



ICNYP

International Council on National Youth Policy

YOUTH POLICY FORMULATION MANUAL (excerpts*)

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By: Peter Kenyon
I.D.E.A.S.
PO Box 606
York WA 6302
Ph: 61-8-96412410
Fax: 61-8-96412417
Email: hillside@avon.net.au

The author of this document is a Director of the international organisation 'I.D.E.A.S.' – Initiatives for the Development of Enterprising Action and Strategies, and has extensive involvement in helping facilitate and analyse national youth policies, action plans and programs within the Asian, Pacific and African regions. As a consultant with the Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP), the author has assisted with the formulation of national youth policy in twelve countries and edited CYP's Youth Policy 2000 Resource Kit. As a consultant to the United Nations Youth Unit, the author provided the resource paper on National Youth Policy Formulation and Implementation for the First World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth (Lisbon, August 1998)

In preparation of this document, the author utilised data from over 20 countries in the Asia-Pacific region. While the information provided has been collated, analysed and expressed in good faith, no guarantee can be given as to its absolute accuracy and current relevance.

“the capacity for progress of our societies is based, among other elements, on their capacity to incorporate the contribution and responsibility of youth in the building and designing of the future. In addition to their intellectual contribution and their ability to mobilise support, they bring unique perspectives that need to be taken into account”¹

(United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000)

“If we are to be true statesmen, we must take into account the needs, desires and the ambitions of the generations for whom we plan our development. No architect would build a house without consulting the wishes of those who live in it, and designing the house to their way of life”²

(Tunku Abdur Rahman, Father Founder of Malaysia)

*“For your country,
If you plan for a year – sow paddy
If you plan for a decade – plant trees
If you plan for a future – nurture youth”*

(Proverb quoted in National Youth Policy of India, 1992)

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Preface

- National Youth Policies are among the newest form of legislation in many countries within the Asia Pacific region.
- There is high demand in the region for sharing of experiences in terms of formulation and implementation, and the production of tools of assistance.
- This manual hopefully responds to that demand, and represents a starting point for the continuing regional cooperation within the field.

Introduction

The mobilisation of youth passion, creativity and unique perspectives of their current and future needs is now increasingly seen as both an international and national priority. While young men and women have always been considered an important target group in terms of national development planning efforts, there is a growing acceptance globally of the value of committing time and resources to initiatives that formulate specific national youth policy and an accompanying action plan. Youth policy formulation is now advocated as an essential mechanism for both the identification of youth needs and concerns, and as a way of promoting greater youth participation in the building of the society for both today and tomorrow.

A range of key international events documents have clearly stated this imperative-

- *“Young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. Their imagination, ideals, considerable energies and vision are essential for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. The problems that young people face as well as their vision and aspirations are essential components of the challenges and prospects of today’s societies and future generations. Thus, there is a special need for new impetus to be given to the design and implementation of youth policies and programmes at all levels. The ways in which the challenges and potential of young people are addressed by policy will influence current social and economic conditions and the well being and livelihood of future generations”*³
(World Programme of Action of Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond)
- *“We commit ourselves to ensuring that national youth policy formulation, implementation and follow up processes are, at appropriate level, accorded commitment from the highest political levels, including the provision of adequate levels of resources...”*⁴
(Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes, adopted at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, August 1998)
- *“The World Youth Forum recommends the formulation in all states of youth policies by the Year 2005 that are cross-sectional, comprehensive and formulated with long-term vision coupled with action plans...”*⁵
(Braga Youth Action Plan, adopted at the Third World Youth Forum, August 1998)
- *“We propose that all Commonwealth governments should make a special commitment to Youth development. This should take the form of the development, refinement and implementation of national youth policies as instruments of change...”*⁶
(Declaration of Commonwealth Youth Ministers, Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, May 1995)

Many Asian and Pacific countries have taken this national youth policy formulation action, and are now building upon that initial step with the design of national youth

plans, and the structural mechanisms to ensure adequate implementation, coordinated responses and maximum youth participation.

Based upon the priority being given to national youth policy formulation, and the degree of regional action occurring, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) have produced this Youth Policy Formulation Manual. This Manual, through drawing upon best practice case study illustration, seeks to provide a handbook for those countries about to initiate the national youth policy formulation process, as well as those countries interested in reviewing and building upon previous formulation initiatives.

This Manual provides guidance by examining and illustrating the following formulation themes-

- Concept, rationale and benefits
- Structure and Components
- Process
- Implementation
- Measurements of effectiveness
- Resources

The Manual deliberately seeks to use an illustrative approach to each theme, demonstrating diversity of approach, and highlighting best practice. It seeks to contribute to regional awareness and appreciation of national youth policy formulation, implementation and evaluation, and enable countries to 'leapfrog' upon each other's experiences.

Above all, this Manual aims to contribute to the development of processes that enhance youth opportunities and creatively assist in eliminating barriers that limit the potential, contribution and empowerment of young women and men.

Finally, it is important to state clearly that this manual does not seek to promote a template that can be simply applied to any country in the Asia Pacific region. It seeks to provide a series of flexible starting points and thought starters to enable youth development planners to begin or improve their efforts with Youth Policy formulation. The clear and simple words of the ESCAP Regional Advisor for Social Development and Planning in the Pacific need to resound within our minds-

"Each of our countries is difficult. As a result, each will develop youth strategies and policies that reflect the needs that they see, and the mix of resources (human, financial, organisational and material) that are available or can be made available to them." ⁷

Chapter I

The Concept of a National Youth policy

“Youth has been a nucleus of socio-economic as well as socio-political change at every junction of history”⁸
(Syed Parvez Ali Shah Jilani, former Minister of State of Youth Affairs in Pakistan)

“Youth are citizens and partners of development of today, and citizens and leaders of the future. Youth is a unique and strategic developmental period. They are both a major human resource for development and national building, and agents of change for advancement and innovation in all spectrums of life. Hence, every effort in the youth development movement by all sectors should be planned and implemented in a synergised, integrated, comprehensive, balanced, relevant, effective, efficient and continuous manner”⁹
(Mr Saiuddin Abdullah, General Secretary, Malaysian Youth Council)

A. Definition

A policy is *“an agreed position, and/or a course of general plan of action to be followed by government, party or individual”*
Concise Oxford Dictionary, Oxford University Press.

A national youth policy is a document of national significance. It represents a nationally agreed formula for meeting the needs and aspirations of young men and women and provides a framework for youth development. It is both an acknowledgement of the specific needs of young people as well as a formal recognition of their potential and unique contribution to national development.

The Commonwealth Youth Programme defies the concept of a national youth policy as

“a practical demonstration and declaration of the priority and directions that a country intends giving to the development of its young women and men. A national youth policy specifically represents a gender-inclusive statement that encapsulates the elements of vision, framework and realistic guidelines from which strategies and initiatives can be developed to facilitate meaningful youth participation and development within a country”¹⁰

The following quotations from across the region provide an excellent cross section of comment regarding the concept of a national youth policy-

- *“Policy may be defined as the principle or foundation where all causes of a certain reaction to be taken are based upon. National Youth policy would therefore mean the guiding principles for planning and implementation of activities relating to the development of the youths. The National policy is a policy for the importance of the youths. It is a guideline for the government and the private sector in planning and implementing programmes according to the needs and aspirations of the youths”*
(Mr Mohammed Shahidul Alam, former Director General, Department of Youth Development, Bangladesh).
- *“The enunciation of youth policy is a manifestation of political will and commitment of the nation to the cause of all-round development of youth and their integration with other sections of the society. While it addresses major concerns and issues crucial for young people, it provides validity and direction to youth programmes and services and spells out the strategy and broad guidelines for the planning and implementation. It also incorporates suitable measures for channeling the energies and potential of youth for national development”.*
(Commonwealth Youth Programme Asia Centre, Regional policy Consultation Statement, 1992).
- *"Our children must become meaningful participants in the development process of our nation and not bystanders. This policy will provide a development framework to enhance their participation in this process. Unless they are empowered to do so, it will not be of use to them"*
(Mathias Karani, Minister for Employment and Youth, quoted in National Youth Policy of Papua New Guinea, 1986)
- *"A National Youth Policy raises the profile and understanding of young people and acts as a blueprint in setting out their status, role, rights and responsibilities in society"*
(Commonwealth Youth Programme, Towards 2000 1996 p10)
- *"Effective youth policies can play a major role in creating an enabling environment in which youth can develop their full potential and aspirations through the creation of a framework for action for all agencies and organizations interested in the needs and contributions of young women and men"*
(ESCAP, Assessment of National Youth Policies for Further Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond p2)
- *“The purpose of a national youth policy...is to establish a national framework to meet the needs of all Australians. It will ensure better coordination of youth policy development and programs and service delivery across agencies. The statement encourages recognition of young people and the contribution they make to the community”.*

(An Australian Youth policy. A statement of Principles and Objectives, 1993, p3).

B. Rationale / Purpose

A comprehensive national youth policy is an essential requirement and process if young men and women are to be integrated fully into society and allowed to achieve their potential. There is a special need to protect young people from exploitation and neglect, while also proactively ensuring their economic inclusion, their civic, social and cultural participation.

The rationale for focussing on young women and men has been summarised well by the following three international documents-

- *“It is important to recognise youth as a unique group in society due to the many aspects of vulnerability they face while passing through a major stage in their lives...In addition to a recognition of the vulnerability associated with the transitional nature of the identity of youth, it is equally important to recognise youth as a positive force, as a human resource with enormous potential for contributing to development”.*
(ESCAP, Review of the Youth Situation, Policies and Programmes in Asia and the Pacific, 1997, p 10-12)
- *“Young people represent agents, beneficiaries and victims of major societal changes and are generally confronted by a paradox: to seek to be integrated into an existing order or to serve as a force to transform that order. Young people in all parts of the world, living in countries at different stages of development and in different socio-economic settings, aspire to full participation in the life of society.”*
(World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, 1995)
- *“There is Commonwealth – wide recognition that young men and women constitute a community of interest whose needs and aspirations require specific attention. Today young men and women:*
 - *form a significant proportion of most national populations;*
 - *need a supportive, anticipatory and informative environment to move successfully from the dependence of childhood to the autonomy and responsibility of adulthood;*
 - *have a unique contribution to make to a national development due to their energy, enthusiasm, resilience and an ability to inject a fresh focus;*
 - *have had less life experience and often significantly less exposure to information, resources and power over their lives than older people, making them more vulnerable to neglect, abuse and exploitation; and*
 - *often represent the most ‘at risk’ group in terms of major socio-economic challenges including unemployment, low income, physical and sexual*

abuse, substance abuse and a wide range of health issues including HIV/AIDS – young women being most disadvantaged in these areas”
(Commonwealth Youth Charter, 1996)

No generation of young men and women has ever been so large. Today, approximately 20% of the world's population is in the 15-24 age group, and in many developing countries this group will soon constitute 50% of the population. 60% of the world youth population or over 600 million young people reside in the Asia Pacific region.¹¹

The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond recommended to governments that have not already done so to formulate and adopt an integrated National Youth Policy as a means of addressing youth related concerns. The Commonwealth Youth Programme through its Youth Policy 2000 Handbook expressed the purpose of a National Youth Policy in these terms-

“The creation of a national youth policy is an acknowledgement of the specific needs of young women and men, as well as a formal recognition of their unique contribution to national development. It provides a means and a symbol for society as a whole to declare, document and intensify their commitment to young citizens, and an opportunity to determine appropriate priorities, goals and strategies. It provides an opportunity to give expression to a nation’s understanding of values, rights and responsibilities as regard to their young women and men. As a document of national and historic significance, a national youth policy with its associated action plans and programmes, will raise the profile and understanding in the wider community about young women and men, their potential and the constraints they face in realizing that potential. Above all, a national youth policy will promote a framework for action for all agencies and organisations interested in the needs and interests of young women and men”¹²

The Malaysian Youth Council was of the opinion that a new national youth policy was needed in Malaysia, in order to:

- “1. Establish a holistic view, main objectives, focus and basic values of youth development in this country.*
- 2. Identify major target group(s) in youth development in this country*
- 3. Provide common and mutual understanding on the importance and areas of youth development among all concerned groups and individuals in this country.*
- 4. Provide a national framework for the development of youth programmes and determining or priorities.*
- 5. Create a means by which progress in youth development is measured.*

... it should provide the impetus and catalyst for greater synergised efforts in the planning, marketing, implementing and evaluating of youth development programmes in this country...¹³

The draft National Youth Policy of the government of the Republic of the Maldives declares its purpose as

“ ... a framework for youth development. It endeavors to ensure all young women and men are given every opportunity to reach their full potential, both as individuals and as active participants in society. The Policy addresses the major concerns and issues critical for young men and women and gives direction to youth programmes and services provided by government and non-government organisations. Through the National Youth policy, the Government declares the importance of the active involvement of young people in national development. The Policy demonstrates the distinctive and complementary roles of all Government ministries, the non-government sector and youth groups in youth development and provides a framework with common goals for the development of a spirit of cooperation and coordination...¹⁴

The draft new National Youth Policy of India states as rationale that

“the development of any country depends upon the ways in which youth are nurtured and that youth must find their due place in society to become active and constructive forces of positive change, an urgent need is felt for a youth policy which apart from aiming at youth development, also ensures partnership in the process of national development...¹⁵

The Background and Purpose section of the Draft National Youth Policy of Samoa summarized well the broad intention of such a document-

“This policy:

- Emphasises the importance of Samoan youth and their contribution to national development. It is a further step in Samoa’s drive to fully tap the vast resources which Samoan youth represent.*
- Presents a profile of youth, their needs, concerns and aspirations, and the agencies specifically committed to young people.*
- Provides a rallying point, a challenge to youth to mobilise their talents and energies and participate fully in national development.*
- Aims to empower youth (physically, socially, economically and spiritually) and provide the avenue for youth to help shape the future of their families, community and the nation.*
- Encourages, indeed requests, that Government and all Samoans give priority attention to youth concerns and aims to generate a spirit of cooperation between young and old.*

- *Acknowledges the distinctive and complementary roles of governments, NGO's and youth groups in youth development, and provides a framework for common goals and the development of a spirit of cooperation and coordination between these groups.*
- *Provides a call for concerted action by all ministries and departments of government to identify and address youth needs and responses and to mainstream youth policies in their sectoral plans.*
- *Encourages strategic and forward thinking and provides the basis and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of youth policies and programmes so that these reflect youth needs.*
- *Emphasises the importance of research on youth, and the use of this research data in planning.*¹⁶

Finally, the importance and relevance of the National Youth Policy formulation process has remained strong in the Pacific for nearly 20 years. Back in 1981, in response to the question - 'Why do we need a national youth policy', youth workers at an ESCAP regional workshop stated that a national youth policy-

- *"Provides Parliament with an effective means of declaring to the nation the importance of youth in national development.*
- *Acts as a sign and symbol of the commitment of the nation to the priority it attaches to youth.*
- *Provides a rallying point, a means of challenge and appeal to the youth generation to mobilise their resources and participate effectively in national development.*
- *Provides an appeal to all citizens to give priority to youth concerns, to generate a new spirit of cooperation between young and old.*
- *Demonstrates the distinctive and complementary roles of governments, NGOs and youth groups in youth development - a framework for common goals and the development of a spirit of cooperation and coordination.*
- *Provides a call for a concerted effort by all Ministries and departments of government to promote youth needs and responses.*
- *Identifies the priority needs and aspirations of youth.*

*Provides through both the processes of formulation and subsequent discussion, an example for how youth can engage in the decision making process of the county*¹⁷

C. Benefits

The potential benefits for a country in undertaking the actions associated with the formulation of youth policy are numerous and can include the following-

- communicating a nation's vision for its young women and men;
- serving as a symbol of a society's commitment to their youth citizens;
- raising of the national profile of young women and men – their concerns, aspirations and contributions, and those agencies specifically committed to their deployment;
- identifying priority needs of, and opportunities for, young women and men;
- creating a framework for common goals, collective action and cooperation/coordination of strategies and actions for youth development among various concerned bodies, including government, non-government and youth organisations;
- providing a basis for equitable distribution of government resources to meet youth needs;
- stimulating opportunities to mainstream youth policies into other sectoral policies and programmes;
- developing a basis for strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes that affect the youth population; and
- demonstrating examples of how young women and men can engage in decision making processes of the country through their active participation in the process of formulation and implementation of youth policies.