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**FOLLOW-UP ON PRIORITY ISSUES IN THE FIELD
OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE ESCWA REGION****NATIONAL POLICIES ON YOUTH****Summary**

In light of the World Programme of Action for Youth adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia as a framework to guide its programme of work on youth, this report reviews the positions of member countries regarding the conceptual framework of youth policies, as well as their foundations and general principles. In addition, it presents a critical review of national youth policies in member countries and national youth policy integration into development plans. The report also highlights challenges and opportunities facing the process of planning for youth.

Moreover, the report focuses on the necessity of reconsidering planning methods by evaluating and reviewing member countries' achievements in developing cross-sectoral policies that focus on the priorities of several youth-related aspects. Finally, the report reaches conclusions and a set of recommendations about developing technical and institutional aspects of formulating national youth policies, in addition to providing the necessary funding. Representatives of member countries are requested to review the present document and submit their relevant observations and recommendations.

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Introduction

1. Encouraging member countries to develop a national youth policy is an integral part of the work programme of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). In this context, ESCWA adopted the World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY), which was developed by the United Nations in agreement with member countries as a methodological framework to formulate national youth policies. The World Programme of Action for Youth has flexible adaptability and dynamism, as it went through an ongoing development process for a decade and a half in order to keep pace with local and international developments including globalization consequences and repercussions. Accordingly, the WPAY has become more responsive to the requirements of young people, wherever they are. WPAY is pragmatic, as it provides a standard framework for monitoring the goals and achievements in the area youth development.
2. Building on the elements identified in WPAY, ESCWA is reconsidering development methods and approaches so as to tackle youth issues from a strategic-planning perspective that promotes further investment in the youth group. This is through including the youth group into the development process as a stand-alone, socio-demographic and cross-sectoral group, and by developing cross-sectoral youth policies with measurable goals and objectives as part of a 15-year plan.
3. In support of member countries' efforts to develop national youth policies, ESCWA prepared this report which reviews the positions of member countries towards developing a national policy targeting youth, incorporating this policy in national development plans, and taking necessary measures to implement it in light of the conceptual framework of the global programme of action adopted by ESCWA to guide its work on youth.
4. Countries were classified according to the measures that are taken in this area, by using the regional inquiry concerning WPAY to which most member countries responded, as well as national documents dealing with the achieved progress in the implementation of WPAY, the extent of political commitment, the efficiency of the youth planning process, approaches and methods, and the effectiveness and quality of interventions in addition to the availability of planning and policy-making institutions.
5. The review of member countries' achievements in developing youth policies reflects many challenges in planning in general, and in planning for youth in particular. Such challenges are attributed to the adoption of traditional approaches to resolving contemporary issues, non-compliance with the conceptual framework that incorporates youth policies, the neglect of foundations and poor compliance with principles that should be observed to overcome the social, economic and political exclusion of youth.
6. The report is based on several sources (see list of *References and Sources* at the end of this report), including the following major sources, which represent key inputs in review and evaluation:
 - (a) The regional inquiry conducted by ESCWA in 2008 on the response of member countries to the WPAY;
 - (b) National literature, including national development plans and documents related to youth policies;
 - (c) The World Programme of Action for Youth issued in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 50/81 of 14 December 1995 and the Supplement thereto issued in the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 62/126 of 18 December 2007 on "Policies and programmes involving youth: youth in the global economy – promoting youth participation in social and economic development", and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 64/130 of 18 December 2009 on "Policies and programmes involving youth".
7. The report reaches a set of recommendations that emphasize the technical and institutional aspects of formulating national youth policy and providing the necessary funding.

I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF YOUTH POLICIES FROM THE ESCWA PERSPECTIVE

8. ESCWA adopted WPAY as a guiding framework for the development of young people and for planning their roles in society at the national level. A national youth policy is defined as an expression of the society's commitment towards its citizens, and a declaration of a joint national vision of the youth generation. In fact, the national youth policy identifies young people's needs, priorities and roles, and provides a basis for the fair distribution of necessary resources to meet them. Substantially, the policy is comprised of texts issued by official governmental authorities in cooperation with non-governmental youth organizations, and includes the country's general orientations regarding youth. Thus, it represents a declaration of priorities and compliance therewith. Given the nature of youth issues, national youth policies seek to identify an array of direct and indirect sectoral measures and interventions, aimed at achieving the quantitative or qualitative goals that were nationally approved. Furthermore, such policies contribute to empowering, integrating, and engaging youth in a country's economic, social, and political life.

9. The conceptual framework of youth policies represents a methodological approach based on fifteen priority areas identified by WPAY, which aims to provide adequate opportunity for all young men and women to live up to their potential as individuals or partners in the development process. Such priorities, albeit broad, reflect the challenges and concerns of youth regardless of their orientation and culture. The said priorities were incorporated into three clusters that represent the general framework of any national youth policy, as shown in table 1.

TABLE 1. THE FIFTEEN PRIORITY AREAS IN YOUTH POLICIES

Youth in the global economy	Youth in civil society	Youth and their welfare
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Globalisation; - Poverty and hunger; - Education; - Employment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Environment; - Leisure-time activities; - Full and effective participation of youth in the life of society and in decision-making; - Intergenerational issues; - Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health; - Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV/AIDS); - Drug abuse; - Juvenile delinquency; - Girls and young women; - Armed conflict.

10. Given that young people are a social group with their own role and societal contribution, and at the same time a specific demographic group facing specific challenges, ESCWA separated this group from its previous context adopted under the Millennium Development Goals in line with the Secretary-General's report on "Goals and targets for monitoring the progress of youth in the global economy" submitted to the General Assembly in its sixty-second session (A/62/61/Add.1-E/2007/7/Add.1), which included suggested goals and targets to monitor the progress of youth in globalization, poverty and hunger, education and employment. Within a specific time period, a set of goals is expected to help formulate national agendas for youth development on the one hand, and provide better opportunities to evaluate achievements at the national level on the other hand.

11. The priority areas represent an integrated action plan targeting youth and improving their conditions through empowerment and social inclusion strategies. These areas are intertwined and each has challenges that require solutions, and opportunities that need to be exploited. Given that the areas are interlinked and inseparable, they maintain a causal correlation, as investing in one area generates a multiplying effect on the other areas in young people's lives.

12. Given that priority areas are sectoral, the policies related to a specific demographic group, namely youth, should be formulated in a cross-sectoral manner covering economic and social sectors, within the general framework of sectoral development policies. The concept of cross-sectoral youth policies refers to a range of policies related to productivity and service development sectors, which work in harmony and full coordination between the various sectors.

II. FOUNDATIONS AND GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH POLICIES FROM THE ESCWA PERSPECTIVE

13. In urging governments to develop integrated youth policies, ESCWA refers to the general foundation of the development planning process and to a specific set of priorities, goals, and targets. It also adopts a sectoral approach which seeks balance and reduces the social exclusion of youth, by:

(a) Separating youth-related issues from the traditional context which covers the entire population, by formulating a national agenda for youth development, including a set of standard policies and indicators with specific goals and within a specific time frame;

(b) Dealing with young people as a distinct socio-demographic group representing human resources contributing to development, thus changing the quality of youth support from sporadic and on-the-spot support to planned and programmed support yielding investment, economic, and social returns;

(c) Changing the general context of understanding youth from negligence to active implementation, considering young people as human resources rather than a source of problems, and believing in their potential rather than doubting their capabilities, as they are considered to be an element of change in society, a valuable asset and effective partners in development;

(d) Supporting the principle of participation at all levels and in all its forms as it represents a genuine right of youth and a prerequisite for implementing citizenship principles and conditions, and providing opportunities for young people to participate in various governmental authorities, institutions and civil society organizations; starting from the family, educational and work institutions and thereby giving added value to participating youth, institutions, organizations and society as a whole;

(e) Engaging all stakeholders concerned with development and youth-related issues, namely the Government, private sector, civil society organizations, as well as regional and international organizations, in supporting and consolidating youth rights, which will serve as basic criteria in the evaluation of public and sectoral development policies related to young people.

III. THE CURRENT STATUS OF NATIONAL YOUTH POLICIES IN MEMBER COUNTRIES

14. The analysis in this chapter required the classification of member countries according to the current status of their national youth policies, using the regional inquiry conducted by ESCWA on the response of member countries to WPAY. The inquiry inquired about the prevalence of political commitment, the efficiency of the youth planning process and its methods, the effectiveness and quality of interventions, in addition to the availability of planning and policy-making institutions and the competence of their personnel. Table 2 summarizes the inquiry outcome, as countries are listed according to the progress they achieved in youth planning.

TABLE 2. THE CURRENT STATUS OF NATIONAL YOUTH POLICIES IN MEMBER COUNTRIES

The current status of youth policies	Number of countries	Countries
Countries having a national youth policy	5	Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Yemen
Countries developing a national youth policy	5	Iraq, Lebanon, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic and United Arab Emirates,
Countries dealing with youth-related issues within development plans	4	Kuwait, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Oman and the Sudan,
Countries establishing youth projects	All member countries	All member countries

15. The national youth policy is based on the following key elements:

(a) *Strategic vision*: This vision is based on the fact that young people have rights and obligations, and is therefore based on human rights, including:

- Engaging all development stakeholders, namely Government, the private sector, civil society organizations and regional and international organizations in supporting and consolidating such rights;
- Considering the said rights as basic standards for evaluating public and sectoral development policies related to young people;
- Considering youth as active members and genuine partners in all youth-related policies, programmes and projects offered to them;
- Not discriminating against any youth group for any ethnic, racial, cultural, social, or gender-based reason;

(b) *Official definition of youth*: The youth policy is based on a quantitative and qualitative perspective which considers that youth cannot be only considered as a demographic group apart from other characteristics that make it a demographic and societal combination. The United Nations adopted a procedural definition of youth that covers persons aged between 15 and 24 years. Currently, this is the most common and accepted definition among international organizations and research institutions. Notwithstanding the importance of identifying a youth demographic (age) group as it helps to determine the size and growth trends of this group, and to conduct national, regional, and international comparisons, this is not enough to understand its complex content. In fact, the youth category includes a set of characteristics that contribute to identifying its specificities, such as male and female, upper and middle class, farmers and workers, employed and unemployed, students and graduates, as well as characteristics related to quality cultural patterns of life (nomad/rural/urban). Therefore, such discrepancies require a qualitative analysis of every different category within youth policies. In terms of language and meaning, the word “youth” has become a neutral term referring to both young males and females;

(c) *Youth classification*: Youth policy contains sub-policies that are governed by general principles of the life cycle and mutations thereof. Therefore, it requires planning for different age groups of young people along with the relevant health requirements pertaining to their physical growth and other societal requirements. Age groups include adolescence and its related physiological developments and the youth period, which is dynamic and involves moving from consuming to producing;

(d) *Youth participation*: Youth policy requires that youth participation is essential and effective in developing youth-related policies and programmes of action. It should not be limited to non-binding consultancy or formal employment of young people to achieve other goals, but must rather, offer opportunities of participation, the supporting culture thereof, and mechanisms that help achieve the goals of

participation. Youth participation is considered key in developing, formulating, and implementing youth policies, as it helps young people to voice their opinions, priorities, and ambitions, and contribute to achieving the goals of such policies.

16. Table 3 provides information on the extent to which the fundamental elements for youth policies are available in countries that have formulated a national youth policy. The table was prepared using national documents on youth policies and the results of the regional inquiry on the response of member countries to the WPAY.

TABLE 3. AVAILABLE KEY DATA OF YOUTH POLICIES IN COUNTRIES HAVING A YOUTH POLICY

Countries having a youth policy	Youth definition	Youth vision	Youth classification	Youth participation
Bahrain	15-30 years	Rights and obligations	Clear classification of sub-categories	Limited
Egypt	6-36 years	Rights and obligations	Children and young people	Limited
Jordan	12-30 years	Rights and obligations	No classification of youth sub-categories	Limited
Palestine	15-29 years	Rights and obligations	Teenagers and young people	Limited
Yemen	0-24 years	Rights and obligations	Clear classification of sub-categories	Limited

17. The conclusion drawn is that countries with an existing national youth policy are still exerting extra efforts to meet the necessary requirements for developing an integrated applicable policy that is commensurate with the conditions of WPAY. The following observations are worth noting:

(a) Most countries under review, which filled the questionnaire, gave definitions to youth ranging between 0 and 36 years, thereby expanding the group size at the quantitative level and generating qualitative overlapping of the needs of the different age groups. In the same context, the definition of youth is contradictory and lacks a unified national agreement. Instead, different definitions are given to this group and they vary from one sectoral ministry to another and from one case to another, according to the covered age group;

(b) The youth national strategy in most countries includes the necessary items of an integrated vision which considers youth as a main driving force for change, a national project through which the nation's profile and future are decided, a major element in the development process, social producers, and key partners in development sustainability. In fact, no comprehensive and sustainable development can be achieved without young people's participation at all levels, as a starting point towards enhanced citizenship, where young people have the right to integrated development and to effective societal participation;

(c) The general characteristics of the youth life cycle, which is comprised of two different age periods, namely adolescence and youth, were not observed despite their importance in policy-making. In fact, each period requires different policies that correspond to its nature on the one hand, and to the strategic vision of society as a whole on the other hand. However, Bahrain, Palestine, and Yemen are excluded from this conclusion;

(d) There are mechanisms for allowing youth participation, but the picture is not clear in terms of the size and quality of such participation in formulating national policy and in any phase of policy development. Besides, documents did not provide adequate clarification about the geographical and socio-cultural extent of such participation and its gender-based distribution. In many instances, the policy

document is formulated without considering the targeted group or with limited participation of a selected group that often represents elite youth. In fact, young people may be present as a targeted group when formulating policies, but not as actors in the development process.

18. Formulating the national youth policy is based on the following key technical and institutional inputs:

(a) *Statistical data*: New and reliable youth-related statistical data classified on the basis of gender and geographical distribution represents a key input to the formulation of a national youth policy based on tangible evidence and containing the necessary mechanism to monitor its effectiveness. The availability of information allows reconsidering the existing policy to reflect the new priorities at the national level. Data on youth are distributed between two categories: the first category includes quantitative data in the form of time series that measure the general demographic trends of the entire youth population per sub-groups; the second category includes qualitative data or indicators measuring the status and development of youth in the fifteen priority areas of WPAY;

(b) *Analytical research*: The research, conducted for this purpose, is focused on youth in terms of quantity, quality, and needs. Quantitative research helps to identify the groups size, future trends and area distribution. It is also descriptive and serves as a basis for public sector policies, such as governmental expenditure, or public and private investment expenditure in the different areas. Conversely, qualitative research aims to identify youth-related issues, and its methodology is linked to the main objective to which it is intended. There is research about youth behaviours that is aimed at identifying and comparing behaviours among different societies, in addition to policy research aimed at introducing decision makers to the importance, reasons, and repercussions of a certain issue with respect to the targeted category and its impact on society and development. Although it is essential to learn about social reality from a scientific and organized viewpoint and to diagnose its various aspects in order to understand and explain this reality, and to face its immediate or long-term benefits and responses, this will remain incomplete without referring to the stakeholders, namely the youth themselves, to listen to their opinions about all issues which concern them and to give them the opportunity to express their concerns and questions through opinion polls, direct interviews, and dialogue;

(c) *Coordination institution*: It is essential to establish an institution to coordinate the national youth policy in order to formulate, implement, monitor the achievements of, and re-evaluate the policy. This requires the contribution of the economic, social, financial, and political sectors. In view of strengthening and further consolidating sectoral efforts, Governments should recognize the importance of establishing an institution that will be in charge of coordination and will ensure a seamless relationship between the different ministries. Therefore, the institution will become the main guarantor of incorporating youth policy in the development planning process;

(d) *Budget for implementation*: Identifying the budget for implementation is a prerequisite and concurrent activity which should be conducted simultaneously with other processes of policy-making. The budget is identified by adopting different approaches to raise funds. There is an international budget approved by the United Nations, and various regional, national, and United Nations funds, in addition to regular or development budget allocations in the country. The budget is approved once the policy is approved by the Government and parliament. Implementing the national youth policy requires an estimated budget to implement the stipulated sectoral goals and targets within a specific time period. This budget creation is incorporated within the framework of a national development budget and of sectoral planning, to ensure implementation of a youth cross-sectoral plan. Besides, this process should take into consideration that the budget is developed according to pre-defined socio-demographic groups which have priority in sectoral investment, provided that they do not compete with priorities of other socio-demographic categories such as the elderly.

19. Table 4 shows the available key technical and institutional inputs that are necessary to develop a youth policy in countries having a national youth policy.

TABLE 4. AVAILABLE KEY TECHNICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL INPUTS TO FORMULATE
A YOUTH POLICY IN COUNTRIES HAVING A YOUTH POLICY

Countries having a youth policy	Statistical data	Analytical research	Coordination institution	Budget for implementation
Bahrain	Lack of detailed statistical data	Rare	General Organization for Youth and Sports	No funding budget
Egypt	Lack of detailed statistical data	Rare	National Council for Youth	No funding budget
Jordan	Lack of detailed statistical data	Rare	Higher Council for Youth	Limited funding of some programmes
Palestine	Strong lack of statistical data	Rare	Ministry of Youth and Sports	No financial resources
Yemen	Lack of detailed statistical data	Rare	N/A	Limited funding of some projects

20. It is evident that countries having a national youth policy are still suffering from a lack of necessary infrastructure that makes this policy integrated, applicable and commensurate with the conditions of WPAY. The following observations are worth noting:

(a) Most countries having a national youth policy suffer from a lack or absence of detailed data on youth. This lack is an obstacle to formulating accurate policies based on specific evidence identified in participation with the youth themselves, according to gender, age (15-19 years for teenagers, and 20-24 years for young adults) or residence (rural or urban). The lack of data on youth, which represents a broad group, comprising several sub-groups rather than a single demographic group, has concealed the needs of groups which face greater challenges compared to others, such as youth with special needs, rural youth, youth who dropped out of school, and unemployed youth. It is worth noting that national youth policies in countries having a national youth policy are generic policies lacking detailed aspects, particularly with regard to area-, gender- and income-based characteristics;

(b) Most of these countries are still generally suffering from the lack of adequate in-depth analytical research about the challenges facing youth, opportunities that can be opened for them, the expected reasons and dimensions of every issue and the needs of different youth categories. Therefore, it is hard to create political solutions and meet the needs in a specific time frame. For instance, such countries did not adopt youth-related definitions on poverty, unemployment and health, but rather used generic, common, and profile-based definitions of population. As a result, young people's issues were superficially tackled without taking into consideration their needs and profile when developing relevant policy;

(c) Countries having a national youth policy have taken into consideration the sectoral nature of youth issues, by creating national youth councils where the different sectoral ministries are represented to coordinate all relevant activities. Such countries, except for Palestine and Yemen, developed an institutional infrastructure to coordinate and incorporate youth policy in the development planning process. It is worth noting that ministries in Arab countries, as in other countries of the world, have different levels of power and influence, with ministries of youth and social affairs having a lower profile, therefore having an inadequate capacity to coordinate and hold other ministries accountable. Thus, some governments assigned the secretariat of the coordination institution to the Prime Minister or to one of his representatives, and ensured that key ministries such as the ministries of economy, finance, planning and services are represented in the council to allow them to play effective roles. Coordination institutions are in charge of organizing activities that are directly linked to youth, notably in urban areas, and mostly in the sports field. Such councils in Bahrain, Egypt and Jordan are in charge of developing the national youth strategy and overseeing the implementation process, while the Ministry of Youth and Sport in Palestine is in charge of developing the policy;

(d) Countries having a national youth policy sought to provide a political cover to youth policies by developing a national document for youth policies. However, such efforts were not completed so as to allow the implementation of the youth policy. In fact, most available national documents on youth policies do not include a cost evaluation or an estimated budget classified according to sectoral activities.

IV. INTEGRATING NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY IN DEVELOPMENT PLANS

21. The process of incorporating the national youth policy into development planning is comprised of the following key frameworks:

(a) *General framework*: Governments are responsible for the public good through mechanisms, institutions, and processes that incorporate young people and ensure their effective participation in development. The general framework includes the following elements:

(i) *Intellectual framework*: Identifies the development, financial, human, and/or economic priorities of the development strategy;

(ii) *Goals*: Long-term qualitative goals declared in the development plan often include:

- a. Achieving sustainable economic growth and eradicating poverty;
- b. Empowering women and men, and achieving human development;
- c. Achieving equity and fair distribution of resources at all levels.

(iii) *Targets*: While development goals are generally identified, development targets are specifically and accurately identified by developing detailed policy targets stemming from general goals, according to different economic and social sectors.

(b) *Sectoral framework*: Covers the economic, social, and financial sectors, including those oriented toward production and service. The ministries of such sectors seek to implement sectoral development targets in accordance with their assigned tasks and functions. The development targets are specifically and accurately developed, and are quantitative and reflect the policies of the different economic sectors;

(c) *Detailed framework*: Here again, targets stemming from the development goals are accurately developed to reflect the policy outputs at different levels, according to detailed youth characteristics, such as gender or geographical distribution (rural and urban);

(d) *Cross-sectoral framework*: Developing integrated policies covering all youth-related issues requires dealing with young people as a group that cuts-across all economic and social sectors. In fact, the relation between the integrated nature of policies and how they target a specific group, namely youth, will not materialize unless included in the sectoral planning process, both at production and service levels.

TABLE 5. THE AVAILABLE KEY FRAMEWORKS FOR INCORPORATING YOUTH POLICY
IN THE DEVELOPMENT PLANS OF COUNTRIES HAVING A YOUTH POLICY

Countries having a youth policy	General framework	Sectoral framework	Detailed framework	Cross-sectoral framework
Bahrain	Available	Available	Separate framework	Separate framework
Egypt	Available	Available	Separate framework	Separate framework
Jordan	Available	Available	Separate framework	Separate framework
Palestine	Available	Available	Separate framework	Separate framework
Yemen	Available	Available	Separate framework	Separate framework

22. The review of national documents on youth policies in countries having a national youth policy generated the following observations:

(a) All countries adopt a general planning framework which is unilateral and focuses on economic priorities, even if it calls, in many cases, for the development of human resources. In fact, most of the said countries have adopted economic growth as a key objective in achieving development, as they consider the human being as a production factor, which therefore requires care as much as it contributes to production and capital accumulation. Consequently, the development process suffered in most cases from its unilateral character as its strategies were developed to meet economic growth needs by enhancing production factors, including the human being, and by turning the human being into a factor governed by supply and demand laws, just like the others;

(b) All countries adopt a sectoral framework for planning. However, they overlook the fact that the human and demographic factors are linked to economic development, which creates conditions that prevent sectoral planning from succeeding in achieving equity and reducing youth social exclusion. The said conditions are manifested in the adoption of unilateral sectoral policies that call for maximizing economic growth in productive sectors by developing sectoral targets that exceed by far the targets specified for human-related sectors, thereby depleting investment allocations. In most cases, generic targets were adopted to enhance sectoral performance without considering social and demographic changes and without assimilating key gaps in income and between areas, and different social and demographic categories;

(c) All countries suffer from defects in the detailed framework of sectoral planning, which requires incorporating the social dimension related to empowerment and equity. Countries sought to develop a framework that is separate from the sectoral framework of planning. Based on that, it may be farfetched to achieve goals such as equity and equality in view of the absent factors of integration. Equity as a target, which dominated development thinking in the past decades, cannot be followed and monitored if its elements are not fully integrated in the development process. In the same line of thought, the concept of integration is linked to long-term planning, i.e. to longer time periods than the existing short five-year or medium-term plans. It is essential to adopt a long-term view of youth policies in order to take into consideration the mutual economic, social, and demographic relation, which requires time before its outcome crystallizes and becomes measurable.

23. Integrating the national youth policy into development planning requires identifying the following key inputs:

(a) *Key priorities for youth:* Education, health, engaging in the labour market, and establishing a family are key priorities for the youth period (14-25 years) which is a transitional period. Achieving those priorities motivates young people to fulfil their potentials. Nevertheless, the conditions of current societies have made the period of youth and transition to adulthood completely different to that of young generations in past decades. In fact, with globalization, new issues were added to youth priorities, the most important of which are the spread of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV/AIDS) and the outstanding growth in ICT among others. These last developments have gradually affected the daily life of young people, as they began to require further participation, and have affected social institutions and democratic decision-making processes;

(b) *Priorities and quantitative goals:* Although it is important to identify key issues for youth when formulating and implementing youth-related national policies, this identification will be meaningless unless reference indicators are available and can be measured through certain targets and time-bound goals that represent national agenda for youth development and contribute to evaluating the achieved progress in this regard. The World Programme of Action for Youth included a cluster of goals and targets to be achieved by youth policies between 2005 and 2015;

(c) *Programme of action for the implementation of goals and targets*: The identification of goals and targets related to youth development should be coupled with time-bound implementation procedures. The suggested time frame to achieve goals and targets is from 2005 to 2015 which both represent the tenth year and twentieth year since WPAY adoption, respectively.

TABLE 6. THE AVAILABLE KEY INPUTS TO INTEGRATE THE YOUTH POLICY IN THE DEVELOPMENT PLANS OF COUNTRIES HAVING A YOUTH POLICY

Countries having a youth policy	Key priorities	Quantitative goals	Programme of action
Bahrain	Available	Not available	Separate framework
Egypt	Available	Not available	Separate framework
Jordan	Available	Not available	Separate framework
Palestine	Available	Not available	Separate framework
Yemen	Available	Not available	Separate framework

24. The review of national documents on youth policies in countries having a national youth policy with regard to the available key inputs to integrate the national youth policy into development planning generated the following observations:

(a) Countries adopt pre-defined priorities that are specifically focused on education, employment, full and effective participation in society and decision-making, health, and ICT. However, the absence of full participation of youth is an obstacle to identifying the priorities of sub-categories and gender. In fact, other youth-related sectors are weakly involved in youth issues, and national dialogue and consultations with youth associations and organizations are absent;

(b) In view of the absence of official statistical data, it was impossible to identify forward-looking quantitative goals and standard indicators that could support planning as well as implementation and follow-up at a later stage. In fact, most countries suffer from the fact that youth policies are not transformed into quantitative goals with measurable implementation over different time periods;

(c) When developing programmes of action, all countries adopt immeasurable goals, and stakeholders cannot be engaged in the implementation of such goals as they do not initially contribute to the development thereof. Furthermore, the authority which developed the policy is sectoral and does not have the necessary conditions to coordinate and implement with the other authorities.

V. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING THE YOUTH PLANNING PROCESS

A. CHALLENGES

25. The challenges that prevented the emergence of integrated and effective youth policies can be summarized in a set of factors, as follows:

(a) The absence of frameworks and definitions related to modern and contemporary concepts and methods which identify youth societal and development roles, and therefore pave the way for the formulating and implementation of youth-targeted policies. Evidence shows that development strategies were formulated in response to sectoral or qualitative issues that are often addressed at the generic level, therefore overshadowing social and demographic groups which may have the most urgent needs and roles in terms of development (children, youth, and elderly). According to strategies based on the generic method to resolve qualitative issues, and in view of the unbalanced outcome of this method, the planning process as a whole is still traditional, and its tools have not been updated to include pertinent contemporary methodologies. The traditional perspective of guiding and managing priorities of development planning tends to overlook the requests and specificities of some sensitive demographic and social groups such as youth. Without the modification of such practices, those countries will not benefit from the possible opportunities offered by the demographic changes;

(b) The continued adoption of traditional planning approaches that require the homogeneity of human resources. Young people are excluded from national strategies such as poverty reduction, employment and education. In fact, youth is one of the key groups suffering from poverty, unemployment, deprivation and exclusion, but are often kept outside the scope of youth-related policies. This is attributed to the continued adoption of traditional policies that exclude youth as well as their related definitions;

(c) The continued adoption of the vertical approach in planning, which is reflected in the development of generic policies from the top of the pyramid, targeting a socio-demographic group distributed according to area, gender and age sub-groups. This type of coverage implicitly assumes that youth are a group that receives the output of such policies. Therefore, strengthening their capabilities allows them to participate in economic, social and political development. One of the paradoxes resulting from this method is that strengthening the capacities of youth was not accompanied by equal economic, social and political opportunities that correspond to their capacities or to the empowerment they received;

(d) The absence of a culture of participation. This is clearly reflected in the weak participation of young people in all fields of development and societal life. Weak participation is due to social, political, and cultural reasons. The family hegemony is one of the key reasons preventing young people's engagement in this field. In fact, a high level of youth participation in public life allows young people to control their lives, futures, and to be more independent; however, it may reduce the family hegemony, thereby causing concern to parents and society as a whole. Governments and civil society institutions contribute to reducing young people's engagement in decision-making and policy-making processes concerning their lives. Besides, the lack of institutional mechanisms reduces youth participation. Even when young people are called to participate, this participation is only formal and does not influence decisions taken. In some cases, gender disparities hinder the participation of young women outside the family. Age and gender factors, in addition to social, area and other considerations affect this participation;

(e) The absence of governance, which is reflected in weak institutional and human infrastructure in policy-making in general and youth policies in particular. In fact, the lack of coordination among sectoral ministries and their relevant authorities, including central statistical authorities, and the continued fulfilment of functions by said ministries and authorities, are factors that largely contributed to a unsuitable environment for the development of a cross-sectoral youth policy. Besides, the training of human resources in planning and programme development is inadequate and is coupled with an absence of strategic frameworks for the media in general, and youth media in particular. Such absence is reflected in weak media promotion of the importance of youth, their issues, societal roles and the sectoral measures and policies targeting them. Although the media targets young people through consumer and entertainment advertisements, its role is weak in raising the awareness of youth about their urgent issues and rights at the social and political levels, and lacks a strategic character in educating, guiding and conveying messages.

B. OPPORTUNITIES

26. In terms of available opportunities, the perspective of governments about youth-related issues in particular, went through considerable positive transformation. The national reports of member countries refer to a range of positive transformations, the most important of which being:

(a) Transformation in the strategic vision of youth, as young people are considered as a socio-demographic group with rights and obligations; according to this perspective, youth are no longer recipients only but also participants in all aspects of life;

(b) Ideological transformation in the perception of youth and consideration of the societal integration of youth as a key goal of human development and tool for the sustainability thereof. This reflects an acknowledgment of the specificity of youth issues and their interrelation with most political, economic, and social challenges faced by member countries. Today, young people are not seen as future decision-makers only, but also as a fully-effective category in society, influencing the present and the future;

(c) Positive transformation in the current discourse about youth. In fact, young people are no longer viewed as a social problem or risk-laden demographic group, but as effective and active members who require care, who have needs to be met, and who need equal opportunities in employment as well as in civil and political participation;

(d) Transformation in citizenship, which is reflected in participation at all levels and in all forms. In fact, there is a close relation between citizenship and participation, based on the fact that economic, social, and political participation is a genuine right of youth and a key starting point for implementing citizenship principles and conditions. Such participation should be facilitated for young people in various communities, governmental institutions, and civil society organizations, including the family, the educational institution, work institutions, and even civil society organizations, as participation offers various added values for young participants, institutions, organizations and society;

(e) Demographic transformation and relevant opportunities for increasing and orienting investment towards human development, given that the human being is generally the goal and tool of development, and towards youth, in particular, who are considered key to transforming the demographic opportunity into development returns. In fact, young people are responsible for employing their scientific and technical ingenuity to make technological breakthroughs at all levels.

VI. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

27. Despite the increasing interest of member countries in developing national youth policies that integrate youth issues and priorities in development planning, such efforts are still incongruent with the framework that ESCWA approved and encouraged member countries to adopt. Besides, those efforts do not take into consideration the challenges generated by contemporary economic, social, and political changes.

28. In addition to structural factors engrained in the economic, social and political nature of societies in the region, the current report diagnoses the following factors:

(a) A lack of integration between socio-economic performance and demographic performance;

(b) Focus on enhancing the human being's quality of life through comprehensive interventions instead of targeting specific socio-demographic groups;

(c) Development of a strategic vision about youth without translating it into plans and goals related to sectoral goals that are practically applicable.

29. Given that most Governments prefer achieving short-term goals, they develop scattered sectoral programmes aimed at partially meeting youth needs; however, the role of such programmes and projects is often temporary and expires when funding sources are depleted.

30. There is an absence of participation and a weak relationship between civil society organizations and public and private sectors due to non-compliance with specific principles of youth planning. Therefore, the efforts of such organizations are scattered and their effectiveness is focused on self-centred goals and not on public goals for society. In fact, youth empowerment may turn into a goal by itself, but organizations may not benefit from it as a tool in the development process.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. DEVELOPING TECHNICAL ASPECT

31. Developing the technical aspect of formulating youth policies requires using modern methodologies in youth planning given that young people are considered as a sector which, albeit distinct in itself, crosses other productive and service sectors, and therefore requires engaging young people both as contributors and beneficiaries.

32. Developing the capacities of national human resources in planning and policy-making by engaging them in training programmes that create better understanding, which contributes to formulating a national youth agenda on the one hand, and provides guidelines highlighting required conditions and helping to understand standard definitions, relevant methodologies and progress evaluation methods on the other hand.

B. DEVELOPING INSTITUTIONAL ASPECT

33. Developing the institutional aspect of formulating youth policies requires establishing institutions that coordinate among different sectors concerned with economic, social and political youth-related priorities to encourage dealing with young people as a category which, albeit targeted, crosses all economic and social sectors.

34. Effective participation should exist among all levels of government, the private sector, and youth organizations to discuss and make decisions about the structure of national youth policy, the implementation, coordination, monitoring and evaluation of youth-related programmes according to the framework of the national youth vision through which key targets are approved. Besides, due consideration should be given to the roles and responsibilities of every partner to ensure implementation of this vision.

C. PROVIDING FUNDING

35. The necessary funding should be provided to implement national youth policies and plans, and expedite the integration of youth in economic, social, and political fields. Investments offered by the demographic window are considered as a key source of funding if they are cautiously exploited.

36. Studies and research must be conducted to calculate the cost of lost social and economic opportunity resulting from reluctance in developing national youth policies, in view of increasing governmental interest in funding the implementation of national youth policies and integrating such policies in the agenda of development investments that have multidimensional returns.

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