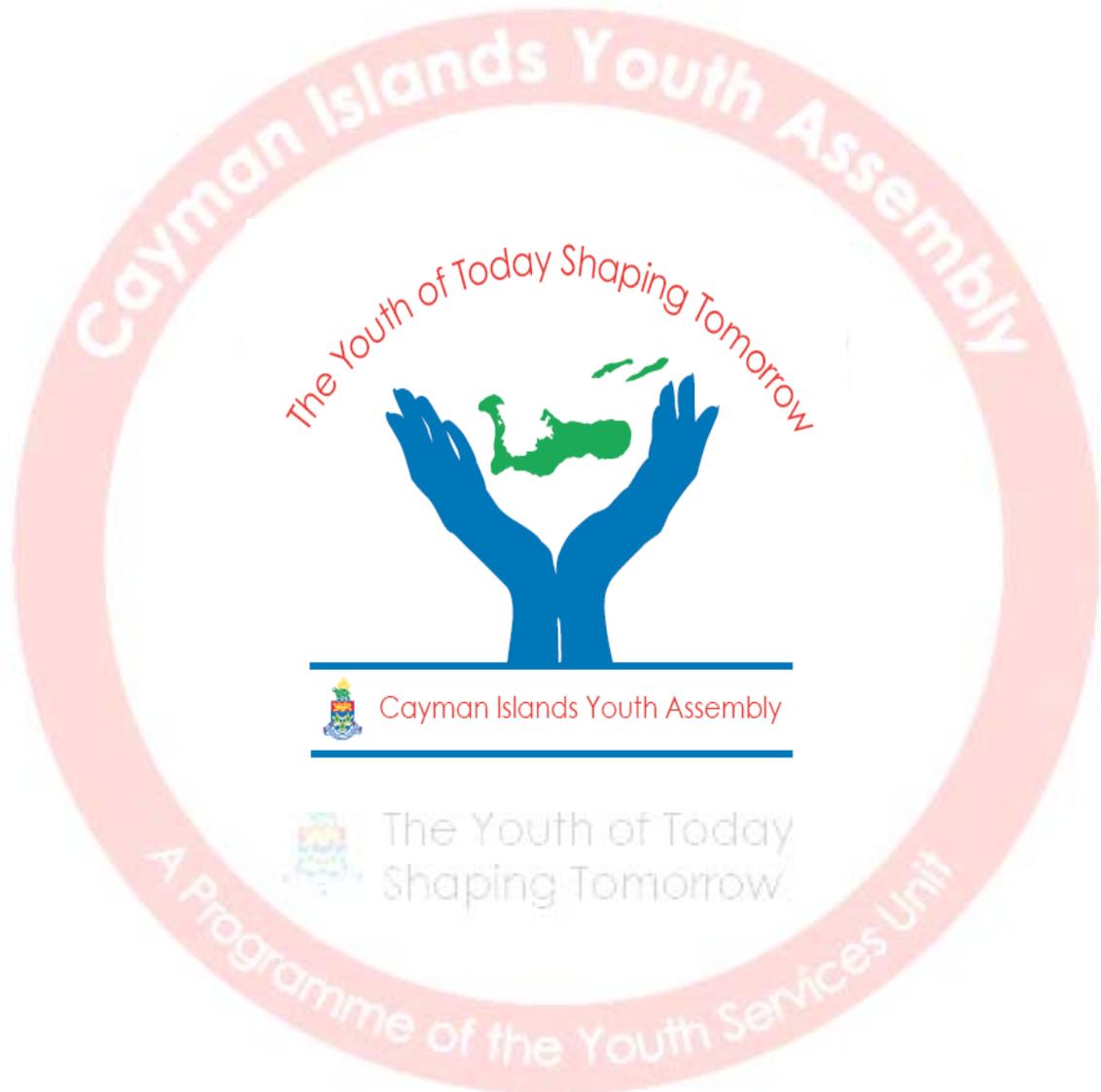


The Voice of Young Caymanians



**Action Papers from the
Cayman Islands Youth
Assembly 2007-2008
delegation**

CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	Page #
Acknowledgements.....	3
Foreword by the Programme Officer of the National Youth Assembly.....	4
<u>Committee on Education and Local Employment</u>	6
Overview of Education and Employment.....	7
The 'Brac' Experience.....	10
Possible Outcomes from the Present Educational System.....	11
Attitudes towards Education and its impact on Today's Job Market.....	13
Vocational Training.....	15
Recommendations.....	16
Conclusion.....	18
<u>Committee on Overdevelopment and the Cayman Environment</u>	20
Manning Development: Population Increase.....	20
Implications of Overdevelopment on the Environment.....	23
Loss of Endangered Species.....	27
Erosion of Culture.....	29
Economic Implications.....	30
A Monumental Threat.....	31
'Solutions through our Eyes'.....	31
Concluding Statement.....	33

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Cayman Islands Youth Assembly (CIYA) wishes to acknowledge their indebtedness to those persons who made an indelible contribution to this crowning achievement. To the members and staff of the Youth Services Unit who monitored and attended many of the weekly Assembly meetings to ensure that the programme met its objectives. Mr. Mikhail McLaughlin who offered his intellect and his interpretation of the final document with the primary aim of guaranteeing that all the proposed arguments were youth centered and reflected the views of the young people of the Cayman Islands. To Mr. Ahmed Myles who was the sole honorary non-voting member of the Assembly but despite this, made his contribution truly felt at each meeting. The programme team would also like to convey sincere thanks to Mr. Edward Todd (John Gray High School) who was instrumental in mobilizing his students to become the first school involved in this initiative. The CIYA programme team would like to express their gratitude to all the parents and school leader who supported this venture and were instrumental in encouraging their children to participate in this monumental achievement. Finally, we would like to take the opportunity to thank Ms. Dorothy Scott and all the other members of the Education Task Force for formulating the National Youth Assembly and by extension making this project possible. We thank you all.



FOREWORD BY THE PROGRAMME OFFICER

The recent formation of the Cayman Islands Youth Assembly is a testament that the youth empowerment movement is alive and well in our beloved islands. It was indeed a pleasure facilitating an inauguration that I believed would give credence to the voice of today's youth, and by extension the future heirs of the Cayman Islands. Tabled in the National Youth Policy of 2000, CIYA's primary purpose was to give voice to the voiceless, represent various categories of youth and advocate on behalf of the young men and women of our country. The first members charged with these responsibilities were the students of John Gray High School in 2007. These members came on board and represented the first pilot chosen by their peers for this delegation. Within a matter of weeks, all the participants of this historic movement were chosen and despite geographic constraints, even the Cayman Brac representatives gave their full contribution.

Today it is with a great sense of pride that I inform everyone that the primary outputs for this important movement has come to fruition. The following Action Papers have captured the opinions of young Caymanians, and also the proposals they believe will assist in the creation of a better society. The ensuing contents will also be the first in a series of youth developed proposals, all aimed at providing an avenue for their concerns and a reference tool for future policy development. With this in mind, the CIYA members have espoused two main issues that they envisioned, if not addressed may lead to the demise of this nation. The topics formulated from these issues were: *Overdevelopment and its impact on the Cayman Environment and Education and Youth Employment*. These issues concern our children and with the topics proposed, they have made another significant step in championing the elevation of this great country.

With the existence of these papers we can now see that the winds of change are blowing and with that thought I hereby to render my sincere thanks to all the members who contributed to this momentous achievement. You have truly made your mark. I do hope

Cayman Islands Youth Assembly 2007-2008

you realize that with great power comes great responsibility, and our young people are indeed the changing winds that will propel this great nation. In addition, it is hoped that the views, fears and aspirations expressed in this document be taken seriously by other young people, policy makers and every nation and creed represented in the Cayman Islands. Finally, I leave you with the motto that the members collectively saw as an epitome of their being, i.e., “The Youth of Today Shaping Tomorrow”, and with the sentiments that ensue; it is evident that they are indeed doing their part to shape the future.



Ewert M. Atkinson
Programme Officer

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Committee Leaders:

1. **Miss. Ashley Osborne*** (St. Ignatius High School) Head of Issues Committee
2. **Mr. Ashvin Murugesu*** (Cayman Preparatory and High School) Head of Issues Committee

Committee Members:

3. **Miss. Allison Antonio*** (Heritage High School)
4. **Miss. Jhnae Brown*** (Grace Christian Academy)
5. **Miss. Kendra Ebanks*** (Wesleyan Christian Academy) Dep. Head of Committee
6. **Mr. Harris Egbert*** (Lighthouse School)
7. **Mr. Alex Cowan** (St. Ignatius Middle School)
8. **Mr. Moses Ebanks*** (New Horizon High School)
9. **Mr. Akime Palmer** (Heritage High School)
10. **Miss. Megan Gouldbourne*** (Cayman Academy)
11. **Miss. Jodessa Hamilton** (Leading Edge High School)
12. **Miss. Amber Martinez*** (Cayman Preparatory and High School) Vice President
13. **Miss. Ashley Smith-Phipps*** (Wesleyan Christian Academy) Dep. Head of Committee
14. **Mr. Rajay Reid** (PACE High School)
15. **Miss. Kaycha Reid*** (John Gray High School)
16. **Mr. Morris Swaby*** (John Gray High School) Acting CIYA President
17. **Miss. Karthika Velusamy*** (Cayman BRAC High School) Sister Island

Representative

***Active participants**

ACTION PAPER#1

Presenters

Morris Swaby
Amber Martinez
Ashvin Murugesu*
Ashley Osborne*
(*Reserves)

I. INTRODUCTION

As avid participants of the first Cayman Islands Youth Assembly, we were given the opportunity of creating an Action Paper based on an issue that is of utmost significance to our nation. We have concurred that the topic of *Education and Youth Employment* is an issue that must be examined as an area that will promote the growth and development of our people. We have identified factors that contribute to low standards of education in the Cayman Islands and how these affect youth employment and overall job placement for Caymanians. By identifying these factors we hope they can be addressed to aid our nation in academic advancement and the development of our human capital.

Through the efforts of the government, the community, and the private sector we hope that the proposed issues, and the recommended solutions be fully acknowledged and used in the further development of education. If taken seriously, this committee believes that the outcome will increase the proportion of fully educated Caymanians, improve their employability and move closer to relinquishing the dependence on foreign labour.

2. OVERVIEW OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Education is the act or process of acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and preparing oneself or others for adulthood¹. It plays an important role in the development of our beloved Cayman Islands and has come a long way since its humble beginnings in 1841, where it was initiated by the efforts of church ministers and their spouses². Historically, many of the traditional Caymanian style classes were held under large trees. In fact, the ambience of 19th century Caymanian schools captured all the aspects of nature, vividly characterized by an abundance of various fruit trees complete with the sounds of zealous children.

Today our educational system and facilities are not merely progressive blossoms of our past; they have also surpassed many of the amenities of our regional counterparts. There are approximately 4,600 students in government schools, with around 2600 in the 11 primary schools and 2000 in the three secondary schools. Since September 2006, this number has increased to six, as the middle school has been split into four smaller high schools. There are 10 private schools that provide for around 2500 children across the entire age range³. After high school many students enroll in higher educational pursuits overseas, while others register locally at UCCI or other regional institutions. However the concern, does not lie primarily with the transitional offerings, it also rests with the fact that while our educational facilities run parallel to other regional territories, many of our students are leaving high schools with very few academic proficiencies. One aspect that has resulted from this is an influx of expatriates who are absorbed in our labour force thereby making it difficult for our youth and native Caymanians to secure worthwhile employment.

To address the situation currently faced by our young people its first necessary to highlight

¹ Education. 2008. Wikipedia. 11 Apr. 2008 <http://www.google.com/education>

² National Consensus on the Future of Education in the Cayman Islands. 2005. C.I. Government Website. 14 Apr. 2008. <http://www.brighterfutures.gov.ky/>

³ New Curriculum for Schools in the Cayman Islands

some of the challenges that prevent them from not realizing their potential. These include:

- **Lack of Parental Involvement:** Parental involvement is an essential ingredient in the recipe for success. Parents must see the relevance of their involvement and the important role they play in the lives of their children. Without their support our nation's children are more likely to fall prey to either peer pressure or lose interest in their education.
- **Low Academic Expectations:** The current requirements for graduating from high schools and enrolling in tertiary institutions also have an impact on the standard of education. Students are given graduate status just for simply attending classes and only to a small extent on academic abilities. This affects the overall outcome as many students merely attend classes just for the sake of acquiring the necessary percentage to graduate and not for the primary role of schools i.e. learning. In fact, this also highlights the notion of social advancement where there is no penalty for non-achievement as students at times attend school for the sole purpose of graduating which will ultimately be enough for job attainment.
- **Inadequate Pre-employment experience:** Most of the job opportunities that are being advertised usually ask for work experiences that many of our high school or tertiary graduates may not have. Therefore, without sufficient pre-employment training our young people will either continue to be screened for not having the requisite knowledge or enter into the work world at a disadvantage.
- **Lack of Vocational Training Facilities:** Not all students are academically inclined and these are usually the ones who graduate without the basic educational proficiencies. We believe that such students should be filtered into vocational training programmes to acquire skills that can be used to gain future employment. Conversely, without these programmes being fully integrated in the

Cayman Islands Youth Assembly 2007-2008

curriculum, these students will have to compete on an academic basis though they may lack the abilities to do so.

- **Breakdown in the Social Fabric of the Community:** Young people are vulnerable and may be influenced to take drugs, yield to peer pressure or become distracted by the sexual perversions that have taken over mainstream culture. These negativities have seeped into our once undiluted society and have influenced the minds of the younger generation. Consequently, there has been an increase in negative activities such as criminal behaviour, teenage pregnancies, and emotional disturbances among others. In turn, these aspects lead to either school dropouts or loss of interest in school. This moral decay has contributed to the harsh realities that our young people now experience and it is a situation that must be reversed if we are to save our youth.
- **Lack of motivation:** An occasional disinterest in school affects all young people in every country. Though this is a common occurrence, our educational system must supplement its present objectives and provide additional stimulus to promote the relevance of education and the zeal for learning. Schools will continue to be major social grounds for children but unless there are additional programmes implemented to show the significance of learning, our institutions will fail to realize its ultimate objective, education.

3. THE Brac EXPERIENCE

The challenges faced by our fellow students on Cayman Brac are similar yet far more evident than in Grand Cayman. Acute shortage of jobs to meet the ever-increasing graduate population is the primary concern being voiced by students. It manifests itself in a perpetual brain drain as students depart from this territory to capitalize on available opportunities in Grand Cayman or overseas. Now, it is imperative that we applaud the recent actions to construct a branch of the University College of the Cayman Islands on Cayman Brac to stem

the perpetuation of this issue. Though this is an important move, a concern still remains. Will the academic options be as thorough and numerous as in Grand Cayman or will they be mere fractions of what is currently offered at the main campus? The answer without question should be the development of an institution or programme that has a wide range of educational options for students with high academic proficiencies as well as alternatives for students without these capacities.

We also believe that as current participants in the present educational system, training is one component that will undoubtedly assist us in the future. Experience gained prior to employment is usually the foundation on which future success is built. However, the training offered on Cayman Brac fails to fully prepare us for responsibilities in the future. Without the necessary intervention, the young people of this Island will have no other option but to migrate to Grand Cayman or face the gloomy realities of not possessing the skills needed for today's competitive job market. In addition, this also raises a very important issue, and that is the evident need for more fulfilling internship programming that adequately prepares graduates for their future roles. Although few of these internship and vocational opportunities exist, the preparation garnered is not enough for tomorrow's job requirements. Therefore, in addition to more courses, subsequent policies must propose that additional training programmes are offered. This will guarantee that the competences of our graduates are fully maximized locally.

4. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES FROM THE PRESENT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

- **Increase in juvenile crime:** Two key reasons can contribute to this outcome: firstly, the absence of parental involvement and secondly, the breakdown in the social fabric of society. The spin-offs from these elements are inevitable. An increase in substance and drug usage is likely and so is sexual promiscuity. If measures aren't put in place to address these possibilities then they will manifest themselves in the schools, the public domain and continue to remain strong dilemmas facing our society and our

Cayman Islands Youth Assembly 2007-2008

region today. In fact, these issues are prevalent with many of our geographic neighbours. Jamaica and Trinidad provide clear examples. Many of the crimes committed within these countries are done by young people. Although there is no clear indication that low educational attainment is the root cause; it does highlight the fact that without proper support from the family and the community juvenile crimes will increase.

- **Dependence on Foreign Labour:** Without adequate training and qualification we will continue to face an escalating demand for foreign labour. This has serious implications for Caymanians because with the pool of labour available overseas, employers sometimes seek these outsiders because it is 'perceived' that they will find employees more competent for the job. According to the *Cayman Islands Labourforce Survey Report (2006)*, only 2336 of the 6334 construction workers were from the Cayman Islands⁴. This means that a difference of 3998 non-Caymanian labourers took up posts that could have been handled locally. By creating more vocational opportunities to train our young men and women we can provide them with the practical skills needed to not only uplift themselves but also to contribute to the development of our country. Furthermore, the construction industry only represents a fraction of the prevalence of foreign labourers. If our young people aren't taught or given the skills needed to build brighter futures for their country then we will continue to be dependent on the services of outsiders.
- **Poverty:** A good education will always determine an individual's level of self-sufficiency; however, without it, one's ability to provide for himself and/or his family will be very challenging. Therefore, it is up to the powers that be to make adjustments to the educational system to spare our young people from this fate.
- **Unemployment:** Education increases the likelihood of job attainment. If these qualifications are non-existent then the possibility of acquiring

⁴ The Cayman Islands' Labour Force Survey Report 2006

employment becomes difficult. However, with the issue of unemployment it should be noted that though essential, qualifications should not be the only means by which employment is gained. In fact, by no means should a Caymanian be without a job especially those that require only basic training. The fact is, even if our citizens are not qualified for certain jobs they should be given the appropriate training to ensure that they attain the skills necessary for current or future job placement.

- **Demand for Welfare:** The demand for welfare will dramatically increase if unemployment rates are high due to lack of education. For that reason, unless we address all the facets of education, especially an appreciation for vocational studies, then our government will face this reality someday.

5. ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION AND ITS EFFECTS ON TODAY'S JOB MARKET

The promotion of education and its preparation for job placement is an issue that requires careful consideration. As young Caymanians, we believe that acquiring the appropriate job competencies through education should be the main factor in job placement. However, many of today's youth fail to see the relevance of this powerful tool. This attitude is as a result of the many distractions that sway and influence our young people from fulfilling their academic goals. To overcome this problem, a massive awareness campaign should be implemented to focus on promoting the relevance of education and the role it plays in keeping our job market in the hands of Caymanians. There are many reasons for this approach. Firstly, educated employees are more tactful and capable of learning and managing new tasks; whereas a person who is not educated will have a harder time grasping their responsibilities. Secondly, once the proportion of Caymanians increase to fill these vacancies, then the influx of immigrants that usually target our job market will have no other choice but to resort to other opportunities elsewhere.

Cayman Islands Youth Assembly 2007-2008

The importance of education must be embraced by all Caymanians. It should be seen as more than just another stage in life; education is necessary for nation building. If we fail to realize its significance, then local employers will continue to recruit expatriates from outside our Caymanian community. In fact, for many of the nations represented in our labourforce, having a first degree is an essential requirement for even the simplest of jobs thereby fueling competition in their countries. Therefore, to survive many are forced into overseas job markets, which at times offer no competition by virtue of their qualifications. Hence, when they come to our shores we are faced with a flood of workers who make it harder for Caymanians to secure employment. For that reason, it is imperative that the priority placed on education be lifted and seen by our youth as an integral ingredient for national growth. Our country is known for its pristine beaches and banking industry but, there is no reason why it can't be seen as one of the top academic territories in the Caribbean. As such, we believe that subsequent educational policies must take the following preliminary suggestions in mind before solidifying decisions on our behalf.

The first action that is needed is the development of a new curriculum. We believe that the new curriculum that has been proposed by the government will improve the current educational system. In fact, we commend the government for this move because this will not only maximize our young people's potential, it will also stem the current influx of labourers. Secondly, students must leave school adequately prepared for future endeavours. In order to address this problem, the young people must play an integral role in collaborating with the Department of Education Services to draft suitable programmes. This will allow future generations to not only inherit a system that will edify their minds, but one that would stimulate interest based on their involvement. With this in mind, as young people we have come to the realization that we are now competing on a global stage, no longer as mere citizens of the Cayman Islands but as inhabitants of this world. However, as Caymanians we need to act in whatever capacities to ensure that we secure those amenities and jobs within our borders. Thus, the most important action that is needed is the further advancement of our human capital through education.

6. VOCATIONAL TRAINING

The committee has constantly alluded to the significance of adequate training and our aim is to show how beneficial this aspect would be if fully developed. The belief shared is that vocational courses will further strengthen the linkages between educational fulfillment and job attainment. It does so by becoming safety nets for students who lack the aptitude for subjects deemed too advanced. Technical and Vocational training prepares learners for careers that are based in manual, practical and/or customer oriented disciplines. It was traditionally seen as an alternative for students who had little academic inclination. However, with the scope of this area transitioning into attractive careers like Auto Mechanics and Culinary Arts, the stigma that once shadowed these disciplines has now vanished.

Findings and Assessment

Many of our country's youths are graduating without acquiring some of the basic skills needed to become employed. Research conducted on a few year nine students also revealed that many were unsure of their future career goals. Vocational training can be seen as one cure for this indecisiveness. The truth is, quite likely if students are familiarized in this discipline, at least one will want to pursue a career in a vocational field. It is also evident that our Islands' are already experiencing an increase in unemployment among our youth and it can be purported that inadequate training may be one of the primary causes. If this assumption is true then the government must channel its effort to change this reality to ensure that no youth is left behind. It is therefore paramount that a solution be made for the sake of all youth thereby preventing them from suffering the indignation of being unemployed. A report written by *Ulrich Van Lith* explains that a state of the European Union has made considerable investments above **all** in academic and vocational training. This is based on the idea that both areas are the catalysts for the growth and economic development of their people⁵. Why then can't we follow a similar

⁵ Van Lith, Ulrich. Costs and benefits of vocational education and training: Contribution to economic growth, Individual and Social Returns. 1998. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Luxembourg

blueprint for the advancement of our own young people?

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

The above assessment is a vivid illustration of the apparent need for additional training in our schools. It is therefore, highly recommended that our leaders implement the needed policies to boost the development of this field. The members of this committee have also proposed the following recommendations to assist in promoting this discipline, expedite its introduction into mainstream culture and increase the number of vocationally skilled Caymanians in our labourforce. Our suggestions are:

- The creation of a Vocational Training Job Fair or Career Day for all students with a slogan, “*Your Salary Affects Your Life*”. This could be used to stimulate interest in this field, while bringing more awareness to vocational study as a viable alternative for future employment.
- Develop a proficiency evaluation for students to determine whether their current academic levels warrant extra assistance. If numerous attempts to improve the child’s aptitude prove fruitless, then vocational intervention should be introduced. This would allow slower students to acquire practical experience in an area that they are more suited.
- Initiating an apprenticeship programme whereby the schools work in tandem with private entities to give young people the hands-on experience needed to make this field educational, yet exciting. In addition, vocational training could also be used in this manner to give young people the relevant work experiences needed to secure employment. This is also crucial because many of the jobs that are being advertised for young people require work experience that entry-level applicants usually lack.

Cayman Islands Youth Assembly 2007-2008

In reference to the other challenges highlighted, we have also deduced additional recommendations to address the previously mentioned issues before they become problems in the future.

FUNDING

Although there may be countless scholarships and funding opportunities available to Caymanians and status holders, more needs to be done to promote where and how these resources are accessed. An ideal suggestion is to have Career Fairs showcasing the different services catering to young people and the resources that are available. In addition, more should be done to get parents more involved in saving for their children's future so that lack of financing does not result in a child's inability to attend other institutions.

MOTIVATION

Motivation is a challenge that can be solved by creating programmes that highlight the importance of staying in school. These programmes could then be coupled with scholarships where students are awarded for staying in school or qualifying for higher education. One approach is by mimicking a programme similarly to D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) where kids learn the dire consequences of not staying in school. The target group for this pilot would be the younger more impressionable students in year's seven to nine who could learn about these negative outcomes in programmes already established, such as Life Skills Sessions. During these sessions the primary objective should be to raise the awareness of the realities that are imminent if suitable training and qualifications are not acquired. This would also be an ideal time to highlight the important role education plays in keeping jobs in the hands of Caymanians.

FAMILY SUPPORT

The importance of family support can never be over emphasized. Therefore by creating mechanisms that identifies and ensures that this support remains in the home, this will allow students to develop their abilities in a wholesome domestic

environment. Counseling sessions are required to achieve this and in turn would relieve the household tensions that may be contributing to the lack of parental support. Parents must also teach their kids positive civic qualities like respect for authority. This would ultimately assist their children in becoming more noble citizens. The rationale behind this is that children who are fully socialized at home deal with school related pressures better than those without and are therefore more likely to succeed.

SOLVING MEDIOCRE STANDARDS

Frequent monitoring and evaluations are the primary ways of alleviating this problem. A special team of inspectors should be dispatched at regular intervals to evaluate whether students are performing at their current grade levels or if the current teaching practices need adjustment. This solution also speaks to the provision of new schools in the Cayman Islands. It needs to be clear that the problem does not lie with the amount of schools in our country; it rests with the current lowered level of expectation and its facilitation of inadequate educational attainment in some students. In fact, we believe that stricter more mandatory academic requirements should be expected of students in order to graduate, not just attendance. Consequently, instead of building new schools, we should see how effective the proposed curriculum is and take additional steps to improve it if necessary.

8. CONCLUSION

Education should be viewed as the most important social element in the lives of all Caymanians. We believe we have identified the major challenges and issues within the society that may impede the realization of this important tool. As devoted participants in the present educational system, we have shown how these challenges can lead to low proficiency levels, which in turn has negative effects on employment as it relates to Caymanians. The members of this committee have collectively formulated solutions that if considered, will adequately address the issues mentioned. These include the investment and development of vocational training programmes, a wider range of tertiary offerings, increased parental involvement, more internship opportunities and additional information on how to access youth-

Cayman Islands Youth Assembly 2007-2008

centred resources. Based on the existence of these concerns we believe it is imperative that our leaders take the necessary actions to not only realize the potential of all young people but provide them with the perfect opportunities for obtaining brighter futures.



COMMITTEE ON OVERDEVELOPMENT AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Committee Leaders

1. **Miss. Taylor Reid*** (New Horizon High School) *Head of Issues Committee*
2. **Mr. Kadane Hall*** (John Gray High School) *Head of Issues Committee*
3. **Miss. Brittani Seymour*** (John Gray High School) *CIYA Secretary*

Committee Members:

4. **Miss Danielle Borden*** (Leading Edge High School)
5. **Miss. Ashley Christian*** (Grace Christian Academy) *Dep. Head of Committee*
6. **Miss. Rashane Frater*** (John Gray High School) *(CIYA President)*
7. **Miss. Martina Jackson*** (John Gray High School) *Sergeant at Arms*
8. **Miss Tianee Levy** (PACE High School)
9. **Mr. Jonathan McField** (Lighthouse School)
10. **Miss. Farrah Miller*** (Triple C School) *CIYA Assistant Secretary*
11. **Miss. Taylor Ribbins*** (Cayman International School)
12. **Mr. Robert Rivers** (Cayman Academy)
13. **Mr. Kodie Scott** (Cayman BRAC High School)
14. **Mr. Tristan von Kirchenheim*** (Cayman International School)
15. **Miss Samantha Williams** (Triple C School)

Non-Member Contributor

16. **Mr. Ahmed Myles*** (Leading Edge High School)

***Active participants**

ACTION PAPER#2

Presenters

Martina Jackson
Brittanni Seymour
Danielle Borden*
Kadane Hall*
(*Reserves)

I. INTRODUCTION

Overdevelopment is an issue that threatens the very existence of our world. Through this Action Paper, we hope to shed light on the impact this impending disaster may have on our environment, and the role we must play in preventing this from happening. We have identified several likely outcomes directly associated with rapid development including: Population Growth, the proliferation of buildings and other amenities and the increase in consumption and waste. We strongly believe that if these aspects are allowed to continue, negative transformations are inevitable and will be irreversible if not addressed.

Following these discussions, we have proposed a series of important recommendations that are crucial for our survival. We can only trust that this discourse enlightens all Caymanians on the grave consequences that await if we fail to address these issues. It is therefore pertinent that in order to solve these challenges, our country will need the collective and unbridled support of all citizens. Through the efforts of the public, the government and the private enterprises we will spark the changes needed to preserve this paradise.

2. MANNING DEVELOPMENT: POPULATION INCREASES

The environment is **the** most important element encircling all humanity. But even with its significance, man's tendency to develop has resulted in a parallel demand to manage and staff this growth. In fact, the effects of development can be vividly seen by the exponential increase in the population that it has induced over the years.

From the statistical analysis of the country's population trends we have concurred that many of the startling realities that we now face are indeed repercussions from the growth in the development. We also believe that population increases affect more than just the environment; they also have other grave implications. For instance, prior to the 1960s, the Cayman Islands were primarily agrarian with emphasis placed on seafaring activities and farming for subsistence. During this period the population grew fairly slow at an overall rate of 18%. Then came modern development which despite affecting population growth in the 1960s didn't affect the growth rate significantly until the 1970s and 1980s where the population increased by 76%.⁶ Subsequent to this period, the population ballooned to numbers that can almost be deemed as an oddity for our country's size. In fact, between the years 1970-2006 our islands witnessed a massive 428% increase in population.⁷ Cayman's propensity to achieve this exponential growth in such a relatively short time span is one of the main influences pushing the drive towards overdevelopment now affecting our Islands. This has serious implications because population growth and its parallel development are two dangerous issues if not curtailed, will ultimately impact the social facets that Caymanians have come to enjoy. Additionally, evidences of this backlash are becoming more apparent in our society. Take a look at the number of schools proposed, the number of houses that are eroding our beautiful landscape and even the magnitude of our most embarrassing monument, the George Town Landfill. These aren't just typical occurrences, these aspects are explicitly linked to the rapid increase in the population and by extension the level of development needed to meet this demand.

⁶ Population Scenarios: Past Trends and Future Responsibilities

⁷ Population Scenarios: Past Trends and Future Responsibilities

3. IMPLICATIONS OF OVERDEVELOPMENT ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Carbon Emissions

Overdevelopment and population growth are two intertwining dilemmas that lend themselves to each other to impact different aspects of our society. The first aspect that both actions influence is the demand for social amenities, such as cars and houses. This is obvious simply because when more companies are built, more employees are needed; the more employees recruited the greater demand for car ownership. Consequently what results is an increase in carbon emissions induced by the rise in car and home ownership. What is even more alarming is the fact that this outcome has been deemed as the primary cause for what is now considered the biggest environmental calamity influencing our world, 'Global Warming'. This process occurs when greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide and methane heat the earth thereby creating a dense layer that prevents the sunlight from reflecting off the earth. This may seem like a big deal, too large for our country to substantially affect, but we have played a considerable role in this regard. Results from organizations like the United States Energy Department's Carbon Dioxide Information Analysis Centre has given the Cayman Islands a ranking of 55 on a list of 207 countries, for global carbon emissions per person.⁸ For a country of this magnitude, whose population and size pale in comparison to other countries this issue must be reversed.

The proliferation of cars is not the only factor contributing to our ecological crisis. The increase in the number of houses, hotels and condominiums equipped with high energy amenities all do their part in adding to the levels of Carbon Emissions. The least of our worries for the future are that our houses need to be cooled by air conditioners or that our water needs to be heated to a certain temperature. What should be of concern are the natural disasters that are spawned in warmer climates made possible by Global Warming. Let us not forget Hurricane Ivan, Hurricane Katrina and the Tsunamis' of Asia. These catastrophes are developing more frequently not because of seasonal norms

⁸ "Cayman carbon footprint raises concern". Cayman NetNews 15 Feb. 2008

but because they are known to develop better in warm waters. Even more frightening, is the fact that our beloved country could one day be inundated or submerged due to the rise in sea levels. Again, these are the harsh repercussions of Global Warming that must be prevented if we are going to survive in the future. Therefore as citizens of these islands, we must make sacrifices. How long do we, as inhabitants have before we lose our pristine environmental surroundings? It should be mandatory for all residents to do their part in preserving our country; the answers to these imminent disasters are in our hands.

In bringing this sub-topic to a close, we urge the government to make the relevant changes to minimize pollution and protect this blessed country. This committee has also formulated several preliminary recommendations that we believe will assist our leaders in this endeavour, including:

- Implementing car pool policies: If citizens are encouraged to car pool this would minimize the amount of cars on the road thus reducing carbon emissions.
- Promoting conservation practices: Even though the population is growing, there are certain household practices we must do to limit our energy consumption. Switching off all unused appliances prior to departure is one way of cutting back on the amount of emissions we produce.
- Limit the amount of vegetation destroyed: If trees and plant-life are constantly removed for building purposes, the consequences are dire, including an increase in carbon emissions, soil erosion and a host of other environmental hazards that are usually minimized by vegetation. For instance, plants help to remove many toxic chemicals, such as formaldehyde and benzene, from the air, and can effectively rid the soil of many toxic chemicals.⁹ In addition, these vital ecosystems help to reduce carbon dioxide and in turn provide oxygen for our survival. Therefore, if we continue to remove these vital ecosystems, the only thing we are really contributing to is our demise.

It may seem a bit uncharacteristic that as young people we are trying to delve

⁹ <http://www.coloradotrees.org/benefits/Trees%20and%20our%20air.pdf>

into scientific issues such as global warming, but it is a concern that should be embraced by all Caymanians- young and old. As a nation, our practices must reflect positive changes and a clear desire to protect our environment. We also believe that it's up to the government to ensure that these practices are adhered to. If we achieve these guidelines we are confident that our Islands will maintain its world renowned splendor that visitors and citizens have enjoyed over the years.

Disposal of Vehicles

The improper disposal of cars and other machines compound the issues associated with increased car ownership. Disposal of metal in whatever state is extremely harmful because they are not biodegradable, toxic and are fatal to animals if consumed. Now solving this problem in the Cayman Islands is a feat that is easier said than done; moreover with the surge in development inducing population growth, the chance of this trend declining becomes even less likely. The ease at which one can acquire private transportation further adds to this problem. In Cayman, the reality is that sometimes people tend to purchase vehicles, use it for a short time and may retire them before they are defective. If this practice continues then we can surmise that within our wealth and lifestyle are the seeds of our own demise. Moreover, after these vehicles are no longer needed, they tend to end up in the landfill thereby adding to an already vast environmental concern.

The abundance of cars in the Cayman Islands is a reality that we may always grapple with especially as our population increases. However, the following measures can be put in place to ensure that we do not continue on this destructive path. These are as follows:

- Implementing laws that provide guidelines on how cars are imported and by whom and mandating citizens to keep their cars for a specific period before purchasing new vehicles would effectively regulate the amount of waste that enters the landfill thus stemming its growth.

Cayman Islands Youth Assembly 2007-2008

- More eco-friendly transportation must be promoted. One solution is to provide incentives for scooter ownership thereby stimulating the interest for this mode of transportation instead of cars. This would also alleviate another obvious problem that has increased over the years- traffic congestion. Additionally, by promoting hybrids we will have cleaner, less polluting cars that are far more environmentally friendly than standard models.
- Smelting is another avenue that could be put into effect as a viable solution. The car parts currently being discarded could be recycled and used to make new cars. We could also offer a service to car manufacturers by selling these smelted by-products for the purpose of building new vehicles.
- Developing an efficient public transportation system would also decrease the demand for cars in the country. This would help to prevent possible environmental woes by reducing the level of Carbon Emissions in the atmosphere. It would also provide working expatriates with suitable commuting alternatives other than resorting to the purchase of interim vehicles.
- Environmentally friendly disposal methods should also be practiced. Guidelines must be proposed to ensure that cars and other machines are stripped of all hazardous material before disposal. Such materials include batteries, fluids and a slew of other harmful wastes that have the ability to harm our fragile environment.

The Cayman Islands is our country and we all need to take the relevant steps in order to save it. This means detouring from the apathy that now typifies some of us, to one that embraces the interest and preservation of our nation. These recommendations are just a fraction of what must be considered by our government and our people if we are to make positive strides in the maintenance of our paradise.

4. LOSS OF ENDANGERED SPECIES

The evidences of overdevelopment especially in Grand Cayman are as clear as night and day. It seems like every day an undeveloped location is transformed into one of the many concrete structures that now dominate our landscape. This is a harsh reality especially for us as young people on the brink of inheriting an island that many believe is paradise on earth. We strongly believe that many of those who support the Islands' rapid development are selfish and disregard the impact these changes will have on this country and its people. Development does more than affect humans; the main preys of this problem are the animals and their habitat. Even more disheartening is the fact that many of the creatures that have become symbols of national pride in our country are now being driven into extinction by this rapid increase in structural development. Cayman Blue Iguanas and Cayman Parrots are now losing their homes due to trees being cut down and the removal of vital green spaces. In fact, due to the loss of habitat, Blue Iguanas are at times forced onto roads where careless drivers either run them over intentionally or by accident. Therefore, as loyal citizens we have a national duty to champion the preservation of areas that are inhabited by these and other creatures.

One important ecosystem now being threatened by the ills of development is the mangroves. Mangroves serve as feeding, breeding, and nursery grounds for a variety of fishes, birds, iguanas and other wildlife. Mangroves also produce 3.6 tons per acre of leaf litter per year, which benefit marine food chains. But even with their apparent significance, mangroves are being destroyed by developers who have little regard for their preservation. For instance, South Sound now vaguely resembles the shorelines of yesteryears; mangroves then, thrived and took on a personality of their own. Today, the last remaining strands of red mangrove trees on the South Coast of Grand Cayman have been put in danger of annihilation due to the scores of buildings being constructed in these areas. Trees have been bulldozed and sizable stretches of quarried rocks have been put down along the edge of the coast, cutting the remaining mangroves off from the tidal flushing essential for their survival.

Consequently, these important plants are at risk of being completely destroyed by the effects of constant expansion.

There are also cultural implications at stake if we destroy these plants. Not only would Caymanians lose an essential eco-system but we would also lose pieces of our history, as these plants were instrumental to our ancestors' subsistence during our seafaring days. These mangroves are also the unsung heroes in our islands defense. Environmentalists worldwide have advocated against coastal development as they believe this is a progressive step towards disaster. Mangroves have been known to grow in thickets along tropical coastlines. With their complicated root systems, they help to bind the shore together, effectively providing a shield against destructive waves such as the one that obliterated Southeast Asia in 2004. Why then can't we as citizens of this country preserve these coastal guardians? With the number of hurricanes and tropical storms brewing, don't we need all the protection that this vegetation affords? The destruction of these plants have serious implications for our country, therefore we beckon to our leaders to propose changes to the way these developers are given approvals for their projects. Our borders need protection, its up to us to preserve these eco-systems. Our future depends on it.

5. EROSION OF CULTURE

No other outcome exemplifies the damaging effects of overdevelopment like the impact it plays in the deterioration of our heritage. This premise speaks to the social aspects of cultural erosion as well as the natural factors that typify our way of life. For instance, major international companies now dominate the real estate market thereby giving rise to foreign workers manning local firms. The aim here is not to point fingers or suppress the investments that have elevated the status of these islands. But as citizens we need to be aware of the fact that when we import more people in our country we then have to grapple with a 'melting pot' of culture all doing their various roles to gnaw at aspects that are truly Caymanian. In addition, Cayman's birthright was built on the ownership of

Cayman Islands Youth Assembly 2007-2008

oceanfront properties for seafaring activities but this is no longer the case. Because of our desire for investments, this heritage has been sold thereby giving rise to hotels, condominiums and homes owned by foreigners. We have to prevent these outcomes; strategies must be implemented to stem the incessant purchases of these areas.

Flora and Fauna

The destruction of Caymanian Flora and Fauna has managed to gain momentum every year. Another incident that blatantly depicts the demise of our ecological heritage is the threat that now looms over the Ironwood Forrest. According to media reports the Ironwood Forrest is the proposed area where a road will be constructed to alleviate one of the many symptoms of overdevelopment-traffic congestion. This is heartbreaking because this zone embodies all things Caymanian, including our distinctiveness, our heritage, our history and even our calm and serene personalities. The Ironwood Forrest overflows with a sundry of exotic plants, most of which were vividly displayed on the Youth Assembly's peripheral observation of the site. In fact, many of the wildlife typical in this area can only be found in the Cayman Islands. "Why then should the authorities be entertaining the possibility of destroying it?" As if the preservation of this natural habitat wasn't enough, these plants also played a vital role in our forefathers' way of life. Our ancestors depended on these plants for medicinal purposes, shipbuilding, home construction and a host of other uses that may not have been documented. With so much historic and cultural significance lying in the balance, we lend our support for the preservation of this Caymanian Jewel. Its values were evident then and can be intertwined with many facets of our society today. It could be used for field trip sites where kids can be shown actual examples of peculiar plant life instead of inanimate representations; it can be developed as a tourist attraction where these travelers can get a true taste of the Caymanian flora and fauna, or it can simply be used as a symbol of Caymanian uniqueness and national pride.

One of our deepest fears in regards to the Ironwood issue is that our country's propensity to develop shows no signs of slowing down. With the expectation of more cars and people on the horizon, policies have now been shifted to see how

best to alleviate the likely side-effect of these increases i.e. traffic congestion. However, the solutions that have been observed do little to solve the broader ecological woes that are inherent in our country. In fact, the only thing that has been observed is the perpetual development of thoroughfares at the expense of natural vegetation. Are we to believe that the creation of more roads is the answer to all our concerns? What about the environmental repercussions? How can we promote an eco-friendly environment when all that is seen are inanimate man made structures with only sparse blooms of vegetation? Without question, what is needed is a detour from the policies that sanction the depletion of our ecosystems to those that preserve the essence of Cayman's beauty.- Therefore as young empowered guardians of this country, we found it prudent to highlight the disheartening fate facing this important territory. By making our tenets heard we hope that this Action Paper will fulfill its primary objective, which is the preservation of all significant aspects of our heritage and our culture.

6. ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

Tourism relies heavily on the natural beauty of these islands. These visitors come to our shores for the ambience, our beaches, historical landforms, unique animals, exquisite dishes and all things uniquely Caymanian. This industry is also vital to our economy as it accounts for a high percentage of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP). With this industry playing such a crucial role, why then are developers allowed to destroy and undermine the primary reason these tourists visit i.e., the tranquility and beauty of our Islands? If perpetuated then the economic consequences are inevitable; particularly, a sharp decrease in tourist revenue. Policy makers must remember that the affluence that we now experience is due in part to the economic contributions made by the tourism industry. Our natural splendors need to be preserved and if we fail to realize this then we are violating the main reason these travelers visit. Moreover, if there are no more traditional or environmental sites to see, we will have to

compete for tourists with undifferentiated means, several of which may be too immoral to consider. If permission is constantly given to build up our Islands then tourists will lose interest thereby causing an economic downfall.

7. A MONUMENTAL THREAT

Arguably the most tragic manifestation of our environmental fears coming to life is the incessant rise in the Georgetown landfill; a vivid representation of the ecological nightmare that awaits. Not only is it unsightly and produces an unpleasant odour, it may also one day affect our health, economy and our society. The most obvious economic backlash that would result is the fallout in the tourism industry. Though we have managed to maintain impressive tourist arrivals despite the landfill's size, the powers that be have to be more proactive and take the steps needed to reverse possible outcomes. We need not forget that "procrastination makes easy things hard and hard things impossible". Hence we need to act now. Research has also shown that incineration diminishes many of the pollutants found in landfill waste. So why haven't we invested in a more efficient waste incineration system? The landfill has grown to be the highest point on the island, and contains materials that are hazardous to all life. Therefore government policies and civilian practices must act now to impede this mountain from growing. The time is right for all citizens, civilians and policy makers to champion the cause of eliminating this imminent ecological dilemma. We all need to take a stand and make the necessary sacrifices to slow our tendency to develop otherwise our nation will someday have an even greater cost to pay in the future.

8. SOLUTIONS THROUGH OUR EYES

Our environment is in danger and as Caymanians we need to address the preceding concerns before they lead to disasters. The following actions must be taken to not only solve some of the issues mentioned, but also to steer ourselves from forthcoming dangers:

- **Promotion of Solar Power:** Solar Energy must be fully utilized in the Cayman Islands. It is our most abundant power supply and unlike coal and petroleum, solar energy is renewable and easily accessed in the Caribbean. By making use of this energy source, millions can be saved by limiting our dependency on electricity.
- **Recycling:** The benefits of recycling can never be over emphasized. By promoting recycling we can limit the amount of potentially harmful waste dumped into the landfill and reduce the rate at which we consume fresh raw materials. This practice also holds huge benefits for our country especially since its one way of decreasing the magnitude of the Georgetown Landfill. Most importantly, recycling saves energy reduces pollution and slows down the effects of Global Warming. Therefore, it is prudent that laws and incentives be put in place to mandate and promote the practice of recycling. Additionally, investment in recycling plants is needed to provide this service. When these facilities are in place, the authorities should then monitor their usage to ensure that all citizens are aware of their existence and take advantage of them.
- **United Effort:** The preservation of our country requires a collective effort. Every citizen in this country should be mandated to join the quest for an environmentally friendly Cayman. Each household should create their own compost heaps to save potentially useful waste for other uses. Containers must also be carefully labeled so that recyclables are separated from useless waste. It is often said, “*United we stand, divided we fall*” and this saying holds true to what is necessary in the Cayman Islands. If we all take a stand and play our individual roles in

Cayman Islands Youth Assembly 2007-2008

maintaining the beauty of these Islands, we will continue to be the paradise that visitors and residents have come to enjoy.

- **Increased Monitoring:** Littering or improper garbage disposal must be punishable by law no matter how small. This can be done by enacting laws that provide for more vigilant monitoring; as result, people would deter from littering or harming the environment. Imposing strong fines would be another strong deterrent that would also prevent the likelihood of littering.
- **Enforcement of Planning Zones:** Zoning is a necessary action that needs to be expedited with urgency in the Georgetown area. In this process special areas are marked off or deemed off-limits thereby preventing further development. In fact, if zoning practices are not employed in the Georgetown area the impetuous growth of development will consume all the natural resources that are left. One way of limiting this problem is to promote more development in the Eastern Districts where land is abundantly available. This would take the environmental pressures off Georgetown while boosting the economy in these rural areas. It would also be a good idea for zoning practices to be enforced by the National Trust Seal to preserve areas of cultural significance from being developed.
- **Education:** Public Awareness is also necessary for enlightening our citizens on the relevance of preserving our environment. Students and children must be educated on the areas of cultural significance; such as the Ironwood Forrest. By doing this we believe residents will get more involved in the preservation and maintenance of sites that are seen as culturally significant. Citizens could also be taught how to make a difference with the environment, such as recycling methods or the various types of recyclables that can be used to reduce the consumption of new materials.

9. CONCLUDING STATEMENT

From the seeds of development bloom the fruits of our own destruction. Development is not to be seen as an indication of wealth; it's an avenue leading to disaster. We have highlighted and addressed several current concerns that we believe are warning signs for this phenomenon, including: population growth, rise in pollutants, land depletion, loss of habitat, cultural erosion and finally, excessive waste.

As inhabitants of this paradise, we can't begin to stress the elements that are at stake if we fail to detour from the ominous path of overdevelopment. Many evidences that now typify our environment now serve as vague reminders of the splendor that once was. For us as young people, these heartbreaking manifestations are a testament that there is little regard for the preservation of our ecosystems. It is up our leaders to deviate from policies that enable or propel rapid development and consider the repercussions if these actions are not curtailed. However, policy makers aren't the only players contributing to these concerns; we all have a part to play in the preservation of these islands.

We therefore, feel that it is prudent for all Caymanians, young and old, leaders and civilians to take a stand and initiate the needed changes to save our Islands. If we continue on our current path, destruction is imminent and we may never retrieve what will be lost.

"When you do nothing, you feel overwhelmed and powerless. But when you get involved, you feel a sense of hope and accomplishment that comes from knowing you are working to make things better."

The CIYA will make a difference.

The Youth of Today Shaping Tomorrow

END OF DOCUMENT