

The Structure of a National Youth Policy

The essential features of a national youth policy were summarised by participants in a CYP Asia Centre Regional Policy Consultation in Islamabad, Pakistan in 1992, when they noted the following points:

- ① "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".
- ② "establish a clearly discernible linkage between the development of youth and the overall national development plan".
- ③ "based on an objective and realistic assessment of the existing as well as prospective areas of concern and issues of development for youth, in particular, and the nation, in general ...".
- ④ "must provide for critical and objective review of the policy from time to time so that it remains consistent with the changing scenario in youth work and ground realities of the country".
- ⑤ "must fit qualitative as well as quantitative targets to be achieved within a specified period of time ...".
- ⑥ "should spell out only broad parameters of work and general outline of action so that the implementing agencies, especially the NGOs, have adequate scope and freedom to evolve their own programmes and activities on the basis of their philosophy of work, objectives, needs of the beneficiary groups and position of resources".
- ⑦ "in the process of development of youth policy, it will be desirable to consult all sections of the community, most importantly youth ...".
- ⑧ "identify specific youth groups, for priority attention ...".
- ⑨ "an integrated approach in the development of youth forums one of the cornerstones of youth policy ..".

"... in short, a national youth policy should be concerned with all aspects of youth integration into society and with its participation in all sectors of development both as contributors and as beneficiaries".

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Youth Policy Proposal for Swaziland

The Working Group on Youth Policy Development at the recent Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago (May 1995) specifically recommended the following key considerations about gender-inclusive youth policy formulation and implementation:

- ① All member governments of the Commonwealth should have their national youth policies formulated or updated by the year 2000, demonstrating their full commitment to the young people of their country. This political commitment is absolutely essential if implementation of the youth policies is to be ensured. It will also help to put youth issues on the national agenda.
- ② The parameters and the scope of the national youth policies should be determined by each country, as a response to its specific political set up, social situation and cultural ethos.
- ③ Young people should be fully involved not only in the formulation of national youth policies but also in their implementation. It must, however, be ensured that all sections of the youth populations are represented in this process.

- ④ It is not enough to formulate national youth policies. What is more important is their implementation. It is therefore necessary that member governments should develop national plans of action for youth, consistent with the policies. Resources should also be made available to ensure that this plan of action is fully implemented.
- ⑤ There is a need for constant review of national youth policies to ensure that they continue to address the needs and concerns of young people.
- ⑥ Youth Ministries should be strengthened, in terms of resource allocation and status.

The above two sets of elements provide useful checklists. Each country will need to make its own decisions on actual structure and components of their national youth policy. For guidance, the following summary of common ingredients is provided. However, this structure is not meant to be prescriptive, and in no way should limit the imagination or national/cultural imperatives regarding format and what should be included or excluded.

Ⓐ Preface

This is usually written by the appropriate Minister Responsible for Youth Affairs, the Head of Government or Head of State, and provides a brief overview of the document, highlighting its national importance, its purpose, and usually emphasises the significant roles young women and men must play in national development.

Ⓑ Introduction

This section provides the opportunity to explain:

1 Background and purpose/rationale

In this part, an explanation is given as to why a policy is being introduced which targets young women and men and what it is intended to achieve. For example:

"Due to historical and contemporary challenges, facing the young people, the Government of the Republic of Namibia has deemed it necessary to bring together, all young men and women of this country, irrespective of their colour, ethnic origin, religious background or political affiliation, to hammer out a policy guideline for themselves. This Policy will provide an operational framework with a set of realistic guidelines, from which action programmes and services can be developed, to facilitate meaningful involvement of youth in national development efforts and to respond to their various needs."

KEY HEADINGS OF A NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY INCLUDE:

- A Preface
- B Introduction
 - ① Background and purpose/rationale
 - ② Definition of youth
 - ③ Youth profile
 - ④ Historical and contemporary issues impinging on young women and men
 - ⑤ Background to the development of youth services in the country
 - ⑥ Reference to other relevant policies and documents
 - ⑦ Principles and values underlying the national youth policy
- C Goal(s) and vision statement
- D Policy objectives
- E Rights, responsibilities and obligations of young women and men
- F Key strategy areas
- G Priority target groups
- H Implementation mechanisms
- I Conclusion

2 Definition of youth

There is no generally agreed Commonwealth or worldwide youth age definition. It is important for each country to establish its own definition appropriate to national circumstances. Obviously there is a variety of positions as illustrated by the following definitions:

Commonwealth Youth Programme	16 – 29 years	Mozambique	14 – 35 years
United Nations	15 – 24 years	Western Samoa	15 – 35 years
Swaziland	12 – 30 years	Malaysia	15 – 40 years
		Bahamas	5 – 25 years

See *Information Sheet No. 1* in Tool Kit for a summary of definitions of youth age, the age of maturity, and the age of the right to vote in Commonwealth countries.

It may be appropriate for a policy to also clarify a degree of flexibility in their definition. For example, the Malawi National Youth Policy includes:

"This Policy defines youth as all young people, female and male, from the age of 14 to 25 years. However, it is recognised that youth is not only a chronological definition, but also a term commonly used to describe roles in society ascribed to the young. This Policy, therefore will be flexible to accommodate young people under 14 years and over 25 years depending on their social and economic circumstances. The age definition, despite its limitation, offers certain statistical utility as well as the practical convenience of a definitive social group which has its own specific problems and needs."

Similarly, the Draft National Youth Policy of Botswana states:

"The National Youth Policy is directed toward young males and females who are aged from 12 to 29 years. Young people in this age group require social, economic and political support to realise their full potential. This is a time when most young people are going through dramatic changes in their life circumstances as they move from childhood to adulthood. It is recognised, however, that there may be some people who fall outside this age range, but who may experience similar circumstances to other young people (eg: there may be 10 year olds who are not engaged in full-time education). Thus, this definition is intended to indicate the primary target group, without excluding those who may share similar circumstances!"

3 Youth profile

Usually a brief statement is included within most national youth policies to provide a profile picture of the country's young men and women. Such a section often outlines the relationship between young women and men and the key socio-economic parameters. It should include both:

- * Quantitative information disaggregated by age and gender. For example, reference to:
 - overall youth population figures and proportion of total population;
 - urban/rural and regional distribution;
 - rate of growth (especially in relation to general population groups);

family structures;
ethnicity;
health status
literacy and education levels;
labour force participation and occupations;
income levels;
migration trends;
religious affiliation and participation;
recreation activities.

★ **Qualitative gender-focused information.** For example, reference to:

specific gender issues relating to disadvantages such as, illiteracy, lack of educational opportunity, unemployment, health problems, sexual abuse and physical violence, drug abuse, and crime; and findings of attitudinal surveys of young men and women reflecting on their needs, concerns and preferences.

Summarising this information usually provides insights and comparisons into the following basic questions about the country's young women and men:

- ★ who are they?
- ★ where are they?
- ★ what are they doing?

For sake of the brevity and flow of text, some policies contain the major proportion of profile information as an appendix or as a separate, but accompanying document.

4 Historical and contemporary issues impinging on young men and women

Historical and contemporary issues usually provide an overview of the issues which have contributed to the above youth profile. In particular, the identification of key issues and challenges facing young women and men are often summarised as part of a situation analysis. Such an analysis may cover trends over time as well as interpretations across disaggregated groups of the youth population. Hence, situational analysis is of fundamental importance in determining the specific components of national youth policies and the nature of associated programmes. The policy should list barriers and issues that young women and men face in accessing opportunities and fully participating in national development.

5 Background to the development of youth services in the country

A brief outline of the development of youth services in the country may help to provide a useful context.

6 Reference to other relevant policies and documents

The policy context of a national youth policy will often require it to make reference to other relevant policies and documents. These may be broad development or fundamental policies such as the national constitution, national development policy; or they may be sectoral policies such as the labour code and national education and vocational training policy.

7 Principles and values underlying the national youth policy

Any national youth policy is strengthened by the inclusion of a section on cultural values, principles or rationale which underpin the policy. The following examples from Namibia, Australia, Malaysia and Botswana respectively, illustrate this:

- * "respect for the principles of democracy and basic human rights as expressed in the Namibian Constitution.

promotion of national unity including a commitment to non racialism, non sexism.

respect for human dignity and a respect for the culture and values of Namibian tradition.

promotion of the total well-being of youth including physical, mental, spiritual and cultural aspects.

provision of equitable opportunities for the development of the full potential of all Namibians.

pursuit of the highest standards by all involved in working with youth.

active involvement of youth in decision making and national development programmes."

National Youth Policy of Namibia

- * "The development and implementation of youth policy and programmes should be based on the following principles:

Equity – recognition of the rights, and associated responsibilities, of all young people to equality of opportunity and equitable distribution of services and resources.

Participation – recognition that young people are participants in society and as such have a role and responsibility in making decisions which affect their lives.

Access – access to adequate and appropriate programmes and services by all young people regardless of gender, geographic location, social, cultural or economic circumstances."

A National Youth Policy – A Statement of Principles and Objectives – Australia

- * "Youth development in this country is based on the following principles:

to practice the Principle of Rukun Negara (National Principles)

to inculcate the spirit of solidarity, voluntarism and practise autonomy

to nurture leadership qualities

to encourage involvement in national building

to have high moral and positive attitudes towards personal health and fitness

to be highly knowledgeable."

In addition, there may be reference to key international documents which the country is a signatory and considers of relevance to the national youth policy.

Examples could include:

- * The Commonwealth Youth Charter*.
- * Commonwealth Plan of Action on* Gender and Development.
- * The Charter of the United Nations.
- * The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.
- * UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*.
- * ILO Resolutions concerning young men and women.
- * The Beijing Declaration (Fourth World Conference on Women).
- * International Charter of Physical Education and Sport (UNESCO).

* Copies of these documents are included within the Tool Kit.

- ★ *"The National Youth Policy has been established within the broader frame work of national development for Botswana which is embodied in the four national principles, being:*

Democracy Puso Ya Batho Ka Batho

Development Ditiro Tsa Dit I Habololo

Self reliance Bol Pelego

Unity Popagano Ya Sochaba

The National Youth Policy provides the Government of Botswana with the opportunity to promote these principles amongst young people. Thus, the Policy expresses:

- ① *appreciation of the precious qualities and talents of young women and men in Botswana;*
- ② *acknowledgment of the aspirations and needs of young people in preparing for adult life and employment; and*
- ③ *Recognition of the services, facilities and programmes that are required on a national basis to encourage and enable the achievement and potential contribution of all young people".*

Draft National Youth Policy of Botswana

Key documents for reflection about the principles upon which a national youth policy should be formulated include the Commonwealth Youth Charter, Declarations which have emanated from Commonwealth Heads of Government (Harare in 1991 and Auckland in 1995) and the principles of the UN World Programme of Action for Youth. The report of the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meetings (Trinidad and Tobago in 1995) is also an important resource. Some of these documents are included in the Tool Kit.

Finally, Commonwealth countries as members of the United Nations have agreed to work towards achievement of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations which enable young men and women to enjoy full participation in the life of society. Such Charter principles include:

- ★ *"attainment of an educational level commensurate with their aspirations;*
- ★ *access to employment opportunities equal to their abilities;*
- ★ *food and nutrition adequate for full participation in the life of society;*
- ★ *a physical and social environment that promotes good health and protection from disease and addiction and that is free from all types of violence;*
- ★ *human rights and fundamental freedoms without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion or any other forms of discrimination;*
- ★ *participation in decision-making processes;*
- ★ *places and facilities for cultural, recreational and sports activities to improve the living standards of young people in both rural and urban areas".*

Ⓒ Goal(s) and vision statement

When formulating a national youth policy, it will be important to provide an overriding statement of the broad aims of the policy, setting out what the policy is intended to do and achieve. Goal statements are:

- ★ an expression of the desired future and desired outcomes for the country's young women and men
- ★ general and qualitative statements, ie. they describe what is being hoped for without a quantitative measure of it – quantitative statements come later when specific objectives are set

For some countries, their goal statement is as simple as

"the youth policy seeks to develop the full potential of young men and women, and promote their active participation in national development".

Ideally objectives should be SMART.

S pecific

M easurable

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R ealistic, and to a

T imetable

Often national youth policies contain more than one goal. A review of national youth policies illustrated that goal statements often incorporate the following types of themes:

- ★ **Involving young men and women in national development and social responsibility**
recognition of the importance of actively involving young women and men fully in all aspects of national and community life, and organised to assume their legal, social and personal responsibilities.
- ★ **Facilitating a co-ordinated response**
recognition of the need for the co-ordination of efforts in securing the needs of young men and women by government, non-government organisations, their families and communities.
- ★ **Fostering economic well-being**
recognition of the need for young women and men to be able to access education, training and employment opportunities.
- ★ **Developing supportive families and communities**
recognition that positive and supportive relationships between young men and women and their families and others in the community are crucial to development and growth, including protection from exploitation.
- ★ **Achieving social justice**
recognition that there may be certain groups of young women and men who have specific needs and may require special services and attention.
- ★ **Ensuring gender equity and equality**
providing the opportunity for all young men and women to have a sustainable life.
- ★ **Promoting healthy lifestyles and personal well-being**
recognition of key health issues where young men and women are especially at risk as well as the importance to encourage young people to participate in the arts, sport, recreation and cultural development activities.
- ★ **Encouraging positive perspectives toward global issues and international understanding**
recognition of the need for young women and men to be a global citizens.

The following examples of national youth policy goal statements illustrate the diversity of style and focus:

- ★ *"we the people are committed to creating an environment in which young people will be encouraged and facilitated to develop their full mental, social, spiritual and physical potential through the provisions of economic and training opportunities to enable them to become responsible and productive citizens. This environment will be achieved through the collaborative efforts of the youth, government, private sector and the community".*

★ *"the National Youth Policy strives to:*

- ① *Recognise and promote the participation and contribution of young women and men in Botswana's socio-economic development.*
- ② *Develop a co-ordinated and holistic response by all stakeholders involved in youth development programmes and activities to the major issues facing young people in Botswana.*
- ③ *Develop families and communities that are supportive of young people, presenting positive role models and promoting social justice and national pride."*

Draft National Youth Policy of Botswana

★ *"the National Youth Policy has the following goals:*

- ① *National Integration – to extend the social knowledge and skills of young people and open up more avenues for them to develop a national identity.*
- ② *Community Advancement – to link young men and women effectively into processes for community advancement and decision-making.*
- ③ *Participation – to maintain a strong and autonomous National Youth Movement helping to shape development aims and strategies.*
- ④ *Productive Action – to ensure that young men and women are productively contributing to the National Development strategy".*

The National Youth Policy of Papua and New Guinea

★ *"the National Youth Policy is directed towards the following goals:*

- ① *Seeking to address the needs and problems of all categories of youths.*
- ② *Setting specific objectives with regard to youth development within the context of the national politico-socio-economic realities as spelt out from time to time in the National Development Planning Strategies.*
- ③ *Guaranteeing the involvement and participation of youths in overall national policy formulation, programme planning and execution, supervision, co-ordination and evaluation".*

The National Youth Policy of the Gambia

④ Policy objectives

It is necessary to incorporate a set of policy objective statements within the national youth policy to indicate the means by which the goal(s) of the policy are to be achieved. Policy objectives seek to identify exactly what will be achieved, how it will be done and when it will be accomplished.

In summary, policy objectives enable a country to:

- ★ Set out very clearly what it intends to do for young men and women
- ★ Check progress during implementation – and take necessary remedial action
- ★ Evaluate results – in order to learn for the future

POLICY OBJECTIVE STATEMENTS ARE:

- ★ the means by which goals are realised
- ★ derived directly from the goal(s)

Some examples of policy objective statements utilising the goal themes above include:

★ **Involving young men and women in national development and social responsibility**

"To facilitate youth leadership in all socio-economic and cultural spheres".

Guyana

"Mobilisation of Namibian youth in urgent tasks of national reconstruction and development".

Namibia

"To inculcate in young people the spirit of national identity".

Swaziland

"To instill in the youth a deep awareness of and respect of the principles and values enshrined in our Constitution and a willingness to further the rule of law, with an abiding commitment to national integration, non-violence, secularism and socialism".

India

"To involve young people at the planning, decision making and implementation levels of development programmes.

Botswana

★ **Facilitating a co-ordinated response**

"To encourage effective co-ordination of youth work in Zambia at both Ministerial and Departmental levels, encompassing youth in the formal and informal sectors".

Swaziland

"To provide a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to the development and implementation of sectoral programmes affecting the youth".

Zambia

"To recognise the roles and promote the functions of NGOs in Youth Development".

Swaziland

"To design a comprehensive, multi sectoral response to the major problems and needs of young people in Botswana".

Botswana

★ **Fostering economic well-being**

"To provide opportunities for young people to develop work and life skills which help them become responsible and self reliant members of the community".

Namibia

"To ensure that young people are aware of their rights and responsibilities as young workers".

Australia

"To provide more opportunities for the youth to develop and acquire employable vocational skills".

Malawi

★ **Developing supportive families and communities**

"Provision of opportunities for young people to develop relevant life and work skills which will help them become responsible and self reliant members of the community".

"To provide for youth protection against abuse".

Zambia

"To promote safe and supportive family and community environments in which young people are protected from violence, neglect and discrimination".

Australia

*** Achieving social justice**

"To provide proper and relevant training facilities and rehabilitation for young people who violate the laws of the land or are in conflict with society".

Swaziland

"To cater for the needs of the youth with disabilities".

Zambia

"To discourage sexism in our society".

Guyana

*** Ensuring gender equity and equality**

No examples were found of any national youth policy which expressly stated this objective. However, it is fundamental in a gender-inclusive policy and should be stated along the lines:

To ensure that all young men and women have the opportunity for a sustainable life.

*** Promoting healthy lifestyles and personal well-being**

"Promotion of healthy lifestyles amongst youth, with special focus on the dangers of alcoholism, unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and other social problems through family life education".

Namibia

"Develop appropriate programmes to address the problems of substance abuse".

British Virgin Islands

*** Encouraging positive perspectives toward global issues and international understanding**

"Enable youth in Malta to develop a mature, world-vision that transcends insularity".

Malta

"Development of national, regional and international cooperation, enabling exchange of ideas and experiences with other young people and youth organisations".

Namibia

"To make the youth aware of international issues and involve them in promoting world peace, understanding and a just international economic order".

India

*** Developing positive attitudes and actions toward the environmental issues at local, national and international levels:**

"stimulation of environmental awareness and responsibilities towards environmental protection among young people".

Namibia

"to instill in our youth a concern for the environment".

Guyana

Ⓔ Rights, responsibilities and obligations of young women and men

Several countries within their national youth policies have stressed the importance of the inclusion of themes which emphasise the rights and obligations of young men and women. For example:

- ★ *"The National Youth Policy recognises the rights of the youth which shall be founded on the sanctity of human life and human dignity as follows:*

freedom of expression.

protection from any form of exploitation, discrimination and abuse.

representation by fellow youth in decision making bodies affecting the youth.

access to all benefits of citizenship such as education, training, employment, legal services, health care, recreation, etc.

right to individual and collective ownership of property.

right to good parental care.

freedom to form lawful association of their own".

National Youth Policy of Malawi

- ★ *"The National Youth Policy recognises the duty of all Namibian youth to make an active and positive contribution to the development of society, in particular:*

to promote the policy of national reconciliation.

to take initiative and actively participate in the national development process by acquiring skills that enable them to become productive citizens.

to promote and defend democracy through active participation in the democratic process at all levels.

to protect and conserve the environment for future generations.

to respect senior citizens and to be courteous to those who are disabled.

to honour and respect the Namibian State Symbols".

National Youth Policy of Namibia

- ★ A Working Party on Youth Policy Formulation in Hong Kong provided an overview of the areas related to the rights of their young people which they believed a national youth policy should elaborate:

"... equal opportunity; freedom of opinion; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of association; protection from abuse and neglect; access to appropriate information; the right of handicapped children to special care; the right to leisure, play and participation in cultural and artistic activities; protection from engaging in work that constitutes a threat to their health, education and development; protection from drug abuse and sexual exploitation ..."

Countries like Malawi also considered it important to include a complimentary section entitled *"The Roles of Adults with the Youth"*.

- ★ *"The National Youth Policy recognises the important role of adults in guiding the youth as follows:*

to be role models.

to provide for the physical, emotional, mental, moral, spiritual and economic well-being of the youth.

to accept the youth, recognise and acknowledge their potential contribution to the society.

to cooperate with the youth in all development programmes".

- * Similarly the National Youth Policy of the Republic of Seychelles underlines the importance "*ascribed to adults in the development, guidance and training of young people and which confers upon them the obligation to:*

act in an exemplary manner and put into practice the values and laws upon which Seychelles society is based.

support emotionally, psychologically, morally and economically the young people under their charge whether form legal, parental or professional responsibility.

accept young people, not only in respect to their potential to be of service to society but also with regard to their differences, preference and particular needs.

help the young to develop responsibility for themselves and to assume the capacity to stand on their own in a context of social harmony.

cooperate in development programmes aimed at the youth and offer to share skills, knowledge and enthusiasms voluntarily for the benefit of young people and the community in which they live.

be sensitive to young people and their difficulties, enter into dialogue with them, suggest solutions, exchange views, and develop understanding and communication.

be willing to work on committees or advisory groups in partnership with young people to achieve the aims and objectives set out in the National Youth Policy".

In preparing statements on rights, it is important to specify that young women must be able to enjoy all rights offered to young men. The Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Vienna Declaration on women's rights as human rights are useful source documents.

Finally, there is a wealth of international declarations and commentaries which provide important starting points in the formulation of statements on rights and responsibilities. In particular, the following (some of which are contained in the Tool Kit) are invaluable sources:

- * Harare Commonwealth Declaration – emanated from the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in October 1991;
- * United Nations Declaration on Youth provided by the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs;
- * Relevant ILO resolutions concerning young men and women;
- * Indicators to monitor the Implementation of the International Law of Youth Rights: 1995 – 2000;
- * United Nations Convention on The Rights of the Child; and
- * Vienna Declaration on Human Rights (1993).

Some national youth policies have combined values, rights and obligations/responsibilities under the general theme of "Principles".

(F) Key strategy areas

Whilst recognising there are a wide range of issues which impinge upon young women and men, national youth policies should identify key strategy areas that must be addressed through specific sub policies, programmes, actions and services. Such a set of priority strategy areas will be unique to each

country, and usually emerge through the formulation processes of consultation and study outlined below (see Part 3 of this handbook). However common gender-disaggregated areas emerging across countries include:

- * education and training*
- * youth employment*
- * health and population*
- * poverty*
- * youth involvement and participation*
- * gender discrimination
- * environment
- * culture
- * science and technology
- * arts, recreation, sports and leisure*
- * communication and the media
- * civics and citizenship*
- * drug abuse*
- * juvenile delinquency*

Those areas of action marked with an asterisk (*) were identified by the international community through the UN. statement 'World Programme of Action, for Young Men and Women to the Year 2000 and Beyond' as top priorities.

The Youth Research Centre in Melbourne (1989) has provided a useful framework for categorising youth issues which have relevance to youth policy formulation, namely:

- * Pathways – issues related to structural pathways/which young men and women require in the transition from dependence to adult independence (eg. education, training, employment, etc).
- * Personal issues eg. health issues, drug dependence, leisure options, etc.
- * Public participation – issues of citizenship, empowerment and participation in societal decision making.

Societies may differ in their social, economic, political, legal, religious, educational and cultural institutions, but they are all largely premised on a patriarchal ideology which allocates young women and men differential access to power, knowledge and prestige. This discussion can be both global and country or region specific, in the context of the structural ways in which societies promote or deny access by young women and men to power, knowledge and prestige.

Attention should be given to strategies which promote greater gender equality. The Beijing Platform for Action identifies a number of issues of concern with regard to "the girl child", which in fact is an elaboration of the specific ways in which societies have structured young women unequally and inequitably. A number of key areas of discrimination against the girl child are contained in the Beijing Platform for Action, including:

- * all practices which result in fewer girls than boys surviving to adulthood in some societies;
- * stereotyping of gender roles of girls and boys;
- * gender-biased educational processes, including curricula, educational materials and practices, teacher's attitudes and classroom interaction;

There are a number of specific gender issues that a national youth policy should incorporate, including:

- * POWER – autonomy, manifested in self-reliance, freedom from coercion, freedom of physical mobility, participation in household and community decision-making, and mobilisation for group action;
 - * KNOWLEDGE – includes specific skills, general knowledge (literacy, numeracy, vocational skills, etc.) and an understanding of the interplay of socio-economic and political forces at the level of the household, community and wider society; and
 - * PRESTIGE – self-esteem, the belief in one's value as a person; the esteem of others in the community and society.
- * inequality of educational opportunities between young women and men;
 - * discrimination against young girls/women in access to nutrition and physical and mental health services;
 - * motherhood at a very young age which is an impediment to improvements in the educational, economic and social status of women;
 - * the vulnerability of young girls/women to sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases; and
 - * the additional barriers faced by young girls/women with disabilities.

Ⓒ Priority target groups

Whilst a national youth policy is directed to the aspirations and needs of all young women and men, the policy should identify certain target groups specifically requiring special attention. These should be determined on the basis of social and economic realities.

The needs and aspirations of young women require special attention. It remains true, that in many Commonwealth countries, young women, half the youth population, remain most at risk in terms of educational opportunities, employment and health problems.

The reality for most women, especially young women, still falls considerably short of the vision expressed by Commonwealth Heads of Government in their Cyprus statement in 1993 of

"a world in which women enjoyed their full rights and were equal partners in shaping the economic, political and social development of their countries". One of the five key strategies endorsed by the Heads of Government in Cyprus was 'priority for women and girls!'

This position was also well described by UNICEF in 1994 with these words:

"Girls of today are women of tomorrow. If tomorrow's women are to become equal partners with men in social change and development, now is the time to accord the girl-child her rightful share of human dignity and opportunity. Yet there exists world wide discrimination and violence against girls that begins even before they are born and continue unabated through their lives. They have less access to nutrition, health and education, enjoy fewer rights, opportunities and benefits of childhood and adolescence than boys. They are subjected to sexual and economic exploitation, violence, and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation and early marriage. Their daily existence and long term aspirations are restricted by attitudes, structures and lack of resources that prevent their full participation. For a girl to develop her full potential she should be nurtured in an environment of opportunity and dignity where her needs are met and rights safeguarded"

Priority target groups examples could include:

- * young people with disabilities
- * rural young women and men
- * unemployed young men and women
- * out of school young women and men
- * students
- * street children
- * young women
- * young refugees and migrants
- * young men and women who are HIV positive
- * young drug addicts
- * indigenous young men and women
- * young offenders
- * young women and men in the informal sector
- * orphans

The national youth policy may need special reference to those factors and barriers which restrict young women from fully participating in socio-economic development and available opportunities.

At a recent Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, (Trinidad and Tobago, May 1995) Ministers highlighted the fact that young women would only gain equitable access to resources and full, effective participation in decision making when gender issues were made explicit in national youth policies and programmes:

"Noting the special disadvantages and inequalities experienced by young women in decision-making, participation, education, health and access to resources where this exists in many parts of the Commonwealth, we recommend that youth policies and programmes should incorporate specific gender perspectives and especially target young women!"

Message to Commonwealth Heads of Government from Ministry Responsible of Youth Affairs, May 1995

Also in 1995, the new Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development was adopted. At its core is the determination to accelerate women's empowerment. It presents a vision in which

"the Commonwealth works towards a world in which women and men have equal rights and opportunities at all stages of their lives to express their creativity in all fields of human endeavour, and in which women are respected and valued as equal and able partners in establishing values of social justice, equity, democracy and respect for human rights".

Similarly, the recent UN. General Assembly Statement – 'World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond' stated:

"Governments, youth organisations and other actors should promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes in accordance with the results of the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit on Social Development, and the Fourth World Conference on Women". (p29)

The Beijing Platform for Action identifies specific actions to be taken by governments, inter-governmental organisations and NGOs in the following areas:

- * elimination of all forms of discrimination against the girl child;
- * elimination of negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls;
- * promoting and protecting the rights of the girl child and increasing the awareness of her needs and potentials;

- ✦ elimination of discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training;
- ✦ elimination of discrimination against girls in health and nutrition;
- ✦ elimination of the economic exploitation of child labour and protecting young girls at work;
- ✦ eradicating violence against the girl child;
- ✦ promoting the girl child's awareness of, and participation in, social, economic and political life;
- ✦ strengthening the role of the family in improving the status of the girl child;
- ✦ support for NGOs, particularly youth NGOs, in their efforts to promote the equality and participation of girls in society; and
- ✦ the promotion of women's rights as human rights.

(H) Implementation mechanisms

A national youth policy seeks to provide the framework for planning and action for all agencies and organisations involved with young women and men. This is well captured in the foreword of the National Youth Policy of Seychelles where Sylvette Frichot, Minister on Local Government, Youth and Sports states:

"This document seeks to provide the basis for integrated and collaborative efforts by all government agencies impinging on youth and the significant efforts of non governmental organisations and other groups committed to youth development".

A national youth policy should spell out only broad parameters of action, so that the implementing agencies, especially NGOs, have adequate scope to evolve their own initiatives based upon their goals, philosophy, the needs of targeted beneficiaries and available resources. Thus this section within the national youth policy should consider highlighting the following:

- ✦ The importance of a NATIONAL ACTION PLAN, as a companion document to the National Youth Policy, which provides a comprehensive statement about programmes and actions to achieve the policy directions. (See Part 5 of this handbook.)
- ✦ The SPECIFIC DEPARTMENT/MINISTRY RESPONSIBLE AS THE LEAD AGENCY for youth policy and programme implementation especially in terms of co-ordination and delivery of government initiatives and services.
- ✦ Initiatives to achieve a CO-ORDINATED AND HOLISTIC GOVERNMENT RESPONSE related to youth development issues. Examples may include:
 - designation of a particular Minister with responsibility for co-ordinating a whole of government approach
 - an inter-Ministerial committee which brings together youth relevant Ministers
 - an inter-departmental committee of senior government officers able to affect decisions at the departmental level
 - creation of focal youth officers in each ministry/department
- ✦ MECHANISMS TO ENSURE ONGOING CONSULTATION AND PARTICIPATION by young men and women. Examples may include:
 - a National Youth Forum
 - initiatives that acknowledge, enhance and reward the contribution of young women and men

- ★ MECHANISMS THAT ENHANCE COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS between various government Ministries, non-government agencies, young men and women, and the community. The creation of a National Youth Council is a popular initiative in many Commonwealth countries. Since these bodies often tend to be male-oriented, by nature, they (or alternative structures which are devised) should promote the participation of young women.
- ★ Publication of an ANNUAL GENDER DISAGGREGATED YOUTH BUDGET which outlines the total contribution of government towards youth development across all Ministries.
- ★ MEASURES TO STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY, TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING of workers with young women and men. Examples could include:
 - a Youth Development Workers Network or Association
 - tertiary youth work training courses
- ★ Procedures for the REGULAR REVIEW OF THE POLICY. It is vital to state the length of the life of the policy, and possibly the process or mechanism for review. Statements like, "The National Youth Policy shall be reviewed and up-dated from time to time as may be required" are far too vague!

Given the amount of detail, some of the above structures and mechanisms may be better described through the use of policy attachments or appendices.

① Conclusion

Policies often include a concluding statement that summarises its hopes, aspirations and ideals. For example:

"Youth today have rights and duties that are more complex than those of many other previous generations. They live in a society which is beset by constant change, with shifting ground and an increasing number of variables. On the other hand, they have a higher level of education, greater opportunities for exposure to different cultures through the international media and the facility of overseas travel. They are more inquisitive, asking more questions and requiring more detailed and convincing answers. They need to search and to experience. They need to involve themselves more in society as it moves from one situation to another, feeling an integral part of the process of decision-making and social development. This Youth Policy document seeks to give this important space for Maltese youth in our society, to bolster their values, to strengthen their voice, to combat consumeristic approaches and develop greater knowledge and appreciation of the long lasting cultural and historic patrimony entrusted to their generation".

National Youth Policy of Malta

② Additions

As mentioned, certain information may be best conveyed as appendices of the national youth policy eg. demographics and profile of youth activities, implementing mechanisms, etc.

In addition, documents may also be improved with the inclusion of an executive summary, abbreviations and acronyms page and a glossary of terms.