

5th GLOBAL YOUTH WORK CONFERENCE 2025
18 November 2025
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Youth Work in a Changing World: Sustaining Local Wisdom for Global Connectivity

Conference Declaration

1. Youth work across the Commonwealth is undergoing profound transformation. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, young people must be equipped not only with global competencies but also with deep local grounding in culture, identity, and community wisdom. Across social, political, economic, and environmental dimensions, this Conference affirmed that youth work must evolve through hybrid professionalism, culturally rooted approaches, and systems that value young people as co-creators in shaping their societies. The discussions underscored that meaningful youth development requires stronger institutions, inclusive policy frameworks, sustainable financing, and the elevation of local wisdom as a foundation for global leadership.
2. Socially, youth work must strengthen identity, belonging, and credibility by and evaluation systems. Social resilience will emerge from culturally grounded curricula, relevant non- formal education and learning approaches, stronger associations, and evidence-informed practice.
3. Politically, the Conference affirmed the need to move from symbolic youth participation to genuine power-sharing. Youth political empowerment must be rooted in local wisdom, justice literacy, intergenerational trust, and the protection of civic space. Political systems must reflect the full diversity of young people and enable their leadership to flourish.
4. Economically, youth work must support entrepreneurship, cooperatives, and livelihood pathways grounded in both innovation and indigenous knowledge. TVET transformation, stronger cross-sector partnerships, and recognition of youth cooperatives are essential to building resilient youth economies and shifting from self-reliance models to shared responsibility.
5. Environmentally, youth are emerging as high-impact leaders in climate resilience and green innovation. The priority now is to close the awareness-action gap by improving infrastructure, funding pathways, and systems that support practical participation. Local wisdom, intergenerational learning, and ethical influencer engagement are critical to building climate-ready communities.

6. Legally, youth work requires strong foundations that safeguard young people, professionalise the sector, and ensure accountability. Mandatory safeguarding policies, UNCRC-aligned training, and clear compliance standards must apply to all organisations. Legal recognition of youth work should include dedicated funding mechanisms and formal registration or licensing of youth workers. Robust laws must guarantee safe environments, protect whistleblowers, and uphold rights-based practice. These systems ensure youth work operates within a trusted, regulated, and credible framework.
7. Technologically, youth work must harness digital innovation to expand access, strengthen participation, and enhance protection. Inclusive digital infrastructure, ethical AI use, and strong cybersecurity standards are essential for safe engagement. Youth workers need funding, training, and tools to adapt to emerging technologies and digital youth cultures. A Digital Technology Observatory can guide accountability, monitor risks, and inform policy. Technology must enable culturally relevant, future-ready youth work that is both innovative and safe.
8. The Conference therefore declares that youth work in a changing world must be:
 - I. Culturally grounded, honouring heritage, identity, and intergenerational knowledge.
 - II. Professionally recognised, with hybrid models enabling flexible, credible pathways.
 - III. Politically empowering, ensuring youth have real influence and protected civic spaces.
 - IV. Economically enabling, supported by strong systems, partnerships, and cooperative models.
 - V. Environmentally responsive, integrating sustainability across education, governance, and community practice.
 - VI. Legally protected, with safeguarding, regulation, and rights-based frameworks that ensure safety, accountability, and recognition for youth work as a formal profession.
 - VII. Technologically enabled, harnessing inclusive digital infrastructure, ethical AI, and innovation to expand opportunity, safety, and participation in a rapidly changing world.
9. We call on governments, youth workers, institutions, and partners to work collectively to strengthen youth work systems, uphold youth rights, invest in sustainable structures, and embed local wisdom within global connectivity frameworks.
10. The Conference reaffirms its commitment to advancing youth work as an essential pillar of social development, democratic participation, economic resilience, environmental sustainability, legal protection, and technological empowerment across the Commonwealth and the world.