

For: Dr Mihaela Smith, CPTM
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May 25, 2011

Subject: second media release for this week – on ‘Smart initiatives at local and regional level’

Smart Partners Hub, London

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Smart Partners’ transformation Initiatives are delivering at national and regional levels

Efforts by members of the influential Smart Partners Group (“G-Smart) to drive forward Initiatives that deliver social and economic transformation have made major contributions to the development of nations across the Commonwealth and beyond since the last Smart Partners Global Dialogue in 2009.

Botswana, Lesotho, Malaysia, Mozambique, Namibia, the Seychelles, Swaziland, Uganda and Zimbabwe are among nations that have been the focus for recent intensive Smart Partnership efforts to achieve sustainable and realistic transformation by drawing together the rich strands of experience of Smart Partners from around the world.

One of these Initiatives is Financial Inclusion. As the Governor of Bank Negara of Malaysia, Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz stated in April:

“Financial inclusion has now emerged as an important global agenda in ensuring sustainable long-term economic growth. The G20 summit in 2010 recognised financial inclusion as one of the main pillars of the global development agenda. This is a significant development as it reflects the global recognition and importance being given to social and economic development and for such growth to be inclusive in its outreach. Financial inclusion is an integral part of such an inclusive growth process. A high degree of financial inclusion will allow for the various segments of the economy, regardless of income levels, economic activity and regions to have access to financial services. At its most basic level, financial inclusion provides the means and opportunity for undertaking essential financial transactions for savings and the accumulations of financial buffers and having access to financing.”

“This progress reinforces the ways in which Smart Partnership values are aligned with Commonwealth values and principles,” reports Dr Mihaela Smith,

Chief Executive of CPTM, the Smart Partnership group's anchor organisation, and Joint Dialogue Convenor.

"This is acknowledged by the recently-created Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, which reports that to strengthen a collective Commonwealth identity among its people they would like to see increased interaction among Commonwealth scholars, professionals, artists, writers and media practitioners – the very people, among many others, who play prominent roles in the Smart Partnership Movement."

Enhancing the role of nations in the Commonwealth and beyond in development and trade is one outcome being delivered by CPTM Smart Partnership innovative approaches, a process that has expanded and strengthened since the 2009 Global Dialogue. This process will develop still further as a result of the forthcoming Global 2011 (LID), in Putrajaya, Malaysia (June 19-21).

"We have reached the stage today where the CPTM Smart Partnership Movement provides a main global platform for a meaningful process of dialogue that energises economic and social transformation in Commonwealth countries and beyond," adds Dr Smith.

She cites the example of young people in Uganda – members of the informal Smart 29ers group – who formed a highly active link that meets weekly to progress issues relevant to national and local challenges, in addition to topics on the agenda of the Smart Partnership Movement. They number more than 50 and comprise students, business, media and communications links, innovators, energy experts and artists, among others.

"Smart initiatives like this are starting to make a real difference at national and regional levels and emphasise the extraordinary progress that can be made when people openly share their experiences, their values and their ideas in Smart Partnership ways," adds Dr Smith.

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