impactful, equitable, resilient, inclusive, and adaptable.**
- Covid-19 has also significantly impacted youth-led businesses and entrepreneurship. More than 70 percent of startups globally have had to terminate employee contracts, reduce operations and wages, or shift business goals to adapt to the pandemic. **Youths should continue being incentivized to find digital solutions, including moving marketplaces and economic activity online.**
- **Design Youth, Peace, and Security models that will be able to withstand future pandemic-related economic and societal shocks.**

2021 ACTIVITY MAPPING

	COUNTRY	COORDINATOR	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
ASIA	Bangladesh	Md. Tamzid H.T. SKIDER	☑	☑				
	Pakistan	Ali ASIF	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
	India	Jonathan S.M. BILLA		☑				
AFRICA	Botswana	Obakeng RAMASU	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
	Cameroon	Yves S. NGALEU		☑	☑		☑	☑
	The Gambia	Fanta SANNEH	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
	Ghana	Solomon BOADI	☑	☑	☑	☑		
	Kenya	Ann MWANIKI						
	Malawi	Francis V. NGALANDE		☑	☑			
	Nigeria	Victor O. CHIMEZIE	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
	Rwanda	Alice NIRERE						
	South Africa	Godfrey MAHLOKO						
	Tanzania	Badru Juma RAJABU						
	Uganda	Lucky NINSIIMA			☑	☑	☑	☑
	Zambia	Rodgers NYIRONGO						
	CARIBBEAN	Belize	Ismael NICHOLSON			☑		
Guyana		Bakedia CLARKE						
Jamaica		Cristina WILLIAMS						
Saint Lucia		Giovanni CHARLES						
St. Vincent & the Grenadines		Jeshua BARDOO	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	
Trinidad & Tobago		Sherese BAPTISTE	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	
PACIFIC Fiji	Eugene CHOW		☑	☑				
EUROPE & United Kingdom	Dunola OLADAPO		☑					



We thank our coordinators and members for the continued support and resilience in our efforts to contribute to Peace and Security across the Commonwealth.

**Commonwealth Youth Peace Ambassadors Network
(CYPAN)**

<https://www.yourcommonwealth.org/cypan/> 

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