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Empowering

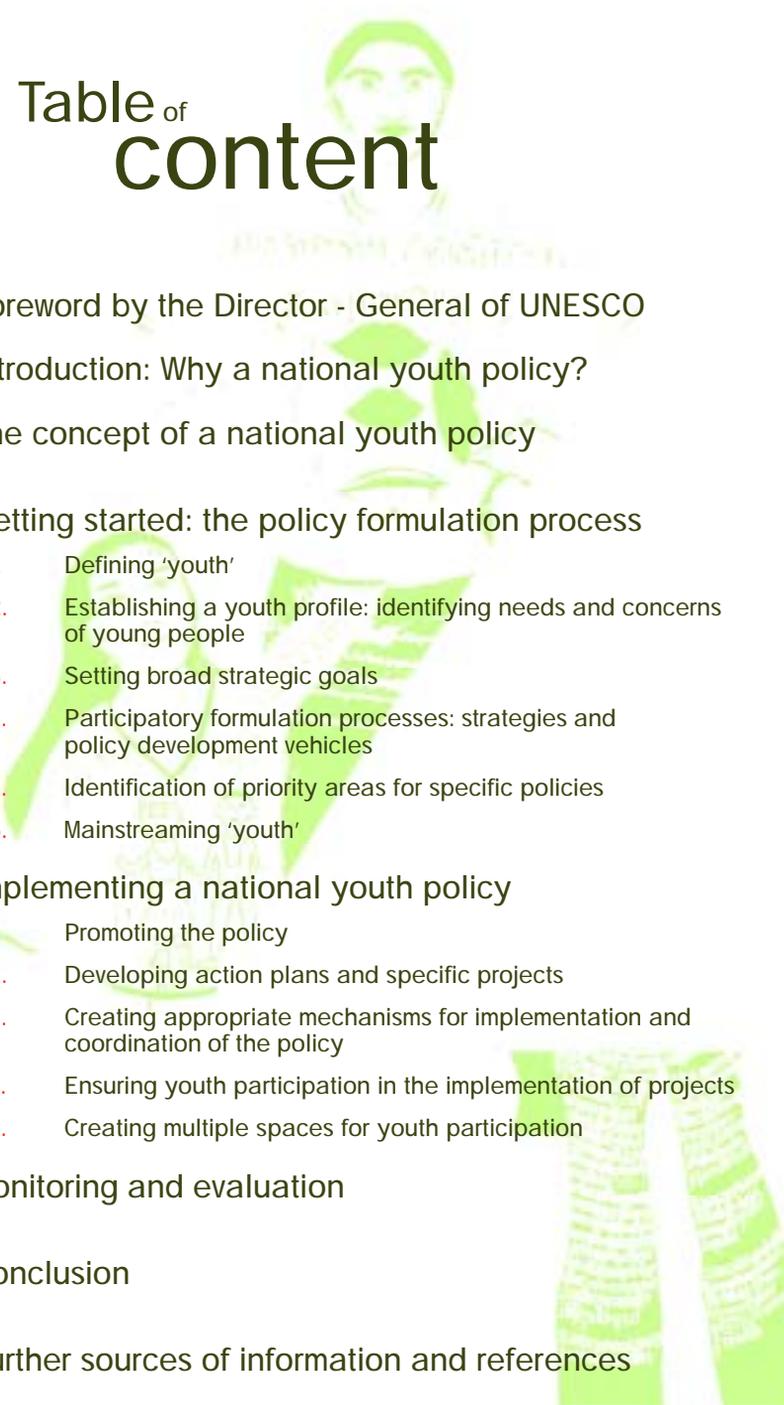
# youth

national through  
policies

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## Foreword by the Director - General of UNESCO

Recent years have seen increasing global awareness and acceptance of the need to mobilize the creativity, vision and unique perspectives of young people for the present and future development of our societies. In UNESCO, for example, a Youth Forum has become a recurrent feature of the General Conference as a way to capture the visions and aspirations of young people as well as their specific recommendations regarding UNESCO programmes and activities.

More broadly, certain international declarations and documents, such as the 'World Action Plan for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond' and the Plans of Action of four World Youth Forums, have stressed the importance of recognizing the constructive contribution of youth and the need to develop a specific national youth policy. At the national level, the process of formulating youth policy has the potential to identify the distinctive needs and concerns of youth and to promote substantial youth participation and integration in the making of our societies.

Over the past decade, several countries have initiated processes of designing and implementing national legislation and strategies focused on youth. However, most countries today have no public policy relating specifically to young people. Furthermore, even for those which have developed this rather new form of legislation, too often it is piecemeal and lacks a comprehensive approach to the challenges faced by the younger generation. Consequently, there is a great need to share experience in this specific field of public policy and to produce tools to assist Member States in addressing youth issues systematically.

This publication aims at helping to fill this gap. It is addressed to national decision-makers of two main kinds: those wishing to formulate a national youth policy and those wishing to evaluate and improve already existing youth policies and programmes. However, we are not seeking to promote a template to be rigidly applied to every national context. Given the wide diversity of political cultures and political systems, countries need to establish their own priorities and mechanisms in order to create a youth policy that is authentic and relevant.

The formulation of a national youth policy, of course, should not be a top-down process. The development of a sound youth policy requires that a wide variety of social actors are involved, a large-scale cross-sectoral consultation takes place and a close link with civil society is retained. Rather than trying to do everything on their own, governments should make use of the expertise and energy available in NGOs and other civil society organisations and make every effort to develop active partnerships with these groups. Above all, young people must be considered as the primary actors with whom to develop such partnerships. Any viable youth policy is one in which young people are not just spectators or advisers but are truly involved in decision-making.

One of the principal aims of UNESCO's long-standing commitment to youth is the empowerment of young people in order to foster their full and equal participation in all spheres of society. The ultimate objective of this publication, in fact, is to provide a conceptual, methodological and practical guideline that will facilitate the achievement of this aim.

Koïchiro Matsuura

# 1. Introduction: Why a national youth policy?

*'No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts itself off from its youth severs its lifeline; it is condemned to bleed to death!'*  
(Kofi Annan, Secretary - General of the United Nations, address to the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, Lisbon, 1998)

There are over 1 billion young people (aged 15-24) in the world today, which amounts to some 18% of the world's total population. Even though the term youth varies in its significance and age range from culture to culture, it may universally be defined as a **transitional** concept. That means youth is viewed as a very specific stage between childhood and adulthood, when people have to negotiate a complex interplay of both personal and socio-economic changes in order to manoeuvre the 'transition' from dependence to independence, take effective control of their own lives and assume social commitments.

The global situation of young people today is characterised by striking paradoxes, i.e. extreme disparities in terms of economic, technological, social and cultural resources which vary enormously across regions, countries, localities and population groups. Almost 85 % of young people live in developing countries, with approximately 60% in Asia alone. Despite mass urbanisation, the majority live in rural areas. Young men outnumber young women (525 million versus 500 million), while 57 million young men and 96 million young women are illiterate. In developing countries, rapid changes in the social conditions of young people as a result of changing socio-economic and policy structures, and wider global change mean that they face a more precarious future than any preceding generation.

Today's young generation experiences widening social gaps and faces manifold challenges: it is the young who - perhaps more so than any other social group - encounter the uncertainties and risks generated by the process of economic and cultural globalisation. Even though, in some parts of the world, young people are better educated than ever before, they are faced with increasing insecurity in the labour market. Those who have the opportunity to go to school are forced to study longer and longer as job opportunities become scarcer, less well-paid and less secure, delaying the age at which they become financially independent from their parents. Those who do not have the opportunity to pursue their education or who choose to leave the school system at an early age face marginalisation from the broader community from which they may never recover, either as a result of long-term unemployment, or low-paid, insecure and even dangerous jobs. Sixty-six million young people throughout the world are unemployed, some 40% of global unemployment. Hundreds of millions more work fewer hours than they would like, while still others work long hours with little gain and no social protection.

In terms of health issues, the recognition of youth as a unique group in society due to the many aspects of **vulnerability** it contains, reveals some shocking truths. One-third of the 20 million people throughout the world who have already died as a result of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses were young people, and another 6,000 are infected every day. Young people continue to lose their lives to acute respiratory infections and vaccination-preventable diseases and malnutrition. Violence and suicide are growing problems in some communities, as is drug dependency among the young.

Youth all over the world thus increasingly emerges as a **specific social category** which is laden with risk and uncertainty. The pronounced difficulties young people experience in terms of their socio-economic, political and cultural inclusion in an ever more volatile world are the subject of wide-spread concern at both the national and international level. Since the ways in which these challenges are addressed by policies will not only shape the present but profoundly determine the future of any country, the need for an adequate policy relating to young people arises as one of the highest priorities of society.

Every country thus needs effective strategies able to help young people to make the right choices, protect them from exploitation and neglect and ensure their participation in all spheres of society. To address some of these issues and, **more importantly**, to take a strong stand in support of their young people, each country is urged to develop a **long-term, consensus-based, integrated and cross-sectoral youth policy**.

National youth policy strategies that are effective and beneficial for youth are thus, above all, those **empowering young people** to actively influence and shape the political agenda. A progressive national youth policy obliges traditional decision-makers to work not only **for** young people, but **with** them and let their experiences inform the development of appropriate interventions and services. It is the essential role of governments to ensure that the concerns of young people are taken into account in all areas of government policy and decision-making, and not just those deemed to be 'youth issues', and that young people's views, priorities and desires are encouraged, listened to and acted upon.

The following chapters of this publication will thus inform you on the essential elements regarding formulation, implementation and evaluation of strategies, which are in equal part, a policy **FOR** and **WITH** youth. This means the initiation of political **processes**, which on the one hand respond to the problems associated with young people and, on the other hand, draw on their enormous potential for development by opening up spaces for inclusion and real participation.

 *The potential benefits for a country gained from a comprehensive national youth policy are manifold. The actions associated with the formulation of a youth policy first of all serve as a symbol of society's commitment to its young citizens; it is the communication of a common vision for its young generation and identifies its needs and priorities. As a framework for common goals and collective action it provides a basis for equitable and concerted distribution of government resources to meet the needs of youth. Furthermore, a national youth policy gives a valuable example of how young people can engage in decision-making processes in their country through their active participation in the development and implementation of youth policies.*

## 2. The concept of a national youth policy

*Any long-term national policy should have a clear, consensus-based vision of the kind of men and women for tomorrow's world needs. We may differ on the type of society we want to build, but we should agree on the qualities of the individuals that will constitute it.<sup>1</sup>*

Given political will and a strong commitment across diverse segments of society to develop a national youth policy, there are several elementary but crucial elements to be clarified before the initial formulation process of this public policy can begin. A public youth policy being a document of national significance, it represents an agreed-upon formula for both meeting the **needs and aspirations** of young people and **recognizing their potential as a framework for youth development**.

☐ A national youth policy will remain purely symbolic unless it:

- , Conveys **clear goals and a vision statement**, i.e. sets out what the policy is intended to achieve in the long run
- , Has an **overarching coordination role** and **provides direction** to all policies that directly and indirectly affect young people and their development as members of society
- , Is a **policy of the State**, and not merely of a government
- , Reflects an **integrated, cross-sectoral and coherent** approach
- , Is **interdisciplinary, inter-ministerial and multi-departmental**
- , Is the product of multi-party, national **consensus**, based on **consultation** with all concerned, **particularly young people**
- , Is conceived as a **long-term strategic instrument** and not out of short-term political expediency
- , Provides for the creation of national youth NGO platforms and the **institutionalisation of informal and formal consultation mechanisms** between national youth policy stake holders and these platforms
- , Opens up **spaces for participation** by young people in all stages of development, i.e. formulation, implementation and evaluation of this policy
- , Sets out concrete **priority areas of policy intervention** as the basis for the development of specific projects

<sup>1</sup> National Youth Policies: A Working Document from the Point of View of 'Non-Formal Education' Youth Organisations – Towards an Autonomous, Supportive, Responsible and Committed Youth.

Produced by the Chief Executive Officers of the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations, World Young Women's Christian Association, World Organisation of the Scout Movement, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Award Association (2000).

The concern for youth as a subject of public policy is relatively recent in Brazil. Youth policy attempts started by mid-70s. Nevertheless, these measures were very much based on a 'functional' approach by targeting undesirable youth's behavior and trying to keep youngsters away from transgression and violence.

As such, it could be said that Brazil has not yet proposed a 'national policy' or overall guidelines for such an important theme, although there are over 34 million people between 15 and 24 years old in the country.<sup>2</sup> A key to understand the youth phenomenon in Brazil is to address the issue of 'vulnerability'. In Brazil, youngsters are both victims and actors of violence and are not well placed to pursue their rights. In addition, the school is no longer a 'safe' place and several neighborhoods throughout the country have become a vulnerable place where the youth is exposed to a number of dangers, e.g. violence, drugs, etc.

Aware of such dangers, and at least at the school surrounding environment, UNESCO Office in Brasilia has advocated for a successful strategy to engage youngsters, parents, teachers and the communities towards revamping the value of school as a locus for human development. The 'Making room: Education and Culture for Peace' programme is based on the simple premise of opening schools during the weekends and offering the communities arts, cultural or health-oriented workshops that can foster the ties between youngsters and their schools. Nowadays, over 6,000 schools are participating in several of the 27 Brazilian states.

**A national youth policy must set up a clear but broad framework for programme development. It is an instrument to mobilise the different parties concerned in a country in planning and realising youth programmes. Thus, a national youth policy provides an 'enabling' environment by the articulation of a general framework, which allows room for flexibility and promotes the involvement of a wide range of actors in society.**

<sup>2</sup> 'Cronogram' of youth policies in Brazil:

1927: First Code of Youth (Código de Menores do Brasil) 1941: Creation of the Service for Youth Support (Centro do Serviço de Atendimento ao Menor – SAM), still very much oriented towards the supervision of youth behavior, later replaced by the National Foundation for the Children's Wellbeing (Fundação Nacional do Bem-Estar do Menor – FUNABEM) 50s: Strong emphasis on the 'functional' role of youth. Vocational education aiming at developing a responsible and productive citizen 60s: Interaction between youth and national security – youth movements against the dictatorship, engaging young recruits in the army, etc. 70s and 80s: Growing participation of civil society and rural and urban movements. 1990: The incorporation of the concept of 'citizenship' for youth policies: The Statute of Children and Adolescents (Estatuto da Criança e do Adolescente – ECA).

### 3. Getting started: the policy formulation process

The main pre-condition of the policy formulation process should be the development of **appropriate policy development vehicles**: this will ensure that the policy document to be drafted has a broad ownership base across all communities and all sections of society. **What is more, it is essential that young people and youth NGOs be actively involved in this process from the very early stages.**

The way in which youth policies are coordinated will be heavily influenced by a country's political and administrative system and the division of labour and power between different levels of government and administration. It is often advisable to choose a high-profile non-partisan person who is widely respected within the community to lead the development and consultation processes. A successful policy formulation process comprises:

- , *The allocation of adequate resources (time, human resources and budget)*
- , *A strong partnership among key stakeholders*
- , *The active participation of young people at ALL stages of the formulation process*
- , *The coupling of national youth policies with action plans*
- , *The main-streaming of youth policies in the policy environment*

Source: Braga Youth Action Plan (1998) and Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes (1998)

The main two initial components of the policy-formulation process are the agreement on a **definition of 'youth' (1)** (i.e. to determine who shall be the target of the policy to be developed) and the establishment of a **youth profile (2)** (i.e. the identification of the specific needs and concerns of youth in your country). While the specific objectives of the youth policy should be decided via a nation-wide consultation process, the **overall strategic goals (3)** should also be delineated beforehand. These overarching normative goals will guide the consultation and formulation process and show the government's desire that the project be long-term and consensus-based.

The achievement of a credible and effective national youth policy will largely depend on whether it captures the felt needs and issues of youth, contributes to provoking changes in their daily lives and allows for their active and equal participation in all areas. It is the **participatory nature of the formulation process (4)**, which will determine whether this challenge can be met. Ideally, it is a nation-wide, intensive consultation process, which should ensure that young people actively participate in drawing up the national youth policy in its earliest stages. Throughout this process and various other techniques, young people can identify their issues and concerns which will then inform the **identification of the priority areas of policy intervention (5)** to be contained in the national youth policy. These will be heavily influenced by the cultural, economic, geographical and societal factors unique to any country.

### **Network 'Infojeunesse' in Morocco'**

The UNESCO Office in Rabat has organised a three-day workshop to train young people as specialists for the Youth Information Offices, to be set up in Moroccan Youth Centres. This training aimed to make young people familiar with youth-specific information services and new communication and information technologies. The workshop combined theoretical and practical training with organised visits to national youth information and documentation centres.

While it is very important for a national youth policy to be formulated as a piece of independent legislation, it is essential to subsequently integrate it into the overall national development plan and to coordinate it with all other sectoral policies. **The mainstreaming of youth issues and youth policy (6)** will guarantee that the needs of youth are subsequently considered as an integral element of national planning and policy making.

In the following, each of these components and the specific process leading to their establishment will be analysed and illustrated in greater detail. However, as concerns these characteristics, it is essential to note again that there is **no prescriptive formula** for drawing up a national youth policy or a common blueprint which can be superimposed on any given culture and societal context. Procedures and programmes which have been effective and appropriate elsewhere may prove totally inadequate for your country. While it is important to learn from others, their successes must be adapted to your country's individual circumstances that are conditioned by the specific socio-cultural and political context which the formulation process is embedded in.

### **3.1. Defining 'youth'**

Most national youth policies attempt to define 'young people' in order to determine the main beneficiaries of policy interventions. Defining 'youth', however, is not a simple task since there is no international consensus on what the term implies or a clear-cut indicator such as age intervals to define it. A quick look at the youth policies of more than one country will show how broadly the term can be defined<sup>3</sup>. Who is designated a 'youth' in your country will depend on a variety of political and cultural factors. Flexibility of interpretation is essential in overcoming the difficulties of age definition. It is equally significant to acknowledge that young people may not be seen as a single demographic unit, but must be considered as a broad category encompassing many specific subgroups, which might require specifically targeted policies. The UN defines 'youth' as people aged between 15 and 24 and young people as people aged 10-19, and for the sake of consistency and to facilitate comparisons across national borders, we encourage the use of this definition.

<sup>3</sup> Some countries start defining youth from birth while others apply the term until the age of 40.

### 3.2. Establishing a youth profile: identifying needs and concerns of young people

*What all policies need.. is to be grounded firmly and unequivocally in a national understanding of the position of young people. For only in this way will it be possible to create policies, which have any chance of success for the young people concerned. If they are not successful by that criterion, how can they be successful by any other?<sup>4</sup>.*

*Commonwealth Youth Action Programme (1990)*

Another main prerequisite for the policy formulation process is the understanding of the needs, perceptions, attitudes, aspirations and concerns of young people in your country which must primarily inform and become substantially incorporated into the national youth policy. Putting the aspirations and needs of young people at the heart both of the policy formulation process and the specific programmes to be developed, is a **multi-layered process** (see 3.4. for more detail). However, when commencing the planning process it is important to already begin with the establishment of a youth profile of your country, i.e. collecting **the baseline data** relevant to the situation of young people. This crucial stage cannot be avoided, as to do so will make programming irrelevant and evaluation impossible, preventing measurement of the effectiveness of your projects. The collection of data can begin as soon as the decision to develop a youth policy is made, and can continue during the consultation and development phases. It must, however, be completed before implementation begins at local and regional level.

What data is collected will depend on the priority areas identified in the national policy, but are likely to include the number, ages, sex and geographic distribution of the 'youth' in your country (as defined in your policy), the languages they speak, their ethnic background and religious affiliations, whether they are students/employed/unemployed and the details pertaining to these categories, their health, their level of education, their family situation and marital status, etc. Much of this information may already be available, but much may not. For the collection of data, it is advisable to involve the local groups with whom you hope to work during the implementation stage. This will ensure that existing community networks are taken advantage of, and new ones established where required. Furthermore, since the process of data acquisition is likely to be time- and cost-intensive, it is always advisable to draw - if possible - on already existing data and mechanisms for its collection. This, of course, requires political decision-makers to actively seek close collaboration and exchange with international agencies, university and research institutes and the civil-society organisations directly involved in the field. However, while the initial collection of baseline data can assure a good understanding of the demographic characteristics of young people, their perceptions, needs and aspirations can only be taken into account when young people are actively INVOLVED in the policy formulation process from the very beginning, including the establishment of data to be collected.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (1999): Youth Policy Formulation Manual, p.18.

The research on youth conducted by UNESCO Office in Brasilia aims at reacting to policy measures and proposing public policies that are youth-oriented, and besides also engage young people as protagonists of their own development, thus contributing towards the proposition of policies which are truly youth-related.

The main thematic lines are:

- **Youth, Violence, Vulnerability, Culture and Citizenship:** Emphasis on policies of social security and experiences in the field of culture, sports, education and democratic participation of youngsters.
- **School and Education:** Understanding the current problems of the Brazilian schools, such as violence and distortions in the school management.
- **Education and Health:** Role of civil society in these domains.
- **Identity and Gender:** Focusing on the day-to-day lives of women of different age groups, their organisations and social movements, aiming to contribute towards policies of affirmative action and the protection of women's rights.
- **Ethical/Racial Identity: Fighting Discrimination:** Focusing on racial relations and the diverse typologies of ethical/racial discrimination within different environments, such as the school.<sup>5</sup>

### **47th International Conference on Education (ICE) on 'Quality Education for All Young people: Challenges, Trends and Priorities'**

In the framework of the Education for All movement, the 47th ICE will have as a theme 'Quality Education for All young people: Challenges, Trends and Priorities'. It will carry out an in-depth analysis of trends and perspectives to improve educational quality for the 12-20 year old group, in order to ensure the inclusion of learning schemes for sustainable development, social cohesion and peace in educational content. This major UNESCO event will serve to orient and promote national, bilateral and multilateral efforts in this respect. The website of the previous International Conference on Education 'Education for All for Learning to Live Together' (2001) is at [www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE/46english/46menu.htm](http://www.ibe.unesco.org/International/ICE/46english/46menu.htm)

#### <sup>5</sup> **Published research encompasses the themes of:**

- Map of Violence III: The Youngsters of Brazil
- Cultivating Life: Disarming Violence: Experiences in Education, Culture, Leisure, Sport and Citizenship with Youngsters in Poverty Situations
- Speak Out: Youth, Violence and Citizenship in the City of Rio de Janeiro
- Gangs, Crews, Buddies and Rappers: Youth, Violence and Citizenship around the Outskirts of Brasilia
- The Youth in Curitiba: Hopes and Disenchantment
- Youth, Violence and Citizenship: the Youngsters in Brasilia
- Violence in the Schools
- Drugs in the Schools
- The Secondary Education: Multiple Voices
- Schools of Peace
- Evaluation of Preventive Actions of STD/AIDS and the Use of Drugs in Basic and Secondary Schools in the Brazilian Capitals
- Municipal School Managers: a Profile
- 'Bolsa-Escola': Education Improvement and Poverty Reduction
- Gender and Environment
- Afro-descendant Girls in School: Silence and Horizons of the Brazilian Racial Inequality
- Racial discrimination in School: Between the Law and the Social Practice
- Non-Governmental responses for AIDS in Brazil: Limits and Possibilities (research underway)
- Youth and Sexuality
- Brazilian Teachers and the Challenges for Professionalisation (research underway)

### 3.3. Setting broad strategic goals

While the specific objectives of the youth policy must be decided via a **nation-wide consultation process**, the overall strategic goals should be delineated beforehand. A statement of goals is a rather **general and qualitative statement** setting out the desired futures and outcomes for youth to be achieved via the public policy to be created. These broad strategic goals thus appear to be normative in nature, they are derived from the principles and values supporting the policy and serve as the basis for the rationale standing behind it.

The youth situation is a highly visible indicator of tomorrow's world; improvements in the quality of life of youth will most certainly translate into improvements in the quality of life of society as a whole. To pursue it we need to

- , decrease youth's vulnerability
- , increase their support systems
- , support the development of their human and social identity
- , help them to achieve a secure beginning

☐ Some examples of typical goals and vision statements from different regions of the world

, *'The mission of the National Youth Policy of Samoa is to [...] enable the spiritual, physical, emotional, intellectual, social and economic well-being of Samoan youth; thereby empowering them to achieve a better quality of life for themselves, their family, their communities, and the nation'.*

*(Samoa National Youth Policy 2001-2010)*

, *'The goal of this policy is to promote youth participation in community and civic affairs and to ensure that youth programs are youth centered and engage the youth'.*

*(Kenya National Youth Policy, 2002)*

, *'The development and implementation of youth policy and programs should be based upon 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 programs and services by all young people regardless of gender, geographic location, social, cultural or economic circumstances)'.*

*(Australian National Youth Policy, 1993)*

### 3.4. Participatory formulation processes: strategies and policy development vehicles

*A substantial condition of effective youth policy is the involvement of children and adolescents in all decisions relevant to them. However, they will not commit themselves unless they are convinced that their involvement has an effect on their future and what they decide today will concern their basic life circumstances tomorrow.<sup>6</sup>*

The importance of listening to young people while developing the youth policy cannot be underestimated. A youth policy which does not reflect the views, concerns and desires of all young people within their community, will soon fade away through lack of support. Policy and programme formulation thus need to start with the **comprehensive involvement and appropriate decision-taking of youth at all levels**, including communities, schools and universities at the provincial and national level. The most effective means to do so is the initiation of a process of **consultation** with various stakeholders in society, i.e. especially young people but, equally, concerned government agencies and non-governmental organisations delivering services that impact on young people.

A consultation process is likely to be long and unlikely to be simple, but it is vital if the national youth policy is to have a true relevance and credibility among young people and across wider sectors of society. If the consultation phase is inadequate (i.e. insufficient allocation of time or resources, not enough people from a sufficiently broad cross-section of the community, lack of political will), it will almost surely fail, as there will not be enough people prepared to ensure its success. The consultation phase should thus be very **high profile** and invite contributions from **all interested groups and individuals**. The consultative group needs to encourage all young people to feel involved in the development of this document, and above all actively go in search of their views; the government must be serious about listening to them.

Further, consultation involves more than just listening to young people; it means acting upon their advice. It means working **with** them and not **for** them. It means seeing young people as a valuable resource, and not a problem to be solved. When seeking the views of young people both initially, in the developmental phase, and later in the implementation and evaluation phases, it is useful to keep in mind that:

- , it is unwise to rely on one single source for finding youth representatives; young people will vary in maturity, ability and experience, just like adults*
- , the sooner responsibility is given to young people, the sooner they will become responsible and be able to handle their own affairs*
- , increased participation soon creates greater self-reliance*
- , the policy objectives must be formulated in an open-ended way. If this is not the case, the young people consulted will have little or no opportunity to decide on its development*
- , youth participation should be looked at as a process, not a method; and it involves learning from mistakes*
- , youth participation should be a guiding principle of youth policies at all levels, not just national level.<sup>7</sup>*

<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2001): Study on the State of Young People and National Youth Policy in Europe. Part I (Executive Summary), IARD.  
<sup>7</sup> Government of South Australia (2000): Youth Participation Handbook: A Guide for Organisations seeking to involve Young People on Boards and Committees.

In a number of countries which have decided to develop a national youth policy during the past decade, a variety of strategies and techniques have been employed in order to enhance the consultation and research phases for its preparation. Some of these examples highlight the importance of a strong commitment to active participation by young people in the policy-formulation process.

#### ☐ 'Regional Youth Parliament Coordination in Central Africa: CAC-PAJ'

As a follow-up to the first session of the African Youth Parliament, held in June 2003 in Nairobi (Kenya), young delegates from Central Africa founded the association CAC-PAJ. This youth platform seeks to co-ordinate and follow-up on a regional scale the initiatives that emanated from the African Youth Parliament. In December 2003, CAC-PAJ held a regional youth meeting in Yaoundé (Cameroon) on the theme '**Building a future of peace and prosperity**'. The meeting's main objectives were to create a network of action and solidarity among young people in the region, to adopt a plan for strategic action and to reinforce the capacities of youth organisations. The participants worked on a number of themes related to the full and effective participation of young people in society and decision-making in Africa.

For more information see: [www.cac-paj.org](http://www.cac-paj.org)

#### ☐ South Africa (1996-1997)

The democratisation of South Africa has offered many new challenges and opportunities to young people (here: aged 14 to 35), who make up 39% of South African society. Since, during the apartheid-regime, the special needs of youth were denied and their rights violated by a repressive and racially oriented system of coercion, the task to develop a national youth policy has been an especially difficult and precarious one.

Thus, the country has in 1997:

- Established a **National Youth Commission**, charged with the elaboration of the policy and an action plan. The members of this commission were all within the youth age group. It especially conducted a number of **sectoral workshops** and **focus groups** to consider various strategic areas of the policy. In addition, it considered **written submissions** from various stakeholders and drew from a **range of research** conducted by other organisations.

- Organised a **National Youth Summit** (Cape Town), drawing together more than 200 delegates from major youth, political and community associations to discuss the framework and direction for national youth policy.

- Launched an extensive process of **consultation** consisting of 35 **Youth Hearings** in **rural and urban** settings all over the country and **Provincial Youth Summits** involving more than 1,400 people.

- Initiated a meeting of some 167 representatives from major youth and political organisations and government bodies to **review** the first draft of the national youth policy and make amendments based on their recommendations.

- Drew on **international experience** demonstrating key elements of a holistic national youth policy.

**Sources:** Government of the Republic of South Africa, National Youth Commission (1997): National Youth Policy / UNESCAP (1998): Assessment of National Youth Policies for further Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

## Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, one in every three persons is a youth and in 1999 the government decided to revise and update the national youth policy in order to make it more relevant to the actual needs of young people. The revision of the national youth policy was assumed by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in close collaboration with youth organisations, especially the National Federation of Youth Organisations in Bangladesh (NFYOB) and the Bangladesh Youth Council (BYC).

Here, the broadest participation of young people is ensured through the extension of youth programmes into all subdistricts of the country. This is done through **bottom-up planning at grassroots level**.

Thus, Bangladesh has implemented a **programme of workshops** on 'Youth Issues and Opportunities'. Over 560 workshops have been conducted from the sub district to the national level. Additionally, a set of **sectoral workshops** have been held on priority issues such as employment, training and education, self-development, culture, participation and migration etc.

**Source:** [www.esa.un.org/socdev/unyin](http://www.esa.un.org/socdev/unyin) and UNESCAP (1998): Assessment of National Youth Policies for further Implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth.

## Philippines

The medium-term Youth Development Plan of the Philippines also provides some useful examples of how to involve and consult a wide variety of stakeholders and especially young people. The formulation of this plan took more than 18 months of preparation and involved over 3,000 participants from the government, NGOs, youth, the private sector and multilateral agencies. Elements of this extensive research phase included:

- , Three **area-wide consultations**
- , A three-day **multisectoral summit** involving 80 representatives from government agencies, NGOs, the private sector and youth
- , A two-day **consultation and youth dialogues** in all 16 regions of the country to validate the output generated by the national summit

**Source:** UNESCAP (1999): Youth Policy Formulation Manual.

Despite the fact that the **concept of active participation** of youth is increasingly recognised by most countries, only a limited number of states clearly include the participation of youth in the decision-making processes of their national youth policy with regard to overall national development. However, youth should not be perceived merely as a resource for national development, but as **genuine stakeholders** and members of society. The UN World Youth Report (2003) reaffirms that 'Youth participation must become an integral aspect of local, national and international politics for youth, and provide the framework for decisions and actions that affect the daily lives of children and young people.'

Consequently, one of the main issues a national youth policy must address, even in its formulation phase, is the creation of manifold **spaces of 'participation'**, i.e. spaces of opportunity for youth participation ultimately fostering the encounter between generations, languages, cultural groups, generations and different religions.

*'The participation of young people in influencing the conditions of their own lives is crucial. Participation is more than involvement in institutions and decision-making. Participation is a pattern of how one lives; it is relevant to work, housing, leisure, education and social relations. Participation is also a question of young people's rights and obligations in shaping the future society'.*

*Council of Europe (1997): The Participation of Young People in Europe. European Steering Committee for Intergovernmental Co-operation in the Youth Field (CDEJ).*

### ☑ 'Young Viet Nam' Participation Small Grants Project'

*The recently launched UN youth participation programme in Viet Nam aims to strengthen the participation of young people in health and development and in civil society projects. Rather than making them passive recipients of projects and programmes, the UN Small Grants project seeks to position young people as active agents of social change. Grants are provided to youth projects (i.e. projects focusing on youth participation and young people being its main beneficiaries) in the categories of volunteerism, prevention of drug abuse, HIV/AIDS education, reproductive and sexual health, employment and education. Attention is also given to rural youth, gender issues and young people from ethnic minorities. This UN initiative - promoting and advocating an image of young people as a positive force in society - is an important example of how to invite and foster youth participation for the development of a country.*

### 3.5. Identification of priority areas for specific policies

The priority areas eventually included in a specific youth policy will be influenced by the cultural, economic, geographic and societal factors unique to that country, as identified by the young people of your country via the consultation process.

It may be instructive however to note the ten issues that the UN **World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond** identifies as being of the highest priority to governments. They are:

- ☑.1 Education
- ☑.2 Employment
- ☑.3 Hunger and poverty
- ☑.4 Health
- ☑.5 Environment
- ☑.6 Drug abuse
- ☑.7 Juvenile delinquency
- ☑.8 Leisure time activities
- ☑.9 Girls and young women
- ☑.10 Full and effective participation in society and decision-making

The more recent *UN World Youth Report (2003)* additionally specifies **five new priority areas** for youth-policy strategies, which are equally important when choosing the predominant dimensions of youth policy interventions.

## 📌 Globalisation

The diverse and sometimes contradictory processes of globalisation (i.e. the growing economic and cultural interlinkages among societies) create both new opportunities and risks for young people. Thus, a fundamental element in youth policy should address the means by which to respond to these risks and sketching ways to influence the direction of globalisation processes.

## 📌 Information and communication technologies (icts)

The information revolution, powering and accelerating in part globalisation processes, is rapidly changing local youth cultures while equally creating new problems for the reconciliation of local and global processes. National youth policies should therefore actively address the challenge to give culturally valid meaning to the use of new technologies and develop strategies in order to harness the positive potential of ICTs for all young people.

## 📌 HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is - in terms of its devastating effects on the lives of young people - perhaps the most pressing issue in many countries with regard to a youth policy. It is estimated that in 2001 7.3 million young women and 4.5 million young men were living with HIV/AIDS, and every day 6,000 young people become infected with the virus. Since the risk of HIV infection is tied directly to individual behaviour, it is essential that young people receive information and preventive education in order to decrease the risk of infection.

## 📌 Youth and conflict prevention

Between 1989 and 2000, 111 armed conflicts were reported in the world involving 300,000 child and youth soldiers fighting in 49 countries. There is no conflict without youth participation; indeed, young men constitute the majority of armed forces in most countries. There is a pressing need to strengthen efforts by young people to build peace and promote a general culture of peace.

## 📌 Intergenerational relations

In recent years, the world has been faced with pronounced demographic shifts in the ratio between younger and older generations. Even though these shifts in the ageing-to-youth-ratios take wide variations between different regions, the ageing of societies creates new challenges and requires new paradigms for politics. Policies should thus reflect a new intergenerational contract, based on the realities of a multigenerational society and reaffirming the value of reciprocity.

Even though **all** of the dimensions mentioned above do have a significant relevance to young people in almost any given societal context, it is impossible to consider each one of them in a national youth policy. Thus, it is essential to establish **a set of combinations of specific priority areas**, which have emerged as the most problematic ones from the collection of baseline data and the consultation processes in the country. **These combinations then form the core and highest priority areas of a given national youth policy and will profoundly determine action programmes and concrete projects.**

## 📌 Malawi

In Malawi, a national youth policy was adopted in 1999 by the Government's Ministry of Youth in cooperation with a wide range of non-governmental youth organisations, especially the Malawi National Youth Council. The key challenges this national youth policy seeks to address are:

- , Unemployment
- , Educational opportunities
- , HIV/AIDS
- , Crime and juvenile delinquency
- , Youth participation in decision-making

Source: ICNYP (2001): Training Manual on the Fundamentals of a National Youth Policy, pp.68-100.



## Empowering marginalized youth through targeted strategies

### **'Poverty Alleviation through Tourism and Heritage in the Caribbean'**

The Youth PATH (Youth Poverty Alleviation through Tourism and Heritage) project was launched in January 2003 by the UNESCO Office in Kingston, Jamaica. This project seeks to implement new community-based initiatives such as community tourism to empower young people to achieve economic freedom and self-esteem. The project goals relate to the training of marginalized youth in the development and documentation of heritage sites, the development of marketing tools and entrepreneurial skills and the use of electronic networking and relevant business strategies, including micro-credit. The project aims to provide not only economic viability but also life skills to young people in rural areas in the Caribbean. So far, each project site has attracted a large number of marginalized youth in the community and partnerships have been formed with the private sector in order to ensure sustainability of these projects.

### **'Crafts as a window for job opportunity for poorest youth in Bangladesh'**

The main objective of this project - initiated by the UNESCO Office in Dhaka and implemented by two NGOs - was revival and preservation of traditional crafts. The main areas of training for young people were on raw material processing, dying, finishing, costing and marketing, fabric painting, the making of bamboo and cane goods and wax production in Sylhet, and traditional handloom in Sherpur district. This project included theoretical instruction, practical training, field visits and an exhibition of items produced by the students during the training period with a view to public information and creating awareness of policy makers.

### **'Non-formal education project for youth in Egypt'**

A UNESCO-funded project taking place in Greater Cairo addresses the situation of youth in marginalized situations and out-of-school learning settings. Implemented under the auspices of three NGOs, the project developed an approach which seeks to empower street youth through an alternative, non-formal model of education revolving around learning and working conditions rooted in local economies and local knowledge, which leads to lifelong learning and earning skills and eventually creates networks of learning communities.

Within the project, Recycling schools were established with the uses of non-organic waste forming the crux of the curriculum. Youth are trained in clean and safe recycling techniques, besides literacy, culture and the arts, recreation and health. The production of goods using recovered and recycled material makes this educational enterprise by and for the poor self-sustaining.

Despite the fact that each country's national youth policy is **unique** since it is a product of the very specific set of social, economic and cultural conditions, there are certain issues which will most likely be common to all youth policies. These governing ideas of national youth policies can be located around the central themes of **learning (education), inclusion and social cohesion (e.g. employment), safety/health/well-being and citizenship/participation**.<sup>8</sup>

### Education

**Is the single most important factor for young people to lead productive and responsible lives. National youth policies relating to educational issues should:**

- , Foster **equal access for all** to the formal education system, especially in order to combat **illiteracy**, which continues to be an enormous problem for many young people in the world.
- , **Not** be limited to the skills on which the labour market is focused. Education contributes, from an early age, to the socialisation, integration and empowerment of individuals.
- , Consider the importance and mobilise the **potential of non-formal and informal learning schemes** next to the formal educational systems. **Non-formal learning** is often considered by young people as the most positive, efficient and attractive counterpart to a largely inefficient and unattractive system of formal education.
- , Place renewed emphasis on **life-long learning schemes** to provide culturally, socially and economically appropriate education. Life-long learning schemes can provide various benefits, especially for people in countries lacking access to universal education.

### Employment

**Youth makes up more than 40% of the world's total unemployed. Youth unemployment can lead to marginalisation, exclusion, frustration and low self-esteem. National youth policies relating to employment should address:**

- , **Employability:** investing in education and vocational training of young people and elaborating strategies to enhance the impact of these investments
- , **Equal opportunities:** giving young women the same opportunities as young men
- , **Entrepreneurship:** making it easier to start and run enterprises in order to provide more and better jobs for young people
- , **Employment creation:** instead of focusing on the supply side of the labour market, governments should increasingly put job creation at the centre of their macroeconomic policy
- , **Provide for active participation of young people in programme design and implementation**

Source: Youth Employment Network, quoted in UN World Youth Report 2003, p.5.

### Health

**Factors that influence the health of young people are numerous and interrelated, therefore successful health policies for young people should:**

- , **Be interdisciplinary and intersectoral** (addressing personal, social and mental development)
- , **Promote life skills and provide practical information on health issues of concern to young people**
- , **Address young people's sexual and reproductive health from a preventive, rights-based, gender-responsive and empowering perspective**

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Council of Europe (2002): Supporting Young People in Europe: Principles, Policy and Practice and Council of Europe (2003): Experts on Youth Policy Indicators. Final Report.

### **Addressing HIV/AIDS-related discrimination in an artist's workshop'**

The UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh has implemented a project involving a group of 30 young people infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS. The group has produced 30 self-portraits painted on wood (life-size) describing the experience of these young people living with the disease and facing discrimination. They have also chosen to address key messages on the epidemic, all presented on the occasion of the commemoration of World AIDS Day in December 2003. A 2004 calendar, as well as postcards showing the graphic creations have been printed and used as advocacy materials with policy makers. Following the success of these activities, additional funding was raised to continue the project in 2004, principally for the organisation of a provincial tour of the exhibition, with the group of young people. Some of them will also present their work at the World Conference on HIV/AIDS, to be organised in Bangkok in July 2004.

### **UNESCO and the Brazilian AIDS programme'**

Brazil's experience in the struggle against Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS has been praised as a success story in many international fora. The Brazilian strategy relies on three key principles: political leadership at the highest level; heavy involvement of civic and community organizations, which are essential for reaching the poor; and cheap medicine and treatment. As of 2000, UNESCO Office in Brasilia has helped to secure positive results for the programme in a number of ways, including:

- , School-related projects and initiatives, such as *AIDS, Drugs and Violence in Brazilian Schools*
- , Non-formal education projects
- , Spreading the preventive message through mass media, e.g. by inserting issues such as AIDS prevention practices, unwanted pregnancy among youngsters, racial and sexual discrimination in popular soap-operas, radio programmes and magazines
- , Democratising access to information through new information technologies ([www.aids.gov.br](http://www.aids.gov.br))
- , Networking and cooperation, e.g. with the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa (assisting these countries in the development of coherent educational strategies)
- , Involving parliamentarians
- , Evaluation and research activities

Next to these three major core dimensions of youth policies (education, employment and health), urgent priorities emerge for any country in terms of **specific groups** of young people who require particular attention. First of all, national youth policies must address gender-based stereotyping impacting severely on the rights and responsibilities of girls and young women in most areas of the world. Other forms of marginalisation to be considered relate to the pronounced rural-urban divide and the diverse forms of socio-economic and cultural discrimination faced by minorities.

Therefore, all national youth policies must address the gender/rural-urban/minority-majority divide and seek to respond to it with respective programmes.

### **Learning the Way of Peace: A teacher's Guide to Peace Education'**

The UNESCO Office in New Delhi has published a guidebook entitled '*Learning the Way of Peace: A Teacher's Guide to Peace Education in South Asia*'. This guidebook targets teachers as peace educators and aims at the integration of peace education into the school curriculum by applying a holistic approach to all subjects taught in schools and teacher training institutions. In India, workshops were held in several schools to make the students and teachers aware of this need and to reinforce the role of youth in the culture of peace. The project will first be tested in South Asia and it is envisaged to propose the concept to other UNESCO Member States within the context of the *UN International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010)*.

### **3.6. Mainstreaming 'youth'**

While it is important that a national youth policy be formulated as independent legislation, it is essential to subsequently integrate it into the overall national development plan. Youth policies need to be related to and co-ordinated with sectoral policies and relate to the overarching objectives for national development: only as such will the needs of youth be considered an integral part in national planning and policy-making. Policy formulation could become a rather inefficient and futile exercise, if no attention is paid to **cutting across sectoral lines**, i.e. to the **mainstreaming** of youth issues and youth policy in your country.

The successful mainstreaming of youth policy requires the involvement of all relevant institutions and ministries at the formulation stage, thereby assuring collaboration in implementing the policy.

#### **Mainstreaming 'youth': the example of Thailand**

*Thailand made considerable efforts to mainstream youth policy into the national social and economic development plan; first of all, by making the period stipulated for youth policy coincide with that of the national development plan.*

*Furthermore, it used the same participatory mechanisms as for the national five-year plans and combined two parallel processes:*

- 1. a **governmental review**, coordinated by the National Youth Bureau, focusing on strategies to develop the desirable goals as stated in the national development plan*
- 2. a **non-governmental process**, aimed at the development of an action plan at grassroots level and based on a survey of the situation of youth at the provincial level*

*The two processes converged towards the conclusion of the planning process and the preparation of the final draft of the policy.*

**Source:** [www.unescap.org/esid/hds/youth/ypol.htm](http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/youth/ypol.htm)

## 4. Implementing a national youth policy

Once the national youth policy has been drafted and the respective priority areas of policy intervention have been specified, it needs to be implemented on a nation-wide level. To ensure the relevance of this policy and make it the framework for community and national youth development, it is essential to:

1. **Promote the policy**
2. **Formulate a national youth action plan and develop specific projects**
3. **Create appropriate mechanisms for implementation and coordination of the policy**
4. **Ensure youth participation in the implementation of the projects**
5. **Create multiple spaces for youth participation**

### 4.1. Promoting the policy

A newly drafted national youth policy must reach all the major stakeholders and a mass audience and efforts should be made to make young people aware of it by publicising it in an innovative way. In countries which do have a tradition of this form of public legislation, creative communication strategies that 'get the message across' appear key in mobilising support among young people.

Some useful ideas on how to ensure that a youth policy has large-scale appeal

- , Use eye-catching graphics, illustrations and titles
- , Use clear and simple language
- , Select covers, formats and colours that will attract attention

Another means is the launching of **national campaigns** aimed at raising general awareness of the existence and content of such a policy. Such national campaigns should be run by a young promotion team and could:

- , Offer regional workshops for representatives of youth agencies and local workers with young people
- , Enter in direct contact with young people to popularise the policy (at the workplace, in schools, youth centres, at cultural events etc.)
- , Use a wide range of electronic and other media to disseminate information (websites, short advertisements, press releases)

**Source:** UNESCAP (1999): Youth Policy Formulation Manual.

## ☑ The promotion of a national youth policy: Malaysia

Malaysia, which launched its first National Youth Policy in 1985, decided in 1995 to review the existing policy and replace it by a new one more relevant to its young people and based on a greater consensus within society. The main impetus for a new national youth policy was the lack of coordination among programmes for youth. For the new policy, it was especially important to **generate a strong sense of ownership among all the parties concerned**, so that the policy would not just be conceived as being the 'property' of the government. Thus, it emphasised that 'large-scale promotional efforts must be done in order to attract and captivate sufficient attention':

• Several drafts of the new policy were put for discussion to the Malaysian Youth Council, but equally to student leaders from secondary schools and university students.

• Once the policy had been adopted, the government created a special website and maximised its use of the print media. Most newspapers printed segments or summaries of the new policy.

**Source:** UNESCAP (1999): Youth Policy Formulation Manual / Saifuddin, A. (2001): Voices of Youth On National Youth Policy. Formulation and Implementation through New Governance.

## 4.2. Developing action plans and specific projects

*'National youth policy must be translated into a local youth policy if it is to respond in a way that is flexible and appropriate to the particular needs, wants and culture [...] of a specific population.'*<sup>9</sup>

Once the priority policy issues of the national youth policy are identified, the next step is the drafting of action plans and the development of concrete projects, both implying the setting of specific targets to be achieved in each area.

**National action plans** serve as a complement to the national youth policy and describe in detail the **practical** elements of how the policy will be implemented. An action plan should thus be a strategic and holistic document incorporating all the major stakeholders and should clearly define the **specific actions** to be undertaken, **when** they will be undertaken and **by whom** in order to meet the priorities of the policy. It equally indicates the **resources** needed in order to realise these objectives.

**Specific projects**, on the other hand, represent a set of **actions**, which, when implemented, will help to achieve policy goals and objectives. Projects must be translated to the smallest local level, i.e. respond to the specific needs and context of the level at which it is implemented. **This can only be achieved when representatives from the target groups (young people) and the grassroots level are not only involved in the actual implementation of the project, but can already profoundly influence the development process of a specific project.** Any project to be realised within the framework of the national youth policy should clearly state the goal to be achieved and the detailed action steps to be taken, identify the target groups and comment on the expected outcomes. It should also list the responsible and supporting agencies, contain a definite time frame and resource implications.

At this stage, it is likely that, consultation aside, the vast majority of work that has already been done has occurred at national level. **However, for programmes to have the required effect at local level, it is essential that regional and local agencies be identified and included in the project.**

<sup>9</sup> Council of Europe Youth Directorate (1997): The Participation of Young People in Europe.

### 4.3. Creating appropriate mechanisms for implementation and coordination of the policy

As mentioned above, the implementation of a national youth policy means the involvement of a broad range of sectors in society. For it not to remain a mere theory on paper, it requires intensive coordination between a large number of both governmental and non-governmental actors and appropriate collaboration mechanisms which should be put in place at the stage of policy formulation. The implementation of a national youth policy involves both **centralisation and de-centralisation** of mechanisms and steps, as the policy must be conceived within a national development framework for the country as a whole and as a localised process with, by and for youth at the same time.

Whereas the **national** (centralised) youth policy must

- , **establish core principles and values, key platforms of activity,**
- , **disseminate examples of good practice,**
- , **identify who is responsible for what,**
- , **establish clear timelines and reporting responsibilities, and**
- , **allocate sufficient resources to ensure that tasks can be carried out,**

it is local (de-centralised) processes that must ensure that the strategic goals set at national level will be achieved in developing and implementing the specific projects. **Local agencies** will thus ensure that

- , **widespread consultation is conducted at a local level to develop specific projects,**
- , **the project objectives set are clear, simple, and measurable,**
- , **timelines are established for all phases, both for development of programmes, implementation and evaluation and reporting,**
- , **both organised and non-organised youth are involved in all phases of the projects.**

Coordination thus needs to take place between the different national ministries and departments of government, between regional bodies, national youth NGOs and agents from the private sector and civil society engaged in service delivery related to young people. It is crucial not to conceive the issue as the implementation of a centralised government-led programme FOR youth, but as a **youth action partnership** between all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders involved.

In order to combine these coordination efforts on a partnership basis, it is advisable to appoint a **national-level co-ordinating agency**. The task of coordinating may be an overwhelming challenge for the national focal-point agency: it above all requires strong financial backing and adequate government authority. Many countries having recently introduced a national youth policy have created youth ministries, councils, departments and offices granted with a high level of government authority in order to promote and implement the policy. However, essential to their full and effective functioning is their strategic positioning and backing with adequate financial resources.

#### 'Youth for the Future' Initiative, Belize

*This youth-centred agency initiative was launched by the government of Belize and seeks to establish a **network of service providers** for youth based on the coordination and collaboration of the private sector, NGOs, religious institutions, civil society and the international community. Among the central objectives of the initiative is the element of youth governance and participation. To this end, a **Youth for the Future Secretariat** was set up, designed to co-ordinate all the activities to meet the general objectives of the national youth policy. The Secretariat provides several related programmes and services through a youth governance unit (staff of youth officers from all local levels of Belize), an enterprise/job creation unit and a conflict-resolution unit.*

*Source: Youth for the Future, Information Paper, Belize 2003.*

**Youth NGOs** play a key role in reaching out to young people with programmes and services and in representing their interests: the implementation and coordination of a national youth policy should reinforce their existence and scope of action by all possible means. Support to youth NGOs can and should take diverse forms and may include :

- , supporting a **network** of youth organisations as a forum for exchanging views and experience and for providing opportunities for resource sharing
- , including representatives of youth organisations in all stakeholder meetings, e.g. National Youth Commissions
- , strengthening or establishing **National Youth Councils** to provide an institutionalised, co-ordinating platform of youth NGOs and a youth-led vehicle to promote and review the national youth policy

#### Syria

*In the Syrian Arab Republic, the government has entrusted the major national youth organisation 'Youth Union of the Revolution' with the coordination of the national youth policy. The Youth Union consists of young people between 13 and 35 and works in close collaboration with government agencies and other youth organisations. It supports vocational - training programmes, conducts research and surveys on youth-related issues, produces a TV and radio programme and co-operates with the youth-related agencies and programmes of the United Nations and international NGOs.*

*Source: ICNYP (2001): Training Manual on the Fundamentals of a National Youth Policy, p. 78.*

#### 4.4. Ensuring youth participation in the implementation of projects

*'Participation promotes the well-being and development of young people. It is by questioning, expressing their views and having their opinions taken seriously that young people develop skills, build competencies, acquire confidence and form aspirations. It is a virtuous circle. The more opportunities a young person has for meaningful participation, the more experienced and competent he or she becomes. This allows more effective participation, which in turn enhances development!'<sup>10</sup>*

<sup>10</sup> Rajani, R. (2000, UNICEF): Discussion Paper for Partners on promoting Strategic Adolescent Participation, quoted in Lansdown, G. (2001): Global Priorities for Youth. Youth Participation in Decision-making.

For the implementation of a specific project or youth programme, it is important to choose the right body to realise it. This will not always be a government agency, but may well be an NGO or the private sector. What is essential is that the chosen agency has government support and guidance.

Assuring the **participation** of young people in the implementation of specific projects and youth programmes at the local, regional and national level is crucial in order to ensure maximum opportunities for youth to contribute as active agents of change in all aspects of life and on all levels of decision-making. However, if their participation is to be meaningful, it is imperative that their engagement be directly linked to first-hand experience and identified by young people themselves as a key area of concern.

**'Participation' should be understood as a process of empowerment of young people as principal players, which produces tangible changes in their living environment.**

Instead of being mere 'onlookers' or 'advisors' to a project, young people must be given responsibility for certain aspects of projects, if not the programme in its entirety. Ideally, projects will be led by young people, with the support (but not control) of state and local authorities. These local authorities must also understand that projects directed and run by young people themselves will not necessarily follow patterns and processes which are the same as those run by adults. On the contrary, young people should be encouraged to develop strategies which best suit both their own needs and those of their structures. This process imparts experience and knowledge to young people and empowers them to undertake further activities. It takes on young people's great potential, their wishes and desires, their curiosity and pleasure in discovering and experimenting in order to develop perspectives suitable to all young people.

#### Argentina: a youth-led National Network of Sexuality and Reproductive Health Educators

Since 1995, FINE (Foundation for Study and Research on Women in Argentina) has been training young people as educators in sexual and reproductive health, an effort itself initiated and led by youth in their early twenties. The training programme has community action at its centre. All of the young people who participate design a project which they put in action upon returning to their community. The young people's projects have taken on a variety of forms: workshops, radio programmes, the creation of newspapers, community mobilizing and organizing HIV awareness. This effort is one among hundreds of effective peer health education programmes around the world — all building on the powerful premise that young people are particularly effective in educating other young people about the dangers of sexually – transmitted diseases and teen pregnancy. Two additional features make this programme have an impact on the community: individual peer educators have come together into a national network of young people who have participated in the FINE training. This networking effort has resulted both in opportunities to share practices and the development of a new national movement.

Second, young people have recognized that education must go hand-in-hand with policy change that helps stop the spread of AIDS. Young people have now turned their attention to national politics, working to gain the same access for young people across Argentina to quality public health.

**Source:** Tolman / Pittmann (2001): Youth Acts, Community Impacts. The Forum for Youth Investment, p. 35.



☐ To sum up, extensive experience has shown that good practice in youth participation involves participation that is based on:

- , choice,
- , is enjoyable, challenging and fun,
- , relates to issues perceived as relevant by young people,
- , raises young people's awareness of social, political, economic, cultural and personal issues affecting them,
- , involves training and skills development,
- , ensures that young people are given ongoing support in their role,
- , provides them with a sense of belonging and ownership in relation to decision-making,
- , makes them feel that their participation is valued,
- , involves adequate resourcing (including time, space, funding and information),
- , acknowledges their contribution,
- , acknowledges that young people often experience financial and transport constraints (getting to meetings for example) and secures support at this level
- , is based on a careful recruitment and selection process,
- , gives them a sense of ownership and belonging; and
- , involves a review process ensuring that both the young people and adults obtain the outcomes they seek.<sup>11</sup>

However, despite the gradual recognition of the importance of active participation of young people in the process of decision-making and implementation, only a few countries have made it an **integral** aspect of national politics. Furthermore, if the specific and varied forms of youth engagement are not taken into account, policies risk to address only a minority of young people.

The practice of creating meaningful opportunities for young people to participate must therefore seek **multiple youth-participation strategies** that will capture a wider and broader youth perspective.

In the following, a number of instruments conducive to fostering the active participation of young people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds and at all levels of society will be put forward.

<sup>11</sup> Government of South Australia (2000) : Youth Participation Handbook : A Guide for Organisations seeking to involve Young People on Boards and Committees.

## 4.5. Creating multiple spaces for youth participation

### , Promoting youth organisations

Youth organisations are unique in that they are primarily focused on reflecting the views and serving the needs of young people. Whether these are structured organisations or informal groups, young people's organisations provide a space where young people can learn and experience participating in decisions and activities with others. Support to youth organisations and their structures on a national level (National Youth Councils or Youth Committees) in many countries is the basic strategy to involve young people. This also involves the right and the support to establish their own organisations.

**Q** Nepal has a wide range of youth-related umbrella organisations, which organise a range of activities relating to primary health care, literacy campaigns, income-generating projects, training and monitoring and evaluation of projects pertaining to young people. Nepal is also outstanding as concerns the number of clubs and institutions run by young people, which offer opportunities for cultural activities, skills-building and human-rights awareness.

**Source:** Lansdown, G. (2001): *Global Priorities for Youth. Youth Participation in Decision-making.*

### , Youth and School Councils, Youth Forums and Youth Parliaments

A current trend, especially in many European countries, has been the establishment of municipal youth councils and local, regional and national youth parliaments. These forums can be successful, especially in small communities where they may focus the attention on youth issues. Youth councils – whether they are private umbrella organisations of youth associations or state youth councils that include public youth institutions and state officials – are the traditional channels of co-operation and exchange of information between politicians, authorities and youth.

**Q** In Peru, school councils now exist in almost 6,000 schools. These councils are run by democratically elected representatives and are recognised by local institutions such as the police, health centres and religious bodies. The school councils run seminars on young people's rights, are active in promoting youth participation and have now been made mandatory in all schools by the Ministry of Education.

**Source:** Lansdown, G. (2001): *Global Priorities for Youth. Youth Participation in Decision-making.*

### , Youth Hearings and youth workshops

Local authorities can organise Youth Hearings to raise awareness on youth issues and provide a public forum for discussion on youth policy. They also reach to some extent people outside 'organized youth'. Another method aimed for collecting information on youth concerns is the organisation of workshops, where adolescents meet and work on various topics.

## , Informing young people

Information is the key to young people's participation in the life in their community and enables them to benefit from services and opportunities aimed at them. Local and national authorities should therefore support the creation of adequate youth-information services and especially meet the needs of young people who have difficulty in accessing information. As information for young people must be both user-friendly and widely disseminated, young people themselves need to be involved in the development of such information.

## , Training in youth participation

Because of its dominant role in the life of young people, the school environment can play an important role for the provision of training in youth participation, human-rights education and non-formal learning in schools. Local authorities should promote civic-education programmes in schools, the provision of necessary space for peer-group education and the exchange of good practice.

## , Promoting youth participation through information and communication technologies

Provided that training and access to new technologies is given to all young people, new information and communication technologies can have a great potential for informing and increasing the participation of young people in issues of concern to them. Local and regional authorities should therefore consider an increased involvement in information and participation strategies.

**☐** *Tele-democracy is a Finnish, internet-based channel for influencing local matters, which includes the Idea Factory. This gives local youth an opportunity to share their views with the governing authorities of their city. An idea submitted is for discussion on the Internet, turned into a practical motion by a moderator and then taken to the local Youth Council, which in turn hands it over to the governing body of the locality.*

**Source:** European Commission (2001): *Study on the State of Young People and National Youth Policy in Europe. Part 1 (Executive Summary)* IARD.

## , Encouraging young people to undertake voluntary work and community service

Voluntary work and community service is central to the development of young people's sense of responsibility and autonomy in becoming social actors. In partnership with young people, authorities should therefore develop systems which encourage and validate voluntary activity in the formal education system and in employment.

**☐** *Voluntary service is defined here as altruistic commitment by people who give their time and/or expertise voluntarily and free of charge, in a formal context, for a given period. Voluntary service requires a number of practical arrangements, such as the payment of subsistence and transport costs and social-security coverage for the volunteer.*

**Source:** UNESCO (2000), 160 EX/40, *Review of Existing Youth Voluntary Service Programmes and Proposals for an Innovative UNESCO Approach.*

## , Fostering young people's participation in and use of the media

Young people are often excluded from active participation in the media or are negatively represented in it. In a number of countries, initiatives train young people as journalists, running their own radio programmes and developing journals and newsletters. Through their way of dealing with specific subjects, young people allow for different and more accessible information to be provided to their peers.

**Q** In Kosovo, Media Action International (an organisation promoting more effective use of the media to help local populations in crisis and to strengthen the role of information in humanitarian and development issues) has re-focused its radio programmes in order to respond to the information needs of young Kosovars (70% of Kosovars are below the age of 30). This broadcast initiative efficiently deals with youth issues and provides a forum for young people through the exchange of their views and experience. It promotes open debate, is produced in a highly lively and informative manner and seeks to respond as much as possible to the questions regarding the future of Kosovo's youth.

Source: [www.mediaaction.org](http://www.mediaaction.org)

## , Promoting the presence of young people in international forums and conferences

Young people are increasingly present in local, national and international conferences as delegates, speakers or organisers. This participation often has a significant impact on the direction and outcome of these events and encourages wider youth participation in the decision-making process. Countries should attach great importance to the inclusion of youth representatives in their official delegations to global conferences and support young people's participation in national and international youth events.

**I**n September 2003, the 3rd UNESCO Youth Forum held in Paris was attended by 187 youth delegates aged between 18 and 30, from 104 UNESCO member states, one Observer State and 22 NGOs. The young participants considered the three themes designated by the UNESCO Executive Board as those on which they desired the young delegates' input. These were (1) Education for sustainable development, in particular freshwater management, (2) Youth and HIV/AIDS: preventive education, and (3) UNESCO and young people: ways and means of communication and co-operation. The discussions led to the adoption of a final report which was presented to the General Conference, the highest decision-making body of the organisation. The Youth Forum will be held every two years on the occasion of the UNESCO General Conference and is expected to provide youth perspectives on key issues.

Developing participatory practice cannot be based on a blue print or pre-defined approaches which risk replicating adult models. **What is vital is the commitment to apply a broad concept of 'participation' and the will to create new approaches to collaborative working and dialogue between young people and adults.**

## 5. Monitoring and evaluation

A national youth policy is directed to a fraction of the population whose needs change rapidly with the evolution of society: consequently, the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all projects and policies cannot be stressed highly enough. Lack of evaluation is a major obstacle to success: it prevents correction or reformulation of programmes with the result that mistakes are repeated ad infinitum. Thus, it is important that strong mechanisms are created and responsible bodies identified which guarantee a **periodic review** of national youth policies and programmes.

The major challenge of monitoring and evaluation processes is the development of tools to measure both the quantitative and qualitative aspect of the effectiveness of youth policy initiatives, i.e. the establishment of a set of **key indicators** for youth development in your country. Indicators may help to understand the social quality of life of young people and may ultimately serve to determine 'policy gaps', i.e. to detect the discrepancies between targeted outcomes and actual results. The aim of working with indicators is to raise the level of understanding of a problem, to break it down into smaller levels where solutions can be identified and put into practice.

 An expert panel of the Council of Europe suggests a framework and structure for social indicators, which is composed of four dimensions:

- , Promoting autonomy
- , Equity
- , Healthy living
- , Social cohesion

**Source:** Council of Europe (2003): *Experts on Youth Policy Indicators. Final Report.*

It is useful to also draw a distinction between the indicators of youth policy **intentions** and the interpretation of youth policy **effectiveness** in relation to the **priority elements** of the policy.<sup>12</sup>

To have a clear understanding of the youth policy 'product' (i.e. its directions and outcomes), a description of the youth policy process oriented towards 'packages of opportunity and experience' can be helpful. These 'packages' are priority issues and contribute towards young people's personal, social and political education.

<sup>12</sup> As to the youth policy **intentions**, evaluation refers to legislation and strategic intentions, allocation of financial resources, the nature of interventions in areas of youth policy and the mechanisms of delivery. The youth policy **interpretations** can be classified in political justification (rationale), statistical indicators (reach) and qualitative relevance of effectiveness.

## ▣ Packages of Opportunity and Experience

- 1 Learning (life-long, formal and non-formal)
- 2 Access to new technologies
- 3 Specialist personal advice and support
- 4 Access to information
- 5 Access to health services
- 6 Access to housing
- 7 Access to paid work
- 8 Social mobility
- 9 Justice and youth rights
- 10 Opportunities for participation and active citizenship
- 11 Recreational,cultural and social facilities
- 12 Youth exchange and international experience
- 13 Safe and secure environment

**Source:** Council of Europe (2003):*Experts on Youth Policy Indicators. Final Report.*<sup>13</sup>

For each of the issues and themes of a youth policy, monitoring and evaluation should identify the respective **domains** (government and non-government institutions) and then establish a set of crude positive and negative indicators. Positive indicators relate to the **participation and access levels** of the relevant area, negative indicators specify **differential engagement**, i.e. determine the existing policy gaps.<sup>14</sup>

### **! Monitoring and Evaluation by youth NGOs'**

Based in four countries (India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh), the main objective of the UNESCO pilot project '*Breaking the poverty cycle of women*' is to empower young people, in particular adolescent girls aged 14 to 18, to become the agents of social transformation, ensuring their participation in society as equal partners. This ambitious programme comprises a number of interlocking components to promote education and skills development, awareness of science and application of technology, micro-finance for entrepreneurship, health and legal counselling and the development of guidelines for related policy. In accordance with UNESCO's strategy of action with and for youth, which strives to involve young people as equal partners in all aspects of project planning and implementation, the Section for Youth collaborates with local youth NGOs in charge of the Monitoring and Evaluation component of the project. This innovative approach will provide project partners with a better reflective mechanism to evaluate the project's progress from the recipient's viewpoint, i.e. from a youth perspective and also entails substantial capacity building of the youth NGO partners.

<sup>13</sup> There are, apart from the Council of Europe's work, a number of resource tools that can be used to develop a set of national indicators. These are e.g. the **ESCAP Youth Participation Manual**, the **Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes** and the **Braga Youth Action Plan** (1998).

<sup>14</sup> Crude indicators for the Area 'Access to new technologies', for example, would determine participation levels by the percentage of households aged 30 and under with a computer and percentage of schools and youth centres with a computer and measure differential engagement by determining the percentage of young people who have never used a computer.

In order for governments to develop, in co-operation with young people, an agenda for necessary adjustments of the national youth policy, special attention must be given to the analysis of the negative indicators. These must be oriented back to the original intentions of policies and programmes and will reveal major discrepancies to be considered for new strategies.

In general, all activities relating to **monitoring and evaluation** should be

- , carried out at **all levels** (local, regional, national)
- , **systematic** so that comparisons can be made across programmes and over time
- , **planned** at the time of the programme's development
- , **adequately funded** at the beginning of the project
- , based on **a standardised set of baseline data** allowing for interregional and international comparisons
- , **published** so that they can be learnt from, but also to ensure transparency and public accountability.

In order to ensure that the evaluation undertaken is as **objective** and **comprehensive** as possible, it should ideally be done by a group or agency that is independent of the youth policy process. The number of monitoring bodies should be limited so that the criteria for 'success' remain constant and fractured implementation is avoided. In monitoring and evaluation, young people should have a major role to play. It is **they** who are affected by the objectives and specific projects of a national youth policy and **they** who are the experts in evaluating how the projects affect their day-to-day lives and their scope of opportunities in society. Substantial and continuous information-gathering on the status of implementation of youth policies will not only help to increase the effectiveness of the policy, but will also raise the level of awareness of it and ensure the maintenance of a rich and transparent dialogue on youth issues.

#### Monitoring and Evaluation: Best Practice

- , Surveys on youth satisfaction
- , Introducing a national youth audit (report from agencies on the actions undertaken)
- , Using specific, measurable targets in policy objectives

## 6. Conclusion

*'Young people in all countries are both a major human resource for development and key agents for social change, economic development and technological innovation. Their imagination, ideals, considerable energies and vision are essential for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. The problems that young people face as well as their vision and aspiration are essential components of the challenges and prospects of today's societies and future generations'.*

*(World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, United Nations, 1995)*

The formulation and implementation of integrated, cross-sectoral youth policies formulated with a long-term vision and in cooperation with young people is a challenging, but indispensable task for every country.

Young people can only commit themselves to active participation and full integration in society when they find 'enabling' environments for the fulfilment of their civic potential and when their actual needs and conditions are taken into account. Comprehensive national youth policies that foster this 'enabling' condition and ensure the full rights of youth as members of society, are in many countries among the most recent types of public policy.

Consequently, there is a great demand for the sharing of experience in formulation, implementation and best practice as concerns strategies for youth participation and involvement. There is a high potential for cooperation in this field, particularly through networking of both governmental and non-governmental youth organisations on a regional and international scale.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, various international agencies assist with the formulation of national youth policies and action plans.

**Q** *The 'Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie' dedicated the year 1999 to the theme of 'youth'. In preparation for the 'VIII Sommet de la Francophonie' (Moncton 1999), it organised a wide consultation of young people in 28 French-speaking countries. These wide consultations gave rise to three large meetings, resulting in a number of important youth recommendations regarding such issues as 'Political life, democracy and human rights', 'Education, training and integration' and 'Culture and Communication'.*

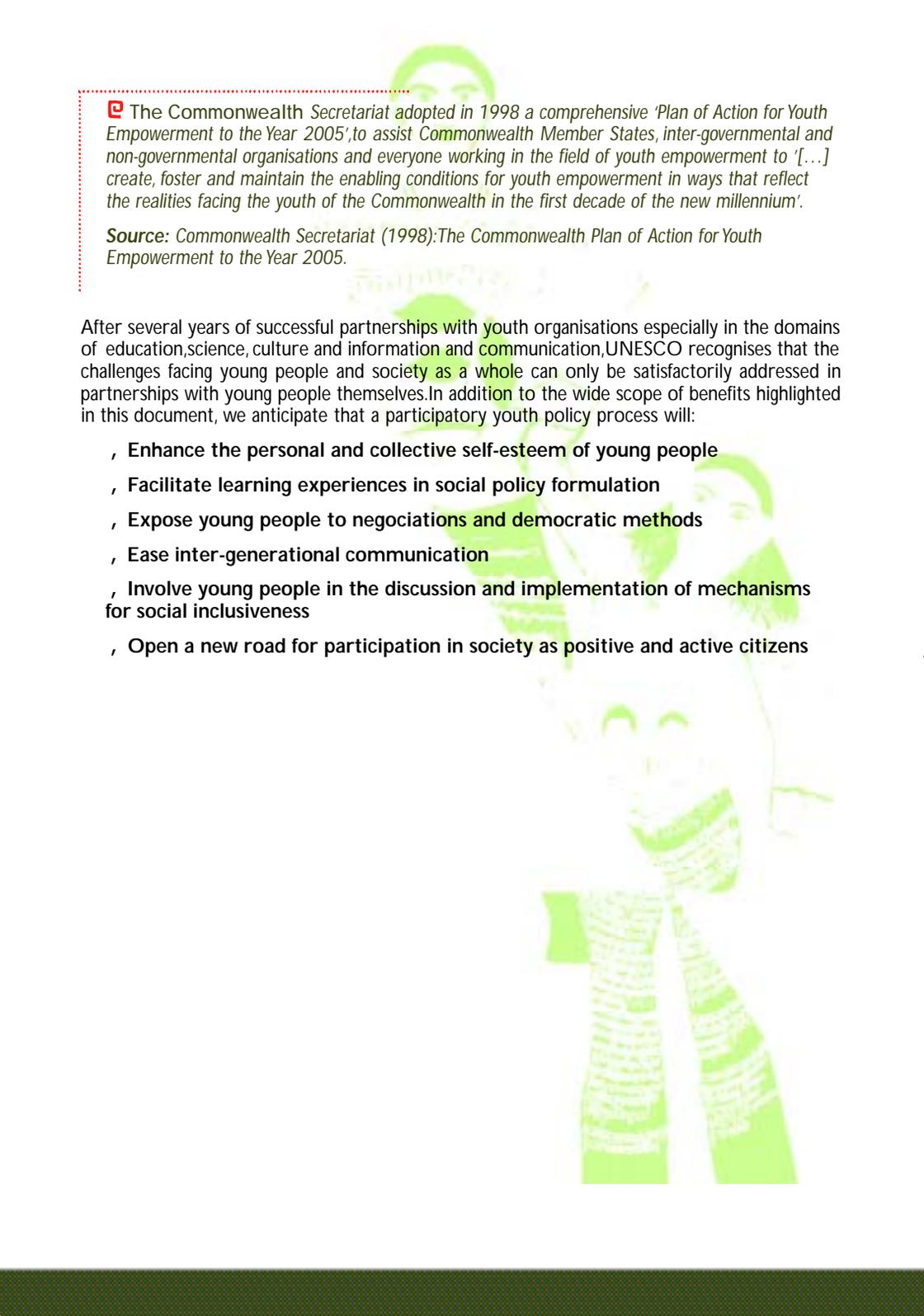
*'Young people affirm that it is important to consult them. But not taking their recommendations into account is even worse than not consulting them at all'.*

**Source:** Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (1999): *La francophonie à l'écoute de sa jeunesse*.

<sup>15</sup> **The Regional Youth Platforms** are international organisations formed by national youth councils and international non-governmental youth organisations to represent the interests of young people from their region. They include:

- The African Youth Network,
- The Arab Youth Union,
- The Asian Students Association,
- The Asian Youth Council,
- The Caribbean Federation of Youth,
- The European Youth Forum,
- The Latin American Youth Forum,
- The Pacific Youth Council and
- the Pan-African Youth Movement.

The Regional Youth Platforms are coordinated by a **Global Cooperation Coordinating Committee (GCCC)**, [www.youthforum.org/en/our\\_work/global3.html](http://www.youthforum.org/en/our_work/global3.html), established in 1997 to help them cooperate and work together on common global issues affecting young people. The GCCC is convened by the European Youth Forum. The Committee, which meets once a year, discusses issues like young people in politics and decision-making processes, as well as topics such as the fight against HIV/AIDS, hunger, the debt crisis, governance, trade and globalisation.



**1** The Commonwealth Secretariat adopted in 1998 a comprehensive 'Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment to the Year 2005', to assist Commonwealth Member States, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations and everyone working in the field of youth empowerment to '[...] create, foster and maintain the enabling conditions for youth empowerment in ways that reflect the realities facing the youth of the Commonwealth in the first decade of the new millennium'.

**Source:** Commonwealth Secretariat (1998): The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment to the Year 2005.

After several years of successful partnerships with youth organisations especially in the domains of education, science, culture and information and communication, UNESCO recognises that the challenges facing young people and society as a whole can only be satisfactorily addressed in partnerships with young people themselves. In addition to the wide scope of benefits highlighted in this document, we anticipate that a participatory youth policy process will:

- , Enhance the personal and collective self-esteem of young people
- , Facilitate learning experiences in social policy formulation
- , Expose young people to negotiations and democratic methods
- , Ease inter-generational communication
- , Involve young people in the discussion and implementation of mechanisms for social inclusiveness
- , Open a new road for participation in society as positive and active citizens

## 7. Further sources of information and references

The Section for Youth has prepared a variety of publications on diverse issues pertaining to youth.

**All publications can be accessed and downloaded at**  
[www.unesco.org/youth/publications.htm](http://www.unesco.org/youth/publications.htm)

Major UN documents pertaining to youth

- , World Programme of Action for Youth to the year 2000 and beyond (1995)
- , Braga Youth Action Plan and Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes (1998)
- , Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy (2001)
- , UN World Youth Report 2003

**All documents can be accessed and downloaded at**  
[www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/library/index.html#otherdocuments](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/library/index.html#otherdocuments)

Internet links

- , [www.unesco.org/youth](http://www.unesco.org/youth) (Section for Youth, UNESCO)
- , [www.un.org/youth](http://www.un.org/youth) (United Nations, DESA)
- , [www.icnyp.net](http://www.icnyp.net) (International Council on National Youth Policy)
- , [www.infoyouth.org](http://www.infoyouth.org) (world-wide information network initiated by UNESCO of government authorities, relevant agencies and youth organisations on youth-related issues)
- , [www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/helsinki/](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/helsinki/) (Reports of the UN Expert Meeting on Global Priorities for Youth, 2002)
- , [www.confejes.org](http://www.confejes.org) (Conference of Ministers of Youth and Sports of French-speaking countries)
- , <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/cyp> (The Commonwealth Youth Programme)

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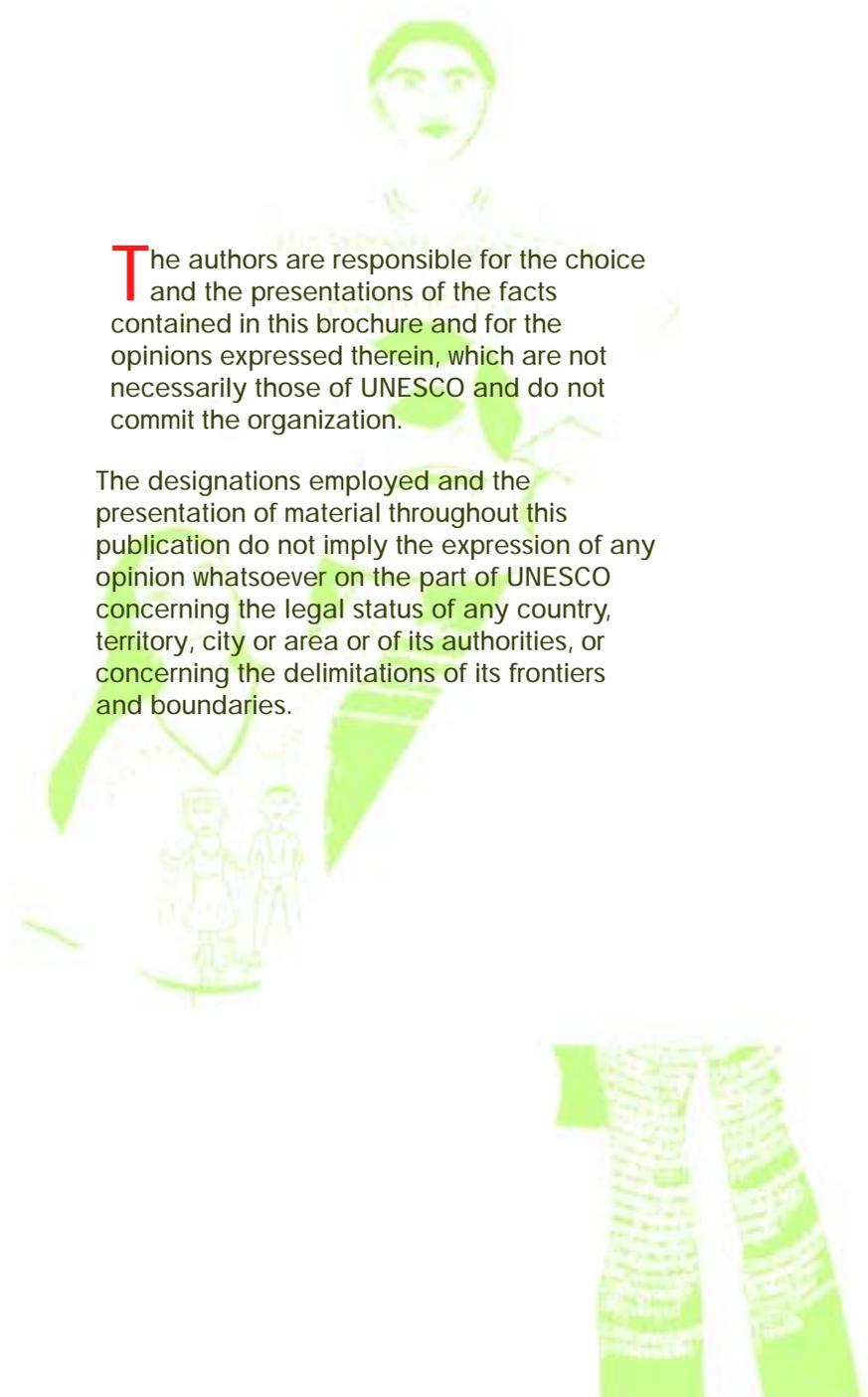
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The artistic creations used as the cover of this brochure are the graphic results of the project 'Drawing the pain of AIDS' (co-ordinated by the UNESCO Office in Phnom Penh and UNICEF in Cambodia), in which a group of 30 young people living with AIDS or affected by HIV/AIDS participated.

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