



Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
Ministry of Information and Culture
Office of the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs

Afghanistan National Youth Policy

Draft for public consultation (July 2013)

ACRONYMS

AMICS	Afghanistan Multi Indicator Cluster Survey
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANQF	Afghan National Qualification Framework
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
ANYP	Afghan National Youth Policy
ASRHR	adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights
BPHS	Basic Package of Health Services
CAH	Child and Adolescent Health
CBT	competency based training
CEDAW	Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Central Statistics Organization
DMOYA	Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs
GBV	gender based violence
GDP	gross domestic product
GIROA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ILO	International Labour Organization
MCN	Ministry of Counter Narcotics
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOIC	Ministry of Information and Culture
NESP	National Education Strategic Plan
NGO	non-governmental organizations
NDSA	National Disability Survey Afghanistan
NRVA	National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
PWDs	persons with disabilities
STI	sexually transmitted infection
TVET	technical and vocational education and training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNODC	United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

CONTENT

Foreword	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Acronyms	vii
1. Rationale	3
2. Purpose	4
3. Context	5
4. Values and Principles	6
4.1. Values	6
4.2. Principles	6
5. Definition of Youth	7
6. Vision and Goals	8
6.1 Vision	8
6.2 Goals	8
7. Policy Objectives	9
8. Youth Groups	10
10. Priority Target Groups	11
10.1 Girls and young women	11
10.2 Unemployed and underemployed youth	12
10.3 Adolescent and youth without access to health services	14
10.4 Rural youth	14
10.5 Youth with no access to education	15
10.6 Young persons with disabilities	16
10.8 Youth with drug addiction	17
10.8 Extremist youth	18
11. Key Policy Interventions	18
11.1 Employment	18
11.2 Adolescent and youth health	18
11.3 Education and training	18
11.4 Participation	18
11.5 Cross-cutting issues	23
11.5.1 Gender equality	23
11.5.2 Peace and security	24
11.5.3 Sports and recreation	25
11.5.4 Environmental sustainability	25
12. Implementation Framework	26
12.1 Implementing bodies	26
12.2 Monitoring	26
12.3 Coordination mechanism	26
12.4 Budget and resource allocation	26
13. Policy Impact Analysis	27
14. References	27

1. Rationale

The recent establishment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan which is the foundation for a free, independent and democratic society after thirty years of political and social unrest is a milestone in the history of the country. In the past decade consecutive governments have provided Afghanistan's young women and men with unprecedented opportunities for development in areas such as health, education, employment and political participation. However, not all young women and men have benefited from the recently achieved progress and much more needs to be done to meet the needs of Afghanistan's youth.

Afghanistan is one of world's youngest and fastest growing populations at an annual rate of population change of 3.1 per cent (UNFPA, 2012a). According to the Central Statistics Organization (CSO) in 2011 68 per cent of Afghanistan's population of around 26.5 million people was under the age of 25, with people between the ages of 15 to 24 years accounting for 40 per cent of the total population. Examples from other countries have shown that this sizable youth population can be turned into a demographic dividend if a country is committed to making its young women and men the focus of its development and poverty reduction strategies. With Afghanistan soon entering the Transformation Decade (2015 – 2024)¹, it is now critical to make these strategic and well-coordinated investments in Afghanistan's young population to realize the full potential and energy of its youth.

Since its establishment the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) has designed, developed and endorsed laws, regulations and policies in the framework of the Constitution of Afghanistan to address the issues and needs of the country's citizens. In the last decade, young people benefited from many national laws and policies of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in the areas of health, education, employment, culture, sports, rural development and reconstruction, but three decades of civil unrest deprived a generation of this country from accessing basic services. Moreover, many of the small scale and short-term programmes initiated by the GIROA and non-governmental actors were not sustainable and did not respond to the growing needs of the country's young people. Therefore, the Office of the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs (DMoYA) has developed a first-ever Afghan National Youth Policy (ANYP) to ensure that investment in young people lead to sustainable and more equitable development of all young women and men.

The aim of developing the ANYP is to bring together all the relevant governmental and non-governmental stakeholders – in particular youth – to systematically address youth issues, and to design and implement short-term, medium-term and long-term strategies and programmes for growth and expansion of talents, skills and potential of young women and

¹ At the Kabul and Lisbon Conferences in 2010, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Afghan Government agreed that full responsibility for security would be handed over to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) by the end of 2014 when Afghanistan will enter the Transformation Decade (2014–2015).

men in economic, social, cultural and political areas of the country. The ANYP is designed in a way that will lead to sustainable and equitable progress in the development of Afghanistan's youth.

2. Purpose

The ANYP was designed and developed in line with the vision of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (2008–2013) (ANDS), the National Priority Programmes (NPPs) as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is aimed at serving the following purposes:

1. Promotes youth as a strategic priority target group for Afghanistan's overall development and poverty reduction strategies;
2. Identifies priority youth issues and provides the legal framework and strategic direction for sustainable youth development;
3. Identifies gaps in existing youth related research, policies and programmes and provides a common framework for addressing these gaps;
4. Acknowledges the distinctive and complementary role of governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and youth organizations in youth development and intends to provide a framework for common goals and the development of a spirit of cooperation between these groups;
5. Intends to strengthen the coordination between the various governmental and non-governmental actors involved in youth related issues;
6. Provides a framework for designing and implementing a monitoring mechanism to improve and strengthen youth related programmes and interventions;
7. Promotes opportunities for political, economic, social and cultural youth participation at the national, sub-national and local level.

3. Context

The priorities and strategic directions provided by the ANYP are based on the needs of Afghanistan's young women and men. The ANYP is in accordance with the principles of Islamic values, human rights, economic and social justice, social morality and solidarity.

Today's youth are the future leaders of the country and they require a policy that enables and empowers them to realize their full potential.

The development and excellence of Afghanistan depends on the ability of the country's youth to contribute to sustainable social, economic and political progress.

The ANYP is a guideline for invigoration of youth to enable and empower youth as well as governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to address existing problems such as human rights abuse, poverty, unemployment, social injustice and insecurity.

The objectives of this policy can be met when the GIROA and other national and international stakeholders prioritize youth development and recognize their responsibility implementing the ANYP.

Efforts towards youth development should be well coordinated between the GIROA and non-governmental actors at all levels. Youth issues need to be the priority of the national development agenda and be mainstreamed through all sectors.

Generations of young people who have been deprived of their basic rights due to unfavourable political and economic conditions and those who continue to live under conditions that deny them growing up and living in dignity are the focus of this policy.

4. Values and Principles

4.1 Values

The ANYP was developed according to the values and principles of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Afghans have very rich social and cultural norms and Afghan youth must be nurtured based on these norms and values including peace, justice and brotherhood. The values enshrined in the ANYP are as follows:

1. Based on Article 14 of the Constitution respect for the national identity.
2. Based on Article 6 and 34 of the Constitution, respect for the human dignity, human rights, culture, religion and political views of others.
3. Based on Article 6 and 22 of the Constitution, social justice and access to resources.
4. Based on Article 20 and 2 of the Constitution, gender equality.
5. Based on Articles 43, 44, 46, and 47 of the Constitution regarding the potential of youth and adolescents.
6. Active political, economic and social participation.
7. Commitment and sincerity towards all principles and values of the Constitution of Afghanistan.
8. Protection of Afghanistan's cultural heritage.

4.2 Principles

The following principles and rules have been designed and developed based on existing governance structures and the responsibilities of governmental and non-governmental organizations for youth development. In addition, the policy is based on the principles of the Constitution and the MDGs.

The GIRoA provides financial and technical support to those governmental and non-governmental organizations that design and implement programmes for youth in the framework of these principles and rules. The ANYP promotes the meaningful involvement of young people in all social, economic and political decisions that affect their lives. The basic principles and rules are as follows:

1. Equity:
 - a) Recognition of the rights and associated responsibilities of all young people to equality of opportunity and equitable distribution of services and resources;
 - b) Recognition of the rights to adequate and appropriate programmes and services by all young people regardless of gender, geographic location, ethnicity, religion or social, cultural or economic circumstances;
 - c) Promoting special programmes to address the problems of vulnerable and most disadvantaged young people, including unemployed youth, drug addicts and young persons with disability; and
 - d) A minimum of 30 per cent of the direct beneficiaries of all programmes designed for youth should be young women and girls.
2. Participation:
 - a) Recognition of young people's rights and responsibilities in making decisions which affect their lives.
3. Implementation and coordination:
 - a) The ANYP is to be implemented under the leadership and management of the Ministry of Information and Culture, in particular, by the Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs (DMoYA) in cooperation and coordination with relevant government agencies, youth and civil society organizations, the private sector and other national and international stakeholders. The ANYP is in accordance with the Constitution and all international conventions to which the GIRoA is a signatory.
 - b) The Provincial Youth Affairs Departments will lead and manage the implementation of the ANYP at the provincial level in close collaboration with Governors and district heads.

- c) Overseeing the implementation of the ANYP is the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Information and Culture (MOIC), in close cooperation with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. This policy will be reviewed and adjusted on a regular basis.
4. Coherence
- a) The ANYP enjoys the full support of the GIROA. Governmental agencies and civil society stakeholders will share youth related research, programmes and strategies with the DMOYA.
 - b) All youth related programmes should be in line with the goals, objectives and priorities of the ANYP.
 - c) All youth development programmes should promote the values of equity, peace, security, stability and economic empowerment.
 - d) Programmes designed based on the priorities and principles of the ANYP will support from the DMOYA.

5. Definition of Youth

Different countries identify different concepts and age groups of youth depending on their specific social, cultural, political, institutional and legal context. Moreover, youth issues are multi-sectoral by nature and any definition of youth should be flexible enough to reflect the specific needs of an age group in different sectors and stages of youth development.

In this policy a youth is defined as a person who is between the age of 18 and 30. However, the ANYP provides also guidelines for programming for adolescents (13 to 18 years) since the GIROA recognizes that for many sectors, including health and education, the return on investment is particularly high when made at earlier stages in life.

Childhood (in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child defined as anyone below the age of 18) is identified based on physical, mental and psychological changes that prepare a person for maturity. According to the legal system in Afghanistan, the childhood period is divided into three phases: undiscerning minor aged 0 to 7 years, discerning minor aged 7 to 13 years and adolescents (juvenile) aged 13 to 18 years. According to the Afghan criminal law, minors are children between the ages of 7 and 13 years. In light of the Afghan labour law, a juvenile is a person who has completed the age of 14 and has not completed 18 years of age.

6. Vision and Goals

6.1 Vision

Responsible, skilled, productive and healthy young women and men who realize their full potential and contribute to Afghanistan's sustainable development and prosperity in accordance with Islamic values.

6.2 Goals

1. Prioritizing youth development in the policies and programmes of the GIRoA.
2. Strengthening the coordination between national and international governmental and non-governmental stakeholders for effective and sustainable political, economic and social growth and development of youth.
3. Targeted capacity building of youth.
4. Promoting decent and equal employment opportunities for young women and men for their economic and social empowerment and development.

7. Policy Objectives

1. Mainstreaming and prioritizing youth issues
 - a) Include youth, in particular young women, as a priority group in national and sub-national policies, strategies and programmes of relevant line ministries, civil society organizations, private sector and international development agencies.
2. Coordination and cooperation
 - a) Facilitate and strengthen coordination and cooperation among governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to deliver efficient and timely basic services to youth.
 - b) Promote knowledge building and sharing on youth issues amongst all national and international stakeholders.
3. Participation and inclusion
 - a) Promote and facilitate youth participation at all levels of social, economic and political decision-making processes.
 - b) Provide opportunities for meaningful social, economic and political opportunities for the most disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalized groups of youth.

4. Empowerment and capacity building
 - a) Promote free and universal access to quality education and training to build the capacity of young people and a strong human resource base.
 - b) Promote decent employment opportunities for young women and men, in particular for young women and persons with disability and in rural areas.
 - c) Design and implement programmes to build self-confidence, leaderships skills, life skills and resilience of young women and men
 - d) Engage youth in the fight against the cultivation, production, trafficking, and the use of drugs by offering alternative income generating opportunities and the promotion of healthy lifestyles.

5. Values and commitment
 - a) Strengthen young people's commitment to the values enshrined in the Constitution.
 - b) Promote young people's awareness of and commitment to Islamic values, democracy, human rights and gender equality and support young people in becoming advocates for these values.
 - c) Establishing and strengthening religious schools for Islamic education in all provinces for eliminating extremism.
 - d) Instituting patriotism, national unity and social responsibility among young people so they understand their national duties and play an active role in the rebuilding of the country.
 - e) Promote and strengthen a culture of tolerance, acceptance and equality.
 - f) Boost the spirit of volunteerism among the youth in various fields, including, civic education, charity, and community services.
 - g) Engage youth in the protection of the environment and the preservation of the country's cultural heritage.

8. Youth Groups

The GIROA recognizes the diversity of young people. Therefore, the ANYP sets priorities which address specific needs of different groups of youth in order to help stakeholders to programme for the diversity of young people.

The GIROA is aware of various problems of youth, individually and collectively, in different fields and all stakeholders must address youth issues in a coordinated manner. Therefore the ANYP identifies youth groups as targeted beneficiaries based on their social and economic needs as follows:

1. Young women and girls;
2. Young women and men living in poverty;
3. Unemployed and underemployed youth and young workers in vulnerable forms of employment;
4. Youth without access to education and out-of-school youth;
5. Adolescent and youth without access to health services;
6. Youth living with HIV/AIDS and chronic diseases;
7. Young persons with disabilities;
8. Youth with drug addiction;
9. Young victims of violence, including gender-based violence;
10. Rural youth;
11. Migrant youth (including internally displaced youth and returnees);
12. Extremist youth; and
13. Orphans and young people living on the street
14. Marginalized youth
15. Athletes

9. Priority Target Groups

While the ANYP considers the problems and needs of all of the above mentioned groups of youth, the policy prioritizes the following most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups:

1. Young women and girls;
2. Unemployed and underemployed youth;
3. Youth without access to health services;
4. Rural youth;
5. Youth without access to education and training;
6. Young persons with disability;
7. Youth with drug addiction;
8. Extremist youth;
9. Marginalized youth.

10.1 Young women and girls

Young women and girls in Afghanistan are faced with severe gender-based political, economic, social and cultural problems. Women in Afghanistan have lower outcomes in most development indicators including human rights, education, health, employment and participation. While gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of Afghanistan and the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has been legally in force in Afghanistan since 2003, much more needs to be done to ensure that every girl and

woman can access her fundamental human rights and is provided with equal opportunities to realize her full potential.

Young women and girls face significantly more and qualitatively different challenges in terms of health than their male counterparts. Generally, young women in Afghanistan have limited access to health services and information due to cultural barriers and lower literacy rates (see below). Afghanistan has one of the world's highest maternal mortality rates and the country's high adolescent birth rate (90/1,000 women aged 15 to 19) (UNFPA, 2012a) poses a major risk to young girls' and women's health. Complications of pregnancy and childbirth are the main causes of death among adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 years old in developing countries. Among the disabilities associated with early childbirth is obstetric fistula, an injury which leaves girls in constant pain, vulnerable to infection, incontinent, and often shunned by their husbands, families and communities (UNFPA, 2012b).

In Afghanistan, the vast majority of adolescent births take place within marriage, making the fight against early marriage (before the age of 18) and the promotion of adolescent sexual and reproductive health rights (ASRHR) critical. According to the *Afghanistan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey* (AMICS) 2010/2011, 15.2 per cent of surveyed women were married before the age of 15, while 46 per cent were married before the age of 18. There is also a significant age difference between married young boys and young girls. The AMICS found that 11 per cent of surveyed women aged 15 to 19 and 14 per cent of surveyed women aged 20 to 24 are married to men at least ten years older than them (*ibid*).

Gender based violence (GBV) poses another major risk to the health rights of girls and young women. Particularly girls (10 to 14 years) in forced marriages are vulnerable to violence. Studies on domestic violence in Afghanistan found that one in three girls in this group were victims of sexual violence and 62.5 per cent experienced physical violence (Global Rights Report, 2008).

While there was significant progress in female schooling in recent years, there is still a big gender gap in education. According to UNICEF (2011) the total adult literacy rate (15 years and older) stands at 39 per cent, however, the adult female literacy rate is one of the lowest in the world of only 13 per cent. For young women (15 to 24 years) the gap is even wider; the literacy rate for young women stands at 18 per cent compared to 50 per cent for young men (UNGEI).

Young women have fewer work opportunities than men; Afghanistan's employment-to-population ratio (aged 15 to 64 years) shows a large gender difference: 80 per cent for males and 43 per cent for females, with an overall ratio of 62 per cent (NRVA, 2008). The share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (MDG Indicator 3.2) is only 8 per cent. This gender gap in employment is mainly due to conservative cultural attitudes

which limit the role of women in public spaces and prevent many girls and young women from attending schools/ trainings and work outside their homes.

Although Afghanistan has a relatively high percentage of parliamentary seats allocated to women, in reality women and especially young women have very little impact in decision-making processes at the sub-national and local levels.

10.2 Unemployed and underemployed youth

Employment opportunities for youth in Afghanistan are severely limited and where jobs for youth do exist they often lack quality. Afghanistan's youth employment situation is constrained by challenges relating to the demand side (slow job growth), supply side (lack and mismatch of skills), and an overall unfavourable policy and coordination context.

On the demand side, continuing security concerns, apprehension about the process of the post-2014 transition and weak institutional capacity continue to create an unfavourable investment climate and resulted in declining growth rates (World Bank, 2012). Afghanistan's economy and jobs are not growing enough to absorb the annual 400,000 new labour market entrants (ILO, 2012). The 2007/2008 National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) reports high pockets of unemployment rates among youth, 10 per cent for young men and 15 per cent for young women.² The majority of unemployed youth in the country are illiterate youth with low skills levels but there are also high levels of unemployment among university graduates in urban areas. Opportunities for youth entrepreneurship are limited due to a lack of access to finances and overall low financial literacy.

Widespread poverty among Afghanistan's youth population force many young women and men to take on whatever work is available to them and led to high levels of vulnerable forms of employment and working poverty. Afghanistan's informal sector (including illicit activities) accounts for 80 to 90 per cent of the total economic activity. According to the 2007/2008 NRVA, most employed people (77 per cent) have insecure jobs as own-account workers or unpaid family workers. Sixty per cent of the employed labour force is working in agriculture in low-productivity and subsistence-type production (in 2011, agriculture contributed only to 23 per cent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product (GDP) (ILO, 2012).

The supply-side related challenges are severe. According to estimations by the GIRoA, there is currently a supply gap of between 15,000 to 20,000 persons per year at the existing level of economic development across the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. There are several factors that act as barriers to achieving such a number of certified and skilled people

² Employment data in Afghanistan is highly controversial. Given the high level of poverty most (young) people cannot afford to be unemployed and the relatively low rates of unemployment indicate high levels of underemployment (ILO, 2012).

who are directly employable after skills training. The first is the small number of high school graduates who opt for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Although there are about 200,000 high school graduates every year who do not get admission to universities or private colleges, only about 5 per cent of this number opt for a formal VET program as a career option. The TVET sector in Afghanistan also suffers from being supply-driven and service providers in general have little or no concern about the employability of graduates or the market relevance of the skills they impart. The sector also continues to remain unattractive to potential students due to the absence of a robust system of licensing and certification, the lack of regulatory control over both public and private training and service providers, and the low technical and pedagogical skill levels of teachers and trainers of VET.

The virtual absence of employment and career counseling services for most of Afghanistan's youth contributes to the mismatch in skills and demand by the labour market. Many youth are not aware of what job and training opportunities are available to them and what skills are needed by employers.

Labour market and youth employment data on Afghanistan is either absent or unreliable which presents an obstacle to evidence-based and effective (youth) employment policies and interventions.

10.3 Adolescents and youth without access to health services

Although adolescence and youth are generally considered healthy periods in life, many young women and men in Afghanistan face significant health risks including issues related to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and drug use.

Afghanistan's high adolescent birth rate (90/1,000 women aged 15 to 19) (UNFPA, 2012a) poses a major risk to young girls' and women's health. Afghanistan has one of the worst maternal mortality rates in the world and one out of every eight Afghan women dies from the causes related to pregnancy and childbirth every year (US Department of State, 2011). For young women the risk of maternal death or disability is significantly higher: the proportion of girls between the ages of 10 to 14 that die during pregnancy or childbirth is five times higher than that of women aged 20 to 24, and twice as high as among girls 15 to 19 (UNFPA, 2007). Young women in Afghanistan have also limited access to health services and information due to cultural barriers and lower literacy rates.

The *Afghanistan Youth Assessment Study* (Samuel Hall, 2013) also found that a large proportion of Afghan youth suffer from untreated mental health issues resulting from trauma and stress relating to conflict, displacement, poverty and continued insecurity. National and sub-national surveys in Afghanistan have found that at least one in two people

aged 15 and older are affected by a mental health disorder such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (Sayed, 2011).

Despite the fact that youth represent 40 per cent of the Afghan population, health services are not targeted at this group. This neglect of youth health is partly a result of lack of data on youth specific health needs but also points to the need for stronger mainstreaming of youth issues in national health strategies and services.

10.4 Rural youth

Like in most developing countries, in Afghanistan there is a wide gap in the level of development between rural and urban areas. In general, young women and men in rural areas have less access to health services, education and employment than their urban counterpart. Moreover, the general gender gap in all areas of development is significantly more pronounced in rural than urban areas.

According to the latest population estimations 2012-2013 (CSO, 2013), out of Afghanistan's population of 25.5 million, 19.4 million people live in rural areas. The NRVA (2007/2008) shows significant differences in the geographic distribution of poverty: the incidence of poverty in the rural population is close to the national average (36 per cent), the incidence in the urban population is relatively low (29 per cent) and very high in the nomadic Kuchi population (54 per cent).

The higher level of poverty in rural areas is reflected in a higher employment-to-population ratio for rural (66 per cent) than urban areas (44 per cent), particularly among women for which the unemployment rate is the same for rural and urban areas: the employment-to-population ratio for women in urban areas stands at 16 per cent compared to 50 per cent for their rural counterparts which underlines the fact that most rural households cannot afford unemployment and have to take on any work they can find (NRVA 2007/2008).

Most people living in rural areas are engaged in agricultural activities. However, agricultural productivity is very low and the main drivers of growth – technology, roads, irrigation, and education – have all been held back due to conflict and continued insecurity and lack of maintenance and frequent droughts. While agriculture accounts for 66 per cent of the workforce and 80 per cent of Afghan households mostly or partly depend on agriculture related income, the formal (excluding the illegal opium sector) agriculture sector only contributes to around 36 per cent of the GDP (ILO, 2012).

Despite the remarkable progress in overall school enrolment rates, there are still wide geographic disparities. According to the AMICS (2010/2011), women's literacy rate in rural areas is three times lower than in urban areas. The literacy rate among the AMICS sample of young women (15 to 24 years) from urban areas stands at 51.6 per cent compared to only 15.1 per cent for young women from rural areas.

Young women and men from rural areas are also disadvantaged in terms of access to health services and health rights. This difference is particularly significant for reproductive health (RH) and RH rights. According to the AMICS, the antenatal care (by a doctor, nurse or midwife) coverage for women (15 to 49) in urban areas (77 per cent) is 36 percentage points higher than in rural areas (41 per cent). The AMICS also found that girls (15 to 19 years) in rural areas are nearly three times more likely to be married before the age of 15. Closely related, there is a difference in young women (20 to 24 years) who have had a live birth before age 18 between urban areas (18 per cent) compared to young women in rural areas (27 per cent) which renders these girls particularly vulnerable to adolescent pregnancies and related adverse consequences for their physical and social well-being.

10.5 Youth without access to education and training

The last decade saw a huge expansion in school attendance throughout Afghanistan. Girls and boys are back to school in unprecedented numbers and more girls are attending school currently than at any time in Afghanistan's history. The Afghan MDGs, the Education for All Goals, the Education Law and the National Education Strategic Plan (NESP) highlight the critical role of the education system (from pre-primary to tertiary education) for national development progress. However, the large number of out-of-school and illiterate children and youth – especially girls and young women – with low skills levels will remain socially and economically problematic for the foreseeable future.

There are around 11 millions of young people aged 15 and above and adults who missed out formal education or could not complete their schooling to obtain a certificate. There is not only a social debt to compensate to those to whom access to education had been denied in the past, it is also necessary to fully use their potential for the future development of the country.

Continued conflict and a fragile security context present obstacles to enrolment, monitoring and school supervision and the delivery of school supplies. Cultural norms which oppose the education of girls and women as well as early marriage exacerbate the problem. In addition, a shortage of teachers, in particular female teachers, make the provision of quality education even more difficult. Moreover, only 27 per cent of all teachers are actually qualified to teach (GIZ, 2011).

Despite continued efforts by the GIRoA and other national and international stakeholders, there remains a large gender gap in education: 60 per cent of the 4.2 million out-of-school children are girls, and there are no female students enrolled in grades 10 to 12 in 200 out of 412 Districts throughout the country (UNICEF, 2011). Consequently, young women (15 to 24 years) have significantly lower literacy rates than young men: 18 per cent for young women compared with 50 per cent for young men (UNGEI).

Apart from persistent security concerns, widespread poverty is one of the main obstacles for children and youth to access education and training. Child labour is very prevalent, according to the AMICS 2010/2011, 25 per cent of children aged 5 to 14 participate in economic activities.

10.6 Young persons with disability

In Afghanistan there is a lack of accurate statistics on impairment, however, a number of national surveys show that Afghanistan has one of the highest proportion of persons with disabilities (PwDs). The National Disability Survey Afghanistan (NDSA) (2005) estimated a (severe) disability prevalence of about 2.7 per cent of the total population, which equals around 600,000 PwDs.³ The World Health Organization (WHO) and other UN agencies estimate the number of PwDs closer to two million people (UNDP, 2007). While hundreds of thousands of Afghans were made disabled by war and landmines, even more acquired disabilities from birth, inadequate healthcare, accidents, or malnutrition and preventable diseases such as polio or tuberculosis (Trani, 2004).

Persons with disability have significantly less access to education than non-disabled persons. According to the NDSA, almost 73 per cent of PwDs did not receive any education, whereas the rate is 51.4 per cent for the non-disabled. This rate is even lower for persons who became disabled before the age of 7; the overall access to public schools is twice as high for non-disabled children than for children disabled before the age of 7. Moreover, in line with the national gender and geography gap in education, disabled girls have lower educational outcomes than disabled boys and rural disabled children and youth have less access to education than those from urban areas. Therefore, disabled girls from rural areas present one of the most vulnerable groups of children and youth. Only 10 per cent of those girls (disabled before the age of 7) have access to education. In order to address this gap in education, MOE and NGOs have established a number of schools for special education and a department of inclusive education has been established within the MOE to facilitate and promote persons' with disabilities enrolment in general schools. In addition, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MOLSAMD) and NGOs have established skill training programmes for persons with disability. An Inclusive Working Group has been established and for the coordination of education programme and activities for persons with disability. In addition to being disadvantaged in terms of access to basic services, persons with disability are faces with discrimination and stigmatization due to sometimes intolerant attitudes in particular with regards to mental disabilities.

³ The NDSA was based on a population estimation of 22.2 million people.

10.7 Youth with drug addiction

Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of heroin and domestic drug addiction has now become one of the major challenges, particular among the country's young population. Widespread and untreated drug addiction among youth can lead to social hazards such as crime and social deviance, unemployment and chronic poverty.

A survey which was conducted in 2009 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) found that there are around one million illicit drug users in Afghanistan (aged 15 to 64 years). This number equals around 3 per cent of the population, a rate which is significantly higher than the world average and several times higher than the rate of opiate use in neighbouring Pakistan, which is 0.7 per cent (CFC, 2012). The UNODC report also found that opium is used by 60 per cent of drug users but that the use of others drugs like cannabis has significantly increased during the last decade.

The survey also reported that as many as 50 per cent of parents who used drugs in the north and south of the country gave opium to their children thus contributing to the high rates of drug abuse among youth. Injecting drug use, as well as sex traded for drugs or money also contributes to the spread of sexually transmissible infections (STIs) including HIV and other blood-borne diseases. According to the Integrated Behavioral and Biological Surveillance which was conducted by Johns Hopkins University in 2010, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the injecting drug users in Afghanistan was about 7.2 per cent and 40 per cent of them were suffering from Hepatitis C.

The number of drug treatment health centers in Afghanistan is very limited. According to the Ministry of Counter Narcotics (MCN), the current capacity of public and private addiction treatment facilities is only around ten to twelve thousand annual clients (2.86 per cent of the existing opium and heroin users (MCN, 2012)). In its National Drug Demand Reduction Policy (2012–2016), the MNC mentions additional challenges for addiction treatment including the absence of a licensing system for treatment facilities and certification mechanism for addiction counselors and the absence of treatment facilities for other substances such as alcohol or cannabis. Where existent, there is also a lack of awareness regarding the services provided by the drug treatment centres.

10.8 Extremist youth

Studies from countries affected by conflict have shown that a large youth population combined with poverty and inequality can serve as a fertile ground for radicalization of youth and the spread of extremism. Recent literature on the root causes of radicalization and extremism suggests that radicalization is a decentralized, complex and evolutionary process (Aldrich, 2012) whose containment and reversal require a multi-pronged and context-specific approach. In Afghanistan there is a lack of research on why young people

join violent extremist organizations but case studies show that feeling disenfranchised over the lack of educational and employment opportunities have led to the radicalization of some youth, particular young men. In light of the approaching post-2014 Transformation Decade, it is critical to better understand and tackle radicalization of youth through evidence-based and integrated programming for ex-combatant youth and youth in and at risk of joining violent extremist organizations.

11. Key Policy Interventions

Based on the most urgent needs of Afghanistan's young women and men the key areas for interventions have been identified as follows:

11.1 Youth employment

Continuing efforts to boost decent youth employment opportunities in line with labour market demands should be given priority by all stakeholders. The GIROA in close consultation with the private sector and social partners should develop a *National Youth Employment Action Plan* which addresses the youth employment challenge through a holistic, multi-dimensional and rights-based approach including the following components:

1. Address the lack of employment and labour-market data and research, in particular the lack of gender and age-disaggregated information on labour and employment.
2. Create a favorable policy environment and remove bottlenecks for decent job opportunities for young people with a focus on the agriculture and livestock, rural development, information technology, mining, trade and industry and construction of dams.
3. Promote sustainable youth entrepreneurship through increasing young people's access to sustainable finances, increased financial literacy and business skills.
4. Promote public works programmes for disadvantaged youth.
5. Develop a demand driven, coordinated and inclusive national TVET system .
6. Promote public private partnerships between the educational and private sector to closer align school curricula with market needs.
7. Promote work experience opportunities for youth including through formal and informal apprenticeships and public and private internship programmes.
8. Expand youth specific employment services and career education, including through the establishment of youth job centers.
9. Promote decent employment opportunities for youth abroad including programmes for smooth reintegration.
10. Adjust the civil servants law to provide employment opportunities for youth including young persons with disability.

11. Increase young people's awareness of their workers' rights and promote young workers' participation in social dialogue at all levels.

11.2 Adolescent and youth health

The Ministry of Public Health's (MOPH) National Child and Adolescent Health (CAH) Policy (2009-2013) and related CAH Strategy include children and adolescents up to 18 years. The CAH Policy should be expanded to include a separate, evidence-based strategy on adolescents and youth in line with the definition as of this policy. Young people have specific health needs and adolescent and youth health services should be mainstreamed into the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS). In addition, the following steps should be taken in order to ensure the development of a healthy young generation:

1. Adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR)
 - a) Provide young women and men must with easily accessible age and gender sensitive education and counseling on reproductive health.
 - b) Promote comprehensive, gender-sensitive and life skills-based SRH education in schools and community settings.
 - c) Raise public awareness on the adverse effects of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy.
 - d) Promote childbearing after 20 years of age and educate religions and community leaders on the advantages of adequate spacing between births.
 - e) Promote an effective system of birth registration and national ID cards and civil registration of marriages in live with national law.
 - f) Make religious and community leaders key actors for positive change in SRHR policy and practice.
 - g) Promote public awareness and universal access to the prevention, care, treatment and support of HIV/AIDS and other STIs. Promote campaigns to de-stigmatize people living with HIV/AIDS.
2. Drug addiction
 - a) Raise young people's awareness of the adverse effects of substance abuse.
 - b) Increase youth friendly treatment facilities for drug addicted youth.
 - c) Promote integrated programmes that combine anti-drug cultivation and addiction and interventions aimed at alternative income generating opportunities.
3. Adolescent and youth mental health
 - a) Promote research on the state of adolescent and youth mental health in Afghanistan.
 - b) Enhance the quantity and quality of youth friendly mental health care services and referral systems.
 - c) Build public awareness and sensitivity to common mental health issues including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

4. Gender-based violence

- a) Build public awareness of gender-based violence (GBV).
- b) Improve the legal context and enforcement for victims of GBV.
- c) Sensitize, educate and train legal enforcement entities on GBV and ways to protect victims of GBV.
- d) Sensitize, educate and training health workers on GBV.
- e) Provide youth friendly safe spaces for victims of GBV.

5. Healthy lifestyles

- a) Mainstream education on hygiene, nutrition, and the health benefits of physical exercise in formal and non-formal education.
- b) Promote public awareness raising campaigns on healthy lifestyles.
- c) Provide accessible, culturally sensitive and youth friendly access to recreation and sports facilities.

11.3 Education and training

Many provinces of Afghanistan especially rural areas need development in terms of quality and quantity of educational opportunities. The Government and non-governmental sector must provide equal opportunities for universal access to formal and non-formal education, in particular for girls and young women. All stakeholders must keep in mind the following points for providing inclusive and quality education to the country's children and youth:

1. Increase opportunities for quality education in secure environments for the most disadvantaged adolescents and youth in particular persons with disability and young women and girls from rural areas.
2. GIRoA and the non-governmental and private sector must enhance a standard teaching/curriculum system in all sectors of the entire country which is flexible, participatory, religiously, culturally and gender sensitive, and demand driven.
3. Improve the quality and accessibility of the TVET system through:
 - a) Supporting formulating of formal, non-formal and informal TVET programmes based on the ANQF requirements in general and TVET regulatory Board in particular.
 - b) Improving youths' access to TVET institutions with a special focus on the rural areas.
 - c) Establishing competency based training (CBT) system of occupational standards, accreditation, CBT assessment, and certification for skilled young students and workers.
 - d) Establishing essential coordination networks among the various sectors in providing vocational and technical education based on the market demand.

4. Create an enabling environment for the private sector in order to promote investments in education and public-private partnerships.
5. Encourage life-long learning opportunities to keep a pace with the rapidly changing work environments brought about by technological progress and development in the organization of work.
6. Provide more opportunities for higher-education in particular for rural youth and young women. Enhance the capacity and preparation of students for higher education.
7. Development in providing Islamic education services on national and regional levels.

11.4 Participation

Youth are part of the solution. The GIROA recognizes that youth are not passive recipients of programmes but are partners and protagonists in their design, implementation and evaluation. Young people's meaningful participation in all aspects of social, political and economic decision making processes is particularly critical in a young democracy where youth participation enables the exercise of citizenship.

The ANYP identifies the following guidelines for meaningful, inclusive and active youth participation:

1. Promote active youth citizenship building including through civic education and leadership building programmes. Promote civic education at schools and universities.
2. Involve young people at all stages of policy and programme development and implementation.
3. Encourage and support youth representatives, in particular young women, to participate in political, social and economic decision making processes.
4. Involve young people in traditional and local dispute resolution processes.
5. Support and expand media space for youth voices and youth issues.
6. Promote the expansion of Afghanistan's Youth Council to village and town levels and promote the cooperation between rural and urban youth.
7. Design mechanisms to collect young people's views and opinions on youth related issues.
8. Strengthening youth led organizations and networks on national and sub-national levels.
9. Promote and support youth volunteerism.

11.5 Cross-cutting issues

Many of the challenges and problems that youth face cut across a number of areas of

intervention and should be tackled through coordinated efforts by all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. While not being exhaustive, the ANYP identifies the following priority cross-cutting issues:

11.5.1 Gender equality

The GIROA identified girls and young women are a priority target group for its national development strategy. Afghanistan, like any other country in the world, will not be able to move forward unless it can provide its women with equal opportunities for full social, economic and political participation. Therefore, all stakeholders should:

1. Recognize, protect and advocate for the fundamental human rights (including sexual and reproductive health rights) of all girls and women.
2. Prioritize and mainstream gender issues in all development programmes.
3. Strengthen coordination on gender related issues amongst all sectors.
4. Promote trainings on gender issues in schools, higher education institutions and at work places.
5. Build the capacity of girls and young women.
6. Build coalitions for gender equality with community and religious leaders.

11.5.2 Peace and security

Peace and security are fundamental conditions for sustainable youth development in Afghanistan. Young people play an important role in national stability and all stakeholders should consider the following strategies for involving young women and men in Afghanistan's peace process:

1. Promote research on youth and extremism in Afghanistan and tackle the underlying causes.
2. Promote civic education amongst youth who are at risk of radicalization.
3. Involve youth in the work for national unity, peace and security in the country.
4. Develop opportunities for youth participation in the Afghan National Security Forces.
5. Promote the participation of youth in local dispute solving mechanisms.

11.5.3 Sports and recreation

Sports and exercise play a critical role for promoting healthy, energetic, optimistic and unified young women and men. All stakeholders should support the development of Afghanistan's sports and exercise sector through the following measures:

1. Promote the value of exercise and spirit of healthy competition among youth and adolescents.
2. Develop and National Youth Sports Policy.

3. Promote inclusive, culturally and gender-sensitive access to sports and recreational facilities in particular in rural and remote areas.
4. Support integrated sports programmes which use sports as entry points for other priority youth issues including health, drug addiction, youth employment and peace building.
5. Promote traditional Afghan sports among young people.
6. Establishing and developing infrastructure for sports on national and sub-national levels.

11.5.4 Environmental sustainability

Decades of conflict, poverty and high rates of population growth have decimated Afghanistan's environment, undermining the wellbeing of rural dwellers of whom up to 90 per cent rely directly on natural resources for their livelihoods. Deforestation and illegal logging present a major threat to the livelihoods of the country's rural population who depend on the forest for firewood and the revenue generated by export of pistachios and almonds. The decreased forest cover and resulting soil erosion increased floods which regularly devastate agricultural lands and settlements.

The return of 5 million refugees, many of whom re-settled in urban areas, and rural-to-urban migration as a result of droughts and lack of income opportunities in rural areas have put a heavy toll on the water and waste management systems in urban areas.

Globally young women and men have taken the lead and championed the global sustainability discourse and practice and all stakeholders should promote and support the active participation of youth in preserving and rebuilding Afghanistan's environment through the following measures:

1. Promote awareness on environmental issues and practices amongst youth through mainstreaming sustainability to school and university curricula.
2. Promote green industries and skills development for green jobs for young women and men.
3. Support youth organizations with a sustainability agenda and promote youth environment champions.
4. Involve the media in disseminating information on environmental issues and best practices of environmental preservation.
5. Encourage and award local communities and youth groups to adopt sustainable income generating practices.
6. Support practices of disaster risk reduction and preparedness amongst communities at risk of natural disasters.
7. Enable Afghan Youth to take on Climate Action and Climate Justice Concepts and

strategies as part of the Second National Communication to the UNFCCC on Climate Change and the Afghanistan National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA).

8. Work with growing Afghan youth movement on nature and outdoors programmes in mountains, practical action, environmental restoration and rehabilitation
9. Support youth directly to take the lead in national and global days for forests, soil, water, environment, peacemaking, green economy, climate and biodiversity.

12. Implementation Framework

12.1 Implementing bodies

The ANYP was drafted according to the country's social and economic needs. This policy is proposed by the executive departments of government and non-government agencies to address the short-term, medium-term and long-term social and economic needs of youth. Government agencies involved in the formulation and implementation of the ANYP are: Deputy Ministry of Youth Affairs of the Ministry of Information and Culture, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Central Bureau of Statistics, Independent Directorate of local governance, Independent Commission of Administrative Reform and Civil Services, General Directorate of Physical Education, Sport and National Olympic Committee and other governmental departments. The following governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations will also play role in implementing the policy at national and local level.

In the center, the DMOYA supports civil society institutions to design and formulate their programmes according to priorities as defined in the ANYP.

Implementation of the policy at the local level: at the provincial level, directorates of youth in closer coordination with governors, governmental directorates and civil society institutions have the responsibility to implement the ANYP and coordinate the implementation of programmes for youth. Youth development programmes, both economic and social, will be implemented by the relevant governmental and non-governmental organizations and all these organizations are accountable to youth.

12.2 Monitoring

Ministry of Information and Culture (MOIC) is responsible for the overall supervision over the implementation of the ANYP. The MOIC reports the implementation process of this policy to the Council of Ministers and attracts political support GIROA for its

implementation. The Office of the DMOYA will monitor the implementation of the ANYP at national, sub-national and local levels. This is the direct responsibility of the DMOYA to oversee the implementation of the ANYP through the Programme Coordination and Policy Development Directorate the DMOYA is responsible for the coordination of the programmes and monitoring the implementation. The Directorate will provide suggestions to other ministries and departments for better implementation the policy and related programmes.

12.3 Coordination mechanism

The MOIC organizes regular meetings with relevant governmental organizations, representatives of youth organizations, civil society and the international community in order to coordinate and track the implementation of the ANYP.

At the local level, programmes will be implemented according to the priorities of this policy by respective governmental departments. The Governors must consider the priorities of the ANYP in all development programmes and encourage their partners from the civil society to reflect the ANYP in their development strategies at the local level. In addition, the governors should attract support of tribal leaders, local clergy and other influential stakeholders for local youth development programmes and provide a broad coordination mechanism between the actors.

12.4 Budget and resource allocation

Allocation to the relevant departments: governmental departments must consider the National youth Policy priorities when they present their programmes to the Ministry of finance for allocation of ordinary and development budget.

Budget allocation for monitoring agency: The DMOYA which oversees and coordinates the implementation of the ANYP must develop its ordinary and development budget for the year 2014 as an independent unit within the budgetary framework of the MOIC.

13. Policy Impact Analysis

The impact of the ANYP will be evaluated thoroughly. The DMOYA will coordinate the implementation and impact analysis of the policy. The impact of the policy will be analyzed on an annual basis based on the indicators set in the *National Youth Strategy*.

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