



Malta Declaration on Governance for Resilience

25 November 2015

Introduction

1. This Malta Declaration on Governance for Resilience has been developed as an outcome of the Commonwealth People's Forum 2015 (CPF 2015), held from 23-26 November 2015, in Malta. CPF 2015 brought together more than 350 civil society participants. It reflects the outcome of discussions by civil society participants over three days, focused on the theme "What Makes Societies Resilient". Covering 19 sessions focused on policies, perspectives, case studies and open sessions, many new insights have emerged and previously unheard voices expressed on how resilient societies are built. Delegates have arrived at a number of achievable, practical and targeted recommendations for actions to be taken by Commonwealth Heads of Government, Commonwealth Member States, Commonwealth bodies and civil society itself.
2. The diversity of civil society organisations across the Commonwealth offers invaluable opportunities to re-think hegemonic and oppressive structures that hinder societal resilience, offering the opportunity for people across the Commonwealth to work together towards more equitable societies. Inspired by the principles of equal partnerships, intergovernmental organisations, national governments, communities, civil society and the private sector are encouraged to dialogue for policies that help communities and societies to flourish and strengthen their resilience. While acknowledging externally imposed development pathways that failed, countries need to face the economic, social, environmental, and financial threats which often exacerbate violent conflict and political unrest. Marginalised and unheard voices need to become part of the dialogue, which respects the diversity of all people in all of their diversity, for the construction of truly resilient societies that addresses problems at their root cause.
3. In the Commonwealth Large Ocean Nations, Least Developed Countries, Indigenous Peoples, Small States and Small Island Developing States are at the front line of facing climate change impacts, economic and environmental shocks and therefore need to be at the frontline of the dialogue which genuinely seeks pathways that offer the possibilities for people, communities and their cultures to flourish.

Building Resilient Societies:

4. The Commonwealth has a long history in initiating, leading and informing global analytical and policy discourse on vulnerability and resilience building. In an increasingly turbulent world, the perpetual character of crisis and vulnerability bring to sharp focus the utility of resilience as a policy response, especially in cases where mainstream notions of resilience perpetuate vulnerability.
5. Resilience as a notion should be understood as a complex, multifaceted construct which must be shaped by unheard voices and narratives, responding to all forms of vulnerability and upholding the rights of all people in all their diversity.
6. While dominant and hegemonic interpretations and narratives of resilience present it as the capacity to respond to shocks and vulnerability, a more compelling narrative is to consider "resilience as life" - an inherent capacity in all living organisms to adapt to contextual changes



without collapsing, and to advance to the next stage of life with the capacity to self-organise and repair the root-causes of vulnerability.

7. Indigenous peoples and other marginalised groups emphasise the role of culture in building resilience, the importance of intergenerational connectedness, the supremacy of collective benefit rather than individual benefit, and the need to sustain a close affinity to earth, its gifts and resources. These narratives recognise the detrimental effects of colonisation, and promote decolonisation as an integral part of building resilient societies.
8. We recognise that current governance systems perpetuate vulnerability, thus leaving many voices in the margins and unheard. We call for a new programme of Commonwealth analysis, research and inquiry to uncover, examine, celebrate and share unheard critical voices on resilience building across Commonwealth member states.
9. New approaches and new systems of governance are needed to make societies resilient. Governance systems that promote participatory, inclusive, responsive, transparent, accountable and gender sensitive governance systems support efforts to build resilient societies.

Resilience and Transformation:

10. Mainstream notions of resilience-building that are limited to strengthening the ability of individuals and societies to cope are inadequate as approaches for achieving substantive transformation, as they transfer the burden of resilience on the poor. In reality, most societal vulnerabilities arise from external factors that people have little capacity to control, including a neo-liberal economic system that reproduces these vulnerabilities. Small states are particularly vulnerable due to size, limited local markets and trade dependence, proneness to disasters and a lack of natural resources.
11. Building more resilience communities requires that communities acquire the power to withstand the challenges they face and to demand the kind of governance system that allows them to build a resilient system. Change in the current power dynamics is needed to build resilience with active, not superficial community engagement and participation in decision-making processes, where people are part of developing solutions to address fundamental problems. We call for the development of a governance matrix within the Commonwealth that will bring together social, economic and political factors that build resilience.
12. In pursuing transformation, special recognition must go to groups that have had sustained long-term exposure to vulnerability, such as women and HIV affected and infected communities, who can serve as reference points for societies seeking to become more resilient.

Measuring Progress and Development Impact:

13. Progress and development impact can be measured in different ways other than relying on GDP and growth that have been critiqued for a long time as sole measures of progress. These critiques highlight the fact that GDP grows by externalising responsibility which is problematic as it removes agency; they shift attention away from the traditional economy; and they create an extractive logic, whilst a cyclical logic in which societies do extract but give back to nature and humans is more creative and resilient.
14. Progress is increasingly measured using new measurement tools that incorporate measures of wellbeing, more strongly emphasise rights, and exclude economic growth as a criterion. New measurement tools include the Happy Planet Index, the Health per Acre approach and the Gross



National Happiness (GHN) which is a holistically human centred index with four pillars: good governance, sustainable socio-economic development, cultural preservation, and environmental conservation.

15. Several steps are needed to promote resilience building when developing new measures of progress. Education is required to build resilience, as biodiversity - and knowledge of it - is being lost through the generations. Intergenerational efforts through education are needed to preserve it. A stronger role can be played by civil society to foster the sharing of good practices; and new tools and methods are needed to improve awareness of and to promote new measurement methods and indexes.

Indigenous Wisdom: Building Resilience Through Indigenous Knowledge

16. Indigenous Peoples are survivors of historical colonisation, genocide and more recent forms of structural violence, reproduced in contemporary societies and the global political economy.
17. For Indigenous Peoples, resilience translates into the survival of cultural and linguistic identities, preservation of indigenous knowledge, and ownership of their territories and resources. The cosmology of Indigenous Peoples recognises obligations to past and future generations, as well as deep spiritual attachment to their lands, territories and resources. Indigenous Peoples celebrate economic, social, and cultural relationships based on equity and shared prosperity.
18. Indigenous Peoples reject values that promote excessive consumerism and individualistic, competitive values. Indigenous Peoples strongly resist the abuse of ecosystems, commodification of genetic resources and violence arising from forced privatisation and assimilation.
19. We call on all Commonwealth member states to:
 - a. Fully recognise Indigenous Peoples in their regions including respect for the representatives and leaders determined by the Indigenous Peoples;
 - b. Consider means for Indigenous Peoples, as First Peoples with the right of self-determination, to be appropriately represented in the Commonwealth and to participate and be integrally included in all processes in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
 - c. Harmonise national legislation with the rights of Indigenous Peoples, as established in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, by 2017;
 - d. Recognise and, in the process, safeguard intellectual property and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, enabling sui generis systems for protection if favoured by the Indigenous Peoples;
 - e. Increase opportunities for information sharing, encouraging representatives of Indigenous Peoples to share the work they are doing to adapt to and mitigate adverse effects of climate change and environmental degradation; and
 - f. Encourage parliamentarians who are members of Indigenous Peoples communities to meet together and promote information and awareness within the Commonwealth.

Building Resilience through Sustainable Energy

20. Across the Commonwealth there is a growing need to ensure sustainable access to sources and use of energy to build resilient societies particularly for the poor and people in remote areas through inclusive and participatory decision-making processes. Civil society has a central and diverse role to play in designing, developing, implementing and monitoring sustainable energy policy, including through advocacy and education.



21. Two cases studies, from Fiji and Cameroon on destruction of mangroves illustrate this; but also highlight emerging challenges in replicating and scaling up best practices when these occur. Both case studies highlight the key role of consultation, participation and local ownership in building resilience through sustainable energy. But both also illustrate challenges, including sustainability, accountability and replicability.

Planning for Resilient Urbanisation

22. Urbanisation is a leading global trend with long term impacts. We welcome SDG 11 which calls for cities and human settlements which are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable; and which call for processes that enhance people's participation. Many Commonwealth cities are home to extreme deprivation and environmental degradation. Globally one billion people live in slums, with nearly 70 percent of the world's capital cities located near water. This together with climate change and risks posed by flooding represents an enormous and growing risk for cities and urban development. Population growth rates, aging population, growing urban unemployment, changes in patterns of human settlements, food security and transport and access to infrastructure are all significant issues of relevance in planning for resilient urbanisation.
23. Achieving resilient urbanisation and planning for sustainable human settlements requires inclusive people's participation. An ultimate goal in planning for resilient urbanisation is to work with governments and communities to ensure informed decisions are made in a democratic process. Resilient urban planning necessitates working across a range of technical professions; helping governments look at and understand risk; and helping communities by understanding their needs during planning.
24. Planning for resilience is not a neutral technocratic process, but an inclusive one, bringing all stakeholders to the table. New relationship structures need to be built to allow for partnerships between Local Government, women, youth, communities, and the private sector. Also, national/local government coordination needs to be strengthened. Consensus and buy-in can help Local Governments to leverage national government and private funding for continued services and to avoid misappropriation of public spaces and resources. Good practices such as the example of the floating school platform project in Nigeria illustrates the opportunities to plan for resilient urbanisation, highlighting innovation, and the use of adaptive technology.

Climate Resilience in Small States

25. Climate change is the most defining challenge to building resilient societies in small states which are acutely vulnerable despite contributing minimally to change. They have high levels of exposure to natural disasters and reliance on natural resources.
26. The ability to build resilience and achieve transformation will hinge significantly on a successful outcome at the forthcoming UNFCCC meeting (COP21). Current economic models do not permit a realistic shift towards a low carbon economy. This is especially due to the lack of a proper and functioning polluter pays principle. However most small states still heavily rely on fossil fuels for their production and consumption patterns, with active subsidies in place that signal no imminent intentions of reducing this dependency.
27. Climate change is blocking many pathways to resilience, including bringing uncertainty to water access and increased food insecurity. In turn this fuels regional conflicts, further plunging affected communities into vulnerability. Furthermore, affected communities are largely excluded from policy processes and negotiations that tend to be elitist.



28. Women and young people are profoundly affected by climate change and face specific vulnerabilities. Therefore it is important to increase awareness at the local level about the harmful impacts of climate change. At the same time climate change can also represent an opportunity to transform production and consumption systems, where for instance the shift towards low carbon economies can offer more sustainable employment opportunities for youth.
29. Many actions can be taken to build resilience to climate change, including investing more in renewable energies, reducing subsidies on fossil fuels, creating funds to match those environmentally harmful subsidies to be used for sustainable and greener employment opportunities for young people.

LGBTI and Resilient Societies: Resilience is Security for all People in all of their Diversity

30. Criminalisation, violence, discrimination and exclusion faced by LGBTI people hinders the resilience of societies. Inclusive societies are stronger, more innovative and therefore more resilient. Commonwealth civil society must forge stronger links across sectoral interests - LGBTI, union, disability, women and faith movements, indigenous people and ageing populations. People in all of their diversity embody multiple identities, face intersecting oppressions and suffer from the same structural and institutional threats to civil society space.
31. A number of Commonwealth governments require encouragement to engage with LGBTI civil societies in their own countries. There is a role in sharing good national policy to inform inter-governmental and cross-governmental dialogue to protect the lives of people who experience violence on the grounds of their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression.
32. The Commonwealth has a role in assisting the transition of knowledge from national to the intergovernmental and between states, and to facilitate a dialogue to safeguard lives which respects the cross cutting nature of LGBTI issues as they intersect with gender, race, faith, ethnicity, disability, and age.
33. We call on Commonwealth leaders to follow the example of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the Organisation of American States and the UN Human Rights Council, and condemn violence on any and all grounds and we call on Commonwealth Governments to effectively build on the work of the CPF 2015 to ensure that this work remains active in the Commonwealth agenda. Furthermore, Commonwealth leaders and institutions must make concrete efforts to prevent acts of violence and harassment committed against individuals because of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

Migration and Resilience:

34. Migration is a key element of resilient societies. It increases diversity, innovation and social capital. But it is linked with a globalised economic system which reinforces the lack of redistribution of wealth and resources. Migration has become dehumanising in both policy and media discourses and needs to be recovered and embraced as an expression of humanity. We should not forget that migration is also a gendered process. Migration expresses new forms of racialised discourse reflected in the way in which states construct the notion of illegality.
35. Building systems that enable resilient societies necessitates moving from seeing migration as a problem, to seeing it as a reality that we need to adapt to and build policy that captures the complexity of the reality while responding to multiple systems of oppression. There is a need for transparent and accountable institutions which explain the rationale of public policies on



migration; migrant voices need to be part of that dialogue with the aim of creating rights-based policies.

36. Governance institutions need to open doors for civil society to have a real say in public policies. Unheard voices, including migrant voices, and those of policy makers defending and protecting the lives of vulnerable people and the rights of migrants need be heard. Civil society needs to be more involved in challenging narratives and discourses that affect migrant rights and freedoms.
37. We call on Commonwealth Leaders and institutions to advance policy initiatives and dialogue on the complexity of migration and its links to efforts in building resilient societies.

Transformative Education for Sustainable Development

38. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development endorses the call for transformative education in SDG4. Commonwealth civil society has actively contributed to the development of the new SDG on transformative education. It provided perspectives and inputs to Commonwealth Education Ministers as well as a recent policy dialogue during the People's Forum 2015. Commonwealth civil society will continue to make a case for transformative learning and leverage the comparative opportunities the Commonwealth offers, including the advantage to self-organise and build capacity for greater advocacy on issues, including a more enabling environment for transformative education.
39. Commonwealth civil society asks Commonwealth small states governments in general and Education Ministries in particular to consider five policy needs for a transformed future and a number of recommendations for adaptation and implementation at the Commonwealth regional and national levels. These will be presented to the Commonwealth Foreign Ministers at CHOGM. Policy needs include a reconceptualisation of education and lifelong learning for sustainable development, not limited to employment and economy; providing spaces for present education structures and basic literacy to incorporate critical literacy and experiential learning; policies that promote timely responsiveness to the needs and demands of a host of marginalised populations; for policies that are informed by and draw inspiration from examples of better practices which are mindful of context; and finally for policies that support schools to have ownership within the established curriculum frameworks and are facilitated to make decisions responding to their specific challenges.
40. Recommendations include a broad and balanced curriculum that innovatively incorporates sustainable development concepts, greater commitment to research funding, harnessing more efficient partnerships within the Commonwealth family, and more effectively linking Universities to communities.

Women, Agency and Responsive Governance

41. Women represent 51% of the population worldwide and are still considered a minority group because they continue to be the minority voice. There is no country in the world whose representative body fully reflects the percentage of women in its population.
42. Governance failures contribute to causing and exacerbating the vulnerability of women, which increases when policies are not implemented. A multi-level governance structure only offers advantage to women's agency when the national level agrees to protect, promote and reinforce women's rights through service provision.



43. Governance systems can address the challenge of inclusion only when they effectively tackle exclusion, stigma and discrimination in the designing of public policies, so enhancing women's choices; and through a process of education of both empowered boys and girls where socialisation processes are questioned and challenged.

Cultural Responses to Conflict

44. In respect of the interaction of culture and conflict it is recognised that culture can be deployed alternately as a framework of oppression or resistance, an argument for retaining patriarchal structures or a language of self-determination.
45. In this regard varying forms of good practice are acknowledged, allowing forms of resistance, agency and reflection through arts and cultural practices. The potential of culture to give voice to memory and commemorate the un-commemorated is recognised. It is noted that culture might play such a transformative role within as well as across communities in conflict. The importance of maintaining women at the heart of responses to conflict is affirmed; as is the desire to privilege intrinsic solutions to conflict over external negotiation, where it is culturally alienating.
46. While maintaining these principles it is noted that competing forms of resilience remain in play; that the resilience of division persists alongside the resilience of resistance and the hope of transformation.

Equity and Resilience: Access to Resources for All

47. Unequal access to resources promotes vulnerability. There is a need to decolonise the theme of equity and resilience, to clarify definitions, and whether equal access to resources and services is possible in a context of a neoliberal model which consistently promotes inequality.
48. Achieving equity and building resilience requires structural access to services and resources, listening to and understanding strengths and strategies at the local level, retaining flexibility in approach, creating safe and open space for critical questioning, providing access to social protection to be able to manage risks, effectively redistributing resources to deal with disparities and generating decent work for all in a growing informal economy.
49. Education, microfinance opportunities, access to community transport, gainful employment and nutritious food can promote equity and resilience. Other contributors include sex education and information; better systems for social service provision; and investment in and access to community based services and resources that incorporate local solutions, which need not be costly nor complex.

Small States: Colourful Economies

50. Multi-stakeholder and multi-level approaches with the engagement of those working at grassroots level are key to build resilience societies. Successful networks and a strong civil society can bring about policy change required for strengthening resilience. Three case studies of blue and green development in Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific, were presented. One case study highlighted a participatory programme in the Philippines, where fishers learnt how to run and manage seaweed farms. Other case studies presented were focusing on participatory governance where networks of governmental and non-governmental entities engage for the protection of natural resources, to scale up resilience.



51. Participatory Governance was presented as best practice. Empowering local communities to engage and participate in policy dialogue allowed for the increase of “political awareness” and greater ownership of the process. Governments that engage with communities can truly bring about positive change, thereby promoting societies’ resilience. All case studies underpinned the importance civil society networks play and their role in the transition towards achieving green and blue economies, which involves establishing agendas that give direction for action, implementation and performance.

Going Glocal

52. In order for global policy to be effective it needs to be rooted in the lived experience of communities at a local, national or regional context. Consequently input to global policy needs to be informed and respectful of the diverse voices from the ground; and precipitates the need for a loop with - and understanding of how the national informs the global and the global informs the national. The local informs the global through the lived experiences and aspirations of those communities and the relationships they enjoy with their lands, and those voices need to continue to be heard. This same voice needs to also influence policy making and agendas by creating the appropriate platforms for citizens and non-citizens alike to influence national and regional frameworks and global policies.

53. The implementation of global policies is successful when meaningful participatory governance takes place, though in practice there needs to be an increase in consultation with people at grassroots levels. Consequently there is the need to adopt more bottom up and needs-led approaches. In most countries this is lacking. However, national players are required to be involved in global agendas, for an effective translation of global policies to national ones. The dissemination of information particularly about the recent SDGs is crucial and a multi-stakeholder approach needs to be adopted for this dissemination among those who will be affected by global policy decisions.

54. Glocalisation is challenged by several factors including that some powerful states have more influence than others on the global agenda and capital has become internationalised. Countries lacking capacity inherit the consequences of their geopolitical positions which limit their influence. Civil society needs to utilise the glocal lens for its analysis and advocacy; while working for the promotion of the dignity of all people in all of their diversity, call for accountability in policies, and for frameworks and agendas being pursued deeply.

Responses to Food Challenges

55. Food security emerged as a major cross cutting theme across the discussions held at the People’s Forum. It poses a major question to humanity: do we have enough to feed the world, and who controls which process? A number of stakeholders with competing or opposing interests are responsible for the production and distribution of food. Politicians, policy makers, scientists, farmers, co-operatives, advocacy groups, and others, need to uphold participatory governance practices in relation to the discussion about food security and sovereignty. Inclusiveness, equitable access to resources, nutritious and fair food, and accountability are key elements to achieve sustainable food security. Food producers presented and discussed models of natural ecosystem based practices that are not exploitative and that care for the Earth and for people as a way forward. It also involves resource adaptation: space, water, soil and community collaboration to produce and access nutritious and fair food. Food producers call for food sovereignty as it prioritises local food systems and enhances natural resources rather than destroying them. While a number of factors erode resilience, community engagement with local farmers can address these threats. It is key for food producers to be



part of policy-based dialogues and decision making processes. Food literacy can be another way forward to ensure access to fair food.

56. Creating incentives for young farmers is one way Governments can scale up resilience while supporting agro-ecological methods at the same time. Facilitating options to share knowledge and practice is another way to support farmers across the Commonwealth.

Building Resilient Health Systems for an Ageing Population

57. The Commonwealth reflect the realities of countries whose populations are either mostly populated by children and youth, or ageing populations. Civil society highlighted the stark contrast of inequalities within the Commonwealth when viewed from the lens of health, where some people suffer from obesity while others have no access to food, where children's growth is stunted because of lack of nutrition while others get sick because of over eating. These inequalities need to be spoken of simultaneously because they are also reproduced into health systems structures or the lack of them. Health is a crosscutting issue requiring the engagement of a wide range of stakeholders particularly when responding to the challenge of ageing populations. Health is also deeply intersectional and resilient health systems bring this to the forefront by involving diverse community representatives in policy discussions to design better health systems which are at the basis of resilient societies.
58. When health systems are in place, accessibility and affordability are binding constraints for most people and in many cases governance systems hinder their ability to adapt and respond, rendering them weak and unable to provide adequate care. They are also not immune to the globalisation processes. By contrast resilient societies invest in just health systems that are able to proactively respond to the needs of the communities they serve and are able to plan for the future, prevent and control disease when this is possible. Inter-regional and international partnerships enhance the process for scaling up resilient health systems. Participatory governance and inclusion of communities in the planning, design and decision making process for service delivery enhances resilient health systems.
59. Resilience is also about fostering a culture of respect for both the child, and the ageing, for the youth and those who are marginalised. Participatory processes open spaces for unheard voices, and new knowledge, bring these to the centre of dialogue and improve the efficiency of health systems and their capacity to deliver. Population ageing opens possibilities for both new forms of exploitation and alternately the harnessing of wisdom. Resilient health systems provide the tools to identify the most appropriate policy path.

Commonwealth People's Forum Malta

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