
PARTNERS IN POLICY

Synopsis of a paper presented by participants
of the 4th Diploma Course in Youth and Develop-
ment Asia-Pacific Centre

THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

There are three principal reasons advanced why governments
should initiate national youth policy

- 1.1 The present situation of youth requires it -
 - 1.1.1 In more than 30 Commonwealth countries,
young people under the age of 30 comprise
at least 50 per cent of the population;
 - 1.1.2 Youth constitute more than 60 per cent of
the economically active population of
the Commonwealth;
 - 1.1.3 To ignore youth by doing without a
national youth policy is to fail to
grasp the significance of the youth
contribution in a rapidly changing
society.
- 1.2 National Development objectives require it -
 - 1.2.1 Governments should view youth as a valuable
asset in the national development process;
 - 1.2.2 They are a comparatively mobile labour
force;
 - 1.2.3 Given scope, they are a dynamic force for
change;
 - 1.2.4 A national youth policy which develops the
talents and potentials of youth in a
conscious manner is vital to the national
interest;
 - 1.2.5 In the efforts to construct a new inter-
national economic order, government will
have to explain to youths why and how their
contribution is needed;
 - 1.2.6 The option is not to do something for the
youth, but to work with the youth; and
 - 1.2.7 The alternative is to perpetuate frustration
and bitterness, leading to apathy.

- 1.3 The needs and aspirations of youth cannot legitimately be ignored -
 - 1.3.1 Democratic governments cannot ignore the needs and aspirations of half their populations; and
 - 1.3.2 In a "no policy" vacuum, government and non-government agencies working with youth cannot articulate to government what youth are saying.
2. The existence of a national youth policy makes it easier to co-ordinate the resources and funds invested in young people at all levels and by various ministries and voluntary organisations.
3. A national youth policy should take into account -
 - 3.1 The regional diversity within each country;
 - 3.2 The diversity of the youth population;
 - 3.3 The necessary level of autonomy for youth workers; and
 - 3.4 Sufficient avenues for feedback and suggestions from youth workers and young people themselves.

SCOPE OF A NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

(1) YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN DECISION MAKING

In order to achieve a meaningful participation of young people and their organisations in the process of development we recommend the following specific provisions be contained under the scope of a national youth policy.

- 1.1 Youth to participate effectively in all major decision-making processes of all levels of government in respect to social, economic, political, cultural and religious matters;
- 1.2 Government to recognise the importance of contribution by youth to national development and invite and consult with youth representation in the planning, implementation, operation and evaluation of policies and programmes;
- 1.3 Youth representation in the forums of government, if necessary introducing legislation in national and state parliaments;

- 1.4 Formation of federations of youth organisations at various levels, such as national and district youth councils; and
- 1.5 Training programmes and facilities for young leaders.

(2) EMPLOYMENT

The scope of a national youth policy should make specific provisions in regard to youth and employment and in particular confront the situation of unemployment, the single most common problem faced by the Commonwealth countries today.

2 The scope of the national youth policy should make provision for:

- 2.1 Adequate and fulfilling employment to all sections of the youth population;
- 2.2 Preventing exploitation of youth in the workforce;
- 2.3 Re-training and on-the-job training to keep pace with technological change; and
- 2.4 The immediate implementation of temporary and ongoing assistance to out-of-work youth.

3 In firstly easing the unemployment situation it is suggested that the policy should include:

- 3.1 Regular unconditional assistance through either cash payments or alternative schemes to provide an adequate life while unemployed;
- 3.2 Medical and hospital coverage while unemployed
- 3.3 Innovative programmes and alternatives to employment that counteract the social and psychological effects of unemployment, through education in living skills training that will equip the individual to cope better with being unemployed;
- 3.4 Vocational and business skills training which increases the employability and hence productivity of young people through initiatives in work co-operatives, community based self-help schemes; self employment and entrepreneurship schemes;
- 3.5 Increasing rural employment opportunities and incentives in an attempt to avoid the worsening and more difficult urban unemployment problems.

(3) EDUCATION

The ability of a society to provide more adequate and better education for its members can be regarded as one of the objectives of economic development. But as well as being an end of development, it should also be seen as a significant instrument in achieving it.

2 If education is to act as an instrument of development policy, and we maintain it definitely should, governments need to initiate new policies towards realigning the education system in this context as a stage and strategy of national development.

3 The scope of a national youth policy should include under education, provisions for:

- 3.1 Free and meaningful education within easy access for all young people;
- 3.2 The cost for all levels of education to be borne by the state not the individual or the family;
- 3.3 Out-of-school non-formal education for young people who do not participate in the formal education system or whose learning requirements are not met by the formal education system;
- 3.4 Special educational facilities for the physically handicapped, mentally retarded emotionally disturbed and hospitalised young people;
- 3.5 Vocational guidance and job placement services linked to the educational system via departments of employment and manpower planning;
- 3.6 For youth to contribute towards evaluations of the current education system so that their views may be taken into consideration in modifying educational policies by providing youth representation on school or academic boards;
- 3.7 Civic education as a means of broadening the range of learning to include the opportunity for young people to learn aspects of international cultural, social and national functioning.

(4) NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

Non-formal education is an organised and planned educational activity operating outside the structure and routine of the formal school-oriented system of education. It is a process of understanding the individual's own need, the environmental situation, the societal goals, and their mutual inter-relationships.

In the context of a national youth policy the fundamental aim is to help the young people to develop their learning needs, which are related to health, nutrition, family planning, functional literacy and numeracy, skills for improving family life such as building up good personal character traits and positive attitudes, increasing agricultural productivity, developing skills for gaining full or part-time employment to supplement the family income, co-operating with local government and voluntary organisations in development programmes and activities.

(5) SOCIAL CHANGE

In many of the Commonwealth countries there is too great a gap between the objectives and policies as pursued by existing political, social and economic systems and those which youth can accept. It is not being advocated that the views of those systems must be identical with those of youth. However within the systems there must be sufficient room for the free expression of opinion, activity and self organisation of young people. Otherwise it might lead to the existence of a static society in which youth fails to play its vital role as a stimulator and agent of change.

2 The national youth policy therefore should:

- 2.1 Create accessible structures for youth, through which youth can effectively mobilise public opinion to bring the developmental needs of their fellow citizens to the attention of the authorities. The structures should include new ways of utilising modern media of communication - periodic youth forums on radio and television, youth columns in national dailies, and publication of youth magazines;
- 2.2 Encourage youth to educate the community through folk plays, work camps and public forums on issues of local and international concern;
- 2.3 Facilitate the greater interchange of young people from developed and developing areas of the world as a step in breaking down racial barriers and fostering greater understanding.

(6) INFORMATION AND DATA BASE

In most of the Commonwealth countries, there is not sufficient knowledge on the current situation of youth. This results in authorities formulating policies on youth concentrating on superficial issues, thus directing attention from or obscuring the real aspirations and needs of youth.

2 The scope of the national youth policy should make provision for:

- 2.1 Development of a comprehensive information and data base for the planning and evaluation of programmes relevant to young people and broad national objectives;
- 2.2 Establishing a youth information and research unit within the national department having primary functional responsibility for youth to perform these tasks;
- 2.3 Creating opportunities for youth and government to evaluate and assess the programmes designed to develop and harness youth potential.

(7) LEISURE RECREATION AND SPORTS

Recreational programmes serve a useful purpose in the overall planning of youth programmes; the need therefore must be borne in mind for a balance to be established between those of a purely recreational nature and those aimed, for example at training the youth in various skills, with a view to either personal development or more appropriate employment.

2 Hence, the scope of the national youth policy should make provision for:

- 2.1 Educating the youth and their leaders on the philosophy and fundamentals of recreation and sport;
- 2.2 Assessing youth's leisure needs and recreational interests at both national and community levels, and formulating comprehensive programmes and plans that make the best possible use of available physical, social, financial and human resources;
- 2.3 Providing appropriate structures for promoting, planning, developing, implementing, co-ordinating and advising on recreational and sport activities for youth;

- 2.4 Training of professionals and leaders in the field of recreation and sport with good understanding of modern recreation philosophy and programme areas concerning youth;
- 2.5 Enabling the youth to contribute their ideas, suggestions and potentials in planning, leading, participating and evaluating their recreational and sport activities.

(8) RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION

We believe a committed programme by governments in rural regeneration would play a major role in halting the rural-urban drift in many of our countries.

2 The enormous exodus of rural youth to urban areas has been recognised as one of the chief reasons for heavy urban unemployment.

3 The scope of the national youth policy should focus on:-

- 3.1 providing more productive employment opportunities and incentives in rural areas;
- 3.2 Enhancing the quality of rural life to reverse the present migration to towns;
- 3.3 Reducing the traditional dependence of rural areas on a few primary products;
- 3.4 Achievement of a fuller utilisation of available physical and human resources;
- 3.5 Increasing agricultural efficiency for all farmers. Development must not result in prosperous farmers growing richer while peasants grow poorer.

(9) POLICY AND PROGRAMME INTEGRATION

The scope of a national youth policy should ensure that there are adequate administrative arrangements to integrate the youth policy with other national policies; and to integrate the delivery of youth services across the separate government departments and the non-government organisations implementing programmes affecting youth.

2 These arrangements should apply at the ministerial and bureaucratic levels. Arrangements should also be made at the scale at which programmes are implemented - local and district-regional.

3 We propose a decentralisation of decision making on programme expenditure within national guidelines. In our view, policy creation is a national level function; programme development may be shared between the national and regional levels- but programme implementation can conveniently be left to the regional-district level.

4 Our concern is to ensure that national policy intentions actually get carried out on the ground. Youth involvement in national development has to be on a mass scale. The youth contribution will be weakened if the programme implementation results in only a selective outreach to young people.

EVOLVING A NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

National governments committed to introducing a national youth policy have a number of options open to them by which a policy can be formulated.

2 It is the specialist working group which we have chosen since we believe it is the approach most likely to be adopted by the majority of Commonwealth countries.

3 In the paper we outline a logical sequence of procedures covering:-

- establishment and composition of working group
- terms of reference
- drafting stages
- public consultation and research
- circulation of draft report and feedback
- additional resources and assistance
- final report and recommendations

4 The consultation process we have recommended including a representative working group appears to us to meet the criteria of efficiency, credibility, comprehensiveness and sensitivity to diversity that should characterise the process of formulating a national youth policy.

ROLE OF COMMONWEALTH YOUTH PROGRAMME

There is a vital and ongoing contribution to be played by the Commonwealth Youth Programme but we suggest certain shifts in emphasis to encourage flexibility of design and implementation and programmes to meet the individual needs of Commonwealth member governments through:

- fellowships and study grants
- short term national training courses
- short term courses at the regional centres
- development of small mobile training teams
- international exchanges of youth leaders
- national and international meetings of young leaders.