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IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

IN THE **ASIAN AND PACIFIC REGION**



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ABBREVIATIONS

ACYF	All China Youth Federation
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CYLC	Communist Youth League of China
DHA	Department of Health and Ageing of Australia
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FaCSIA	Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs of Australia
ICT	information and communication technology
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs of Australia
MCYS	Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports of Australia
MDGs	Millennium Goals
MEHRD	Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development of the Republic of Korea
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development of India
MOE	Ministry of Education of Singapore
MOYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports of Malaysia
MSN	Microsoft Network
MYC	Malaysian Youth Council
NGO	non-governmental organization
NSS	National Service Scheme of India
NSVS	National Service Volunteer Scheme of India
NYARS	National Youth Affairs Research Scheme of Australia
NYC	National Youth Council of Singapore
NYCC	National Youth Consultative Council of Malaysia
OSYs	out-of-school youths
SARS	severe acute respiratory syndrome
SSEAYP	Ship for Southeast Asian Youth Programme

STDs	sexually transmitted diseases
STIs	sexually transmitted infections
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VSC	Volunteer Special Constabulary (School) Scheme
WPAY	World Programme of Action for Youth

PREFACE

Today, over 60 per cent of the youth population of the world lives in the Asian and Pacific region. Youth in the Asian and Pacific are better poised than ever before to participate in, and benefit from the advancement of social, economic and political developments. It also faces a complex and rapidly evolving situation where new opportunities coexist with major challenges.

The General Assembly in its resolution 60/2 of 6 October 2005 urged the Governments to develop holistic and integrated youth policies based on the World Programme of Action for Youth in consultation with youth organizations. Each country was urged to develop a long-term, consensus-based, integrated and cross-sector youth policy. Because this is a relatively unknown and underdeveloped area, there is a great need to share experience in this specific field of public policy and to produce tools to assist national governments in addressing youth issues systematically. It is against this background that this publication by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific was prepared.

This publication intends to enhance the understanding on youth issues in six countries including Australia, China, India, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Singapore with a special reference to seven priority areas, including youth policy framework, national youth coordinating body, education, health, employment, participation and challenges.

The countries covered by the publication are at different stages of development and have shown considerable interest, in formulating and implementing a comprehensive and integrated youth policy at the national level. It is hoped that the information and experiences of these countries on youth policy formulation and programme development will provide additional stimulus to other countries in the region. It is hoped that the publication could assist in stimulating more policy debates and helping the establishment of clearer policy targets for the region as well as facilitating more regional and sub-regional co-operation in the field.

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Youth in the Asian and Pacific region

Youth, defined by the United Nations as persons between the ages of 15 and 24, is a transitional period from childhood to adulthood. By this definition, it represents almost 18 per cent of the current global population. A vast majority of the 1.2 billion youths in the world today lives in developing countries (84 per cent in 1995 which is projected to increase to 89 per cent by 2020).¹

In 2005, 61.8 per cent of the youth population of the world lived in the Asian and Pacific region.² Due to declines in fertility rates in the countries in the region, the Asia-Pacific has witnessed a “youth bulge” or a demographic bonus where 20 per cent or more of a national population are aged 15 to 24 and there is a growing cohort of working-age adults relative to the dependent population.

Owing to a combination of factors, youth in the Asian and Pacific region today are better poised than ever before to participate in, and benefit from the advancement of social, economic and political developments. Compared to previous generations, a higher proportion of young people in the region have completed primary schooling. They are achieving better education, with the gross enrolment rate at the tertiary level reaching 18 per cent and 15 per cent respectively for male and female youth.³ The majority of youth in the region is healthy, having survived childhood years, which only a few decades ago had considerably higher infant and child mortality. Furthermore, across the region, young people show initiatives to participate in local, national and regional development as important and equal participants, rather than as passive bystanders unable to shape their own future.

Although the present cohort of youth has numerous advantages and assets, it also faces a complex and rapidly evolving situation where new opportunities coexist with major challenges. Fierce competition is affecting the marketplace and its rules and practices in the region. Youth often remain in a vulnerable situation and lack the requisite knowledge and skills to adapt to the changing economic and social environment. In Asia, youth made up 20.8 per cent of the labour force in 2004, but unemployed youth accounted for nearly half (49.1 per cent) of the region’s jobless people.⁴ Long-term unemployment leads to a wide range of social ills to which young people are susceptible such as delinquency and substance abuse, and often feeds political unrest and violence. In addition, exacerbating the situation are very limited knowledge and poor access to health services related to the prevention of HIV infection, drug use and other health risks, particularly among those who are out-of-school in rural areas.

In the past several decades or so, a large number of countries in the region have adopted national policies and legislation on youth-related issues. Education, employment,

¹ Data were from ESCAP (2007). *Youth: Fact Sheet*. Bangkok: Emerging Social Issues Division of ESCAP.

² See United Nations (2005). *World Population Prospects: 2004 Revision*. New York: United Nations publication.

³ See ESCAP (2007). *Youth: Fact Sheet*. Bangkok: Emerging Social Issues Division of ESCAP.

⁴ *Ibid.*

health and youth participation are found to be the key components of these policies, among other areas of priority or concern. Implementation of policies and programmes on youth remains a big challenge due to various reasons, including a lack of commitments, resources, coordination, and implementation mechanisms. Furthermore, most countries do not have specific mechanisms in place for effective youth participation. They have not successfully managed to mainstream youth concerns, as the issues relating to young people fall across a variety of policy areas.

B. Global and regional initiatives towards youth issues

Young people in all countries are a major human resource for development, key agents for social change and driving force for economic development and technological innovation. Their talents, dynamism, imagination, ideals, considerable energies and vision are essential for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. Youth is increasingly being viewed for bringing potential benefits to other generations. The significant role that youth plays to the societies has been fully recognized in various important global and regional initiatives.

At the global level, the youth development agenda received major impetus through the adoption of the World Programme of Action for Youth in 1995.⁵ The World Programme of Action for Youth represents an unprecedented initiative by the international community to recognize the value of youth as both a major human resource and as key agents for social change and economic development, and to bring the need to address obstacles to their development to the fore. It contains proposals for actions to the year 2000 and beyond to promote an improved well-being and livelihood among young people. It focuses, in particular, on measures to strengthen national capacities in the field of youth and to increase the quality and quantity of opportunities available to young people for full, effective and constructive participation in society.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁶, which was adopted in 2000, once again placed young people at the forefront of international attention. They consist of eight goals, with each of these goals relates directly or indirectly to the well-being of children and young people.

*The World Development Report 2007*⁷ entitled *Development and the Next Generation*, which focuses for the first time on youth and development, identifies three sets of strategic policies to enhance investment in young people: 1) expanding opportunities, 2) improving capabilities, and 3) offering second chances for young people, who have fallen behind due to difficult circumstances or poor choices. According to *the Report*, developing countries which

⁵ See United Nations (1995). *The World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*. New York: United Nations publication.

⁶ See United Nations (2000). *The Millennium Development Goals*. [electronic version]. accessed on 10 November 2007 at < <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>>.

⁷ See World Bank (2007). *World Development Report 2007: Development and the Next Generation*. Washington DC: the World Bank.

invest in better education, healthcare, and job training for their record numbers of young people could produce surging economic growth and sharply reduced poverty.

A number of Asia-Pacific initiatives further energized the youth development agenda in various specific areas at the regional level. For example, resolution 57/1 entitled “Regional call for action to fight the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in Asia and the Pacific”⁸ was adopted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 2001. It affirms the importance to promote and ensure the protection of the rights of all children, and strengthen and expand prevention and care programmes for youth, giving special attention to reducing the vulnerability of girls and young women. It further requests the Executive Secretary to support member governments in expanding and accelerating HIV/AIDS programmes as well as a wide range of HIV/AIDs prevention programmes among youth.

C. Rationales

The United Nations and its Regional Commissions have an important role to play in providing regional and sub-regional forums for policy dialogue and consensus building on youth issues. UN General Assembly, through its resolution adopted at its sixtieth session (A/RES/60/2)⁹, urged the Governments to develop holistic and integrated youth policies based on the World Programme of Action for Youth in consultation with youth organizations. Each country was urged to develop a long-term, consensus-based, integrated and cross-sector youth policy. Because this is a relatively unknown and underdeveloped area, there is a great need to share experience in this specific field of public policy and to produce tools to assist national governments in addressing youth issues systematically. It is against this background that this publication by ESCAP was prepared.

In addition, youth issues in the region are worthy of studying for three major reasons. First, there is no comprehensive study available on the latest development concerning youth issues in the region. Little is known, for example, about how youth policy frameworks are formulated and organized in different countries; how national youth coordinating bodies work in various countries; what are the major problems and challenges confronted by the countries in the region in the areas of youth education, health, employment and participation; and what are the proposed policy recommendations to help these countries overcome these obstacles and barriers. Youth in the Asian and Pacific countries find themselves in the midst of rapid social, economic, political and environmental changes. They face both challenges and opportunities. In order to fully understand the situation of young people in different countries in the region today it is important to understand these questions.

⁸ See ESCAP (2001). “Regional call for action to fight the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome in Asia and the Pacific”. ESCAP Resolution. [electronic version]. accessed on 6 November 2007 from <<http://www.unescap.org/esid/hds/officialdocs/index.asp>>.

⁹ See United Nations (2005). “Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 60/2: Policies and programmes involving youth”. United Nations Resolution. [electronic version]. accessed on 5 November 2007 from <<http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/files/11104/11836396131N0548766.pdf/N0548766.pdf>>.

Second, there is a need to raise awareness on youth issues among stakeholders in the region. For Governments, policies related to issues such as youth education, health, employment and participation deserve particular attention as they provide a policy framework and a series of practical guidelines for both national action and international support to ameliorate the situation of young people. For civil society, more efforts can be made to educate young people about what constitutes collectively responsible action through formal and other means. The effectiveness of family and community resources can be enhanced by making use of intergenerational relationships, engaging peers and drawing on the experience of a variety of organizations to educate youth. For business sector, there is scope for greater development and capacity building with regard to matters such as youth entrepreneurship and prudent use of information and communication technologies, so that the productive contribution that young people can make to the countries of Asia and the Pacific can increase. All these initiatives require raising the awareness on youth issues to help consensus building, which provides the countries in the region with greater assistance to improve the overall situation of youth.

Third, the publication can serve as a useful reference to other countries in the region. The region covered by ESCAP straddles a considerable range of countries stretching from Turkey in the extreme west, through Central Asia to South, Southeast and Northeast Asia, and extending to the Pacific islands in the east. This publication attempts to capture the youth situation in six countries in the region, namely, Australia, China, India, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Singapore. Although countries covered by the publication are at different stages of development, there are many common theme areas that cut across countries, and the youth in the six countries are confronted with many challenges and problems similar to those faced by other countries in the region. In addition, the six countries have shown considerable interest, besides a few other countries, in formulating and implementing a comprehensive and integrated youth policy at the national level. It is hoped that the information and experiences of these countries on youth policy formulation and programme development will provide additional stimulus to other countries in the region. The six countries studied in the publication could be placed on the global and regional debates on good policy responses to youth issues and therefore interest in the work should not be confined to those with a concern for the six countries. It is hoped that the publication could assist in stimulating more policy debates and helping the establishment of clearer policy targets for the region as well as facilitating more regional and sub-regional co-operation in the field.

D. Objectives and structure

The overall aim of the publication is to enhance the understanding on youth issues in six countries including Australia, China, India, Malaysia, Republic of Korea and Singapore. In order to achieve this aim, this publication focuses on the following seven priority areas: 1) Youth policy framework; 2) National youth coordinating body; 3) Youth education; 4) Youth health; 5) Youth employment; 6) Youth participation; 7) Challenges.

Thus, after the first introduction chapter, this publication consists of six chapters, with one chapter for one country. Each country is structured around the above seven priority areas.

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II. AUSTRALIA¹⁰

A. Introduction

According to the Australia Bureau of Statistics, the country had a population of 19,855,288 in 2006,¹¹ among which 455,031 people were identified as being indigenous. Among its population, 2.6 million aged 15 to 24 years, accounting 14 per cent of the total. The percentage is the same as the proportion in 2001 and slightly lowers than the percentage of 16 per cent in 1991. In terms of the gender composition, in 2001, there were more males than females in the youth population, with 103.6 young males for every 100 young females, although female out numbers males in the population as a whole. In terms of geographical distribution, 63 per cent of 15 year olds and 72 per cent of 20 to 24 years olds were counted in major cities in 2001. Overall in 2001, nearly 70 per cent of young people aged 15 to 24 years lived in major cities, and other 19 per cent lived in Inner Regional Australia and around 12 per cent lived in Outer Regional and Remote Australia.¹²

According to the *UN World Population Prospects*¹³, the youth population (15 to 24 year olds) in Australia is projected to decrease from 14.0 per cent in 2005 to 11.8 per cent in 2025. Table 1 shows the projections for the period of 2005-2025.

Table 1. Youth population (15-24 years) and its prospects in Australia, 2005-2025

Year	Total population (thousand)	Youth population (thousand)	Youth percentage in total population
2005	20,155	2,814	14.0
2010	21,201	2,899	13.7
2015	22,250	2,851	12.8
2020	23,317	2,748	11.8
2025	24,329	2,735	11.2

Source: United Nations. *UN World Population Prospects*. [electronic version]. accessed on 4 April 2007 from <<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2004/wpp2004.htm>>

¹⁰ The main references and data contained in this chapter were drawn from government websites, official sources (e.g. Australian Bureau of Statistics; Australian Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs; Australian Department of Education, Science and Training; and Australian Department of Health and Aging) and reports (e.g. *National Youth Affairs Research Scheme Report, Australia's Health 2006* and *the Country Report* in the 2002 ILO Meeting).

¹¹ See Australia Bureau of Statistics (2006). The number excludes overseas visitors.

¹² Australia's population inhabits many different geographic locations, ranging from large coastal cities to isolated outback areas. The new Remoteness Structure, developed as part of the Australian Standard Geographical Classification is used to analyze population characteristics across these various regions of Australia. The new Remoteness Structure covers the whole of Australia and classifies Australia into regions which share common characteristics of remoteness. There are six Remoteness Areas in the Structure: Major Cities of Australia, Inner Regional Australia, Outer Regional Australia, Remote Australia, Very Remote Australia and Migratory.

¹³ See United Nations (2004).

The majority of young people (62 per cent) in Australia were living with their parents. More males than females youth were living with their parents. In 2000, 91 per cent of males and 85 per cent of females aged 15 to 19 years were living at home. The corresponding proportions for those aged 20 to 24 years were 52 per cent and 39 per cent respectively. Around 11 per cent of young people were either married or living in a de facto relationship¹⁴. Marriage rates for young people under 25 years declined considerably between 1976 and 2000, partly because of an increase in de facto relationships.

B. Youth policy framework

Most state governments have prepared a youth policy which seeks to be a practical demonstration and declaration of the priority and directions the state intends to give to the development of its young men and women. These policies, often accompanied with a youth strategy and appropriate structure, seek to enhance youth participation and development within the state. In these policies, the link between economic and social opportunities and the active participation of young people in the process of opportunity creation has been a growing focus in Australia.

At the national level, there are a range of national statements and strategies in existence that provide key elements of a national agenda and framework for action for young people, namely:

-
- The Commonwealth/State agreed National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first century
- The Vocational Education and Training in Schools Framework
- The Prime Minister's Community and Business Partnership
- The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy

Of great significance was the release of the statement of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce in July 2001 entitled "Footprints to the future".¹⁵ The Taskforce was established in September 1999 to advise the Government on how the nation could improve support for young people and their families as a young person moves towards becoming independent in the community, and how to strengthen support for young people at risk of not proceeding successfully from school to further education and training or to full time employment and independence. When the Report was launch, the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs stated that the report set out a policy framework for supporting young Australians through school, and from school to further education, training, work and active citizenship.

Official involvement of the Australian Government at the national level in the development of a comprehensive policy on youth was facilitated by a Proposal from Western Australia to the Tenth Meeting of the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) held in Adelaide, 22-23 April 1999, which suggested that the

¹⁴ The Australian Family Law Act defines a de facto relationship as one where a man and woman live together as spouses in a genuine domestic basis, although they are not legally married to each other.

¹⁵ See Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001).

Australian Government took a leadership role on youth development and considered a national rollout of programmes. The Council members established a Youth Sub-group to develop a national youth development strategy and report to ministers later in 1999. The proposal by the Government of Western Australia stemmed from the successful Cadets WA programme which had been introduced into that state's high schools and colleges in 1996¹⁶.

In working toward a position on youth development for Australia, the First National Youth Development Conference was held in Perth, October 1999, at which the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs was a keynote speaker. This provided an opportunity for various youth organizations to advocate with the Government for national support for youth development programmes. The Minister confirmed that the Australian Government "would like to work with state and territory governments to develop a national scheme that builds on these successes and allows for significant expansion of youth development opportunities" and announced two major initiatives. The first was accreditation of training for cadets or young people in youth development programmes, a project under the auspices of the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), and a national facilitation unit to coordinate and support youth development activities nationally. Ausyouth, a purpose-designed organization based in Adelaide, won the contract to be this unit and commenced operating in April 2000.¹⁷

Just prior to Ausyouth's commencement, MCEETYA considered the background paper developed by the Youth Sub-group at its March 2000 meeting. It endorsed the concept of youth development as a positive approach to young people's needs and endorsed the National Youth Development Strategy to develop and expand community-based youth development programmes through the package of coordination and facilitation measures, funded by the Commonwealth Government.

The Sub-group of the MCEETYA Youth Taskforce defined youth development as "a process which prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated and progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally, emotionally, physically and cognitively competent. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth, in contrast to deficit-based models, which focus solely on youth problems." Youth development encompasses a broad range of activities, including learning specific vocational skills, acquiring life skills, developing positive personal characteristics, community service, and acquiring some experience of the world.

¹⁶ Cadets WA is Australian Government funded youth development program, aimed at creating exciting opportunities for young people aged 13 to 18 years. For details, please visit <http://www.cadetswa.wa.gov.au/content_template.asp?CID=2>.

¹⁷ Ausyouth was a project which was established to provide a range of services to promote, coordinate and facilitate youth development as an approach and practice across Australia. The project was funded by the Commonwealth Minister for Youth Affairs and contracted through the Department of Family and Community Services.

The objectives of the National Youth Development Strategy are:¹⁸

- Providing a focus at both the national, state and territory levels which highlights the benefits to be gained from structured youth training and development programmes
- Identifying core goals and good practice for particular types of youth development activities, and encouraging organizations to adopt these goals and practices where appropriate
- Fostering a sense of national cohesion while acknowledging that circumstances and needs vary between locations, and providing opportunities to address these
- Identifying existing programmes that have as their central theme the provision of youth development opportunities through structured training (e.g. Scouts,¹⁹ Guides²⁰ and St. John Ambulance²¹)
- Identifying community-based organizations (at the national, state and territory levels) that could host and deliver a youth development programme that incorporate the core training and activity objectives
- Identifying potential funding sources (e.g. corporate sponsorship).

Partnership programmes were developed at the state level in Australia in the mid-1990s. Local programmes operate in partnership between education (primary schools) and specific community agencies that have their own community-based developmental programmes for young people and others (including various forms of cadet and induction programmes). Several Australian states and territories have introduced such youth development programmes that are characterized by:

- An alliance between schools and community service agencies
- Active participation by young people in community-level service activities
- Development of and learning by young people through community-based action.

These programmes emphasize goals of developmental outcomes for young people that include:

- Development of specific programme knowledge and skills through hands-on instruction, training and experience
- Development of personal and social skills by young people through the provision of increased opportunities and challenges
- Development of a sense of community service/spirit and responsibility through encouragement of young people to take an active role and to participate in their community.

¹⁸Full-text could be found at <http://www.thesource.gov.au/ausyouth/pdf/nyds_doc2.pdf>.

¹⁹ Scouts Australia aims to encourage the physical, intellectual, social, emotional and spiritual development of young people.

²⁰ Guides provide a non-formal education program that is a dynamic, flexible and values-based training in life skills, decision-making and leadership. It is run by trained volunteer Leaders committed to helping girls and young women grow into confident, self-respecting, responsible community members.

²¹ St John Ambulance Australia is a self-funding charitable organization active in all states and territories, dedicated to helping people in sickness, distress, suffering or danger.

The following six points are essential elements of a programme if it is to be called a “youth development programme” in this area. They:

- Are open to all young people
- Aim to achieve specific and positive outcomes or growth for participants: development of skills, knowledge and attitudes etc.
- Focus on learning through experience: active and hands-on learning
- Involve young people in active programme decision-making and implementation roles
- Support young people’s involvement outside schools in a wider community
- Have schools and community groups working together to provide the programme.

The National Youth Affairs Research Scheme (NYARS) was established in 1985 as a co-operative funding programme between the commonwealth, state and territory governments. It facilitates nationally-based research into factors affecting young people. The research findings of NYARS assist with policy development and implementation by commonwealth, state and territory ministers and departments responsible for youth affairs. NYARS operates under the auspices of MCEETYA.

C. National youth coordinating body

Ausyouth was the main youth coordinating body between 2000 and 2002. It was a project which was established to provide a range of services to promote, coordinate and facilitate youth development as an approach and practice across Australia. The project was funded by the Commonwealth Minister for Youth Affairs and contracted through the Department of Family and Community Services. Its role was to bring together, work with and assist collaborative interaction between governments and public and private sector organizations with a common interest in consolidating and advancing youth development as a national approach. Stakeholders in the process included youth program providers, policy-makers, practitioners in the field of youth work, youth affairs networks, government service providers, the business sector, and various other organizations and agencies.

Ausyouth’s work from April 2000 to July 2002 focused on the following three main areas:

- Exploring youth development concepts through:
 - Conceptual analysis of existing research and literature
 - Direct consultation with people involved in Australian youth development programmes, service providers, school staff, young people
 - An active research programme that filled out the gaps in the literature and developed an Australian base of literature
- Coordinating national forums that draw together key stakeholders (government, business and community organizations, and young people) to explore what youth development means for their organization and the future of youth development in the 21st century
- Working with the state-funded youth development programmes to explore common interests, policies, practices and issues, particularly if a future decision was taken to roll out a national programme.

Ausyouth was instrumental in promoting positive debate on youth development and raising awareness of the concept and the benefits that can flow from it. Government and community agencies regarded much of Ausyouth's work as very successful. The organization laid the groundwork for positive discussions around matters such as a common national minimum data set, bringing together individuals and organizations that had previously not spoken to each other.

The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) took over youth affairs in 2002 as the Australian Government's principal source of advice on social policy issues and is responsible for about a quarter of the government's budgetary outlays. FaCSIA works in partnership with other government and non-government organizations in the management of a diverse range of programmes and services which support and improve the lives of Australians including youth.

According to its *Annual Report 2004-2005*, FaCSIA supports youth by:

- Helping young people overcome barriers to participation through the delivery of targeted programmes
- Improving the life prospects of young Australians by engaging young people, helping to enhance their self-esteem and improving their profile and perceptions in the community
- Developing partnership arrangements within and across levels of government to ensure coordinated provision of support for young people and their families that helps young people in their transition to independence and adulthood.

In order to achieve these, the following strategies are planned and implemented:

- Managing a range of programmes that help disadvantaged young people (particularly those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness) to improve their level of engagement and overcome barriers to participation with their families and communities including Transition to Independent Living Allowance,²² Reconnect, Mentor Marketplace,²³ YouthLinx (formerly the Youth Activities Services/Family Liaison Worker Program),²⁴ and Newly Arrived Youth Support Services²⁵

²² Transition to Independent Living Allowance was developed in response to the *Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce Footprints to the Future Report* which emphasized the need to improve the provision of support services to young people as they make the transition to independent living.

²³ Explanation on the programmes of Reconnect and Mentor Marketplace can be found at the latter section of youth participation in this chapter.

²⁴ YouthLinx is a prevention and early intervention program that supports young people aged 11 to 16 and their families build self reliance, strengthen their family relationships and encourage community involvement.

²⁵ The Newly Arrived Youth Support Service initiative provides a multi-function service to newly arrived young people aged 12 to 21 years from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families.

- Creating opportunities for and promoting the engagement and greater participation of young people in community activities, including through the National Youth Roundtable, the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group²⁶ and National Youth Week
- Raising the profile and positive image of young people in the community
- Facilitating and undertaking research on families and young people to inform policy and programme development
- Liaising with other stakeholders to improve services for young people on a range of issues affecting them including mental health, education and work.

The National Youth Roundtable is the centrepiece of the Australian Government's youth consultations mechanisms. It brings together young people aged 15 to 24 years, to discuss issues that have an impact on youth. It is managed by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services. Roundtable members include young people from all states and territories, metropolitan and regional areas and from various cultural backgrounds. The members bring to the Roundtable a wide range of experiences and viewpoints on issues related to studying, caring for others and employment. Members' experiences from being involved in local community activities and their knowledge of local youth issues are also an asset to the Roundtable.

The Australian Forum of Youth Organizations, another mechanism, seeks to provide high-level advice to the Australian Government on key youth related issues and to progress key policy objectives on behalf of all young Australians and the organizations working with them. The principal goal of the Forum is to promote the empowerment and positive image of youth through involvement in consultation between the government and the youth sector, as well as within the sector itself. The Forum is made up of 14 important youth development organizations, each of which have been chosen because of their significant membership base and demonstrated ability to make a constructive contribution to discussions about the issues affecting young people. The Forum meets twice a year.

D. Youth education

In 2001, 53 per cent (or 1,357,700 persons) of all young people (15 to 24 years of age) were attending an educational institution on either a full-time or part-time basis. Nearly half (48 per cent) of these were attending secondary schools, 17 per cent were attending technical and further education institutions and 30 per cent were attending higher education institutions. Youth participation in education increased between 1996 and 2001 across all education types. The largest increase was in higher education, where participation was up by four percentage points since 1996 (13 per cent to 17 per cent). Of those attending secondary school, 63 per cent attended government schools, 21 per cent attended Catholic secondary schools and 16 per cent attended other non-government schools. Males were more likely than females to have completed school to Year 10 (22 per cent of young males and 17 per cent of young females) while females were more likely to have completed to Year 12 (64 per cent of young females and 54 per cent of young males).

²⁶ It provides an opportunity for indigenous and non-indigenous young people to work together and learn from each other. It gives indigenous young people an opportunity to be heard on issues other than those considered to be indigenous.

To improve the quality of education nationally, the Australian Government works with state and territory governments, private and other school authorities, parents, educators and other organizations to seek the best possible outcomes for young Australians. Strategic policy development and delivery of programmes and services at the national level are coordinated through MCEETYA. This cooperation is underpinned by The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century²⁷, which focuses on the learning outcomes of students, and providing a framework for national reporting on student achievement and for public accountability by school education authorities.

At the national level, the age-specific participation rates for full-time school students in 2005 were 94.7 per cent for 15 year olds, 82.6 per cent for 16 year olds and 63.5 per cent for 17 year olds, the latter rising from 58.6 per cent in 1995. In 2005 the apparent retention rate of full-time school students from year 7/8 to year 12 was 75.3 per cent compared to 72.2 per cent in 1995. As in previous years, the apparent retention rate for females (81.0 per cent) was significantly higher than the rate for males (69.9 per cent). Apparent retention from year 10 to year 12 over the last decade increased from 73.4 per cent in 1995 to 76.5 per cent in 2005. The year 10 to year 12 rate for females in 2005 was again considerably higher than that for males (81.6 per cent and 71.5 per cent, respectively). The year 12 completion rate in 2000 was about 67 per cent, with a higher proportion of females completing year 12 (74 per cent) than males (61 per cent). In the same year, 76 per cent of 19-year-old completed year 12 or obtained a post-school qualification and 44 per cent of 24-year-old attained a skilled vocational qualification or higher.

The Government aims to increase retention because it reduces official unemployment rates and increases an individual's choices of finding a job. In addition, a more educated workforce could attract international capital to Australian shores. Currently there are more than 190,000 teenagers who are neither in full-time work nor full-time education. Young people leaving school before completing year 12 face long-term disadvantages either in terms of unemployment or lower incomes. They also face other risks to their well-being. The overall cost to individuals, governments and the rest of society in Australia is estimated about AU\$2.6 billion every year due to the disadvantages of higher unemployment, lower incomes and other costs arising from early school leaving.

The data on educational disadvantage for indigenous young people is unequivocal, consistent and serious. Studies have indicated that indigenous young people have lower participation rates, lower retention and lower completion rates at all levels of education.²⁸ A quarter of indigenous young people had already left school by the age of 15, compared with about 6 per cent of non-indigenous 15 year-old. Participation rates in tertiary education for the general population were three times that of indigenous 20 to 24-year olds. About 10 per cent of indigenous young people aged 20 to 24 nationally were enrolled in the year 1999, compared with 25.8 per cent of non-indigenous young people. This led to the endorsement of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy by all Australian governments

²⁷ The state, territory and Australian government ministers of education met as the 10th Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in Adelaide, 22-23 April 1999. Council agreed to act jointly to assist Australian schools in meeting the challenges.

²⁸ See Gary Marks and others (2000).

and was reflected in the Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act 2000. This policy guides programme initiatives across Australia in a continuing effort to achieve equity between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians. As a result, apparent retention rates for indigenous full-time school students, from year 7/8 to both year 10 and year 12, continued to rise over the last five years — the rate to year 10 increased from 83.0 per cent in 2000 to 88.3 per cent in 2005, and the rate to year 12 increased from 36.4 per cent to 39.5 per cent. However, these indigenous retention rates are still lower than the comparable rates for non-indigenous students. In 2005, the rate to year 10 for non-indigenous school students was 98.6 per cent, while the rate to year 12 was 76.6 per cent.

In 2005, the average number of primary school students per teacher was 16.2 persons. In government schools, the average was 16.1 persons and in non-government schools it was 16.6 persons. The equivalent figure for secondary schools was 12.2 persons, with an average of 12.4 persons in government schools and 11.9 persons in non-government schools.²⁹ One of the recent developments in secondary schooling in Australia has been the attempt to create an integrated environment on school campuses known as “full-service schools”. In these models, a range of services are available on campus or are in a close relationship with the school. Services may include:

- Health services, including dental services
- Counseling
- Various welfare services, including food clubs and financial counseling
- Accommodation or accommodation brokerage
- Recreation
- Employment services, including job placement and job creation services
- After-hour-education, including vocational, secondary and leisure-based education.

The increasing use of information technology within schools and universities has already seen a reduction in face-to-face tuition. The nature of current technology interfaces also indicates that education may become more individualized as it becomes more computer-based. The dependence on technology, however, raises equity considerations, with students from wealthier households being able to take advantage of sophisticated multimedia presentations which may not be available to those with more modest means.

With the efforts of governments, near-universal enrolment seems likely for 15 to 19 year olds, with a majority of 20 to 24 year olds also being involved in formal education processes in the near future. At the same time, the pressure is on for schools to be able to respond flexibly to the needs of young people in an environment where more are likely to be involved in part-time work and a range of other activities, and where the student population is likely to be more diverse than ever before.

²⁹ Data in this paragraph was mainly from Australian Yearbook (2006).

E. Youth health

The principle of preventative health care forms the basis of Australia's youth health strategies and programmes. This approach recognizes the growing body of research that both early childhood and adolescence are key transition points for effective intervention for better health outcomes in later life. It is also important that positive protective factors introduced in early life are reinforced during adolescent years. In addition, young people face a range of life events that can have an impact on their health including decisions on career paths and school retention, contact with drugs and alcohol, peer and family pressures, mental health and wellbeing and sexual health and development. The Department of Health and Ageing (DHA) has funded, established and implemented a range of programmes and strategies that address, or are relevant to, the health and well-being of young people. DHA programmes, as described below, are based on evidence and knowledge of the major health issues facing young people today.

Access to medical care – Australia's health care system provides universal access to quality care at reasonable cost through the provision of medical and pharmaceutical benefits, and other funding of general practitioner programmes and funding agreements with states and territories for public hospital services. Young people are entitled to hold their own Medicare Card from the age of 15 years. Consequently, they are able to obtain independent access to health services.

Immunization – The Australian Government, in conjunction with states and territories, has conducted immunization programmes for young people aged 18 to 30 years as part of the Young Adults Measles-Mumps-Rubella Campaign.³⁰ The National Meningococcal C Vaccination Programme provided free meningococcal V vaccine to children and adolescents who turned one to 19 years of age in 2003. Probably the largest vaccination campaign ever carried out in Australia, this programme targeted almost 6 million children and adolescents.

National HIV/AIDS strategy – Sexually transmitted diseases have been a central area of concern for young people's health, especially since the advent of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. With the trend towards an increasing number of sexual partners due to the increasing amount of time that young people are sexually active but single, sexually transmitted diseases continue to be of concern. With increasing globalization, the emergence of new diseases or new strains seems likely. There may be an increase in risks from infectious diseases with the increase in travel and transport and the emergence of strains of disease agents which are resistant to current treatments. The Australian Government remains committed to education campaigns for HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C. A number of projects have been developed with a youth focus like "talking sexual health", a parents' guide to discuss on sexual health matters with their children.

Mental Health Initiatives – A number of national activities and resources have been developed under the National Mental Health Strategy and National Suicide Prevention Strategy, which specially address the needs of youth, including booklets such as *Tips for Parents*, *Growing up with Young People* and *Mind Matters*; and the National Mental Health

³⁰ The Measles-mumps-rubella Immunization Campaign aimed at addressing susceptibility to measles among young adults was conducted in Australia in 2001.

Promotion Initiative for Secondary Schools. Kids Help Line is a national telephone counseling service for young people aged 5 to 18 years. Auseinet, the Australian Network for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health, seeks to facilitate the implementation of mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention and suicide prevention initiatives.

Rural health services – The Australian Government’s Regional Health Services Programme aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people in the rural by providing small rural communities with funding for primary health services. Services that can be funded include youth services, podiatry, physiotherapy, rural health promotion, illness and injury prevention, women’s health, children’s services, community nursing, mental health, radiology and immunization. The Australian Government offers a range of scholarships in medicine, nursing, pharmacy and allied health sciences to encourage students to undertake a health career in regional, rural and remote Australia.

Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth Programme – Funding provided by the Australian Government is matched by state and territory governments to provide specialized and innovative health services for homeless and at risk young people to enable this group to maintain and improve their health.

Strategies for the prevention of drug use and harm among young people – The rise in risky and high-risk drug and alcohol consumption by teenagers, particularly among young women, as evidenced from key data sources like the *National Drug Household Survey*³¹, is a cause for concern for all governments and non-government organizations representing young people. The National Drug Strategy provides a vision and direction for governments and non-government organizations in developing strategies and allocating resources for the prevention and reduction of the harmful effects of substance use in Australian society. Under the current strategy, there are a number of activities and key initiatives focusing on young people and targeting families and parents.

From self-ratings in the *2004-2005 National Health Survey*, about 70 per cent of young Australians aged 15 to 24 years were in either “excellent” or “very good” health, while a further 24 per cent rated their health as “good”. Only 7 per cent reported their health to be either “fair or poor”. By contrast, the proportion of indigenous young Australians rating their health as “excellent” or “very good” was only 59 per cent; and at 9 per cent, to rate their health as “fair or poor”. In 2004, 4.3 per cent of all births (10,857 persons) in Australia were to females aged less than 20 years and a further 14.2 per cent (36,146 persons) were to those aged 20 to 24 years. These proportions have declined since 1994, when 5.0 per cent of births were to females aged less than 20 years, and 19.1 per cent to those aged 20-24 years.³²

Risk-taking behavior in young people in Australia manifests itself as accident, injury, exposure to violence, sexual health risk arising from choices made about sexual behavior or substance abuse. Young men are more likely to have problems as a result of risk-taking behavior. They are over-represented relative to women in almost all areas of risk: motor

³¹See Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *2004 National Drug Strategy Household Survey*, [electronic version]. accessed on 22 April 2007 from <<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10122>>.

³² See the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2006).

vehicle accident, accidents at work and in sport, problematic drug and alcohol use, and violence. The main recognized risks for young women relate to sexual health, unwanted pregnancy, infertility arising from sexually transmitted disease and family and domestic violence. In general, homeless young people experience higher risks of violence, drug use and sexual health problems than the general population. Aboriginal young people experience higher levels of violence, teenage pregnancy, and sexual health problems. All economically and socially disadvantaged groups experience higher risks of violence. Injuries are common in young Australians and are the leading cause of their hospitalizations and death; for young males, injuries accounted for 26 per cent of hospitalizations in 2003-2004. Transport accidents and other injuries and intentional self-harm are the most common causes of death among young people. In 1997 around 3 per cent of 18 to 24 year olds said that they had attempted suicide at some stage in the past, compared with 0.024 per cent completed suicides.

Young people in Australia in general enjoy good levels of health and well-being, and many of the indicators of health show a stable or improving trend. These trends are likely to continue, particularly if advances in diagnostic and preventative medicine continue. However, there are a number of environmental and social pressures that increase the levels of risk for young people, and the translation of these factors into young people's general levels of wellbeing may compromise current standards. In particular, care should be given to the approaches to young people's health that deals with problems primarily in categories of deviance, whether moral or criminal.

In addition, health is not always good for young people who are socially disadvantaged, who live in rural and regional areas or who are indigenous. Completion of schooling and employment status directly influenced self-assessed health; 63 per cent of those who had completed year 12 rated their health as "excellent" or "very good" compared to 44 per cent of those who had completed only year 9. A higher proportion of young people who were employed assessed their health as "excellent" or "very good" than those who were unemployed.

F. Youth employment

In 2001, based on responses to the census questions undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there were 1.6 million young people aged 15 to 24 years in the labour force (employed or unemployed), constituting just over 18 per cent of the total Australian labour force of nearly 9 million persons aged 15 years and over. This represents a youth labour force participation rate of 63 per cent, compared with 60 per cent for the total population.³³

Between 1982 and 2002 the proportion of young people in full-time employment decreased from 40 per cent to 16 per cent for those aged 15 to 19 years and from 65 per cent to 50 per cent for those aged 20 to 24 years. Over the same period the proportion of young people in part time employment increased from 12 per cent to 32 per cent for people aged 15 to 19 years and from 8 per cent to 25 per cent for those aged 20 to 24 years. Half of all employed youth were in part-time employment, with 15 to 17 year olds more likely to be employed in this capacity (84 per cent of all employed 15 to 17 year olds) than other young people. This is

³³ Data were from Australian Bureau of Statistics website (2006).

related to the fact that many of those in the younger age brackets are combining part-time work with study commitments. Most employed persons aged 20 to 24 years were in full-time jobs (69 per cent), similar to the total population (72 per cent).

According to the Australian 2006 statistics, youth aged 20 to 24 years were slightly more likely to be unemployed than those aged 15 to 19 years (unemployment to population ratio of 9 per cent and 8 per cent respectively), although both of these groups tend to remain unemployed for shorter periods than other age groups. This reflects the fact that young people are more likely to stay in the labour force for short term periods, with many seeking employment during breaks in education or holidays. Most unemployed 15 to 17 years old were looking for part-time work (61 per cent), with the majority of these (88 per cent) engaged in full-time study.

Indigenous young people have been particularly at risk. At least a third of men and half of the women between the ages of 20 and 24 are neither working nor studying. The 1996 census³⁴ indicates that 22.6 per cent of indigenous males were unemployed compared with 12.9 per cent of non-indigenous males.

In 2001, the main industry of employment among 15 to 24 year olds was retail trade. There were 434,400 young people employed in this industry, making up 31 per cent of all employed youth and 36 per cent of all persons employed in retail trade. Accommodation, cafes and restaurants employed 10 per cent of all employed youth and property and business services 9 per cent. The most common occupational groups among employed young people were elementary clerical, sales and service workers (24 per cent of all employed youth), intermediate clerical, sales and service workers (20 per cent), and trade persons and related workers (15 per cent). The median income of young people increased with age, from AU\$16 per week for 15 to 17 year olds, to AU\$162 among 18 to 19 year olds and AU\$375 for those aged 20 to 24 years. Young men, regardless of cultural background, had higher median incomes than young women.

The future for young people appears to involve a rapidly changing set of work practices in which the under-utilization of youth labour will continue to be a problem. Market processes, the dominant means for distributing labour in the current situation, seem unlikely to be effective in distributing the available profit-generating work in such a way that all members of the community will be able to meet the requirements of subsistence, let alone to prosper. Without appropriate intervention, the natural mechanisms of the market seem destined to leave us with a large population of chronically poor young people who are unable to become adult. Already, in an environment where working hours continue to rise for those in full-time work, the unemployment of some workers is mocked by the overwork of others.

Changing work practices do offer significant opportunities for a life that is more interesting, variable and flexible, and is able to engage in a wide variety of economic, aesthetic, personal, sociable and family activities. The challenge is to avoid the risk of dehumanization, even for a part of the population, and to maximize the capacity for a human life that new

³⁴ See Australian Bureau of Statistics.

structures of work offer. A Report to the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme³⁵ recommends a range of services which will be needed by all young people, and a set of programmes to engage those young people who are not competitive in the new labour market, as well as strategies to improve their competitiveness. They include the following recommendations:

- Universal training and preparation for successful jobless work needs to be available both within the school curriculum and in the post-school environment – in fact whenever young people need it;
- Small business incubators and supports need to be available to help young people in the process of generating self-employment;
- Income support models need to be reformed to be able to deal effectively with mixed incomes, and with fluctuating and irregular incomes; a serious public discussion of Guaranteed Minimum Income schemes is overdue in the light of the predictions for work and unemployment for young people in the future;
- Young people, especially those who do not have strong family backing, need access to cheap risk capital, perhaps on an equity basis;
- Tax systems need to be more sophisticated to deal with the informal economy;
- The community will need to take a greater role in the generation of non-market varieties of goods such as recreation, in order to include people who may be income-poor; increasing use of non-money forms of rewarding work at the community level should be explored, including labour credit schemes where access to resources is open to those who contribute labour rather than those who pay cash;
- Given the growing importance of education, young people (and others) need relentless opportunity to try again at education through a variety of educational models and institutions and at all education levels;
- Sophisticated brokerage services will be needed to connect young people who have labour to offer with organizations needing labour;
- Young people must have access to information and communications technology; Other facilities needed: Internet cafés, 24-hour open access computing in libraries, schools or shopping centres;
- Youth services themselves should mirror the work pattern of young people: Be flexible, just-in-time, mobile and service driven.

G. Youth participation

Ausyouth saw youth development as “focused on building on the strengths and abilities of young people in ways that strengthen their learning and connection with community in the present, as well as encouraging young people’s participation in actively shaping their futures. It is for all young people, using common processes for diverse groups. Youth development focuses on the community’s investment in the wellbeing and personal development of young people, and that of young people themselves in their own futures.”³⁶ Young people have the

³⁵ See Howard Sercombe and others (2002).

³⁶ See Nicole Gilding and Margaret Wallace (2003).

highest participation rate in sports and physical activities and volunteer activities and the highest attendance rates at cultural activities comparable to other Australians³⁷.

Australia continues to give high priority to youth matters, focusing in particular on recognizing the contribution that young people can and do make as responsible citizens. The Federal Government of Australia has implemented several major initiatives to support this priority. Under the broad title “Voices of Youth”, a comprehensive programme is being developed to allow young views to be heard by the governments. It has also established the national youth media awards to promote a more positive portrayal of young people in the media. Young people are often in the media but negative stories are more likely to make the news than positive stories. The aim of the Awards is to recognize the best examples of journalism, which reflect the positive contribution young people make to the Australian society, including a category for best young journalist. Furthermore, for the first time, in the year 2000, a national youth week enabled young Australians to celebrate and promote their contribution to the nation. The national youth week is an annual event for young people aged 12 to 25 years, with youth activities and events held nationally and in every state and territory. It is about young people getting involved, having their say and having fun. Hundreds of thousands of young Australians join in local events all over the country.

There are a number of initiatives that focus on the positive participation and contribution of young people. These bring together young people and government agencies and provide a basis for discussion and knowledge about youth issues and positively portray the contribution of young people to the community. They include:

- The National Youth Roundtable and the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group, which provide opportunities for young people to consult directly with their community and with government about issues and policies that impact on young Australians
- Promoting the active engagement and greater participation of young people in community activities, including through National Youth Week
- Managing a youth research agenda, including the Australian Government’s role in the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme
- Sponsoring a range of high profile events and activities that improve the portrayal of young people including:
 - Young Australian of the Year Award
 - Australian Students Prize
 - National Awards for Local Government (Youth Engagement Award)
 - Rock Eisteddfod Challenge
 - Young People and the Arts
 - Rostrum Voice of Youth National Speaking Competition
 - Triple J Unearthed Competition
 - Promoting Youth Entrepreneurs
 - Step to the Future Youth Leadership Forums
 - Wakakirri Story Dance Festival
 - Kool Skools Recording Programme

³⁷ See Australian Bureau of Statistics.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is an international leadership in action programme, available to all young people aged between 14 and 25. It provides an opportunity for young people to achieve personal excellence and build self-esteem, self-confidence, self-reliance, self-motivation and respect for others via their involvement in service, skills, physical recreation and expedition activities. The Federal Government will spend more than \$600,000 expanding the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Australia in the hope of raising annual participation in the programme from 15,000 people to 25,000 people by 2010. More than 250,000 Australians have completed the programme since it was introduced in 1958.

The YMCA Youth Parliament³⁸ can provide youth, who are aged 15-25 and live in Queensland, with the opportunity to have their say in Queensland's Parliament House. World Youth International is a South Australian based charitable organization that offers people over the age of 18 the opportunity to travel to a developing country and volunteer in a meaningful way. They offer a range of programmes and styles of placements to countries including Kenya, Nepal, Peru and China.

The Australian Government's Transition to Independent Living Allowance is available for permanent Australian residents who are between the ages of 15 and 25. It assists with some of the needs that a young person leaving care may face in establishing independent life. It helps with the transitional costs of young people who are leaving either formal or informal care arrangements to develop their resilience and build their capacity to overcome the difficult situations they may face when they start to live independently. It is intended as a one-off direct payment to a young person up to the value of \$1000 to support the costs involved in starting employment, education or establishing a household. It may also include life skills courses to provide young people with the skills to live independently.

The Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services administers the Mentor Marketplace Programme, which encourages the use of mentoring to improve the outcomes for young people aged 12 to 25 years, particularly those at greatest risk of disconnection from their family, community, education, training and the workplace. Mentor Marketplace develops a mentoring culture in schools, businesses and communities that will result in the engagement of business and community sectors towards self-sustaining mentoring activities for young people.

Reconnect is another scheme that provides early intervention support for young people aged 12 to 18 years who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness, and their families. Services include counseling, adolescent mediation and practical support to both the young person and their family. The Programme improves the level of engagement of young people with family, work, education, training and the community. The Newly Arrived Youth Support Service initiative provides culturally appropriate services ranging from early intervention to transition, for newly arrived young people aged 12 to 21 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

³⁸ The Young Men's Christian Association ("YMCA" or "the Y") is a world-wide, largely nonsectarian and apolitical social movement with a special emphasis on community development and young people. The YMCA Youth Parliament is a YMCA sponsored youth model parliament programme. There is a YMCA youth parliament in every Australian state and territory (with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory).

In 1990, the Youth Activities Services Programme was established to support young Australians and their families. Building on the positive outcomes achieved for young people, the Programme was extended to include a specific family component, the Family Liaison Worker Programme in 1997. Both the Programmes support young people, aged 11 to 16 years, and their families through early intervention. The Youth Activities Services Programme specifically helps to prevent young people from developing and continuing with patterns of behavior that place them at risk of disconnecting from their families and community and which may have long term effects on their family relationships, schooling and labour force participation. The Family Liaison Worker Programme assists families and young people deal with issues affecting their lives by offering positive practical support and guidance.

The National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group was established by the Australian Government in 2001 to provide opportunities for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to:

- Discuss with governments their experiences and perspectives about issues important to them
- Promote positive images of young Aboriginal and Strait Islander people
- Develop leadership skills.

The members of the National Indigenous Youth Leadership Group reflect the diversity of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in cultural heritage, life experiences and circumstances. Criteria for selecting the members are that they should

- Be aged 18 to 24 years old
- Be selected through a national nomination process
- Have strong leadership skills
- Have made significant achievements
- Be role models
- Have assisted with the growth of their communities.

The group is supported by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services.

H. Challenges

Despite of the achievements, there are a number of challenges in the work of youth development in Australia. Firstly, there is a clear perception that more needs to be done to facilitate the participation of young people. This would require efforts to encourage a culture-shift for many organizations working with young people from “doing for” young people to a culture of “doing with” young people, where developing youth policy direction and programme delivery involves young people to the maximum extent possible.

Secondly, there is a continuing need for more flexible education and training opportunities and a need for schools to be involved in the provision of more youth services, especially to provide widespread career and transition support. The rising cost of education is a serious concern to young people. Education systems need to actively and constantly develop

strategies to engage those young people who face barriers to education, and to remove obstacles in their continued participation. Schools in the future will need to be able to engage with the social circumstances of their students and to develop a problem-solving capacity to enable their students to remain engaged within the school environment.

Thirdly, the growth of casual employment is seen as adversely affecting young people's skill development and transition into economic and social independence. This brings out the need for the availability of apprenticeships and traineeships and for workforce planning to avoid skill shortages. Evidence suggests that while the numbers of young people engaged in paid work may have been maintained, their level of engagement has dropped considerably due to the increase in part-time, casual and temporary work. This is a major feature of the changing labour market for young people, and it deserves extensive discussion.

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III. CHINA³⁹

A. Introduction

China is the most populous country in the world with a total population of about 1.3 billion by the end of 2005, of whom 380 million were young people (16 to 34 years old), accounting for 29 per cent of the total population⁴⁰. For cross-country comparison and analysis, the youth definition of the United Nations (persons aged 15 to 24 years) is used in this chapter. According to the *UN World Population Prospects*⁴¹, the youth population (15 to 24 year olds) in China is projected to continuously decrease from 16.5 per cent in 2005 to 11.6 per cent by 2025 due to the demographic shift that is occurring worldwide.

Table 2. Youth population (15-24 years) and its prospects in China, 2005-2025

Year	Total population (thousand)	Youth population (thousand)	Youth percentage in population
2005	1,315,844	217,349	16.5
2010	1,354,533	218,593	16.1
2015	1,392,980	195,952	14.1
2020	1,423,939	177,735	12.5
2025	1,441,426	167,499	11.6

Source: United Nations (2005). *World Population Prospects: 2005 Revision*.

B. Youth policy framework

China's youth policies are firstly presented in its Constitution. Article 46 of the Constitution of People's Republic of China stipulates⁴² that "Citizens of the People's Republic of China have the duty as well as the right to receive education. The State promotes the all-round moral, intellectual and physical development of children and young people." The Constitution has also stipulated the rights and obligations of all citizens including juvenile and other special groups. Addressing the youth development issues by the principal law of the nation manifests the great importance attached to the youth by the legislative institutions, the Government and the society.

China's youth policies are elaborated in other laws and regulations formulated by the National People's Congress and the central government. These include Compulsory Education Law, Adoption Law, the Law on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency, the Law on Disabled

³⁹ The main references were drawn from websites of All-China Youth Federation, China Education and Research Network, and Ministry of Education; *China Youth Report (1995-2004)* by All-China Youth Federation and *the ILO Country Report in the 2004 ILO Symposium* and from other official sources.

⁴⁰ Total population was from Chinese Statistical Yearbook (2006). Youth population figure was from ILO (2004).

⁴¹ See United Nations (2005) *World Population Prospects: The 2005 Revision Population Database*.

⁴² Details of the Chinese Constitution can be found at
<<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/constitution/constitution.html>>.

People Protection and Marriage Law. The fourth of May is observed as the National Youth Day since 1950. The 21st Century Agenda of China, approved by the central government in March 1994, has a special chapter on youth, with detailed goals and action plans on education, employment, environment protection, health and hygiene, rights and interests protection, participation in politics, economic and social development. It has also placed the formulation of Youth Law on schedule, which describes the medium- and long-term goal of Chinese youth development.

Chinese youth policies are also embodied in the Charter of the Communist Party of China which is in power. The 10th charter elaborates the relationship between the Communist Party of China and the Communist Youth League of China (CYLC). The Charter stipulates the political and social status of CYLC, and also points out that “The Party will firmly support the work of CYLC to meet the requirements and needs of the youth groups in an active and creative way and to play the role of a commando and bridge between the Party and mass youth.” This regulation fully and effectively reflects the special needs of youth as a unique group, and also points out means to meet the youth’s requirements.⁴³

Since the 1990s, the Central Committee of CYLC and All China Youth Federation (ACYF) have successively formulated the Chinese Youth Work Strategic Development Plan in the Process of Establishing Socialist Market Economy Mechanism and Programs of Trans-Century Work of CYLC, which are major components of the Chinese youth policies.

C. National youth coordinating body

There is no specific Ministry on youth affairs in China. The Central Committee of CYLC and ACYF are required to assist the Chinese Government in dealing with youth affairs. Established on 4 May 1949, ACYF is one of China’s basic people’s organizations led by the Communist Party. It is a federative body of Chinese youth organizations with the Communist Youth League of China as the core. It is a broad, patriotic, united and front organization of youth of all ethnic groups and all walks of life in China. The highest decision-making body of the ACYF is the National Committee that works for a term of five years. The National Committee has a president and a number of vice presidents. When it is not in a session, the Standing Committee presides over the Federation’s work. The Standing Committee has a secretary-general and a number of deputy secretary generals.

ACYF has adopted a membership system. It has 48 member organizations and 1,352 individual committee members at present. CYLC, All-China Students’ Federation, Chinese Young Men’s Christian Association, Chinese Young Women’s Christian Association, Chinese Young Entrepreneurs Association, Chinese Young Scientists’ Association, Chinese Young Volunteers’ Association and other youth organizations are all member organizations of ACYF. Local youth organizations have been established accordingly, which helps to form a nation wide and integrated coordinated system for efficient youth work.

⁴³ See ACYF website at <<http://www.acyf.org.cn/ywb/>>.

Basic tasks of ACYF include the following:

- Holding aloft the banners of patriotism and socialism
- Encouraging young people to study Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory and studying the socialist market economy, modern science and technology and general knowledge
- Representing most extensively and safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of young people of all ethnic groups and all walks of life
- Guiding young people to actively participate in social activities and helping them grow healthy and becoming well-trained
- Actively developing ties of friendship with young people of Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao and overseas Chinese
- Consolidating and developing the situation of social stability and unity in China
- Promoting its socialist modernization drive
- Pushing the development of the socialist market economy
- Improving the socialist democracy and legal system and promoting the reunification of the motherland and defending the peace and development of the whole world.

D. Youth education

Education plays a decisive role in youth development. The Chinese Government has attached great importance to the development of education by formulating a national policy to pursue country's prosperity through advancement of science and technology and prioritizing educational development over all other national undertakings. The country has made rapid progress in the area of education during the last 10 years, creating opportunities and an enabling environment for youth development.

Educational budget increased more than three times over the last 12 years, from 188 billion RMB⁴⁴ in 1995 to 646 billion RMB in 2007. The coverage of education for the youth has also expanded significantly. Since the enactment of the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China in 1986, the percentage of younger population covered by the nine-year compulsory education has reached 98.6 per cent by 2004. In addition, the scale of senior high school education has seen noticeable growth. The gross enrollment rate at senior high schools was 47.6 per cent in 2004 against 33.6 per cent in 1995. The percentage of junior high school students entering senior high schools stood at 62.9 in the year 2004. The number of general higher-education institutions registered an increase of 63 per cent in the last 10 years (from 1054 to 1731) and the number of students admitted for general bachelor and junior college studies grew from 0.9 million in 1995 to 4.5 million in 2004, registering a five-fold increase. The number of post-graduate students enrolled rose from 51,100 persons in 1995 to 326,300 persons in 2004 (more than five times) while the number of doctoral students rose from 11,056 persons to 53,300 persons (nearly five fold) during the same period.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ In 2003, 8.3 RMB equals 1 US\$.

⁴⁵ Figures in this paragraph were from National Bureau of Statistics of China at <<http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/statisticaldata/yearlydata/>>.

The efforts of the Government to wipe out illiteracy among the youth have brought it down to 4 per cent by 2004. In 1998, the Ministry of Education promulgated the Ordinance of Strengthening the Cultural and Quality-oriented Education of College Students. Educational reforms have accelerated the implementation of quality-oriented education for the youth with a focus on inculcating creativity, practical abilities and scientific temper in them. The measures undertaken by the educational administration in this regard include amending educational structure and curriculum setting, reforming the entrance examination system, establishing the supervision and evaluation systems, improving moral education and consolidating educational research. Along with the popularization of higher education, the State cancelled the government-arranged job placement for college graduates and shifted to the market-oriented employment system. This has brought about noticeable difficulties for the graduates to find employment.

Vocational education and training has expanded in a massive way in response to the demands of the employment market. On 1 September 1996, the Vocational Education Law of the People's Republic of China was enacted and brought into effect. As a result, there were 14,466 secondary vocational schools in the nation in 2005 with an enrollment of 6.6 million students.⁴⁶

With the promulgation of the Provisions of Schools run by Social Actors on 31 July 1997 which became the Law of the People's Republic of China for Promoting Non-public Education with effect from 1 September 2003, non-public educational institutions have grown rapidly and are playing an increasingly important role in the entire educational undertaking. These schools enjoy the same legal capacity of public schools and the State protects their autonomy. In 2004, there were 78,500 non-public schools in the country with an enrollment of 17.7 million students. There were 1.4 million students in non-public general higher-education institutions in the same year which accounted for 10.5 per cent of the total students attending general higher education in the country.⁴⁷

The Chinese Government has taken strong measures during the past 10 years to improve the provision of equal opportunities for education to young people in different regions, different economic strata and different ethnic groups. Support has been given to provide education in poorer regions. These include renovation of school buildings, supply of free text books and support for living expenses to the students from poor families in the central and western regions. Poor students are also provided with loans to pursue higher education. Between 1999 and 2005, 1.1 million students were successively been granted loans worth 7 billion RMB.

Efforts are made to improve the special education to the youth. The right of disabled youth to receive education is well guaranteed. In 2005, there were 1593 special schools with 364,000 students. In 2003, more than 3000 disabled students entered colleges and universities and 490,000 disabled persons received vocational education and training.

⁴⁶ Chinese Statistical Yearbook (2006)

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Efforts have been made to improve the educational status of minority groups. Since China's reform and opening up, the central government has increased its investment in the education of minority communities and the local governments have adopted favorable policies in terms of allotment and use of special educational fund. The State pursues a preferential policy for students hailing from minority groups in higher education. In 2003, there were 697,600 minority students in general colleges and universities across China, who accounted for 6.6 per cent of the total students.⁴⁸

In February 2003, the Ministry of Education published *the Report on Chinese Education and Human Resources Issues* which included key indicators such as achieving gross enrolment rate of 73 per cent in senior high school education by the year 2010 from 40.7 per cent in the year 2001; raising gross enrolment rate in higher education from 13.3 per cent in 2001 to 23 per cent by 2010; enhancing the budget allocation from 3.2 per cent of GDP in 2001 to 4.5 per cent by 2010 and increasing the average number of years of education of the new labour force from 10 years in the year 2000 to 12 years by 2010.

Though remarkable progress has been made in the sphere of youth education in the last 10 years, the inherent problems and weaknesses that exist in the Chinese education can not be ignored. Firstly, the budget allocation for education has been consistently low (less than 4 per cent of the Chinese GDP). When the Ministry of Education announced in 1998 the Action Plan for Vitalizing Education in the 21st century, the financial outlay for education was only 2.6 per cent of GDP. Secondly, there is educational imbalance between urban and rural areas. Near three quarters of the total illiterate population resides in rural areas. Imbalance exists among different regions. The illiteracy rate and gender-based illiteracy rate of population was the highest in the western region. There is also imbalance among different ethnic groups and is noticed between men and women. The thought of valuing sons and belittling daughters is still prevailing in some rural and economically backward regions. Thirdly, educational expenses pose a heavy burden to families. A multiplicity of unauthorized educational charges still exists in China. Many young persons have quit schooling due to the exorbitant cost.

E. Youth health

Health and well-being of members of a society, particularly the youth, lay the foundation for economic growth and social development. The food and nutrition of Chinese youth have improved significantly. The rate of malnutrition among secondary school students declined from 30 per cent in the year 1985 to 19.5 per cent in 2000. Percentages of secondary school students with anemia in cities and rural areas have come down from 16.5 per cent and 24.1 per cent respectively in the year 1992 to 9.1 per cent and 11.4 per cent in 2000. The physical development level of Chinese youth has seen a significant progress which is constantly improving. Awareness on hygiene and health care has increased among the youth who have acquired healthy and hygienic habits gradually. However, the percentage of young people in a poor health state has risen as a result of unbalanced food, excess pressure from life and work and life style in the modern times. In June 2004, the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education and the State General Administration of Sports have jointly initiated the Youth

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Physical Health Intervention Project to improve the physical health and lower the percentage of fat students in schools in cities.

With the accelerated social and economic reform, the Chinese youth are under constant pressure from studies, employment, finance and inter-personal relationship and they are puzzled during their development. They lack appropriate skills to cope with their mental health which has led to various types of emotional and behavioral problems. These include difficulties with inter-personal relations, emotional stability and adaptability to studies, anxiety, horror, neurosis, obsessive-compulsive disorder and depression. In September 2004, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education jointly inaugurated the Mental Sunshine Project for the purpose of promoting mental health of the youth. It aims to strengthen the mental health education and training of teachers and school doctors, enhance their ability to identify mental and behavioral problems of youth at early stages and to provide mental health education and counseling services specific to the situation of the individual youth.

Sexual and reproductive health constitutes an important part in the healthy growth and development of the youth. Puberty of youth obviously tends to occur earlier due to the increasing speed of physical growth and earlier sexual development. However, the lack of sexual health knowledge has led to problems including pre-marital pregnancies, abortions and spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS which have severe impact on the reproductive health of the youth, particularly young women. China has made persistent efforts to improve sexual and reproductive health of the youth. The Ministry of Education promulgated the Basic Requirements of Health Courses for College Students in 1993. In 1996, the Notice on Further Promotion of Reproductive Health and Puberty Education in General Secondary Schools was enacted. Currently, puberty health courses are available in about 50 per cent of rural and 90 per cent of urban secondary schools and in all colleges and universities. Hotlines and face-to-face advisory clinics for the youth have been established in and outside schools and colleges. Youth clinics are being established in various parts of the country. Non-governmental organizations such as Chinese Association of Family Planning have actively promoted sexual health education and contraceptives for the youth.

Infectious diseases among the youth are under control, thanks to the advancement of medical technologies and the strong health awareness measures. The Government has promulgated the Law for Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases (enforced in 1989 and amended in 2004) and the Provisions on Health Work in Schools (implemented from 1990) and set up a three-tier prevention and health care network. Active preventative measures have been taken up by providing immunization to the youth before the occurrence of infectious diseases such as hepatitis A, smallpox, flu and measles. Health education is offered extensively in schools to enable the youth to get basic knowledge on the prevention and treatment of frequently occurring infectious diseases and to promote healthy behaviors.

According to an official estimate, there were 840,000 people affected by HIV/AIDS at the end of 2004.⁴⁹ As sexually transmitted infections including HIV spread from high-risk people to ordinary people, the Chinese youth are faced with increasing threat of the disease.

⁴⁹See ChinaNet at <<http://www.china.org.cn/english/en-shuzi2004/kj/ws.htm>>.

The Government attaches great importance to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. It has established and revised laws, regulations and working mechanism for that purpose. China Plan of Action for AIDS Control, Prevention and Treatment places strong emphasis on provision of knowledge in sexual health, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted disease, voluntary blood donation and anti-drug education to the youth. In recent years, the Ministry of Education has enacted a series of policies which specify that prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted disease and drug abuse should be part of the health education in schools and colleges. Since 2005, a course on HIV prevention and treatment is being offered in all secondary schools, colleges and universities. ACYF initiated in 2001 the Youthful Red Ribbon Campaign – an activity offering health education to the youth for HIV prevention. As a direct result of the campaign, China Youth and Children Fund for AIDS Prevention was set up to support HIV/AIDS prevention and health education activities for the youth, particularly in the rural areas.

F. Youth employment

Employment is the foundation of survival and development of the youth and a precondition for harmonious social development. Governments at all levels have formulated appropriate policies and taken measures to improve employment of the youth, which have witnessed significant results. Sustained growth of the Chinese economy has created numerous jobs for the youth. Active efforts have been made to establish the market-oriented employment mechanism to promote employment of the youth. In order to solve the employment problem of college graduates, the Government has implemented a number of measures to eliminate restrictions concerning social identity, place of registered permanent residence and employment quota in most cities and helped the graduates realize competitive and flexible employment in the market. At the same time, the colleges and universities were guided to adjust their curriculum and human resources development structure in accordance with the market needs. Since late 1990s the Government has paid great attention to make labour markets standardized and modernized. It has established the public employment service system and constantly enriched employment information. The Government has also encouraged and standardized the growth of non-governmental employment service agencies. The Ministry of Education and local educational administrations have setup employment service information networks to provide employment guidance and services to college graduates. ACYF has helped set up 651 youth employment service centres in 107 key cities for employment and re-employment of the youth which provide job introduction, employment consulting services and putting the youth in contact with employment markets for information exchange and communications. All these efforts have played a positive role in easing employment pressure and in facilitating full youth employment.

Young people are actively encouraged to start their own businesses. The ultimate solution of employment problem is to create new jobs and to pursue employment and re-employment through initiating new businesses. Recognizing the enthusiasm and potential of the youth, the Government has launched relevant policies and activities with entrepreneurship as the theme which have yielded positive results. Some of the measures taken up by the State to encourage college students to start their own businesses include preferential tax treatments, micro credits, business training and guidance, policy consultancy and follow-up coaching.

Since 1998, ACYF and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security have launched the Entrepreneurship Campaign for Young Laid-off Workers and China Youth Entrepreneurship Campaign. The campaigns organize and implement business start-up activities across the nation that include provision of support for start-up businesses, skill training, intermediary services, concept instructions and employment aid. It has offered business start-up skill training to nearly 400,000 young people and supported 90,000 young entrepreneurs during the period between 1990 and 2004. These activities have not only realized self-employment but also directly resettled more than 1.1 million laid-off workers.

Youth organizations have carried out a multiplicity of activities to accelerate the improvement of employability of the youth. The Youth Model Worker Campaign conducted in state-owned enterprises by ACYF in conjunction with related government authorities aims at improving the quality of young workers and of products through post-specific training and mentoring apprentice. ACYF has also implemented the Skill Vitalization Plan for Young Workers and the Skill Training Project for a million young laid-off workers, which have provided highly pertinent skill training to young workers and laid-off personnel in towns and cities to enhance their vocational skills. In order to meet the needs of rural youth, ACYF has launched the Century-spanned Science and Technology Training Project for Young Farmers, the Sparkle in Western Regions Programme and the Plan of One Thousand Schools to Train a Million Young Migrant Workers in Cities to provide vocational skill training to young people staying in their hometowns and those flowing into cities for jobs. For the purpose of promoting the employability of college students, ACYF and All-China Students Federation have jointly launched the College Students Quality Development Plan to provide them with employment training and coaching and the Pre-employment Internship Plan for the Youth to arrange pre-employment practice in qualified enterprises on the basis of governmental subsidies, social supports and enterprises volunteering.

Efforts have also been made to provide social security to unemployed youth through the Ministry of Civil Affairs which provides temporary aid to poor and unemployed graduates to ensure minimum livelihood security. This aid is usually granted for a year.

The Chinese Government has all along attached great importance to the interests of special youth groups such as young women, disabled youth and young migrant workers. The right of young women to equal employment is protected through the Constitution, the Labour Law and the Law on Protection of Women's Rights and Interests of the People's Republic of China. The employment right of disabled youth is also protected by the State through creating preferential conditions for their employment. The legitimate rights and interests of young migrant workers are protected by gradually improving the administration of employment contracts of migrant workers. Employment of minor labourers (16 to 18 years old) are regulated by the State who are not allowed to work in mines or to take part in toxic, harmful work or work of Level-IV intensity as defined by the State or other work banned against them.

Despite various measures taken by the Government, the Chinese youth are currently confronted with tough employment situation and many difficulties. These difficulties typically include oversupply of new labour force beyond demand, increase of unemployment among college graduates and greater difficulty in transfer of rural young work force. It is estimated

that around 300,000 graduates remain unemployed every year. Due to rapid urbanization, a huge number of young rural labourers flow to cities and towns for employment.

G. Youth participation

Youth is an important force. A country's social, economic, cultural and political development requires the active participation of the youth. Transformations in the functions of the State and the rise and development of non-governmental organizations have offered larger space for the youth's social participation. Chinese youth's participation in contemporary social life and decision-making mainly focus on participation in political life, economic construction, management of state authorities in community services and public interest affairs. Between 1994 and 2004, the Government with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Personnel, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Construction, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League as well as the local governments, have issued more than 100 documents that support and promote youth participation in decision-making and social life.

Chinese youth plays a significant role in the Communist Party of China which is distinctly reflected in the Party's Constitution. The proportion of youth under the age of 35 in Party Committees at prefecture and county levels stood at 0.7 per cent and 7.3 per cent in the year 1997 and 2004 respectively. Youth organizations and representatives attend the People's Congress and People's Political Consultative Conferences at all levels and actively participate in the decision-making of public policy and youth policy. The number of members under 30 years of age in the tenth People's Congress⁵⁰ accounted for 1.5 per cent. There are youth members in local People's Congress and People's Political Consultative Conference who represent the will of the youth and reflect youth's voice.

Reforms of civil servants system and issue of Law on Public Servant of the People's Republic of China have offered enormous scope for Chinese youth to work in government agencies and have instilled in them a strong sense of political participation. The youth play a significant role in economic development, especially in hi-tech and innovation fields. International Youth Exchange is the main channel and way for Chinese youth to participate in world youth affairs. Over the last 12 years, a sound organizational system for youth participation has evolved through youth organizations such as the Communist Youth League of China, ACYF and the Chinese Young Entrepreneurs Association. The Communist Youth League has the strongest appeal, sense of ownership and recognition. The Model Youth Units Activity⁵¹ has been jointly launched by the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League and other 24 government departments with an aim to encourage the youth to actively participate in social life and decision-making in their work based upon their job positions. There were about 250,000 model units throughout the country in 2004.

⁵⁰ The Tenth People's Congress was held between 5 and 18 March 2003.

⁵¹ The program organizes on-post learning, promotes contests among youth and youth teams, advocates the spirit of professionalism, creates the outstanding achievement, thus encouraging youth participation and youth achievement.

Chinese youth provides active voluntary service during major social events. At the end of 1993, the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League decided to carry out the Chinese Young Volunteers Operation which became a national campaign quickly. Young Volunteers Associations have been established in every province and in two thirds of prefectures with more than 100,000 volunteer teams. In the year 2004, around 150 million youth provided over 4.5 billion hours of voluntary service to the society. Since the launch in 1996 of the project Transfer of Culture, Science & Technology and Medical Care to Rural Areas, about ten million college students have gone in teams to the rural areas, particularly the poverty-stricken and less-developed areas to provide volunteer service during every summer vacation. The Chinese Young Volunteers Poverty-alleviation Project mobilized urban youth to provide half year to two years of voluntary service in the mid-west part of China. Up to 2006, nearly 40,000 college graduates and doctors have been sent to 300 poverty-stricken counties in the west under the Go West College Students Voluntary Service Project which was launched in 2003 to provide volunteer service at the grassroots. Another program is called One-Help-One was initiated in 1994 for the purpose of providing assistance to those old or disabled people in communities. This program requires that a young volunteer find an old or disabled person in the community to form a one-to-one pair and provide services to him or her for a long term. By 2001, the number of paired-up groups has increased from 150,000 to 2.5 million and more than 40 million young people have been involved in these community voluntary services. Accordingly, the concept of the Model Youth Communities emerged. Up to now, there have been 1000 model youth communities set up at national level and nearly 3000 at the provincial level.

H. Challenges

Some of the major challenges related to the youth policies in China are enumerated below. Firstly, the budget allocation for education has been low (less than 4 per cent of China's GDP). Secondly, there is educational imbalance between urban and rural areas. Near three quarters of the total illiterate population resides in rural areas. Imbalance exists among different regions. There is also imbalance among different ethnic groups and between men and women. Thirdly, educational expenses pose a heavy burden to Chinese families. Many young persons have quit schooling due to the exorbitant cost.

With accelerated social and economic reforms, Chinese youth are coming under constant pressure from studies, employment, finance and inter-personal relationship and are puzzled during their development.

Lack of sexual health knowledge has led to problems including pre-marital pregnancies, abortions and spread of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS which have severe impact on the reproductive health of the youth, particularly young women.

As sexually transmitted infections including HIV spread from high-risk people to ordinary people, the Chinese youth are faced with the increasing threat of the disease.

Despite the various measures taken by the Government, the Chinese youth are currently faced with tough employment situation and various difficulties. These difficulties

typically include oversupply of new labour force beyond demand, increasing unemployment among college graduates and greater difficulty in accommodating outward migration/transfer of rural young work force.

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IV. INDIA⁵²

A. Introduction

According to *the Census of India 2001*, the total population of India was 1,028.61 million. Nearly 40 per cent of the population was in the age group of 13 to 35 years. The number of youth aged 15 to 24 years was 195.07 million, which accounted for 19.0 per cent of the whole population.⁵³ India thus has the largest youth population in the world.

In India, the Government officially defines youth as persons between the ages of 13 and 35 years. For cross-country comparison and analysis, the youth definition of the United Nations, which defines youth as persons between 15 and 24 years of age, is used in this chapter. It is projected that the percentage of youth aged 15 to 24 years will decrease in the country from 19.1 per cent in 2005 to 16.7 per cent in 2025 as shown in table 3 below:

Table 3. Youth population (15-24 years) and its prospects in India, 2005-2025

Year	Total population (thousand)	Youth population (thousand)	Youth percentage in population
2005	1,103,371	211,254	19.1
2010	1,183,293	224,657	19.0
2015	1,260,366	231,221	18.3
2020	1,322,032	232,353	17.4
2025	1,395,496	232,579	16.7

Source: United Nations. *UN World Population Prospects*. [electronic version]. accessed on 4 April 2007 from <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2004/wpp2004.htm>

About 70 per cent of the youth lived in rural areas, while 30 per cent lived in urban areas in 2001. Young women and young men constituted 48 per cent and 52 per cent, respectively, of the total youth population. The Government has recognized adolescents as an important segment of the youth population group.

B. Youth policy framework

The first National Youth Policy was formulated in 1988 which recognized youth as a vital and vibrant human resource that had both a right and an obligation to participate actively in shaping national development. It acknowledged the high aspirations of young people and emphasized the need to create increasing opportunities to make them economically productive and socially useful. Since then, the socio-economic conditions in the country have undergone a significant change and have been shaped by wide-ranging technological advancement. The

⁵² The main references were from *the Census of India 2001*, *the National Youth Policy 2003*, the annual reports from the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Human Resource Development, the Policy Project Report, and other official sources.

⁵³ See Office of the Registrar General Census and Census Commissioner, India at http://www.censusindia.gov.in/census_online/population.html.

National Youth Policy 2003 was designed to galvanize young people to rise up to new challenges. It aims at motivating youth to be active and committed participants in national development.

The 2003 National Youth Policy reiterates the commitment of the country to the composite and all-round development of the young people in India and seeks to establish an all-India perspective to fulfill their legitimate aspirations. The Policy is based on recognition of the contribution that the youth can, and should, make to the growth and well-being of society and endeavors to ensure effective co-ordination between the policies, programmes and delivery systems of the various ministries, departments and agencies. The thrust of the policy centred around “youth empowerment” in different spheres of national life.

This Policy covers all youth in the country in the age group of 13 to 35 years. It is acknowledged that since all persons within this age group are unlikely to be one homogeneous group, but rather a conglomeration of sub-groups with differing social roles and requirements. The youth belonging to the age group 13 to 19 years, which is a major part of the adolescent age group, is regarded as a separate constituency as compared to the group of people aged 20-35 years.

This Policy has the following objectives:

Instilling in the youth, at large, an abiding awareness of, and adherence to, the secular principles and values enshrined in the Constitution of India with unswerving commitment to patriotism, national security, national integration, non-violence and social justice

- Developing qualities of citizenship and dedication to community service among all sections of the youth
- Promoting awareness amongst the youth, in the fields of Indian history and heritage, arts and culture
- Providing youth with proper educational and training opportunities and facilitating access to information in respect of employment opportunities and other services, including entrepreneurial guidance and financial credit
- Facilitating access, for all sections of youth, to health information and services and promoting a social environment which strongly inhibits the use of drugs and other forms of substance abuse, wards off disease (e.g. HIV/AIDS); ensuring measures for de-addiction and mainstreaming of the affected persons and enhancing the availability of sports and recreational facilities as constructive outlets for the abundant energy of the youth
- Sustaining and reinforcing the spirit of volunteerism among youth in order to build up individual character and generate a sense of commitment to the goals of developmental programmes
- Creating an international perspective in the youth and involving them in promoting peace and understanding and the establishment of a just global economic order
- Developing youth leadership in various socio-economic and cultural spheres and encouraging the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), co-operatives and non-formal groups of young people

- Promoting a major participatory role for youth in the protection and preservation of nature, including natural resources, to utilize their abundant energies in community service so as to improve the environment and foster a scientific and inquisitive reasoning and rational attitude in the younger generation; and encouraging the youth to undertake such travel excursions as this would better acquaint them with cultural harmony, amidst diversity in India and overseas.

The Policy has four major thrust areas, namely youth empowerment, gender justice, inter-sectoral approach and information and research network. It acknowledges that the youth of the country should be assured of a set of privileges while it exhorts the youth to fulfill their key responsibilities. It recognizes the following areas as key sectors of concern for young people:

- Education
- Training and employment
- Health and family welfare
- Preservation of environment, ecology and wild life
- Recreation and sports
- Arts and culture
- Science and technology
- Civics and good citizenship.

The Policy attaches priority to the following groups of young people:

- Rural and tribal youth
- Out-of-school youth
- Adolescents particularly female adolescents
- Youth with disabilities
- Youth under specially difficult circumstances such as victims of trafficking, orphans and street children.

The Policy envisions the following implementation mechanism:

- All ministries/departments of the union government and the state governments, particularly in the social sector are to make identifiable allocations in their budgets for youth development programmes;
- A broad based National Committee on Youth Policy and Programmes is contemplated to review and assess various programmes and schemes focusing on youth. It will also advise the Government on measures for the implementation of the Plan of Action of the National Youth Policy;
- The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (under the guidance of the National Committee on Youth Policy and Programmes) will be the nodal Ministry for programmes and schemes in the area and oversees the implementation of provisions of the Policy;

- An effective mechanism to coordinate the activities of the central ministries/departments, the state governments and community and youth organizations, would evolve in order to facilitate timely execution of youth development programmes;
- A National Youth Development Fund will be created through contributions, including from NGOs, which would be utilized for youth development activities. Income Tax exemption would be sought for contribution to the Fund.

The Committee for Action Plan of the National Youth Policy has been constituted to draw plans for implementation of programmes and activities for all round development of youth. Besides, the Lok Sabha⁵⁴ has recently constituted a Parliamentary Forum under the Chairpersonship of the Lok Sabha Speaker to consider various suggestions made in the Forum before finalizing the Action Plan. The National Youth Policy 2003 would be reviewed after five years from the date of commencement of implementation.

Besides these policies and constitutional provisions, several legislative acts have been promulgated by the National Government to safeguard the health and social protection of adolescents and youth such as the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1976; the Juvenile Justice Act, 1986; the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986; and the Prenatal Diagnostic Technique (Regulation and Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1994.

C. National youth coordinating body

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports of the Government of India was initially set up as the Department of Sports in 1982 at the time of the IX Asian Games in New Delhi. It was upgraded to the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports during the International Youth Year in 1985. It became a full fledged Ministry on 17 May 2000. Youth which is the most vibrant and dynamic segment of the country's population constitutes potentially its most valuable human resource. To optimally tap their constructive and creative energies, the Ministry pursues the twin objectives of personality building and nation building, developing the personality of youth and involving them in various nation-building activities. As most of the issues concerning young people are the functions of other ministries/departments, such as Education, Employment and Training, Health and Family Welfare etc., the role of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports is to act as a facilitator and catalytic agent.

The Ministry is divided into two bureaus, namely Youth Affairs and Sports. A Joint Secretary heads each bureau. It has a total staff of 203. The Ministry has one subordinate office and four autonomous organizations under its administrative control. The subordinate office is the National Service Scheme Organization. The autonomous organizations are:

⁵⁴ The Lok Sabha (alternatively titled, the House of the People, by the Constitution of India) is the lower house in the Parliament of India. The Lok Sabha also stands for the term of the lower house between consecutive parliamentary general elections in India. Members of the Lok Sabha are direct representatives of the people of India, having been directly elected by the electorate consisting of all eligible adult citizens of India.

- Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, New Delhi
- Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development, Sriperumbudur, Tamilnadu
- Sports Authority of India, New Delhi
- Lakshmi Bai National Institute of Physical Education, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh.

The Ministry performs the following functions pertaining to youth affairs under the Order of the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961:

- Youth affairs
- Nehru Yuva Kendras Sangathan⁵⁵
- National Service Scheme
- Voluntary youth organizations, including financial assistance to them
- National Service Volunteer Scheme
- Commonwealth Youth Programme and United Nations Volunteers
- Youth welfare activities, youth festivals, work camp etc.
- Boy-scouts and girl-guides
- Youth hostels
- National Youth Awards
- Residual work of the erstwhile National Discipline Scheme
- All attached or subordinate offices and autonomous bodies set up by the Ministry concerning any of the subjects specified above.

The total budget allocation for the Ministry for 2006-2007, according to the Ministry's website, is Rs 6690 million (Rs 6000 million for planned activities and Rs 690 million for non-plan activities).⁵⁶

There are two youth coordinating bodies in India outside the Government. These are the Indian Committee of Youth Organizations and the Indian Assembly of Youth. Indian Committee of Youth Organizations was founded in 1981 and had 360 members in 1996. It is directed by a national conference and managed by elected officers. Its main aim is to provide a common platform for Indian youth organizations to establish communication channels between them and to coordinate their activities. India Assembly of Youth was established in 1955 to promote the interests and socio-economic conditions of Indian youth. It holds conferences, seminars, workshops, training courses, camps and campaigns on topics related to education and literacy, poverty and rural development and the advancement of girls and young women. It also runs an International Youth Centre (Vishwa Yuva Kendra) in New Delhi⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ The Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, an autonomous body of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India was set up in 1972 as Nehru Yuva Kendra under the Ministry of Education. It currently has 500 district level offices, 2.16 lakh village level youth clubs and 80 lakh rural youth affiliated to it in the 13 to 35 age group.

⁵⁶ Indian currency is Indian rupee (abbreviation Rs). 1 US Dollar equals 39.475 Indian Rupee on 10 October 2007.

⁵⁷ Vishwa Yuva Kendra is one of the leading non-governmental organizations on youth training in India.

Established with the active support of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the Vishwa Yuva Kendra was inaugurated in 1968 by the President of India Dr. Zakir Hussain. Ensnconced in the prestigious diplomatic enclave of the New Delhi, the Kendra has grown to be a fountainhead of a wide variety of youth - related activities.

D. Youth education

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is the primary organization which is in charge of youth education policy in India. Under MHRD, there are two Departments, namely the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, and the Department of Secondary and Higher Education. The Minister for Human Resource Development is assisted by one minister of state. Each Department is headed by a secretary to the Government of India. The Departments are organized into bureaus, divisions, branches, desks, sections and units. Each bureau is under the charge of a joint secretary assisted by divisional heads at the level of deputy secretary/director.

The National Policy on Education, adopted in 1986 and modified in 1992, recognizes the right to education for all segments of the population and made elementary education for all children compulsory, including adolescent boys and girls. It envisages the improvement and expansion of education in all sectors, elimination of disparities in access and laying greater stress on improving the quality and relevance of education at all levels, including technical and professional education. It also emphasizes that education must play a positive and interventionist role in correcting social and regional imbalance, empowering women and securing a rightful place for the disadvantaged and the minorities. Programmes have been developed and implemented to provide universal education and reduce school dropouts, especially among adolescent girls. In many states, the education of girls is free until the graduate level.

The Indian education system has three levels, namely primary, secondary and higher education. Secondary education which serves as a bridge between primary and higher education is expected to prepare young persons between the age group 14-18 for higher education and employment later on. The secondary education starts with classes 9-10 leading to higher secondary classes 11 and 12.

The gross enrollment rate of secondary and tertiary schools increased from 37.9 per cent and 6.0 per cent in 1985, to 53.5 per cent and 11.8 per cent in 2004, respectively as shown in table 4.

Table 4. Gross enrolment ratio in India, 1985-2004, unit: percentage

Level/year	1985	1990	1995	2000	2004
Secondary level	37.9	44.5	48.8	47.9	53.5
Tertiary level	6.0	6.2	6.6	10.2	11.8

Source: World Bank (2006). *Summary Education Profile: India*.

[electronic version] accessed 5 August 2007 from

<<http://devdata.worldbank.org/edstats/SummaryEducationProfiles/CountryData/GetShowData.asp?sCtry=IND,India>>

The data also suggest that the primary education completion rate in the country rose from 75.4 per cent in 2000 to 83.6 per cent in 2004 while the repetition level declined from 4.2 per cent in 2000 to 3.2 per cent in 2004. Public expenditure on education accounted for 3.3 per cent of India's GDP in 2004. The ratio of pupils to teachers at primary and secondary levels of

education in 2004 stood at 40:1 and 32:1 respectively. The share of the private sector in the enrolment of students at primary and secondary levels was estimated as 17 per cent and 41.9 per cent respectively in 2004. While 48 per cent of youth were illiterate, a much higher percentage of young women (62.5 per cent) remained illiterate compared to young men (34.5 per cent) in 2004.

Integrated education for disabled children

It is estimated that there are about 20 million of disabled children in India today. Under the Persons with Disabilities Act, it has become mandatory for the central/state/local governments to provide basic education to children with disabilities up to 18 years of age. The Act also calls for a series of activities to promote the education of such persons and mainstream them in general school system.

Environmental orientation to school education

The National Policy on Education 1986 attaches great importance to the protection of environment by assisting voluntary agencies to conduct experimental and innovative projects aimed at promoting integration of education programme in schools with local environmental conditions.

National Population Education Project

The Project was launched in April 1980 with a view to institutionalize population education in the school education system. It has two objectives:

- Introduction of adolescence education (with major components such as the process of growing up, HIV/AIDS education, drug abuse in schools and teachers education)
- Re-orientation, updating and improvement of the elements of population education in the light of the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1984.

Information and communication technology (ICT) in schools

India recognized the importance of ICT in education as early as 1984-1985 when the Computer Literacy and Studies in School Project was initially introduced as a pilot with the introduction of micro-computers. It was soon realized that understanding and leveraging ICT is critical for countries striving for continued social and economic progress. Today India has one of the largest ICT workforces in the world. Efforts are underway to ensure coverage of the scheme in all states and union territories of the country during the current five year plan.

Technical education

Vocational training is imparted to young people within the age group of 15 to 25 years. For this purpose 357 industrial training institutes with an overall capacity of 155,000 training places have been established in various parts of the country. The period of training ranges from one year to two years.

Vocationalization at the first degree level

In conformity with the National Policy on Education 1986, a scheme to provide career orientation to education at the first degree level was launched in 1994-1995. Under this scheme, a university/college could introduce one to three vocational courses in 35 identified subjects.

The approved Tenth Plan (2002-2007) outlay was Rs 438.25 billion: Rs 138.25 billion for the Department of Secondary and Higher Education and Rs 300.00 billion for the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy respectively. The approved annual plan outlay (2004-2005) was Rs 60.00 billion for the Department of Elementary Education and Literacy and Rs 22.25 billion for the Department of Secondary and Higher Education.

E. Youth health

Youth health is the domain of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and the Departments of Health and Family Welfare of the states. The Ministry of Women and Child Development is significantly involved in the issues of nutrition and development of children, particularly girl children. The National Health Policy of 1983 (and later modified as the National Health Policy 2002) aimed at attaining health for all through primary health care. While the policy did not mention youth specifically, it emphasized safe motherhood and child survival as well as the need for the provision of health care for school-going children through the school health program. The major thrust to youth health was given in the National Population Policy 2000. Adolescent health is also covered as a sub-section under the health sector in the National Youth Policy. Youth empowerment and gender justice are recognized as the major thrust areas of the policy.

Recognizing that the needs of youth, including the need for protection from unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), were specifically addressed in the past, India's National Population Policy 2000 underscored youth health as a strategic focus in achieving socio-demographic goals. The policy aims at ensuring that

- Adolescents' need for information, counseling, population education, and contraceptive services are accessible and affordable;
- Food supplements and nutrition services are available;
- The legislation on restraint of child marriage is enforced.

The National Population Policy also emphasized that reproductive health services for adolescent girls and boys are especially needed in rural areas, where adolescent marriage and pregnancy are most prevalent. The Policy underscored the need for programs that encourage delayed marriage and childbearing and the need for education about the risks of unprotected sex.

High fertility rates, high rates of teenage pregnancy, high risk of STIs and HIV, and poor nutritional status are the main health problems among the youth population in India. High fertility is related to early marriage. The age-specific fertility rate among 15-19 year-old

female adolescents is as high as 10.7 per cent. There are wide urban and rural differences in the age specific fertility rate. The rural age specific fertility rate is twice that of urban areas.

Adolescence is often shrouded in myths and misconceptions about sexual health and sexuality. Little information is provided by educational institutions to adolescents about sexual health. Young people usually learn more about sexual and reproductive health from uninformed sources, which results in the perpetuation of myths and misconceptions about puberty, menstruation, physiological and body changes and STIs.

Reproductive tract infections and STIs are not uncommon. In India, STIs rank third among the major communicable diseases. Of concern, however, is that approximately 25 percent of all STI cases are among teenage boys. STIs often go undetected or untreated among young women, who embarrassed or stigmatized by the presence of an STI. These women are usually reluctant to seek help. The Ministry of Health has a number of programmes to address HIV/AIDS problem. Notable amongst these are the School AIDS education, the University Talk AIDS and radio and TV programmes which target adolescents. The Ministry is also collaborating with the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in running drug de-addiction centres and supporting NGOs to do the same.

Nutrition is a significant indicator of the overall well-being and development of adolescents and youth. Most of the current programmes of the Government are focused either on pregnant and lactating mothers or pre-school children. Adolescent nutrition has not been given the attention it deserves except for a limited nutrition programmes for adolescent girls under the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme run by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The rapid growth of under-nourished children during adolescence may increase the severity of under-nutrition. Iron is deficient in almost all age groups. Naturally, the shortfalls create more vulnerability for adolescent girls. Pre-pregnancy anemic status of adolescent girls is crucial and has long-term inter-generational consequences. Anemic adolescent mothers are at a higher risk of miscarriages, maternal mortality and giving birth to stillborn and low birth weight babies. Early marriage and pregnancy perpetuate both maternal and child under-nutrition. Under-nutrition in adolescents also leads to poor academic performance in schools and low productivity in the work force later in life.

A recent study revealed that in the rural areas of Rajasthan State, 93.3 per cent of all girls suffered from first to third degree chronic energy deficiencies. The caloric intake of nutrients for adolescent girls was deficient by 26 to 36 per cent with a 23 to 32 per cent deficiency in protein.⁵⁸ There is also evidence to show that there has been an increase in obesity among adolescents especially among affluent groups, both in rural and urban areas. There is therefore a need to combat both under-nutrition and obesity.

There is a high correlation between the age at marriage, fertility management and family health with educational levels. The age at marriage for illiterate females is usually 15 years. It is noted that in India 30 per cent of adolescents in the age group of 15 to 19 years are married. In India most fertility occurs within marriage and the age at marriage is of paramount

⁵⁸ Data were taken from *India Country Paper for South Asian Conference for Adolescents* (1998) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

importance for fertility rates. According to the National Family and Household Survey India (1992-1993), 36 per cent of married adolescents in the age group of 13 to 16 and age group of 17 to 19 respectively were already mothers or were pregnant with their first child. There is a great need of contraceptive services as 27 per cent of adolescent girls did not have access to these services. The male female differential in mortality rate among adolescents is very noticeable. This is probably due to the lower nutritional status of girls, early marriage and high adolescent fertility often leading to maternal mortality.

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing two major programmes for adolescents using Integrated Child Development Services Infrastructure.⁵⁹ The Adolescent Girls Scheme, now renamed Kishori Shakti Yojana, focuses on school dropouts. It aims at improving the nutritional and health status of adolescent girls (11-18 years old), providing literacy and numeric skills through the non-formal system, training and equipping adolescent girls with home-based and vocational skills, and promoting awareness and encouraging them to marry after 18 years. The Balika Samridhi Yojana aims at delaying the age of marriage and finally eliminating child marriages.

The Department of Family Welfare through its Reproductive and Child Health Programme provides maternal care, including safe motherhood and nutrition facilities, prevention of unwanted pregnancies, safe abortion facilities to all women etc. Adolescents get subsumed under the general target group of women. However, the atmosphere and environment within which these services are provided are not conducive for adolescents. Besides there being an unwritten code denying services to unmarried adolescents, lack of privacy and confidentiality prevent adolescents from accessing these facilities. Unfortunately there is no mention of adolescent boys in the Reproductive and Child Health Programme.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports set up an Adolescent Cell in January 2005 to facilitate effective management of the Adolescent Development and Empowerment Scheme of the Ministry and to operationalize the United Nations Population Fund supported project on adolescent health and development. The project focuses on:

- Strengthening capacity of the Ministry for implementing Adolescent Development and Empowerment Scheme
- Advocacy on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and life skills
- Capacity building of Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development⁶⁰, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan, National Service Scheme⁶¹ and NGOs for implementing adolescent health programmes using a life skills approach.

⁵⁹ Integrated Child Development Services, with its opportunities for early childhood development, seeks to reduce both socio-economic and gender inequities. This is aimed at breaking the intergenerational life cycle of nutritional disadvantage and providing a supportive environment for self-development.

⁶⁰ Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development is an autonomous organization of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports fully funded by the Government of India.

⁶¹ The National Service Scheme is an experiment in the academic framework. It inculcates the spirit of voluntary work among the students and teachers through sustained community interaction. Over the years it has emerged as the India's largest student-youth movement in linkage with the community.

Violence against girls and young women is a global phenomenon and India is no exception. Crimes are perpetuated both against adolescents and by adolescents. Several studies have revealed that the major causes of violence against adolescents are the social custom of dowry, low status of women and girls in society, false sense of superiority of adolescent boys and young men and the desire to show-off and take revenge.⁶²

In India, there is an appreciable surge in policy initiative in various concerned ministries and departments and the right policy environment exists at the national and state levels. NGOs have exhibited high levels of enthusiasm about youth health and development issues, especially sexuality, HIV/AIDS and STIs, and reproductive health. Several programs have been initiated in the public and NGO sectors. It is a good time to use the potential of these sectors to promote sexual and reproductive health among youth. Important recommendations are briefly outlined below:

- Strengthening the public health care system at all levels, particularly reproductive and child health services
- Promoting and strengthening inter-sectoral coordination at the policy and programme levels
- Developing a systematic and in-depth assessment of adolescents' health and developmental needs
- Networking with and involving NGOs to a much greater extent
- Providing mechanisms for resource mobilization for funding long-term youth health programs and interventions to ensure the sustainable flow of funds and program activities
- Developing interventions to modify various levels of school curricula to incorporate lessons on reproductive biology, sexual health, and contraception
- Involving parents in reproductive education and one-on-one and home-based counseling
- Activating youth forums at the village level
- Encouraging community involvement to mobilize youth, increasing the age of marriage, promoting the use of contraception, and implementing various programs aimed at adolescent health and development.

F. Youth employment

The Government of India has stressed the goal of increasing employment opportunities and eventually eradicating unemployment from the country. Awareness about the difficulties of eliminating unemployment has, over the past three decades, led the successive governments at both the central and state levels to formulate and implement schemes for promoting employment.

Despite high rates of economic growth for the last one decade, unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, remains one of India's biggest challenges. According to indirect estimates based on the National Sample Survey⁶³, almost 70 per cent of the persons on

⁶² See *Report of the Working Group on Adolescents for the Tenth Five Year Plan*, Planning Commission, Government of India.

⁶³For details, see National Sample Survey at http://mospi.nic.in/mospi_nssso_rept_pubn.htm

live registers of employment bureaus were in the age group of 15 to 24 years in 2004. Almost 72 per cent of unemployed youth in urban areas were looking for jobs for the first time. College-educated rural youth also seek work opportunities in urban areas. Factors such as accelerated population growth, lack of training for work, massive expansion of education, lower quality of education leading to lower employability of the educated have all contributed to the high rates of unemployment among young people. The problem has been recognized as part of the overall problem of employment creation or development⁶⁴.

The National Youth Policy, which was adopted in 2003, recognized the severity of the problem of youth unemployment. The policy explicitly recognized that “the most important component of the youth programme” has to be the removal of “unemployment - rural and urban, educated and uneducated”.⁶⁵ The Indian Government has taken steps to reduce youth unemployment both as a specific phenomenon and within the broader context of reducing general unemployment. Special employment schemes have aimed to improve the training, skills, capacities and job potential of young people and to promote self-employment and entrepreneurship. Such schemes include

- Efforts to re-orient the Indian educational system in the direction of vocational education
- Apprenticeship Training Scheme supported by legislation passed in 1961 and amended in 1973 and 1986
- Centrally sponsored Scheme of Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment since 1979
- Prime Minister’s Rozhar (Employment) Scheme since 1994.

Apart from these national schemes, several state governments have been operating self-employment schemes. Some of the schemes have been modified in the light of experience and the findings of evaluations undertaken by various agencies and institutions on behalf of the government.

While young people comprise 25 per cent of the labour force, 59.5 per cent of youth remain unemployed. Thus the youth unemployment rate is much higher than the general unemployment level in the world, which is about 13 per cent. The average annual increase in the youth labour force was around 1.3 million during the period 1991-1997 but it almost doubled to 2.4 million during 1997-2007.

As shown in table 5 the rate of unemployment increased in rural areas from 57 per 1000 in 1993-1994 to 71 per 1000 in 2004-2005 for males and from 39 per 1000 to 80 per 1000 for females during the same periods. It is also found that the rate of unemployment among youth was significantly higher in urban areas compared to rural areas (133 males in urban areas compared to 71 in rural areas and 207 females in urban areas compared to 80 in rural areas during 2004-2005). It is also found that women are more unemployed than men both in rural and urban areas and the disparity is strikingly high in urban areas.

⁶⁴ See *World Employment Report 1998/1999* by ILO.

⁶⁵ See <<http://www.yuva.nic.in/downloads/NATIONALYOUTHPOLICY2003.doc>>.

Table 5. Unemployment rate among the youth (15-24 years) per 1000 persons, India

Age groups and periods	Rural areas		Urban areas	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<u>1993-1994</u>				
15-19 years	47	33	134	168
20-24 years	67	45	139	277
15-24 years	57	39	137	223
<u>1999-2000</u>				
15-19 years	65	31	154	155
20-24 years	62	49	139	226
15-24 years	64	40	147	191
<u>2004-2005</u>				
15-19 years	79	67	140	156
20-24 years	62	93	125	258
15-24 years	71	80	133	207

Source: "Employment and unemployment situation in India 2004-2005", National Sample Survey 61st Round (July 2004-June 2005), Government of India

The high rates of youth unemployment need serious attention by policy makers not only to mitigate the frustrations faced by the new entrants into the workforce but also to minimize the likely alienation and widespread evidence of deviant behavior of the youth throughout the country. The unemployed youth have partly been responsible for the tensions leading to the "sons-of-the soil"⁶⁶ movements in different parts of the country and perhaps also the unrest in several of the border states of the country. Several schemes initiated by the Indian planners and policy-makers during the past several decades merit a careful scrutiny to assess and evaluate their impact on the employment situation.

The Indian trade unions have been quite effective in safeguarding the interests of their membership; but they have taken little interest in issues of promoting employment of the unemployed persons seeking work for the first time. The employers have been forced to participate in the efforts to raise the skills of the potential young workforce through training. Many employers recognize such activities to be in their own medium and long-term interest and help to identify the skills in short supply or those likely to become important in the years ahead. However, the scale of the problem is much larger than what the employers can grapple with and it needs a larger perspective.

The Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports provides financial assistance, under the scheme of Financial Assistance for Promotion of Youth Activities and Training, to the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations. It recognizes educational institutions,

⁶⁶ When groups that have a regional base face demographic pressure through internal migration, they become likely candidates for rebellion. These groups are called "sons of the soil" (Weiner 1978).

polytechnics including universities, regional centres of National Service Scheme and colleges having National Service Scheme units, Nehru Yuva Kendras, Bharat Scouts and Guides⁶⁷, Panchayati Raj Institutions⁶⁸ and NGOs, public trusts and non-profit making companies registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (Act XXI of 1860) or any corresponding state act, who have completed at least three years on the date of application for conducting the following programmes:

- Vocational training to
 - Prevent migration of the rural youth to cities by enabling them to realize that agriculture and other rural occupations are rewarding as those in urban areas
 - Create new skills among rural youth through which villages can become self-reliant
 - Inspire youth to set up their own training centres in their areas.
- Entrepreneurship development to
 - Promote among the youth an understanding of the process of entrepreneurship development
 - Equip the youth with the skills in designing and planning projects for enterprise development
 - Enable them to set up and successfully run micro-enterprises of their own in conformity with local skills and demands for goods and services
 - Help the unemployed youth with entrepreneurship and management skills.

There is a widespread recognition of the need to bring about a match between the demand for and supply of work opportunities. The Ministry of Labour runs nearly 900 employment bureaus throughout the country to provide vocational guidance and employment counseling. However, over the years, the number of persons registered with these bureaus each year has far exceeded the number of placements.

The special government schemes that have attempted to bridge the gap between education and employment through training and vocational guidance have been of uneven quality. Hence there is enormous potential for youth services to address the issue of youth unemployment. Given the large numbers of unemployed, it is not feasible for the youth service to directly provide employment to young people. However, the potential lies in training young people adequately and in providing stronger linkages with micro-finance facilities (for initial seed capital) and with the labour market (to provide avenues for private placement). Training for rural youth, who are typically excluded, and harnessing the potential of information technology sector to provide new opportunities are necessary steps to ensure that young people survive and grow in a changing economic environment.

G. Youth participation

Some of the significant schemes of the Government that promote youth participation are mentioned below:

⁶⁷ The Bharat Scouts and Guides is the national Scouting and Guiding association of India.

⁶⁸ Panchayati Raj Institutions are seen as tiers of self governance below the level of states in India.

National Service Scheme (NSS)

Launched in the Mahatma Gandhi birth centenary year 1969, as a student youth service programme, NSS aims at arousing social consciousness of the youth with an overall objective of personality development of the students through community service spanned over a period of two years. It is guided by the motto “Not me, but you”. NSS attempts to establish meaningful linkages between campus and community (colleges and villages), and knowledge and action. Its programme comprises special camp (10 days) and community work (120 hours in a year).

Activities undertaken as part of community work include:

- Improvement of campuses
- Tree plantation
- Constructive work in adopted villages and slums
- Work in welfare institutions
- Blood donation
- Adult and non-formal education
- Health, nutrition, family welfare, AIDS awareness campaigns
- Construction of durable assets
- Sustainable development with emphasis on wasteland development and watershed management.

One NSS unit consists of 100 student volunteers led by a teacher in-charge called “NSS Programme Officer”. Currently it has more than 2.4 million student volunteers on its roll spread over 198 universities and 41 senior secondary councils and directorate of vocational education covering more than 10,313 institutes/colleges of higher education and 7,542 senior secondary schools all over the country.

National Service Volunteer Scheme (NSVS)

The objective of this Scheme is to provide opportunities to students who have completed graduation to involve themselves in nation-building activities for a specific period (one or two years) on a full time basis. Each of the volunteer is paid a monthly stipend. NSVS gives intense training on induction, which primarily focuses on personality development, public speaking, positive thinking and a basic capsule of event management so that participants can organize small campaigns and awareness programmes. Subsequently they are given refresher courses. The number of national service volunteers sanctioned by the Ministry during the year 2005-2006 was 5,300.

Bharat Scouts and Guides

Began well before independence, Bharat Scouts and Guides opens up an opportunity to young boys and girls to build their character and inculcates in them a spirit of patriotism, social service and communal harmony. It also promotes endeavors for their all round development to make them responsible citizens of the country. It is one of the largest voluntary bodies in India

with nearly 3.2 million as its members. It is an apolitical and educational organization that aims at:

- Community-building
- Self-development
- Character development and education

Nearly 80 per cent of scouts (referring to boys), and guides (referring to girls) units are affiliated to educational institutions, with the faculty involved as trainers. Each state has scout and guide associations that are further divided into district-level and regional associations.

Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghatana (NYKS)

The 25th anniversary of India's independence in 1972 provided the impetus for the launch of the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghatana. This Scheme provides rural non-student youth with an opportunity to participate in the process of community and social development, as well as opportunities that were already available to urban and student youth through NSS and NSVS. NYKS is an autonomous body of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. NYKS has its presence in 500 districts of the country. It has become one of the largest grass-root level organizations in the country, catering to the needs of more than eight million non-students rural youth enrolled through about 230,000 village-based youth clubs. These youth clubs work in areas like education and training, awareness generation, skill development and self-employment, entrepreneurial development, thrift and cooperation, besides development of the body through sports and adventure and mind through sustained exposure to new ideas and development strategies. For implementation of the programmes, every district NYKS has a trained cadre of district youth coordinator, national service volunteers and youth leaders.

Rashtriya Sadbhavana Yojana

This came into effect from 1 April 2005, replacing the earlier National Reconstruction Crop Scheme. Under this scheme, 10 to 20 volunteers in each of 500 districts in the country, selected from amongst the rural sports club, youth development centres and Mahila Mandals, would be deployed for a period of one or two years at a monthly honorarium of Rs1000.

National Integration Scheme

This provides for greater exchange and understanding among young people belonging to different states and union territories of the country. Assistance is provided for youth programmes, which inculcate the spirit of national integration and communal harmony amongst the younger generation. Under the Scheme of Promotion of National Integration, assistance is provided to NGOs so as to involve them in the process of nation and community building.

The main programmes covered under this scheme are National Integration Camps and Inter-state Youth Exchange Programmes. National Integration Camps are held with the aim of forging a national cultural bond between various communities and regions. These camps

further seek to remove a sense of alienation from amongst youth and provide an opportunity for people belonging to north, south, west and east regions to intermingle. Inter-State Youth Exchange Programmes take student and non-student youth of one or more states to other states to understand and appreciate the diverse culture of India.

Sub-national and national youth festivals, youth exhibitions, leadership training, research, publications, symposia and seminars, celebration of National Youth Day, National Youth Award and National Adventure Award are also integral parts of the National Integration Scheme.

National youth festivals are held annually from 12 January to 16 January on a mega scale in one of the selected states to commemorate the birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda.⁶⁹ During this festival, youth from all over the country with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, converge on a single platform displaying a strong commitment to “Unity in Diversity”. Competitive and non-competitive events, cultural programmes, adventure performances, national youth conventions and other activities are organized during the festivals with a view to enabling every youth to display his/her skills and talents. The National Youth Day is celebrated on 12 January to focus on youth development and contributions to the country. National Youth Awards are conferred on youth and youth organizations for their outstanding work for the community.

H. Challenges

Young people in the age group of 13 to 35 years constitute the most vibrant and dynamic segment of India’s population. To optimally tap their potentials for national development, the Government of India pursues the twin objectives of personality-building and nation-building. Standardized programmes are not necessarily the most effective in a country with India’s ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. It is critical to meet the real needs of each youth community for programmes to be effective – these needs may differ markedly from one region to another, impeding the large-scale replicability of national programmes. It is important to support and build creative and decentralized youth service programmes that are community-led.

Young people have many needs – economic, educational, social and health. Programmes sometimes tend to address one need to the exclusion of other related needs, leading to ineffective outcomes. In a country like India, where complexities of poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation and lack of opportunities combine with a scarcity of resources, it is vital for programmes to understand the integrated nature of young people’s needs.

Multi-disciplinary dialogues and discussions on the ways and means of raising the capacity of the Indian society to confront and alleviate the problem of poverty and unemployment are urgently required to tackle the problems of youth.

⁶⁹ Swami Vivekananda (12 January 1863 – 4 July 1902), whose pre-monastic name was Narendranath Dutta, was one of the most famous and influential spiritual leaders of the philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga.

Effective youth programmes are those that meet the self-defined needs of youth, rather than perceived needs. Therefore, it is important to support initiatives that strengthen young people's voices, build youth leadership and role models, and those that enable young people to assert and demand their rights. Most national youth service programmes aim to inculcate among youth a sense of community service, rather than strengthen their work skills or generate employment for them. Creating employment and livelihood opportunities for young people is a priority as the youth unemployment rate in India is more than double the general unemployment rate. It may not be realistic to expect young people to serve the community without addressing their own needs. There is an urgent need to support quality training programmes, strengthen the linkages between education and employment, and encourage youth service programmes to generate livelihood options for youth.

A majority of unemployed youth are persons with no prior experience or new entrants into the workforce. The major challenge before the country is to improve the employability of the young people by training them adequately for productive work, by imparting to them marketable skills. Closer association between the private sector employers and educational institutions can help to minimize the gap between needs for and supply of skills.

The special schemes of the Government have not focused sufficiently on the problems and needs of the youth in the age group 15 to 24. In addition, the general tendency to underfund the programmes leads to compromises with quality. Failure to recognize fully the real costs of many of the planned activities largely explain the delays in the achievement of the goals relating to vocational education. However, the current accelerated rate of economic growth in the country could indeed generate pressures for enhancing the training of youth in skilled activities and thereby help to moderate, if not eliminate, the problem of their absorption in productive economic activities.

There is a need to promote gender awareness and gender equality in the implementation of youth service programmes. It is critical for youth programmes to become more gender-sensitive and to develop programmes that respond to the specific needs of young women and young men respectively.

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V. MALAYSIA⁷⁰

A. Introduction

The National Youth Development Policy of Malaysia defines youth as people aged between 15 and 40 years. It stipulates further that the main focus of youth development programmes and activities in the country should be young people aged between 18 to 25 years. The United Nations defines youth as persons aged between 15 and 24 years. For cross-country comparison and analysis, the youth data as presented in table 6 is confined to those who are between 15 and 24 years.

In 2005, there were 11.1 million people aged 15 to 40 years in Malaysia, an increase of 3.7 million since 1991.⁷¹ The majority of youth aged 15 to 24 years old (53.5 per cent) and 25 to 40 years old (56.5 per cent) lived in urban areas.⁷² There were equal proportions of males and females in both age groups in rural and urban areas. According to the *UN World Population Prospects*⁷³, the youth population (15-24 years) in the country is projected to increase to 18.5 per cent by 2015 and, afterwards, is expected to decrease to 16.3 per cent by 2025 as shown in table 6 below:

Table 6. Youth population (15-24 years) and its prospects in Malaysia, 2005-2025

Year	Total population (thousand)	Youth population (thousand)	Youth percentage in population
2005	25,347	4,594	18.1
2010	27,532	5,036	18.3
2015	29,558	5,473	18.5
2020	31,474	5,463	17.4
2025	33,223	5,402	16.3

Source: United Nations. *UN World Population Prospects*. [electronic version]. accessed on 4 April 2007 from <<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2004/wpp2004.htm>>

⁷⁰ Main references were drawn from *Youth in Malaysia* published by ESCAP in 2002, the *UNESCO Report (Case Study, Malaysia)* in 1999, and the *Country Report in the 2004 ILO Symposium* and other official sources.

⁷¹ Data were from Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010).

⁷² The data were from *Malaysia Population and Housing Census 2000* (see http://www.statistics.gov.my/english/frameset_census.php?file=pressdemo). The Census is conducted once in ten years. It contains the latest information on Malaysia population with age structure and regional distribution.

⁷³ See United Nations (2004).

B. Youth policy framework

The primary youth development policy and plan in Malaysia are the National Youth Development Policy of Malaysia and the Seventh Malaysian Plan. The National Youth Development Policy of Malaysia was first issued by the Cabinet in 1985 with the following objective: “To establish a holistic and harmonious Malaysian youth force imbued with strong spiritual and moral values, who are responsible, independent and patriotic; thus serving as a stimulus to the development and prosperity of the nation in consonance with Vision 2020”.

The National Youth Development Policy was revised and promulgated in 1997. The revision process involved all the main players in youth development work in the country, including the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS), the Malaysian Youth Council (MYC) and the National Youth Consultative Council (NYCC), which in turn engaged youth groups throughout the country in discussions. It is considered important to ensure that the monitoring process of the policy implementation includes the participation of young people and their views.

The National Youth Development Policy serves as a framework for the planning and implementation of youth programmes in the country. It includes six strategies:

- Enhancement of the knowledge base in various subjects to develop the competence of youth
- Inculcation of moral values and development of a positive and creative attitude in youth
- Equipping youth with state-of-art technical knowledge and vocational skills, as well as involving them in entrepreneurial activities in line with the demands of nation-building
- Engagement of youth in societal and voluntary activities that lead to a healthy, active and dynamic lifestyle that would nurture youth into responsible leaders of high caliber
- Encouragement of partnership and cooperation amongst government agencies, NGOs and the private sector for the benefit of youth development
- Encouragement of youth to further promote closer ties and networking with international communities.

The Seventh Malaysian Plan, adopted in 1996, was the country’s first development plan to include a specific chapter on youth. According to the Youth in Development Chapter of the Plan, the thrust of youth development would be to provide youth with the necessary skills to increase their participation and contribution to nation-building, as well as to develop their leadership qualities and inculcate positive values among them. Development programmes to be implemented as outlined in the Plan include:

- Provision of greater accessibility to youth through capacity building of existing educational and training facilities
- Implementation of distance education programmes in various tertiary institutions
- Enhancement of non-formal education
- Promotion of awareness on the importance of and opportunities for life-long education.

C. National youth coordinating body

Youth issues in Malaysia are addressed primarily by three major entities: NYCC, MOYS and MYC.

NYCC

National Youth Consultative Council (NYCC), founded in 1972, is the principal body responsible for youth policy formulation in Malaysia. Chaired by MOYS, the NYCC's membership consists of the following:

- Members of the Supreme Council of MYC
- Members of the MYC's Executive Committee
- Chairpersons of State Youth Consultative Councils
- 10 representatives from other federal government agencies
- 10 experts appointed by MOYS
- Three resource persons on specific issues
- Senior officers of MOYS and Directors of State Youth and Sport Departments
- Joint Secretary and Director General of MOYS and Secretary General of the MYC

The objectives of NYCC are to:

- Monitor the implementation of the National Youth Development Policy
- Advise the Minister of Youth and Sports in formulating policies on issues related to youth development
- Act as a consultative and advisory body for youth organizations and the State Youth Consultative Councils
- Coordinate the planning and activities of all youth organizations and the State Youth Consultative Councils.

NYCC convenes twice a year to discuss reports submitted by the participating members as well as other topics of interest.

MOYS

The Ministry of Youth and Sports (MOYS) was established in 1964. Its main function is to contribute to the development of youth policy through its position as chair of NYCC, and to serve as the policy's key implementation body. The MOYS is directed by three members of the Parliament, viz a minister, a deputy minister and a parliament secretary. The two divisions of the Ministry include the Youth Division and Sports Division, each headed by a director general.

The Youth Division consists of the following departments:

- Skill Training Institutes (there are seven throughout the country.)
- Youth Economic Development Department
- Youth NGO Development Department
- Rakan Muda (Young Friends) Programme

At the state level, the MOYS is represented by the Director of the State Youth and Sports Department. District youth and sports officers are present at the local level.

MYC

Malaysian Youth Council (MYC) is a non-governmental voluntary organization which was formed in 1948. It plays an active role in monitoring the implementation of the National Youth Policy as well as in the policy formulation process through NYCC. The MYC is the sole coordinating body for youth and student organizations in Malaysia.

The objectives of MYC are:

- Upholding and strengthening the voluntary and democratic principles in the youth movement
- Making representations and recommendations to the Government, statutory bodies or other appropriate bodies on matters affecting youth
- Establishing and maintaining relations with other national and international youth councils and organizations
- Promoting international respect, inter-communal understanding, cooperation and harmony through youth work
- Promoting and encouraging interest in the moral, intellectual and physical development of youth in the country among interest groups.

MYC is affiliated with the World Assembly of Youth and the representatives of MYC serve as the President of the Asian Youth Council and the Chairperson of the Committee for ASEAN Youth Cooperation.

D. Youth education

Malaysia's national education policy has been formulated in the context of the country's vision of reaching developed nation status by 2020. The education system has been reformed to ensure the development of a highly educated and skilled as well as strongly motivated professional workforce. In keeping with its objective of providing highly skilled human resources necessary for the development of the nation, the Government has accorded high priority to education. The Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010) allocated RM 50.6 billion⁷⁴ over five years to the education and training, an increase of RM 39.5 billion from the Seventh Five Year Plan (1995-2000).⁷⁵

The Government's attempts to make the Malaysian education system increasingly market-centred have been facilitated by the promulgation of several bills. These include the Education Act, 1996; the National Council on Higher Education Institutions Act, 1996; the Private Higher Education Institutions Act, 1996; the National Accreditation Board Act, 1996;

⁷⁴ MR refers to Ringgit Malaysia, the currency of Malaysia. 1 MR equals 0.3 US\$.

⁷⁵ Data for the Ninth Five Year Plan were from "Higher education key to developed status: Malaysia" IslamOnline.net at < <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news.php?id=29164>>. Data for the Seventh Five Year Plan were from ESCAP (2002), p.1.

the Universities and University Colleges (Amendment) Act, 1996; and the National Higher Education Fund Board Act, 1997.

The national education system, as stipulated in the Education Act of 1996, encompasses pre-school, primary, secondary, post-secondary and higher education. Pre-school consists of one to two years and primary school comprises grades one to six. Secondary school is divided into two levels: lower secondary, which lasts for three years (four years in the case of students who take a Remove Class⁷⁶); and upper-secondary, which is two years in duration. Post-secondary school lasts for two years and prepares students for higher education in colleges, polytechnics, universities and other institutions of higher learning. The national education system has three categories of educational institutions: those established and maintained by the Ministry of Education; those that receive financial aid from the Government; and those that are established and maintained by private organizations.

In 2005, the net enrolment of children in primary schools was 91.7 per cent. Enrolment rate of girls is equal to that of boys. Literacy rate among the young is largely universal.⁷⁷ Malaysia has been successful in ensuring primary education for its young citizens. The policy of the Ministry of Education extends free access to 11 years of basic education to all and therefore high transition rates from primary to secondary education is observed in Malaysia.

Issues of equity and increased access to education, however, need to be addressed beyond the primary level, the only level wherein universal education has been achieved. The net secondary school enrolment rate was 71 per cent for male and 81 per cent for female in 2005.⁷⁸ Of the remaining youth eligible for secondary education, some have dropped out while others have chosen to continue their studies at either religious or private Chinese schools. The major barriers against universal access to secondary school education include lack of funds and lack of qualification for relevant examinations due to poor grades. Secondary school education in Malaysia is free but not compulsory. The facilities and teaching staff among schools located in the urban and industrialized states have benefited more from such reforms than the schools located in the rural and remote areas. The challenge here is to afford high quality secondary school education to all youth in Malaysia.

The Education for All 2000 Assessment for Malaysia found a high level of literacy among those aged 15 years and above throughout the country. Improvements in literacy level can be attributed to increased participation and retention rates in primary education as well as the effect of government programmes to expand literacy. Among the efforts to reduce adult literacy is the implementation of the adult functional literacy and the reading habit promotion programme (Gerakan Membaca) which is specifically designed to meet the needs of lower income groups. There are neither age limits nor restrictions based on gender for entrance into these programmes. However a considerable difference in literacy rates exists among various

⁷⁶ A Remove Class is a preparatory year prior to universities for those students who have not undergone schooling in the national language. Students who have studied in Chinese and Tamil schools, for example, often take a Remove Class before entering universities.

⁷⁷ See UNICEF at <http://www.unicef.org/malaysia/children_4160.html>.

⁷⁸ See UNICEF at <http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/malaysia_statistics.html>.

ethnic groups and among various states in the country. Non-Malaysian citizens, particularly the migrant workers, have relatively lower literacy rates than those of Malaysian citizens.

Unemployed and out-of-school youth can attend skills training centres that have been set up to meet their needs. These centres, which are managed by various government agencies, provide formal and non-formal training to both youth and adults between the ages of 15 and 40 years whose education ranges from primary to tertiary level. The centres conduct training courses with the aim of imparting technical know-how to the participants in order that they may qualify for employment in various industries or initiate their own businesses. Activities under the Adult Education Programme include work-oriented classes for women in technical fields traditionally dominated by men including crop production, animal rearing, aquaculture and other new vocational skills.

A study report of “Education trends in perspective - Analysis of the World Education Indicators, 2005 Edition, UNESCO/OECD” tracks demand for primary to tertiary levels of education between 1995 and 2003 and then analyses the policy choices made by 19 middle-income countries including Malaysia.⁷⁹ It was found in the report, while declining birth rates meant that population pressure on basic education systems had decreased or even disappeared since 1995, secondary and tertiary school-age populations were still growing in most of these countries. These students and their families were generally aspiring to higher levels of education and were increasingly able to pay for it. The most spectacular growth occurred at tertiary level. The number of students in higher education almost tripled in Malaysia. Every third person enters university in Malaysia. Between 1995 and 2003 university enrolment numbers increased in Malaysia from 227,689 to 632,309.

In March 1998, all public universities were incorporated with the objective of providing these institutions with greater autonomy in management and operations as well as increased flexibility in the recruitment and remuneration of teaching staff. Newly incorporated institutions were allowed to seek funding from external sources based on business plans approved by the Government.

In 2007, a sum of RM 33.4 billion is allocated to education. The highest proportion of the education budget was given to tertiary education (31.1 per cent), followed by training programmes (30.2 per cent), secondary education (18.6 per cent) and primary education (20.1 per cent).⁸⁰

The quality of education has been influenced by the teacher-student ratio in primary and secondary schools. The primary school student-teacher ratio improved from 27.3 to 18.7 students for every teacher between 1980 and 1998. Similarly, the student-teacher ratio for

⁷⁹ The World Education Indicators Programme is a joint UIS (UNESCO Institute for Statistics)-OECD collaboration that develops policy-relevant education indicators with national coordinators from 19 middle-income countries that comprise over 70 per cent of the world's population. Participating countries are: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Malaysia, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia, Uruguay and Zimbabwe. For details, see <http://www.uis.unesco.org/ev_en.php?ID=5263_201&ID2=DO_TOPIC>.

⁸⁰ See Education in Malaysia at <<http://educationmalaysia.blogspot.com/2006/09/budget-2007-i-education-training.html>>

secondary schools improved from 22.5 to 18.5 students for every teacher during the same period. However, there is widespread opinion that students in the country are simply taught to answer questions and are not encouraged to think. Hence there is a need to foster a sense of dialogue which promotes creativity and allows for a vision of youth as innovators of new ideas.

As part of the effort to improve the quality of education, the Ministry has initiated the Smart School Programme to produce a new generation of IT-literate Malaysians who are creative and innovative, adept in new technologies, and are able to access and manage information. Schools and universities are taking up the challenge of globalization by adjusting their curricula and programmes as well as their delivery systems. In an effort to attain developed nation status by 2020, the Malaysian Government has reoriented the education system in the direction of science and technology. It has made significant advance in the area of higher education in keeping with the needs of its economy. IT has been introduced into the school curricula. Enrolment in the fields of science and technology has increased in recent years. Investment in tertiary education has commanded the highest proportion of the national budget for education. However, efforts are still required to ensure that investment in high technology education benefits the whole educational system and not only a privileged few.

E. Youth health⁸¹

The National Health Policy in Malaysia adopted in 2001 includes youth as part of the general population. But there is no youth-specific health policy yet in the country. The Government's primary aim in the area of health is to ensure that all individuals attain and maintain a health status that will enable them to pursue a socially and economically productive life.

In 1997, mortality of young people aged 15 to 40 years accounted for 13 per cent of all deaths in the country. Young people between the ages of 15 to 24 years made up 4.5 per cent of the total deaths. In that age group, the ratio of male deaths to female deaths was 3.5 to 1. This sex ratio decreased slightly to 2.5 to 1 among youth aged 25 to 40 years. The major causes of death among youth in Malaysia can be grouped into two categories: medically certified or inspected causes and uncertified causes. In 1997, among medically certified deaths or inspected causes, the five most prevalent causes of death among youth aged 15 to 24 years were accidents and adverse effects, violence, disease of the circulatory system, infectious and parasitic diseases, and malignant neoplasm. It is important to note that the primary causes of youth mortality differed significantly from the mortality pattern of the general population.

Each year, more than 10,000 adolescent girls in Malaysia get pregnant and give birth, subjecting themselves to the health risks accompanying such births. The Malaysian Department of Statistics reported that child birth by mothers aged 15 to 19 years had declined from 10.8 per cent in 1966 to 4.7 per cent in 1984. In 1990, this went down further to 3.4 per cent, numbering 13,566. In 1996, the corresponding number of births totaled 13,274 making up 3.1 per cent of the total live births for the year.⁸²

⁸¹ Data in this section were mainly based on *Malaysia Population and Housing Census 2000*.

⁸² See Mary Huang Soo Lee (1999).

In the two decades since the first HIV/AIDS case was reported in Malaysia, the number of new cases has risen exponentially. By the end of 2004, roughly 64,000 Malaysians were reported as infected with HIV, of whom some 9,400 had developed AIDS.⁸³ No youth-specific data on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are available. With regard to HIV and AIDS, youth have been the most affected. The Ministry of Health reported that those aged 20 to 29 and aged 30 to 39 years accounted for 39.3 per cent and 43.1 per cent of all HIV cases and 21.9 per cent and 43.9 per cent of all AIDS cases respectively. Between 1987 and 1998, there was a rapid increase in the number of infections among the young. In 1990, 364 cases were detected in the 20 to 29 year age group, but only eight among those aged 13 to 19 years. By 1998, 1,861 were diagnosed to be positive with HIV/AIDS in the 20 to 29 year age group, while 67 were detected among the 13 to 19 year age group. It has been reported that 82.4 per cent of all people living with HIV and 75.8 per cent of those living with AIDS are aged 20 to 39 years. And they are unlikely to seek help voluntarily. While knowledge on HIV/AIDS transmission among the youth was found high in a series of focus group discussion and interviews, tolerance and compassion for people living with HIV/AIDS was found considerably low. Youth were generally uncomfortable with the idea of sex education in schools.

Substance abuse is a pressing concern among youth in Malaysia, as 93.7 per cent of substance abusers are below the age of 40 years.⁸⁴ Drug addiction among youths continued to increase from 24,940 cases in 2001 to 41,684 cases in 2005. The use of contaminated needles has been the primary cause for the spread of HIV/AIDS among the youth population. Although the majority of drug users are youth, they constituted only 1.5 per cent of those who were under treatment. Most of them had not sought treatment. Recognizing the seriousness of drug addiction and the correlation of drugs to social problems and crimes, preventive and rehabilitative programmes have been implemented by various government agencies and NGOs to address social problems among youths such as loafing, gangsterism, violence, bullying, substance abuse, indiscipline and other undesirable behaviour. This included the establishment of a Special Cabinet Committee on Eradication of Drugs to ensure efficient coordination and implementation of drug eradication efforts. Awareness campaigns and exhibitions have also been carried out to enhance public cooperation in reducing drug problems particularly among youths and students. These included the *Belia Benci Dadah* campaign organized by the Ministry of Youth and Sports in cooperation with youth associations and the *Say No to Drugs Campaign*, which is undertaken in primary and secondary schools. Voluntary bodies such as *Persatuan Pencegahan Dadah Malaysia* and *Persatuan Bekas-Bekas Penagih Malaysia* also play a vital role in the rehabilitation of drug addicts by providing counselling and spiritual guidance.

Sexual and reproductive health is an important issue among the youth. There is a need for sex education and counseling in schools, as well as in health programmes targeting out-of-school youth, as there is evidence that many of the youth in Malaysia are sexually active and lack accurate information to protect them. This seems to be particularly true among young males. Young people seldom seek advice from health personnel due to cultural norms that

⁸³ See UNAIDS at

<<http://www.youand aids.org/Asia%20Pacific%20at%20a%20Glance/Malaysia/index.asp#HIVSituation>>

⁸⁴ See UNESCO Bangkok Office webpage at

<www.unescobkk.org/fileadmin/user_upload/arsh/Country_Profiles/Malaysia/Chapter_6.pdf>.

inhibit youth from openly speaking about sex. This situation points to the need for efforts to increase information dissemination, alter attitudes and increase access to youth-friendly, confidential, and affordable health services for youth throughout the country. This may require the re-training of medical staff in the area of youth relations. Youth-specific data on contraceptive prevalence rate as well as on STDs needs to be collected in order to plan and implement effective programming.

Youth have benefited from Malaysia's overall advancement in the health sector, yet their specific health needs have not been adequately addressed in the national health policy. Age disaggregated data in the area of health is still unavailable and the existing data demonstrate a clear need for a national youth-specific health policy in Malaysia. Youth have health needs that are different from the general population due to various physical and behavioural changes that occur during adolescence. Thus, health policy and programmes need to be age-specific in order to be more effective.

Programmes for youth relating to all aspects of health education and information need to be further strengthened. There is also a need to strengthen the family institution in order to foster an environment that is supportive to youth. This entails improved family relations, open communication and increased interaction and time spent between parents and children.

A youth health policy is urgently needed in Malaysia which takes into account the health needs of both male and female youth. Although most health data are not age-disaggregated in the country, the available information suggests that health concerns of youth are significantly different from those of adults or children. For example, the leading causes of death among youth are accidents and violence. Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of people living with HIV/AIDS as well as those who abuse substances are youth. A national youth health policy therefore is required for the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS among the young population. Substance abuse, particularly injected drug use, should be addressed in an open manner, both in order to curb HIV/AIDS transmission and to offset the deleterious effects of drug use.

F. Youth employment

In Malaysia, several laws have been enacted to ensure that workers enjoy a decent standard of living and secure employment and livelihood. Youth workers are protected by the same laws as all other workers. Additionally they are guarded by the Children and Young Persons (Employment) Act, 1966. The Ministry of Education, Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Labour are the key government agencies concerned with employment in Malaysia. Youth as part of the labour force are included under the target group for employment initiatives, although no youth-specific employment programmes yet exist.

The vulnerability of youth in the employment sector was particularly evident during the economic downturn when Malaysian GDP recorded a negative 7.5 per cent growth in 1998. As a result of the crisis, many companies were forced to cut costs and lay off their employees. Although no youth-specific data exist with regard to retrenchment, the majority of the retrenched employees were likely to have been youth as employees with the least seniority tend

to be dismissed first. Moreover, retrenchment compensation was likely to be less for the younger and less senior employees than for the older ones.

Training received 2.8 per cent of the total education budget in the Seventh National Plan. The majority of funds (88.9 per cent) of the training budget were allocated to industrial training. The increased public expenditure on industrial training reflects the shift of the economy towards capital-intensive and higher value-added activities which require an increasing supply of knowledge and skilled human resources to industry. There are on-going efforts to improve the quality of the workforce through retraining and skill-upgrading.

Programmes offered by the Ministry of Labour were noted by youth as good alternative for those who have difficulties finding employment. Increased programmes in education and career counseling were identified as important steps to increase the employability of the youth. Efforts are undertaken to encourage self-employment, particularly among the unemployed and the new job seekers, including recent graduates. A Graduate Entrepreneur Training Scheme was set up in 1998 to provide training in basic entrepreneurial skills, communication skills and personal development. Loans ranging from RM 20,000 to RM 100,000 are provided to those graduates interested in setting up their own businesses.

Based on the Labour Force Survey conducted by the Department of Statistics, Malaysia, the total number of youth aged 15 to 24 years employed for the year 2001, 2002, and 2003 were 1.9 million (89.5 per cent), 1.8 million (89.3 per cent), and 1.9 million (89.1 per cent) respectively. Overall, there has been parity among the employed male youths and female youths as illustrated by table 7:

Youth aged 15 to 24 years formed the highest proportion of the unemployed. In 1998, they formed 64.6 per cent of the total unemployed in the country. Table 8 illustrates the situation of youth unemployment. Youths who were unemployed totaled up to 226,200 (10.5 per cent), 228,000 (10.7 per cent), and 240,500 (10.9 per cent) for the year 2001, 2002, and 2003 respectively. Although the average rate of youth unemployment reached 10.0 per cent, the national unemployment rate remained below 4.0 per cent. For the year 2001 and 2002, the unemployment rate was 3.5 per cent which increased to 3.6 per cent in 2003. The percentage of male and female who were unemployed in 2003 was also 3.6 per cent in 2003.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ See *ILO Country Report*, 2004.

Table 7. Number and percentage of youth employment (15-24 years) by gender, Malaysia, 2001-2003

Details	2001			2002			2003		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Employed youths (Thousand persons)	1,933.1	1,143.8	789.3	1,893.8	1,118.5	775.3	1,971.3	1,156.2	815.2
Youth employment rate (%)	89.5	89.7	89.3	89.3	89.7	88.6	89.1	89.0	89.3

Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia, *Labour Force Survey (2001-2003)*,

Table 8. Number and percentage of youth unemployment by gender , Malaysia, 2001-2003

Details	2001			2002			2003		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Unemployed youths (thousand persons)	226.2	131.2	95.0	228.0	127.9	100.1	240.5	142.6	98.0
Youth unemployment Rate (%)	10.5	10.3	10.7	10.7	10.3	11.4	10.9	11.0	10.7

Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia, *Labour Force Survey (2001-2003)*,

In order to address unemployment in Malaysia, the Government has reversed its policy on the employment of foreign workers, once pursued due to shortage of labour in the country. In an effort to increase the utilization of local labour, the Government has introduced flexible working hours and formalized part-time work.

Table 9 reveals that the labour force participation rate for young males has always been much higher than those of young females. The labour force participation rate of young men decreased slightly from 2001 to 2003 while the rate for young women increased in the age group of 20 to 24 years.

Table 9. Labour force participation rate by gender, Malaysia, 2001-2003

Age group	Male			Female			Total		
	2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003	2001	2002	2003
15-19 years	31.0	28.3	29.7	20.6	19.4	18.5	25.8	23.9	24.2
20-24 years	83.1	81.0	81.1	60.7	59.4	61.8	72.0	70.3	71.6

Source: Department of Statistics, Malaysia, *Labour Force Survey (2001-2003)*,

The drop in the proportion of youth aged 15 to 19 years participating in the labour market can be attributed to longer years of schooling before entry into labour force, due to the increase in educational and training opportunities. The rise in female labour force participation for the 20-24 age group was caused by an increase in demand for young female workers especially in manufacturing and the electronics sectors. In addition, young women have increasingly delayed marriage in order to enter the workforce.

As part of the youth employment strategy, emphasis was given to strengthening youth capability in leadership, skill training and entrepreneurial development as well as instilling positive traits and right attitudes. The Government is currently taking concrete steps to upgrade the overall labour market information system in order to more effectively meet the growing needs for such information. Improvements are also undertaken with respect to institutional coordination, streamlining of data production and continuous inventory of user needs.

There are two areas that the Government gives great attention to in order to improve the youth employability. The first area is skill training. The training and acquisition of skills among workers is introduced as a life-long process in order to provide the opportunity for more people, including youth, to participate in skills training to meet the demand for skilled human resources. Various skills training institutes such as Institut Kemahiran Belia Negara, Institut Latihan Perindustrian and Pusat Giat MARA provided training to 246,030 youths between 2000 and 2005. Of this total, 137,940 youths were trained at diploma and certificate level. Through the non-institutional training, 108,090 youths received training. Besides institutional and non-institutional trainings, private training institutions also offered a wide range of skill courses for youths. These courses, which included production technology and ICT, ranged from basic

to advanced level. During the same period, 130,000 youths were trained by private skills training institutes.

The second area is entrepreneurial development programmes, which were carried out to nurture the entrepreneurial potential of youths and to enable them to participate actively in business enterprises as well as promote self-employment. Towards this end, Majlis Amanah Rakyat⁸⁶ and training institutes such as Institut Keusahawanan Belia Negara conducted training, seminars and short courses as well as provided advisory services to young and new entrepreneurs. A total of 79,740 youths benefited from these programmes at the state and district levels between 2000 and 2005. Measures were also undertaken to inculcate the spirit and culture of entrepreneurship among students in schools and institutions of higher education Under the Program Pembangunan Usahasiswa, a total of 32,470 students in public institutions of higher education participated in various business activities such as Kelab Keusahawanan Desasiswa and Pasar Pelajar.

Despite of these achievements, there is a need for a youth-specific employment policy that addresses the concerns of young workers. Policies to safeguard the employment rights of young workers should be mainstreamed into the National Youth Development Policy alongside its objective of preparing youth with up-to-date technological, technical and vocational skills as well as through entrepreneurial activities.

G. Youth participation

Youths are encouraged to participate in youth associations to enable them to be involved in the decision making process. The number of youth associations increased from 5,500 in 2000 to 8,000 in 2005, while their membership increased from 2.2 million to 2.8 million during the same period. However, this represented only 26 per cent of the total youth population in the 15 to 40 age group, indicating the need to encourage greater participation of youths in these associations.⁸⁷ To enable effective planning and management of youth development programmes, the membership of the National Youth Consultative Council was broadened in 2004.

The low level of youth participation has a historical reason. Youth in Malaysia had a tradition of active participation in all aspects of public life including politics. Following the students' involvement in socialist movements and in public demonstrations during the late 1960s and the mid 1970s, youth participation was curtailed with the introduction of the Universities and University Colleges Act of 1971, which remains in effect today. The Act bans students from holding political office in organizations outside the university such as trade unions and political parties. The curtailment of youth activities as a result of this Act has significant implications for the development of youth capacity in labour, educational, social and political participation.

⁸⁶ Majlis Amanah Rakyat, an agency under the Ministry of Entrepreneur and Cooperative Development, is a Malaysian Government agency established to promote the participation of Bumiputeras, particularly those in the rural areas, in commercial and industrial activities.

⁸⁷ Data were from Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006-2010).

While student political activism has been curtailed, non-student youth still play an active role in politics and are free to join the various political parties. Almost all political parties in the country have youth wings, which are seen as the birthplace of future political leaders. In some of the major political parties, especially those that constitute the Government, the youth wings have developed into pressure groups. Their opinion and stance on political, economic and social issues are made known and their suggestions are often incorporated in the process of decision making or drafting legislation.

The majority of the youth organizations in Malaysia fall under the umbrella of the MYC, which is a non-profit voluntary organization. The MYC comprises of 35 national and state youth-affiliated organizations, including student organizations, socio-economic organizations, religious organizations, uniformed organizations and state youth councils.

At the national level, there are two registered organizations: the National Union of Malaysian Muslim Students, which holds motivational and tutoring classes for students; and the Peninsular Malaysia Malay Students Foundation, which assists Malay students in pursuing academic excellence. At the informal level, there is the Barisan Bersatu Pelajar Malaysia, which is a national network of student unions and a network of campus Muslim students associations.

Strengthening youth participation in Malaysia requires that youth plays an active role in civil society. MYC has called for the formation of a civil society network in order to improve governance and to enhance youth participation within it. To date, efforts in this direction have been successful to the extent that seven NGOs have confirmed their participation in the network. Major programmes that promote youth participation in all areas of public life include the following:

Leadership training

In line with the objective of moulding a generation of dynamic youths imbued with qualities such as discipline, positive values and good ethics, leadership training programmes were conducted at the national, state and district levels. Between 2000 and 2005, a total of 380,090 youths participated in leadership training programmes at the various youth skills training institutes. Schools and institutions of higher education continued to provide leadership training programmes covering aspects such as communication skills, negotiation skills, social interaction techniques and other aspects of character building. These programmes were also provided to youths in rural areas including those in land development schemes. A total of 24,500 rural youths participated in leadership training programmes organized by the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development, the Federal Land Development Authority as well as the Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industries.

Rakan Muda Programme

Vision Rakan Muda means “a new vision for the youth”, a part of the development of Vision 2020, Malaysia's blueprint for social and economic development

for the country. The Rakan Muda programme aims at giving the country's youths a direction and helping them gain strength and confidence to face future challenges. As a physical entity, Rakan Muda is an all-encompassing, innovative youth focal point - the first and biggest of its kind in the country. It has 10 lifestyle programmes that have strong youth-appeal including sports, martial arts, environment, culture and arts, innovations, entrepreneurship, physical fitness, community service, recreation and uniformed corps. These programmes were designed to channel the energies of our young people towards healthy, productive and interesting activities.

Program Latihan Khidmat Negara

To instill the spirit of national unity and patriotism among youths, the Program Latihan Khidmat Negara was implemented in 2003. The three month programme aimed at moulding Malaysian youths of all races into the future generation of leaders with sound values and strong character. The training modules covered areas such as physical fitness and endurance, their roles and responsibilities in nation building, essentials of good citizenship and accountability with emphasis on character building. At the end of 2005, 135,700 youths were trained at 76 training camps established nationwide.

Although these government-imitated programmes exist, youth lacked knowledge about government programmes targeted specifically at youth. This could be a reflection of a need to increase dissemination about youth development initiatives among them. Youth participation in Malaysian civil society, although active, is still limited. Efforts to promote youth representation in governmental bodies and NGOs are underway through the efforts of groups such as the Malaysian Youth Council, trade unions, civil service unions, women's groups and professional bodies.

Youth consider ineffective bureaucracy as a barrier to their participation and feel that they are rarely taken seriously by older people. The integration of youth participation at all levels of civil society organizations would strengthen youth leadership skills and experience. Furthermore, civil society organizations stand to benefit from the ideas, creativity and initiatives of young people, especially in areas of major concern to them.

H. Challenges

The enactment of the National Youth Development Policy in 1997 which is a significant achievement in the area of youth development in Malaysia, serves as a framework for strengthened planning, implementation and evaluation of youth development programmes in the country. The Action Plan currently contained within the policy sets the general direction for future action. However, programmes and further detailed action plans, with set timeframes and monitoring indicators are needed to accelerate the effective implementation of the policy and achieve the policy's stated goals.

The inclusion of the youth chapter in the Eighth National Plan (2001-2005) and Ninth National Plan (2006-2010) as well as the budget increase designated for youth from RM 1.05 billion to RM 5.3 billion from the Eight Plan to the Ninth Plan,

demonstrate the Government's commitment to youth development. However, the monitoring of the plans and programmes is important to track the ability of these initiatives to improve the economic, educational and health status of the youth.

The disparities in equity, access to resources and the gender inequity in the country have had a significant impact on youth. The distribution of resources to ensure equitable development among youth particularly requires continued attention.

There is also a need to differentiate among groups which have benefited from the educational reforms and those which have not. Disparities in access to education are difficult to ascertain, however, since educational statistics are currently not disaggregated to reveal the gaps in the system (net enrolment rates, completion rates and drop-out rates, disaggregated by sex, age, region, and ethnicity). Lack of information in the area of education impedes planning and has negative consequences for poor and disadvantaged groups and those in less developed regions whose needs and risk being masked in the overall statistics.

More age-specific data need to be collected. Data should be gender disaggregated, as male and female youth experiences differ greatly.

Drug prevention strategies should focus on primary prevention, public education, community support and prevention of drug use in work place. Providing adequate skills-training to drug users in treatment centres and rehabilitation programmes, in cooperation with the community and potential employers, may help counter negative peer pressure and fight depression among drug users.

No youth-specific employment programmes exist in Malaysia. Training courses and other employment programmes that fall in line with the market demand for skills need to be developed and targeted at youth as they constitute the majority of the unemployed. Young women should be particularly targeted, especially those living in rural areas, as they form the highest proportion of the unemployed. Those who have lost their jobs in failing sectors may need re-training in order to secure gainful employment in the future. These youth are currently not targeted by government or private sector training programmes.

Programmes involving skills-training, business opportunities and entrepreneurship are needed to guard against future adverse effects of economic downturns on youth as well as to create a generation of youth who are independent and capable of developing successful careers.

A large number of knowledge-based workers will be required to ensure that the demand and the supply of human resources are matched and to help the government meet its objective of gradually moving towards knowledge-based economy.

Youth participation has been encouraged in many sectors in Malaysia with the exception of university students. As students are an important component of youth, legislation that restricts student activity in politics should be reconsidered.

Youth participation in Malaysian civil society, although active, is still limited. Efforts to promote youth representation in governmental bodies and NGOs need to be further supported to ensure their active participation.

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VI. REPUBLIC OF KOREA⁸⁸

A. Introduction

The total population of the Republic of Korea stood at 48,461,000 as of 1 July 2005. The youth population aged 9 to 24 years (as defined by the Korean Government) was 11,101,000, which accounted for 22.9 per cent of the whole population.⁸⁹ The gender ratio of female to male among the youth population was found to be 100 to 111, as of July 2004, according to the National Youth Commission.⁹⁰

The United Nations defines youth as persons between 15 and 24 years of age. For cross-country comparison and analysis, youth population data from the UN are used. It is projected that the percentage of youth aged 15 to 24 years will decrease from 14.5 per cent in 2005 to 13.6 per cent by 2010 and to 9.3 per cent by 2025 in Korea.

Table 10. Youth population (15-24 years) and its prospects in Korea, 2005-2025

Year	Total population (thousand)	Youth population (thousand)	Percentage of youth in total population
2005	47,817	6,952	14.5
2010	48,566	6,617	13.6
2015	49,092	6,454	13.1
2020	49,393	5,452	11.0
2025	49,457	4,612	9.3

Source: United Nations. *UN World Population Prospects*. [electronic version]. accessed on 4 April 2007 from <<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2004/wpp2004.htm>>.

B. Youth policy framework

Youth basic law

National youth policies are based on the Youth Basic Law which was officially announced on 31 December 1991 and came into effect on 1 January 1993. The Law regulates youth policies and basic principles of youth development. Prescribed in the Youth Basic Law are the responsibilities and duties of the nation and society for youth development. The Law includes training of youth leaders, setting up of facilities, development and execution of programs, and establishment of a development fund etc.

⁸⁸ The main references were drawn from the *Report of the National Youth Commission (2005-2006)*, the *WHO Report (Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents and Youths in Republic of Korea)* in 2005, the *National Report at the ILO Symposium* in 2004 and from other official sources.

⁸⁹ Korean National Statistical Office (2005).

⁹⁰ See the webpage of Korean National Youth Commission at <<http://youth.go.kr>>.

Youth activity promotion law

The Youth Activity Promotion Law was enacted on 9 February 2004 which provides articles that actively promote various youth activities. The main contents of this law include:

- Establishing youth activity support centres in local areas
- Introducing the Youth Activity Program Accreditation to systematically manage and support activities
- Establishing a policy for international youth exchange activities and creating and manage youth encounter centres
- Encouraging personal experience such as cultural activities, club activities and volunteering.

Youth welfare support law

The Youth Welfare Support Law was also enacted on 9 February 2004. It is a law that describes articles related to the improvement of youth welfare. Its purpose is to provide basic living expenses, medical expenses, extra-curricular and academic expenses, job training expenses and youth activity expenses for those who need special support in the areas stated above. The special features of this law are:

- Ensuring rights and eliminating discrimination against the young
- Showing special consideration towards the youth and issue identification cards for those aged 9 to 24 years
- Operating a certification system with physical examination and check-ups for non-school attending youth
- Giving help to youths who are not being protected by their guardians or others
- Providing professional counseling and education for misguided youths in order to help them adapt to school and to society.

Youth protection law and juvenile sex protection law

The Youth Protection Law was brought into force on 1 July 1997 to protect youths from hazardous environments. Its main content includes the regulation and punishment of persons for exposing youths to harmful media, harmful drugs, harmful business sites etc. The Juvenile Sex Protection Law which took effect on 1 July 2000 includes the protection of juveniles from sex offenders, punishment of those purchasing sex from juveniles, of those producing and/or distributing lewd material involving the young and of sexual offenders and the provision of rehabilitation and protection of sexually offended youth.

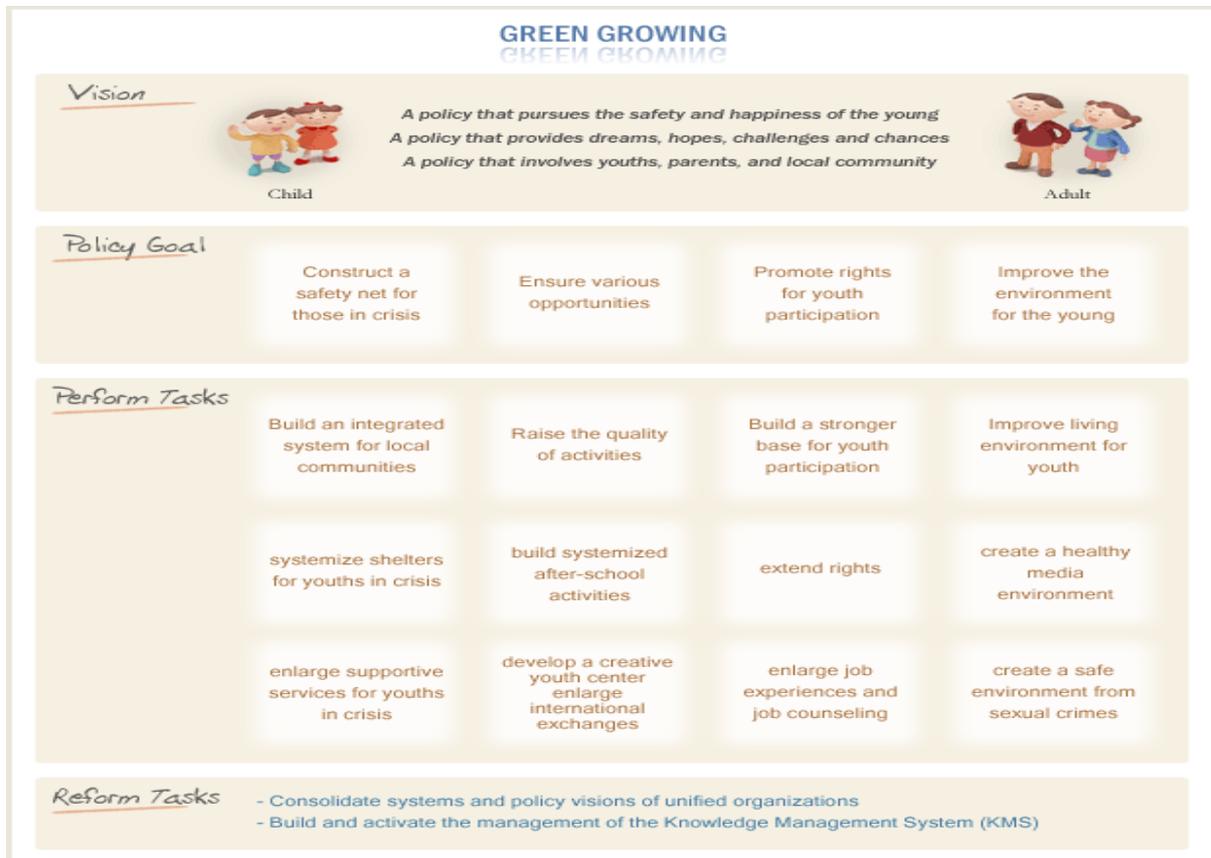
Establishment of new and unified youth policy

Until 2005, youth policies at the national level provided the basis for the formulation and execution of three successive five-year youth development plans. In 2005, youth policies were integrated as there was a need to unify various youth policies and develop a comprehensive national youth policy in the wake of the changes in the policy environment. The National Youth Commission has developed a new strategy and vision prior to the fourth five-year youth development plan (2008-2012). This new plan will be implemented nationally and by local governments. The National Youth Commission consults the head of each administration of the central government about youth related issues in order to construct its basic plan for youth development. In addition, the National Youth Commission holds the Presidential Youth Congress with the participation of young people as well as youth experts, in order to set policy tasks and evaluate existing policy tasks. The heads of local governments are required to develop annual plans for youth related matters and submit them to the National Youth Commission.

Direction of the new national youth policy

The current National Youth Policy is being implemented through the National Youth Commission since its inception in May 2005 and the promulgation of the “vision and perspectives of the newly integrated youth policy.” In the unified Youth Policy, youth is regarded as a core period in life in which a young person matures into an adult. This “green growing” is imbued as the vision of the National Youth Policy.

Figure 1. General concept of the newly unified youth policy and vision, Republic of Korea



Source: National Youth Commission, Republic of Korea (2006). *National Youth Commission Report: 2005-2006*

Youth welfare policy

Counseling

Young people today have complicated problems in general as a result of the interaction among individuals, homes, schools and societies. Government departments and youth organizations are providing youth with counseling services to propose methods of solving these problems and troubles. According to the department's specific functions, the Ministry of Human Resources and Education, National Youth Commission, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Ministry of Labour etc provide a variety of services such as executive agency support counseling, school counseling, civil and religious group counseling etc.

Under the provision of the Youth Basic Law, the National Youth Commission operates the Korean Youth Counseling Institute. In 1999, general youth counseling centres were built in 16 cities and provinces and youth counseling centres were built in

137 smaller cities, counties and districts. Youth counseling, information and consultation on youth problems for parents as well as diverse information for youth are provided through the youth counseling centres of local self-governing bodies.

Shelters for runaway youths

The main idea is to build crisis solving shelters and support systems in cooperation with local community organizations as there is a sudden increase of young people leaving home, school and other protected environments with a consequent crisis-exposure to dangerous environments, infringement of rights etc. The Korean National Police Agency estimates that 18,000 to 19,000 youth under the age of 19 runaway from home every year. Shelters for runaway youths started attracting the attention of the Government and the society in the early 1990's. As of 2004, there were 40 shelters for runaway youths nationally that are supported by the Government. The primary purpose of the shelters for runaway youths is to provide them with temporary protection and to help them return to their families and schools. The shelters also provide professional counseling services, life guidance and educational activities for the self-growth of the runaway youths, and emphasize preventive measures for potential runaway youths through on-the-street counseling and runaway prevention campaigns.

Youth study rooms and informal schools

Most youths living in low-income areas, due to relative poverty and social alienation, do not have opportunities to develop proper goals and values and often feel confused or lost. Therefore, youth study rooms are established in order to allow these young people to overcome their sense of social inferiority and alienation as well as carry out study guidance and counseling during periods of hardship. As of 2003, there were about 428 study rooms throughout the country.

In addition, young people who cannot attend formal schools due to difficult economic conditions are studying in the so-called “informal schools for non-acknowledged schooling” such as evening schools, self-support schools and Saemaul (New Village) schools. However, schooling at such schools is not acknowledged. Thus, not only do these schools suffer from financial difficulties, but they also see a yearly decrease in the number of students and teachers. The Government first began supporting informal schools in 1989. As of late 2003, the Government has been supporting 157 schools with management expenses and youth literacy activities.

Youth protection policies

Youth misdemeanor and juvenile delinquency

According to the Juvenile Law, misdemeanant youths are classified into juvenile delinquents, unlawful youths, and juveniles liable to committing crimes. Recently, the rate of repetition of offenses in juvenile delinquents has increased, the age of delinquents has decreased, and their crimes have become more brutal. As a result, the

paradigm has shifted from punishment to guidance. Various guidance programs have been provided to these youth to effectively deal with repeat offenders and to develop them into sound individuals. Police stations and youth guidance organizations nationwide have set up youth counseling centres to offer facilities to listen to the problems confronted by young people and pre-diagnose and solve the problems. In addition, a cyber counseling system using the Internet was introduced for youths who are familiar with computers so that they might have easy access to counseling. Furthermore, every police station manages crime prevention classes, in which police officers visit schools to provide preventive training on how youths can defend themselves from crime. In addition, to prevent the repetition of offenses by juvenile delinquents, every local police station, in cooperation with youth organizations such as the Korean Big Brother and Sister Union and the Korean Youth Support Association, operates "Caring Classes." Through these classes, they continue their efforts in preventing misdemeanor in youths and blocking their becoming adult criminals by carrying out self-reflection education of misdemeanant youths, juvenile delinquents and trouble-makers in middle and high schools.

Elimination of sexual crimes against children and youths

In September 2003, the Government established the Youth Centre with the purpose of providing an integrated one-stop service for youths at risk such as those abused at home or school, runaway youths, victims of sexual crimes, youths not protected at the workplace and youths with drug abuse issues. When young victims of the sex trade request immediate rescue, the Youth Centre, together with related organizations, saves them and provides temporary protection or refers them to the appropriate facility. It also offers special programs that support these youths to return to society, organizations and facilities that protect young victims of sexual crimes, and supports them with scholarships and vocational training.

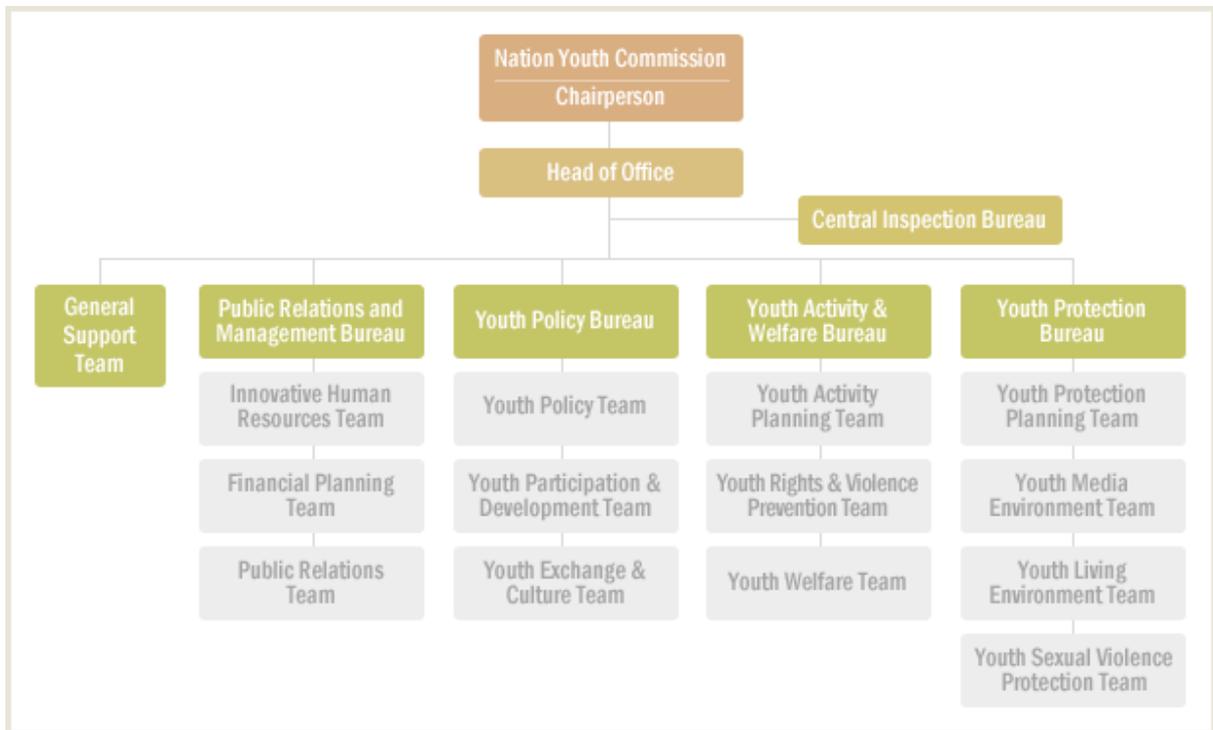
Furthermore, to support young victims more effectively and efficiently, the Youth Centre is in charge of various activities to develop a network between local NGOs, police and administrative offices that work for eliminating commercial sexual exploitation of children and women in every region. In 2004, a drop-in centre for immediate rescue and temporary protection of youth such as runaways and those seeking shelters from the sex trade was installed. The National Youth Commission intends to organize local district centres in the future to form a youth protection system network in every district and expand the services for young victims of prostitution. To eliminate youth sex trade that is becoming more serious, the National Youth Commission has been working together with NGOs and schools for continuous prevention, publicity and regulation activities. Particularly after the Anti-sex Trade Act took effect, control of sex trade in young people has been enforced. Meanwhile, with the enforcement of the Juvenile Sex Protection Act on 1 July 2000, a public disclosure system of those who commit sexual crimes against children and young people has been introduced. In addition, a policy that restricts sex offenders against children or youth from being employed in schools of all levels - kindergartens, after-school academies, shelters and child welfare facilities - for five years after their sentence.

The heads of about 100,000 schools, kindergartens, academies and training schools, shelters, child care facilities and child welfare facilities are required to check whether a newly hired employee has a record of sex crimes.

C. National youth coordinating body

The National Youth Commission is an organization which deals with the Republic of Korea's youth related policies. It is a governmental organization, set up in 2005, attached directly to the Office of the Prime Minister. It unites the previously divided youth policy faculties (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, National Youth Protection Commission, and Office of the Prime Minister)

Figure 2. Structure of National Youth Commission, Republic of Korea



Source: National Youth Commission, Republic of Korea (2006). *National Youth Commission Report: 2005-2006*

The National Youth Commission unites the previously divided system of “youth fostering” and “youth protection”. It develops and operates new policy paradigms that coincide with the changing environment of youth policies, and takes part in the national youth policy promotion. The main functions of the Commission are as follows:

- Achieving efficiency in activities related to youth development, welfare, protection etc
- Developing and operationalizing the basic plans of youth policies
- Activating youth participation and rights

- Promoting youth training, counseling and guidance activities
- Providing support and management for youth welfare and welfare facilities
- Investigating, research into and regulating harmful elements and the media
- Protecting youth from sexual crimes and support rehabilitation of the victims
- Handling reports and dealing with various harmful elements and harmful activities
- Nationally publicizing youth related issues and backing up related organizations and civil movement.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resources and 19 other related ministries are involved in Korea's youth related policies. When needed, a Council of Youth Related Agencies is created and operated. The Council performs tasks such as coordinating and adjusting activities of youth policy related organizations. The Chairperson of the National Youth Commission also becomes the Chairperson of the Council of Youth Related Agencies which has 15 members approximately. These members are civil service personnel from related departments.

There exists city and provincial youth departments in self-governing bodies of vast areas and county and district youth subsection in basic self-governing bodies. Youth affairs are dealt within these departments and subsections. The city and provincial youth departments are in charge of subjects related to the Local Youth Development Committee. They adjust youth related policies for self-governing bodies of wide areas, and promote diverse youth policies by connecting with the National Youth Commission. The county and district youth subsections deal with providing direct services for youth and supporting youth related facilities.

Aside from the governmental budget and local transferred funds, the central government has established Youth Development Fund to invest in youth policies. The Fund is composed of money donated by the Government, cash, goods and property donated by parties other than the Government, profits generated by the operation of the Fund, and other profits prescribed under the Presidential Decree. It is used for the activities of youth organizations such as construct and operate facilities, train leaders, support poor youths, facilitate exchange etc. According to the revised Youth Basic Law, 2004, the Youth Development Fund has a target of five trillion won⁹¹ to be raised and the money raised by the end of 2004 was 3,305 billion won. If necessary, local governments can develop their own youth development funds.

Based on the Youth Basic Law, the Presidential Youth Congress is an organization that deals with youth affairs, holds meetings to set the related agenda of the Government's youth policies and searches for solutions and plans. It was first opened in 2004 as a model congress, and is now institutionalized by being held annually. Local meetings are organized where youth related debates and cultural art events are held side by side. Agenda that are selected in these meetings are reported to the related executive agencies and are reflected in future policies.

⁹¹ Won is the currency for the Republic of Korea. 1 won equals 0.00109 U.S. dollars.

D. Youth education

Education in the Republic of Korea in the 1990s emphasized human education through the pursuit of quality education. Expanding the scope of mandatory education, widening the provision of secondary education services, and enlarging opportunities for higher education have all contributed to the fulfillment of personal goals and national development.⁹²

The Eighth National Five-year Plan for Economic and Social Development (1997-2001) focused on the future by producing well-equipped citizens by pursuing efficiency, enhancing independence, and expanding opportunities for education. Plans for educational reform were first announced on 31 May 1995 which successfully continues even to the present day.

The enrollment rate of students moving on to advanced schools has continuously increased (table 11). Elementary school students entering middle schools increased from 66.1 per cent to 95.8 per cent (1970-1980), and after 1985, the percentage rose to almost 100 per cent. Middle school students entering high schools were 70.1 per cent in 1970. It was increased to 90.7 per cent in 1985, and 95.7 per cent in 1990. The rate in 2004 was 99.7 per cent. High school students moving onto higher education was only 40.2 per cent in 1970. Again it was increased to 53.8 per cent in 1985, 72.8 per cent in 1995 and 89.3 per cent in 2004.⁹³

As table 12 illustrates, in 2004, the number of elementary school teachers was 157,407. The numbers of middle school teachers (101,719) and high school teachers (116,111) have increased since 2003. The number of students per teacher was 26.2 for elementary schools, 19.0 for middle schools and 15.0 for high schools. On the other hand, the absolute number of students per teacher in major cities and Gyeonggi Province was 30 to 33 in elementary schools and over 20 in middle schools, showing higher numbers compared to other areas and provinces. This figure shows that school classes in major cities and Gyeonggi Province are greatly oversized compared with rural areas.⁹⁴

⁹² Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development Website (2006)

⁹³ Data were from Statistical Yearbook of Education, Republic of Korea (2004).

⁹⁴ See MEHRD(2004).

Table 11. Entrance rate (percentage) in the Republic of Korea, selected years⁹⁵

Classification	Elementary school – middle school	Middle school – high school	High school – higher education	Vocational high school - higher education
1970	66.1	70.1	40.2	9.6
1975	77.2	74.7	41.5	8.8
1980	95.8	84.5	39.2	11.4
1985	99.2	90.7	53.8	13.3
1990	99.8	95.7	47.2	8.3
1995	99.9	98.5	72.8	19.2
1998	99.9	99.4	83.8	35.6
1999	99.9	99.4	84.5	38.5
2000	99.9	99.6	83.9	41.9
2001	99.9	99.6	85.3	44.9
2002	99.9	99.5	87.0	49.8
2003	99.9	99.7	90.2	57.6
2004	99.9	99.7	89.8	62.3

Source: Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development (MEHRD), Republic of Korea (2004). *Statistical Yearbook of Education*. Seoul: MEHRD

Table 12. Status of students per teacher in the Republic of Korea, 2001-2004 (in person)

Classification	Elementary school			Middle school			High school		
	Teacher	Student	Students per teacher	Teacher	Student	Students per teacher	Teacher	Student	Students per teacher
2001	142,715	4,089,429	28.7	93,385	1,831,152	19.6	104,314	1,911,173	18.3
2002	147,497	4,138,366	28.1	95,283	1,841,030	19.3	114,304	1,795,509	15.7
2003	154,075	4,175,626	27.9	99,717	1,854,641	18.6	115,829	1,766,529	15.3
2004	157,407	4,116,195	26.2	101,719	1,933,543	19.0	116,111	1,746,561	15.0

Source: MEHRD, Republic of Korea (2004). *Statistical Yearbook of Education*. Seoul: MEHRD

⁹⁵ Colleges, educational colleges, universities, and other schools are included in higher education.

The budget for education in 2003 was 206,934 trillion won, and the scale of educational finance including the internal income of city/province educational administration and education related budgets of other government organizations was 309,639 trillion won, which was about 4.3 per cent of GDP. The budget for education in 2005, based on general accounting, was 234,130 trillion won, or 17.8 per cent of the total budget of the Government of 1,315,000 trillion won. It was raised from 14.3 per cent in the year 2000.⁹⁶

Alongside these achievements in education, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development has identified many areas that should be further improved:

The decrease of school-age population, accompanied by income increase, has brought about a diversification and elevation of educational demand:

- The quality of university education has not quite matched with its growth of quantity. The Ministry recognizes this as an urgent task to tackle and has set measures to elevate the quality of higher education to global standards;
- A recent issue that has come to the surface is the widening educational gap between income levels and regions. Statistics of the first quarter of 2005 show that the educational investment of high-income households was approximately seven times higher than that of low-income facilities.

Opportunities for activities outside schools

This has been promoted to increase the quality of youth activities. A number of policies have been nurtured to increase the usage of youth facilities including

- Expansion of smaller, specialized and specific facilities that are suited to the actual circumstances of the community
- Maximization of the usage of libraries, museums, public facilities, cultural centres, after-school extra-curricular activities etc
- Strengthening of the safety of youth training centres.

A few examples are:

- Improving the quality of activity programs through “Youth Activity Program Accreditation”
- Expanding national facilities of professional training and job training
- Developing youth leaders' abilities through improvement of certificate systems
- Providing a one-stop national service for youth activities by developing and managing a “Youth Activity Portal Information Systems”.

Control of surroundings harmful to the young

The establishment of businesses such as bars and gambling shops near schools which may have an adverse impact on young people is regulated by law. However, harmful businesses are still around and young people are exposed without defense. The National Police Agency have organized joint control teams with 91,469 civilians and governmental officers and continuously regulate and/or remove the environment

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

harmful to youth. Despite the designation of absolute and relative clean-up areas and the efforts to cleanup harmful surroundings according to the School Health Act, businesses that promote youth deviation still exist in areas beyond the reach of the law. Due to the increasing prevalence of materialism and the absence of moral values during the adolescent period, young people are susceptible of being lured into pleasure-seeking. This is spreading and becoming a major social issue, as some youths take money from others and even resort to violence to meet the expenses for their various activities.

Promotion of measures against media harmful to youth

In order to protect young people from various adverse aspects of the Internet, such as the overflow of violent information, addiction and online crimes, the National Youth Commission set up the Cyber Youth Protection Comprehensive Measure in 2005 and has been working on this pending issue by forming a conference group with the Ministry of Information and Communication, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and other related ministries. With the development of the Internet, addiction has become a serious social issue. For the sound use of media, an education project on media has been promoted with the help of civil organizations from 1999, and as of 2005, about 80,000 youths received this education. In addition, starting in 2002, the development of teaching materials on media education has been accelerated and efforts are being made for the regular development of teaching materials once a year. In 2004, online education contents were developed and are being serviced through the National Youth Commission website.

E. Youth health

The Ministry of Health and Welfare is a primary organization which is in charge of youth health policy in the Republic of Korea. The Ministry published the Health Plan 2010 in 2002 in order to promote national health through health education, disease prevention, nutrition improvement, and healthy lifestyle practices. The overall objective of its plan is to increase the average life span of Koreans and secure the health equity for all people including youth in country. The Ministry emphasizes school health programmes to improve youth health and prevent social burden and dysfunction owing to acute and chronic diseases and unhealthy lifestyles.

Studies show that the physical build of Korean youth has improved. The amount of protein and vitamin C taken by the youth exceeded the recommended amount in 2001, though the intake of energy-producing nutrients was merely 89.3 per cent of the recommended quantity. Aside from muscular endurance, and cardiac and pulmonary endurance, all other performances of physical elements have increased. Therefore improvement of school and local communities' physical program for youth and the promotion of activities for physical fitness are urgently demanded.

The WHO Report on Sexual and Reproductive Health of Adolescents and Youths in the Republic of Korea⁹⁷ shows the situation and trends of youth reproductive health problems as enumerated below:

⁹⁷See World Health Organization (2005).

- Less than six per cent of adolescents have engaged in sexual intercourse.
- Of all sexually active middle school adolescents, only 23.2 per cent used contraceptives when they had sex. Also, 268 of the 611 female teenagers (44 per cent) in the study did not use contraceptives.
- In a study of middle school adolescents, 71.4 per cent of pregnant adolescents had an abortion.
- Most (87 per cent) doctors surveyed believed that the pregnant teenagers they treated did not have enough knowledge about sex.
- The most common sources of information about sex were the Internet, friends, and schools.
- The figures for adolescents' accessing pornographic websites in 2000 doubled from that of 1999. More than half (52.4 per cent) of the adolescents attending schools and 70.2 per cent of adolescents not attending schools logged on to pornographic websites.
- Currently, 10-hours of sex education is provided to adolescents per year in primary, middle, and high schools. Most adolescents did not think that the sex education they received was very effective or useful.
- Less than one per cent (0.7 per cent) of adolescents attending schools but 8.2 per cent of adolescents not attending schools were involved in prostitution. The notable fact is that 13.5 per cent of the students and 23.3 per cent of the non-students were propositioned, mostly from on-line chatting on the Internet.
- Adolescent attitudes towards sex have become more liberal. In one study, 608 subjects (21.5 per cent) agreed to sex before marriage and believed dating among adolescents should become more natural.

According to the 2003 Statistics of Causes of Death published by the National Statistical Office, in the case of males aged 10 to 24 years, the death rate per 100,000 people was 43.1 in car accidents, 26.4 by suicide, 7.7 by drowning, 3.1 by falling, 2.2 by fire, 2.2 by murder and 0.4 by drug addiction. For female youths, 14.3 died in car accidents, 18.5 by suicide, 3.5 by fire, 2.6 by murder, 1.0 by drowning, 0.8 by falling and 0.3 by drug addiction⁹⁸.

F. Youth employment

The youth employment policy in the Republic of Korea is addressed primarily by the Ministry of Labour. In the aspect of labour market supply, the Ministry set the goal of the policy to:

- Help youth to develop an outlook on work and work values through ongoing job counseling and guidance and on-site experience according to the educational backgrounds;
- Encourage university authorities to strive for the promotion of their students;
- Strengthen the vocational education and training system tailored to meet the employers' needs.

The Ministry also aims at improving labour market infrastructure in order to make youth accessible to labour market.

⁹⁸ See Korea National Statistical Office at <<http://www.nso.go.kr/eng2006/emain/index.html>>.

The most notable aspect of youth employment trend in the Republic of Korea is the impact of the financial crisis in late 1997 (see table 13). Due to the crisis, the labour market situation since 1998 has quickly deteriorated. After the financial crisis, many workers became unemployed as companies underwent restructuring and faced harsh business environments. As a result, the unemployment rate jumped from 2.6 per cent in 1997 to 7 per cent in 1998, and the youth unemployment rate from 5.7 per cent in 1997 to 12.2 per cent in 1998. In 2002, the unemployment rate of youths aged 15 to 29 years went down to 6.6 per cent, but increased again to 7.7 per cent in 2003 due to depressed domestic demands. This is more than two times the level of the overall unemployment rate (3.4 per cent), and the number of unemployed youths aged 15 to 29 years reached 383,000, accounting for 49.3 per cent of the total number of unemployed people (777,000).

The fundamental solution to the youth unemployment in the Republic of Korea would be to create new jobs in a sustainable manner by strengthening growth potential. It is essential to train workforce that meets industry requirements by strengthening industry-academia cooperation, establishing a system which guarantees smooth transition from school to work, and improve labour market infrastructures.

However, it takes a long time before these long-term measures can produce tangible results. Therefore, short-term measures are being implemented at the same time for youths so as not to lose their capability and motivation to work. Currently, the short-term measures to minimize factors hindering youth employment are being carried out in the country, such as actively providing jobs in the public sector while supporting job creation in the private sector, offering various opportunities for youths to have work experience, and strengthening vocational training and job referral services.

With regard to promotion of job experiences and job counseling, diverse experience-oriented job counseling programs such as youth business schools, activities such as starting a business games, business camps etc are being developed so that youths can move from school to work smoothly. Plans to offer places for youths with disabilities for an independent life, development of job training for youths who quit school education early and to strengthen their job abilities are under consideration.

Table 13. Youth employment trend in the Republic of Korea, 1996-2003

Details	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Number of youths (thousand)	11,743	11,724	11,651	11,461	11,243	10,952	10,651	10,368
Number of economically active youths (thousand)	5,685	5,671	5,387	5,264	5,281	5,203	5,140	4,989
Youth's economic activity participation rate (per cent)	48.4	48.4	46.2	45.9	47.0	47.5	48.3	48.1
Number of employed youths (thousand)	5,420	5,349	4,733	4,691	4,879	4,815	4,799	4,606
Youth unemployment rate (per cent)	4.6	5.7	12.2	10.9	7.6	7.5	6.6	7.7
Number of unemployed youths (thousand)	264	322	655	574	402	388	341	383
Total unemployment rate (per cent)	2.0	2.6	7.0	6.3	4.1	3.8	3.1	3.4
Total number of the unemployed (thousand)	435	568	1,490	1,374	913	845	708	777

Source: National Statistical Office, Republic of Korea (2004). *Economically Active Population Survey*. Seoul: NSO.

The Government of the Republic of Korea believes that the year 2008 will serve as the turning point in youth employment, as declining youth population driven by low fertility is expected to mitigate youth employment level. Therefore, the country will focus on resolving youth unemployment by 2008. To this end, the Government enacted the Special Act on Reducing Youth Unemployment in 2004, which will be enforced on a temporary basis until 2008. Also, the Special Committee on Youth Employment was launched in 2004 jointly by private and public entities, to monitor and improve the measures being implemented to reduce youth unemployment.

G. Youth participation

Youth participation has become one of major youth policy areas in the country since the end of the 1990s. Youth participation is one of primary policy principle in the Second and Third Five-year Youth Development Plans (1998-2002, 2003-2007) and the comprehensive youth policy tasks published in 2005. Thus, the Government has established and implemented a variety of policies and programmes to promote youth participation in all areas related to youth.

The Government is organizing and operating various committees such as the Presidential Youth Congress, the Youth Participation Committee, the Youth Administration Committee etc not only to assist in the formulation of national youth policy, but also to promote policy proposals and monitoring of various voluntary participation activities in all youth related areas of the government ministries, local self-governing bodies, youth organizations and youth facilities etc.

Expansion of youth activity facilities

Youth activity facilities provide training, exchange and cultural activities. They can be divided into youth training facilities and youth utilization facilities. Youth facilities are establishments equipped for training activities. They have programs to conduct systematic training activities under the guidance of youth leaders. Depending on the main function, programs and given conditions of the location of the youth training facilities, the youth facilities are given the names such as youth training centres, youth training institutes, youth cultural homes, youth specialized facilities, youth camp grounds, and youth hostels. Till March 2005, there were 687 youth training centres, 186 youth training institutes, 133 youth camp grounds, and 81 youth hostels. Moreover, to present a direction for youth training activities and to set up an index for management, the National Pyung-Chang Youth Training Centre (opened in November 1998) and the National Central Youth Training Centre (opened in August 2001) serve as national central facilities. In addition, in tune with the era of globalization, the International Youth Centre was opened in July 2000. It has been managed to activate youth exchange and cooperation projects and the management of youth organizations in the country.

Support of international youth exchange

For youth to mature into citizens of global awareness and leadership, the Government provides chances of international exchange for youths to experience diverse cultures. In addition, the Government supports various international exchange activities in order to develop an accompanying relationship in the 21st century by promoting youth to work together with foreign youths on universal problems concerning the human race such as peace, environmental concerns, diseases, starvation, unemployment etc.

The Government has signed youth exchange agreements with 19 countries and supports various youth exchange projects. This includes overseas study and training projects, opening international youth events, and expanding international exchange activity projects in multilateral cooperation with international youth organizations. Moreover, Korea and countries of the Association of South East Asian Nations conduct various exchanges programmes every year to promote mutual understanding, build cooperative relations and seek new roles for Asian youth among young people from different countries

Youth volunteer activities

In order to activate youth volunteer activities, the Government is operating nationwide youth volunteer centres. Each of 16 cities and provinces around the country has a youth volunteer centre. It is planned to spread this program to other cities, counties and districts. Currently, the Korean Youth Volunteer Centre (the first of its kind set up in 1996) is managed by the Korean Youth Service Centre. Plans are afoot to convert youth volunteer centres in cities and provinces into local youth service centres to manage and support youth volunteer activities, as well as manage diverse experiential activities with careful documentation. In 2004, a total of 903,239 youths participated in volunteer activities through city and provincial centres. Youth volunteer activities show high participation in the fields of local community development, preservation of environment, helping out in public facilities and social welfare etc.

Youth Patrol Program

The Youth Patrol Program is a learning program to cultivate young people's ability in recognizing the seriousness of harmful surroundings so as to actively protect youth. There is direct participation of youth, schools and teachers in the cleanup of harmful surroundings. Youth patrol activities allow young people to act independently and actively in cleaning up the areas around themselves and thus provide an opportunity for gaining life skills to critically view harmful surroundings and develop a sound civil awareness. The main activities include monitoring television programs, Internet and computer games, personal computer rooms, businesses for selling alcohol, cigarettes and sports newspapers.

Uhulmadang (gathering ground) programmes

Uhulmadang has been a nationwide youth program since 1990 to offer space and programs for youth at the local community level. These programs, which provide youth with a chance for exercise and stress release from home and school by interacting with others, are held once a month on Saturday in 250 cities, counties and districts throughout the country in locally operated youth halls, youth facilities and playgrounds etc. In addition, mobile Uhulmadang are held in middle and high schools. In 2004, for example, 1,202 Uhulmadang were held throughout the country with 649,148 youths participating.

Existing platforms to promote youth participation

The Youth Participation Committee is a platform and a mechanism for the youth to state their opinion on youth policies of the Government and local self-governing bodies. Currently there are 87 local committees in 14 cities/provinces and 73 cities/counties/districts. All executive agencies and local self-governing bodies that carry out youth related policies are recommended to establish and operate youth participation committees in future. The budget needed for the operation of youth participation committees is supported by the National Youth Commission and provincial governments.

Moreover, by setting up youth administration committees in youth facilities nationwide, suggestions on facilities and overall management procedures of programs are expected to be reflected. In addition, leading youths are invited to form problem-solving organizations to find solutions to the youth and communal violence, accelerate a non-violent youth movement and promote participation in solving current social issues.

In terms of promoting the rights for youth participation, the following two areas shall be discussed. The first area is Presidential Youth Congress. It has been organized as a platform for youth experts to delve on subjects and create alternative plans to give recommendations to departments that carry out youth related policies and manage the Youth Participation Committee. In some provinces, youth assemblies have been set as an example to propose opinions related to youth policies, which is predicted to be replicated in many other areas in the future. The second area is the participation of youth through the introduction of the Youth Ombudsman⁹⁹ and the development of Youth Rights Index, with the latter enlists national support for youth rights education and publicity material.

At the same time, the youth rights policy is being promoted as a nationally important policy agenda. For the advancement of youth rights, exchange and joint efforts

⁹⁹ The Ombudsman of Korea is a special administrative agency made up of 10 members, including the Chief Ombudsman, three standing Ombudsman, and six non-standing Ombudsman, all of whom are appointed by the President. All decisions are made by majority vote. The Ombudsman "has the authority to conduct investigations on grievances submitted by the people. However, the current system does not allow for the opening of investigations on its own initiative. Recommendations for corrective measures issued by the Ombudsman of Korea toward the relevant government agency have no legal binding force. Instead, decisions of the Ombudsman of Korea require the head of the relevant administrative agency to notify the result of settlement within a specified period, to publicize its activities, and to present reports directly to the President."

with not only national departments such as National Human Rights Commission of Korea, Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, but also international agencies such as UNICEF and UNESCO are being strengthened. Despite these measures, the concept of youth participation has not taken deep roots in all parts of the country.

H. Challenges

Some of the key challenges that emanate from the analysis of the youth situation and youth policies include the following:

- Informal schooling is not acknowledged. Thus, not only do these schools suffer from financial difficulties, but also see a yearly decrease in the number of students and teachers.
- The quality of university education has not quite matched with its growth in terms of quantity. The Ministry of Education recognizes this as an urgent task to tackle and has set measures to elevate the quality of higher education to that of global standards.
- The establishment of harmful businesses near schools such as bars and gambling shops that have a negative influence on young people is regulated by law. However, harmful businesses are still open and young people tend to be exposed without defense.
- As suggested by evidence, the Government needs to further develop national policies and strategies for the sexual and reproductive health for the youth as well as increase their awareness on reproductive health.
- Despite the continuous effort of the government to root out school violence and youth violence, the issue remains unresolved in Korean society. Recently, as violence becomes more organized and more extreme, it has become a major social issue. In addition, violent acts through cyber space and magazines are causing serious human rights infringement problems.
- It is essential to train young workforce that meets industry requirements by strengthening industry-academia cooperation, establishing a system guaranteeing smooth transition from school to work, and improve labour market infrastructures.
- Although youth participation has been emphasized as one of the major youth policy areas and principles, it is not yet rooted in all the areas of the country. More practical policy tasks and programmes shall be developed and implemented.

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Annex: Youth organizations in the Republic of Korea

Name of organization	Main activities	Homepage
National Youth Commission	Governmental body in charge of national youth policies	www.youth.go.kr
Korea Institute for Youth Development	Research and development in youth policies	www.youthnet.re.kr
Korea Youth Counseling Institute	Counseling, research, and development of youth	www.kyci.or.kr
Korea Youth Services Centre	An affiliated organization of the National Youth Commission to promote youth activity	www.kysc.or.kr
National Youth Centre of Korea	National youth training activity general centre	www.nyc.or.kr
The National Council of Youth Organizations in Korea	Youth organization conference	www.ncyok.or.kr
Korea Youth Volunteer Centre	Research, development, and offer of information on youth voluntary services	www.youthvol.net
Korea Association of Youth Facility	Youth training facility conference	www.youthnet.co.kr
Foundation for the Rural Youth	Domestic and foreign scholarship business and oversea training business for youth in farming and fishing villages	www.fry.or.kr
Korea Youth Association	Establishment of views of youth on people and nation through the whole-man education of youth	www.koya.or.kr
Korea Scout Association	Contribution to seeking for improvement of quality of democratic citizens and development of nation and society	www.scout.or.kr
Girl Scouts of Korea	Development of potential capacity, fostering of quality of democratic citizens, and exercise of serving	www.girlscout.or.kr
Korea Youth Hostel Association	Promotion of youth hostel movement fostering knowledge of youth through traveling	www.kyha.or.kr

VII. SINGAPORE¹⁰⁰

A. Introduction

Singapore's total population stood at 4,351,400 in 2005 of whom 3,553,500 were residents. Singapore residents, comprising Singapore citizens and permanent residents, formed 82 per cent of the total population. The youth population aged 15 to 24 was 462,500, which accounted for 13.0 per cent of the whole population.¹⁰¹

National Youth Council (NYC) of Singapore defines those between the ages of 15 and 29 as youth. For cross-country comparison and analysis, this chapter uses youth definition of the United Nations, which defines youth as persons between 15 and 24 years. According to the *UN World Population Prospects*, the youth population aged 15 to 24 in Singapore is projected to reach 14.3 per cent by the year 2010 and, afterwards expected to decrease gradually to 8.9 per cent by 2025.

Table 14. Youth population (15-24 years) and its prospects in Singapore, 2005-2025

Year	Total population (thousand)	Youth population (thousand)	Youth percentage in population (%)
2005	4,326	551	12.7
2010	4,590	656	14.3
2015	4,815	679	14.1
2020	4,986	560	11.2
2025	5,144	457	8.9

Source: United Nations. *UN World Population Prospects*. [electronic version]. accessed on 4 April 2007 from <<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2004/wpp2004.htm>>.

National military service is compulsory for all men who are 18 years of age for a period of 24 months. Only those who are 16 years of age and above can become volunteers. Voting is universal and compulsory for all persons above the age of 21 years.

B. Youth policy framework

The Government of Singapore envisions socially-aware active youth citizen for youth development in the 21st century. It defines youth development as the active process by which young people are engaged, equipped and empowered to be active citizens in society. This is characterized by a purposeful strength-building approach. Rather than

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The main references were drawn from data and materials provided by Singapore Government websites and other official sources (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, and National Youth Council) and ILO Country Report for Singapore 2004.

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Data were from Singapore Department of Statistics Website.

categorizing young people according to their deficits, the Singapore model of youth development aims to build upon the creative capacities inherent within each person. One of the challenges identified for youth development in the 21st century is to nurture the youths to be highly adaptable to all environments and personal worlds where they operate in such as career, school, and relationships with peers, parents or colleagues. They are required to be equipped with the appropriate mindset, personal mastery of necessary skills and operate by a youth creed which ties them to the community in Singapore while they make their mark in the wider society.

The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) is the primary agency responsible for formulating and implementing policies related to youth in the Singaporean Government. MCYS' vision is "inspired and committed youth for Singapore". Its mission is to develop purpose and dynamic youth who are deeply engaged with the broader community and the nation at large. To this end, the objectives for the youth in Singapore are to:

- attain their full potential
- be socially responsible
- be rooted to Singapore.

In order for young people to meet the challenges of the new millennium in Singapore, a Vision Task Force was set up in 1998 to chart a direction for the local youth sector so that the potential of young Singaporeans could be harnessed and maximized. The Task Force comprised NYC members and dedicated individuals interested in youth development. To develop the youth vision, consultation was carried out in the first half of 1999 through a series of focus groups, executive roundtable meetings, informal interviews and surveys as well as youth development workshops. Youth organizations and youths at large voiced their opinions about the challenges that youth face, the dreams and aspirations of young people today, the goals they thought youth should strive for, and desirability of a common youth vision.

In August 2004, MCYS initiated a public consultation exercise entitled "Youth: Creating our future" to tap on youth's aspirations for themselves and for Singapore as well as solicit inputs to help shape the Government's agenda, policies and programmes for youth. Over 2000 youth from diverse backgrounds gave feedback during the public consultation through diverse feedback channels ranging from emails, to SMS messages, to postcards and faxes. Good ideas that were received through the feedback process subsequently formed the basis of new youth initiatives that were launched by MCYS. To continue the process of youth engagement, MCYS then invited youth to be part of four thematic workgroups to look into issues relating to community involvement, national engagement, opportunities for all and youth entrepreneurship, supported by NYC and various relevant ministries.

Youth development is characterized by a process that prepares young people to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood through a coordinated, progressive series of activities and experiences which help them to become socially, morally,

emotionally, physically and cognitively competent. Positive youth development addresses the broader developmental needs of youth in contrast to deficit-based models which focus solely on youth problems. MCYS adopts a “many helping hands” approach in youth development. MCYS works with various government and non-government partners, such as the Ministry of Education (MOE), NYC, National Council for Social Service, National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre, People’s Association and various other agencies, to set and review national youth policy as well as implement and coordinate programmes and initiatives.

MCYS’ youth strategy has been evolved through the process mentioned above which hinges on the three “Ss”:

Assist youth to develop a **Stake** in Society by keeping them involved with the community, by catalyzing youth initiatives and volunteerism, and facilitating opportunities for youth to positively influence their environment

- Ensure that youth have a **Say** in national affairs by recognizing the contributions they can make and by involving them in the process of consultation
- Provide youth with the **Support** they need to develop and participate meaningfully in society, through facilitation, mentorship and other assistance mechanism.

In developing policies and programmes for young Singaporeans, MCYS is guided by the following principles:

- Empower the youth: Facilitate opportunities for the youth and nurture their capabilities
- Embrace diversity: Affirm and support the diverse interests and passions pursued by the youth
- Be inclusive: Provide opportunities for participation and build networks between the youth
- Think youth development: Ensure that, above all, the youth will benefit and grow.

C. National youth coordinating body

NYC, a division of the People’s Association, was set up by the Singapore Government in 1989 as the national coordinating body for youth affairs in Singapore. The Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports and Second Minister for Trade and Industry is the Chairman of the 9th Council. NYC comprises members representing various government ministries, youth organizations, academic institutions, voluntary welfare organizations, media and private sector. NYC aims to create opportunities where youth can be challenged by choice and be involved in life transforming experiences that will shape their attitude and outlook to be active citizens of the new millennium. It also seeks to develop a vibrant, highly connected and self-sustaining youth sector so as to nurture “world-ready-youth”, which means youth with the values, perception and skills to thrive and succeed in a global environment and yet

maintain strong ties to their families, community and nation. Singapore's world-ready-youth will possess the following characteristics:

- Inspiration – They “dare to dream” a vision
- Aspiration – A “can do” attitude in meeting challenges and achieving goals
- Resilience – A “never say die” spirit in the face of adversity
- Integrity – The courage to “walk the talk”
- Compassion – The passion to “serve by doing”.

The following five functions reveal the NYC's roles in national youth development:

- National catalyst: Creating new strategies in services and programmes as manifested in the current vision
- National facilitator: Promoting the interaction and networking among interested agencies and creating platforms for cross-fertilization of ideas and sharing of resources to take place
- National supporter: Providing support for projects with the Youth Development Fund and possibly extending funding to training for youth workers
- National organizer: Organizing national events to increasingly promulgate synergies by joint collaborations with other agencies
- National communicator: Updating the youth sector on the latest information in youth development strategies and reaching out to the youth at large through dissemination of information on the vision as well as establishing a feedback loop to allow for a two-way interaction.

The NYC has initiated and administered various types of grant and award schemes to motivate youth organizations and young people. The key ones are as described below:

- Young Change Makers is a grant scheme to ignite youth passion for community change in Singapore;
- Youth Development Fund provides seed money to help youth initiate and implement projects which benefit the community and society;
- Youth Organization Capability Development Fund seeks to enhance the long-term capability of youth organizations by giving incentives and value-added assistance;
- Youth Research Fund supports studies that will add to the collective understanding of youth trends and issues;
- Overseas Youth Programme Grant supports overseas youth programmes that encourage youth development and benefit the community;
- Overseas Youth Programme Grant – Overseas Community Projects supports Overseas Community Service Projects/Youth Expedition Project in the ASEAN, China and India.

The NYC plays an active role in nurturing world-ready-youth by increasing the capability of youth organizations through funding and other forms of support as

mentioned above. It supports the development of youth and youth organizations through awards, national and international programmes, research and publications as well as other support services. The NYC is the administrating body for the Singapore Youth Awards, Outstanding Youth in Education Award, and liaison body with ASEAN and international organizations on youth development. It also creates a supportive environment in which youth can participate in national education programmes, international exchanges, and projects that bring out the best in them and that benefit the community at the same time. NYC acts as a catalyst in areas where its assistance and limited resources are most needed in complementing the efforts of various youth organizations to innovate youth development opportunities to meet the changing needs of the youths in the country.

D. Youth education

The MOE directs the formulation and implementation of education policies. It has control of the development and administration of the Government and Government-aided primary schools, secondary schools, junior colleges, and centralized institutes. It also registers private schools. There are opportunities for every child in Singapore to undergo at least ten years of general education. A cornerstone of Singapore's education system is the bilingual policy which allows each child to learn English and his/her mother tongue. The public expenditure on education for the year 2004 stood at 3.5 per cent of the GDP.¹⁰²

The MOE's vision of "thinking schools, learning nation" was first announced by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in 1997. This vision describes a nation of thinking and committed citizens capable of meeting the challenges of the future, and an education system geared to the needs of the 21st century. The mission of the Education Service is to mould the future of the nation, by moulding the people who will determine the future of the nation. The services provide children and youth with a balanced and well-rounded education, develop them to their full potential, and nurture them into good citizens, conscious of their responsibilities to family, society and country.

In Singapore's educational system, secondary education refers to the four-to-five years of education after primary education while post-secondary education refers to a course of study after secondary education which provides preparation for university studies or technical training for direct entry into the labour market. Tertiary education is usually for a period of five years. Data obtained from the latest Singapore Population Census conducted in 2000 revealed that there was near parity in the attainment of secondary level of education among male and female persons of 15 to 24 years (85.8 per cent for females and 83.7 per cent for males). The same source of data also showed that the proportion of persons with post-secondary and tertiary education surged from 10.9 per cent in 1990 to 20.5 per cent in 2000 and from 4.1 per cent in 1990 to 10.8 per cent in 2000 respectively. As shown in table 15, Singapore maintains high enrolment rate in primary and secondary schools. It also illustrates that while there was no significant change in the net enrolment rate of primary, secondary and post-secondary schools

¹⁰² The figure was from the Ministry of Education.

between 2000 and 2004, the tertiary education participation rate improved from 37.7 per cent and 21.9 per cent in 2000 to 42.3 per cent and 23.3 per cent in 2004, respectively.

Table 15. Participation rate in education, Singapore, 2000-2004, unit: percentage

Net enrolment rate/year	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Primary (age 6-11)	96	94	95	94	94
Secondary (age 12-15)	92	93	92	93	92
Post-secondary (age 16-17)	48	48	49	50	49
Tertiary – type B (practical/technical/occupationally specific programmes)	37.7	40.0	41.3	39.9	42.3
Tertiary – type A (university)	21.9	22.3	22.5	22.4	23.3

Source: Ministry of Education (2004). *Education Statistics Digest*. [electronic version]. accessed on 5 May 2007 from <<http://www.moe.gov.sg/esd/Default.htm>>

The teacher-student ratio in primary and secondary schools is important for the quality of education. The primary school student-teacher ratio improved from 25.6 in 2000 to 24.3 in 2004. However, there was no significant change in student-teacher ratio for secondary schools.

Table 16. Ratio of students to teaching staff in Singapore, 2000-2004

Level	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Primary	25.6	25.1	24.4	24.9	24.3
Secondary	19.2	19.2	18.9	19.1	19.0

Source: Ministry of Education (2004). *Education Statistics Digest*. [electronic version]. accessed 5 May 2007 from <<http://www.moe.gov.sg/esd/Default.htm>>

Over the years, the education profile of youths in Singapore is likely to improve as more opportunities are offered for education at tertiary level. There will be increasing demand for education upgrading among youths as more people recognize the importance of continual upgrading to maintain and improve their employability and keep their knowledge and skills up to date and relevant.

Other educational schemes and programmes

1. Step-up

In March 2004, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports introduced a new programme called STEP-UP, which was designed to empower pupils to utilize their potential through school social work. It is a school-based social work initiative where schools tie up with voluntary welfare organizations to run different types of programmes including counseling, family education and life-skills training. It aims to

strengthen students' social and emotional resilience, as well as help parents and teachers better manage and support at-risk students.

2. Out of school youth development scheme

An average of about 1200 children and youth drop out of school each year. Most of out-of-school youths (OSYs) drop out due to a loss of interest in academic studies. At the same time, these youths have expressed interest in seeking employment. While the number of out-of-school youth is small, it is necessary to ensure that they acquire the skills to lead meaningful lives and contribute to society. Hence MCYS has set up the Youth Inc. Secretariat to provide direction for the delivery of out-of-school youth services in Singapore under the OSY Development Scheme.

Youth Inc. was set up in June 2004 within MCYS with the following aims:

- Providing a strategic framework for strengthening and coordinating the network of OSY organizations and encourage inter-agency partnership
- Supporting new programmes which have the potential to be sustainable with clear outcomes and accountability
- Exploring more vocational skills training and educational opportunities for youth
- Encouraging evidence-based practice and local research related to OSYs.

3. Parenting programme

The Parenting Programmes of the MCYS seek to preserve and uphold the concept of the family as the basic unit of society by nurturing strong relationships and to help parents to understand the process of child upbringing so that they can become effective parents.

4. Youth family care programme

The Youth Family Care Programme is run by the Family and Justice Centre and the Singapore Children's Society. A large number of delinquent youths who come under the supervision of the juvenile court come from broken and dysfunctional families. Often, there are no family role models. Through this programme, volunteer mentor families are matched to befriend, mentor, support and encourage young persons placed on probation or statutory supervision as well as to provide hope and modeling for healthy families that work. It is targeted at helping juvenile offenders and beyond-parental-control children who have little family support, and who are remorseful about their past misdeeds and do not have ingrained delinquent traits.

5. Life skills for effective living

Schools have a life skills programme to help pupils develop self-management and inter-personal skills. The programme consists of structured classroom-based lessons, which are designed to meet the developmental needs of all pupils. They are taught how to

deal with frustration, anger and disappointment, control their impulses, resolve inter-personal conflicts peacefully and solve problems effectively.

6. Peer support programme

The Peer Support Programme was started by MOE in 1990. Its main objectives are to help pupils establish rapport and learn good values and skills from their peers in school. Most schools have trained secondary three pupils as peer leaders and they meet with secondary one pupil once a week during the first term to help them assimilate into the new school.

7. Peer mediation programme

In April 1997 the MOE in collaboration with the Subordinate Courts introduced the Peer Mediation Programme to secondary schools to promote a culture of mediation and peaceful conflict resolution in schools. This programme aims to empower pupils to deal constructively and creatively with conflicts and to improve the overall climate of schools by imparting practical life skills to students in the management and resolution of conflicts.

Preventive programmes under the inter-ministry committee on youth crime

1. Honorary volunteer special constabulary (VSC) (School) scheme

The Honorary VSC (School) aims to help schools better manage school discipline and extend a symbol of police authority in schools. Initiated in 1997 by the Singapore Police Force with the support of MOE, eligible discipline masters/mistresses, disciplinary teachers and operations managers of secondary schools and vocational training centres are appointed as Honorary VSC (School) officers or teacher-cops. To date, about 90 per cent of secondary schools in Singapore have participated in the scheme. These teacher-cops, besides other roles, act as a counselor to delinquent students and network with other stakeholders of youth development to build and enhance localized partnership to address youth crime.

2. Justice teen quest

Launched in 2000 by the Juvenile Justice Centre, this Programme targets at youths between 9 and 15 years who participate in a series of educational activities like quizzes to reinforced students' respect for law and authority and raise public awareness of the juvenile justice process.

3. Preventive drug education programme

Under this Programme, visits to Selarang Park Drug Rehabilitation Centre and Khalsa Crescent Drug Rehabilitation Centre are being arranged for male and female youths assessed to be at risk for drug abuse. The visit offers the youths an opportunity to

see for themselves the tough regime that drug addicts have to undergo and the spartan conditions in drug rehabilitation centers.

4. Anti-drug programme by the central narcotic bureau

Central Narcotic Bureau, as the lead agency under the Ministry of Home Affairs, plans, promotes and implements Preventive Drug Education Programme for students and youth throughout the year to spearhead preventive drug efforts in Singapore. The Programme includes school assembly talks, joint talks, workplace talks, anti-drug exhibitions etc.

5. Institutionalized rehabilitation programme

MCYS manages three residential homes which provide care and rehabilitation for children and young persons aged between 7 and 16 years who have committed offenses or who are beyond parental control. The programme includes therapeutic rehabilitation, education/vocational training, sports and games and moral and religious education. In addition, there are also special programmes that aim at dealing with special needs.

Under the Young Offenders Section, the Reformatory Training Centre houses young male offenders between 14 and 21 years of age who were sentenced by the court to undergo reformatory training. It is recognized that the key to success in the rehabilitation of the reformatory trainees is a highly individualized form of institutional training and treatment followed by a period of close supervision after their discharge.

E. Youth health

Some of the health concerns among children and youth in Singapore are smoking, obesity, sedentary behaviour, unhealthy eating practices, myopia, mental health and STD/AIDS. The Ministry of Health places great emphasis on health promotion and preventive health services as key strategies to reduce illness and improve the health of youths in Singapore. The Health Promotion Board was set up as a statutory board in 2001 to provide greater focus on these major health problems, to spearhead health education, promotion and prevention programmes, and create a supportive environment to address health problems.

Majority of Singapore's children and youths spend significant proportions of their time in schools. Hence the Government has introduced the School Health Promotion Programme to empower students and youths to adopt healthier lifestyles to help them develop their potential to the fullest. The Programme strives to achieve its aims through the following strategies:

- Supporting schools in the development and establishment of health promotion programmes

- Organizing school-based and community-based activities to increase awareness of key health messages and skills among school students and youths at community settings
- Collaborating with organizations to promote young people's health
- Organizing training programmes for educators and youth facilitators to build the capacity of schools and community
- Organizing parent education programmes to enable parents to better understand the health concerns among children and helping their children adopt healthier lifestyle
- Promoting the concept of health promoting schools and encouraging schools to establish comprehensive school health promotion programmes
- Developing and providing educational resources to support health promotion programmes run in schools and community settings for children and youths.

The main activities of the School Health Promotion Programme include:

- Smoking Control Programme for youths
- STD/AIDS Education Programme
- National Myopia Prevention Programme
- Healthy Lifestyle Programme
- Mental Health Education Programme
- Youth Community Health Promotion Programme
- Childhood Injury Prevention Programme
- Youth Advolution for Health
- Developing and providing educational resources to support schools and community organizations working with young people.

*The National Health Survey 2004*¹⁰³ was conducted to measure the prevalence of major non-communicable diseases such as diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular risk factors in Singaporeans. Although it was not the survey targeted for youths, findings can be compared with those in *the National Health Survey 1998*, to examine the changes in the levels of these risk factors among youths (18-29) in Singapore (see table 17). The prevalence of diabetes among both male and female youths aged 18 to 29 years fell from 0.6 per cent and 1.0 per cent in 1998 to 0.2 per cent and 0.8 per cent in 2004 respectively. The proportions of both male and female youths with high total blood cholesterol decreased from 10.4 per cent and 7.7 per cent in 1998 to 6.1 per cent and 4.3 per cent in 2004 respectively. In 1998, the proportion of obese youths among males (4.5 per cent) and females (4.4 per cent) was not significantly different. In 2004, obesity was more prevalent among male youths (9.6 per cent) compared to female youths (4.0 per cent). While the prevalence of daily cigarette smoking among male youths declined from 20.0 per cent in 1998 to 18.2 per cent in 2004, the prevalence of daily cigarette smoking among female youths increased from 3.7 per cent in 1998 to 6.6 per cent in 2004. Similarly, the proportion of regular alcoholic drinkers among female youths increased from 0.5 per cent in 1998 to 2.0 per cent in 2004. The proportion of both male and

¹⁰³ Full report could be found at <http://www.hpb.gov.sg/hpb/default.asp?pg_id=1781>.

female youths who engaged in regular physical exercise increased from 25.1 per cent and 11.3 per cent in 1998 to 43.9 per cent and 24.0 per cent in 2004, respectively.

Table 17. Diabetes mellitus and cardiovascular risk factors in Singapore, 1998 and 2004, unit: percentage

Risk factor	1998			2004		
	Male (age 18-29)	Female (age 18-29)	Total (age 18-29)	Male (age 18-29)	Female (age 18-29)	Total (age 18-29)
Diabetes Mellitus	0.6	1.0	9.0	0.2	0.8	8.2
Cholesterol	10.4	7.7	25.4	6.1	4.3	18.7
Obesity	4.5	4.4	6.0	9.6	4.0	6.9
Cigarette smoking	20.0	3.7	15.0	18.2	6.6	12.6
Alcohol consumption	2.1	0.5	2.6	2.9	2.0	3.2
Physical activity	25.1	11.3	16.8	43.9	24.0	24.9

Source: Ministry of Health, *National Health Survey, 1998 and 2004*. [electronic version]. accessed on 20 May 2007 from <http://www.hpb.gov.sg/hpb/default.asp?pg_id=1781>

The number of reported cases of HIV/AIDS in Singapore increased from 173 in 1997 to 237 in 2001 (see table 18). On the contrary, the number of reported cases of HIV/AIDS among youths aged 10 to 29 years decreased from 37 in 1997 to 28 in 2001. Thus, the percentage of youths among the total population infected with HIV/AIDS decreased from 21.4 per cent in 1997 to 11.8 per cent in 2001.

Table 18. Number of HIV/AIDS infected Singaporeans, 1997-2001

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Total (person)	173	199	206	226	237
Youths (age 10-29, person)	37	39	35	32	28
Youth percentage (%)	21.4	19.6	17.0	14.2	11.8

Source: Ministry of Health, *State of Health 2001, State of Health 2002*

Among adults including the elderly in Singapore, chronic non-communicable diseases such as coronary heart disease, stroke and cancer are the main causes of morbidity and mortality. Behavioral risk factors such as a sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diets, obesity, smoking and stress have been linked to these diseases. Thus, these modifiable risk factors can be reduced from youth through the adoption of healthy lifestyle practices. Youth-specific surveys are required to draw up its policies and plan further strategies to empower young people to adopt healthy lifestyles.

F. Youth employment

The Government's overall employment policy in Singapore is to facilitate an efficient and responsive labour market and develop a well-educated workforce. Government agencies work closely with the educational institutions to ensure that new entrants to the workforce are equipped with the right skills. The majority of youth graduating from post-secondary educational institutions can get jobs within three to six months after graduation.

Most employment-related policies, including training, upgrading and job placement schemes, cover all workers. Programmes that are of specific benefit to youths tend to be conducted in partnership with the educational institutions, including internship programmes, career counseling and coaching, and various programmes supporting entrepreneurship.

The labour force participation rate of young people in Singapore has fallen steadily in the last decade (see Table 19), reflecting the increasing number of youths who delay entry into the labour market in pursuit of higher education. The labour force participation rate of males fell faster than that for females for both age groups of 15-19 and 20-24.

Table 19. Labour force participation rate of youths, Singapore, 1993 and 2003

Year	1993		2003	
	15-19 (%)	20-24 (%)	15-19 (%)	20-24 (%)
Male	25.1	81.0	12.6	67.4
Female	25.6	79.4	13.5	74.6

Source: Ministry of Manpower (1993 and 2003). *Labour Force Survey*. [electronic version]. accessed on 5 May 2007 from <<http://www.mom.gov.sg/publish/momportal/en/communities/others/mrsd/surveys.html>>

Since 2001, Singapore has been experiencing slower economic growth, resulting from the slowdown in the global economy in mid-2001, followed by the shocks caused by terrorist attacks and SARS. This has translated in an overall increase in unemployment from 2.7 per cent in 1993 to 5.4 per cent in 2003. The unemployment rate (non-seasonally adjusted) among the youth has also risen, from 5.5 per cent in 1993 to 7.8 per cent over the same period, but at a slower pace. Like in many other economies, the youth typically experience above-average unemployment rates, reflecting their greater job search activity as they enter the job market for the first time. Even when they are employed, they tend to seek more frequent job changes.

Nevertheless, the relative prospects of youths relative to the overall labour force did not worsen, with the ratio of the rates of youth unemployment to overall unemployment falling from 2.0 to 1.4.

Table 20. Youths and average unemployment rates, Singapore, 1993 and 2003

Year	Average unemployment rate (%)	Youth unemployment rate (%)	Ratio of the rates of youth unemployment to overall unemployment
1993	2.7	5.5	2.0
2003	5.4	7.8	1.4

Source: Ministry of Manpower (1993 and 2003). *Labour Force Survey*. [electronic version]. accessed on 5 May 2007 from <<http://www.mom.gov.sg/publish/momportal/en/communities/others/mrsd/surveys.html>>

Even in 2003, when economic growth was slow, about 70 per cent of new graduates from the post-secondary educational institutions found full-time employment within three-six months of graduation. Consequently, while the number of youth unemployed rose from 17,100 in 1993 to 19,700 in 2003, their share among the unemployed shrank sharply from 39 per cent to 17 per cent over the same period.

In Singapore, the duration of unemployment is closely correlated with age, with younger job seekers having a much shorter job search than older workers. The relatively short span of 4 weeks in the pre-crisis periods suggests that unemployment among youths during non-recessionary periods is mainly frictional due to new entrants and movement of people between jobs. This unemployment arises as it normally takes time for job seekers and employers to match. Unlike in some developed countries, youths in Singapore generally do not experience long unemployment spells. It would appear that the younger segment of the workforce is better able to meet the educational, skills and other requirements of employers.

Job creation remains one of the Government's top priorities. Singapore's strategy to employment creation is to attract and retain investments, focusing on high value-added industries that create better paying jobs. The Ministry of Manpower is committed to facilitating employment by ensuring a flexible and efficient labour market. This is one main contributing factor to the relatively low youth unemployment rate in Singapore. The Singapore labour market is relatively free of rigid employment practices that protect existing workers at the expense of new job seekers. Hence, youths find it relatively easy to find employment. However, a recent study indicated that most of the youth worked for materialistic reasons, with less emphasis on job satisfaction and interest. Nearly two third of students worked in some part-time jobs to earn pocket money, gain experience and occupy their spare time.

Continued investments in education have resulted in the improving education profile of the youth workforce. In 2003, 45 per cent of the young job seekers had at least post-secondary qualifications compared to 34 per cent in the year 1993. Generally, the younger new entrants to the workforce are better educated and better able to compete for the jobs available.

Internships are also encouraged with various institutions making the internship component a requirement for graduation. Internships are great opportunities for students

to try out a field before committing to it, or a chance to work with the latest technology. Many students who perform well in their internships are subsequently considered for long-term positions with the companies. Such internships are not restricted to companies in Singapore, but may also include opportunities overseas, such as the Hotintern Programme, which offers the students in National University of Singapore the opportunity to serve a one year internship with start-ups in Silicon Valley, Philadelphia and Shanghai.

The Workforce Development Agency in Singapore organizes Teachers' Attachment Programme for secondary school teachers to be attached to leading companies in key industries to gain direct appreciation of the skills needed in today's workplace. The purpose of this Programme is to more effectively develop the employability of students. Career coaching workshops are held to equip career guidance staff in vocational institutes with a structured career guidance framework to better guide and advise students in their career planning. There are also various training schemes where job seekers receive training and are matched with potential employers before, during or at the end of the training. Youths are able to take part in various schemes if they meet certain criteria.

Students engage in a number of activities aimed specifically at promoting entrepreneurial skills. A growing number of schools are participating in the Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge organized by Singapore Polytechnic. A Youth Entrepreneur Network, started by Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge, provides youth between the ages of 16 to 25 with access to top entrepreneurs in Singapore.

G. Youth participation

The inaugural National Youth Forum, organized by the National Youth Council, was held from 19 November to 23 December 2004. The event enabled 60 young Singaporeans, aged 17 to 25, to gain a broad-based understanding of national issues and policy-making. The Programme included learning journeys, case studies and dialogues with decision-makers, peer consultation and debate. MCYS and National Youth Council worked together to enhance the National Youth Forum and extended its reach to more young Singaporeans. The Feedback Unit has embarked on a School Outreach Programme targeting junior colleges and tertiary institutions to encourage students to play an active role in giving their views on national issues shaping national policies. It has also formed a Youth Panel to advice on the development of an online feedback website specifically targeted at youth.

Some of the notable projects and events that promote youth participation in Singapore are as follows:

Youth expedition project

The Youth Expedition Project was launched in 2000. It is managed by Singapore International Foundation to support youth embarking on overseas community service

projects. Through such projects, youth would learn leadership and team skills, become more committed to serve the community and gain a better appreciation of Singapore's systems, policies and way of life. More than 9000 youths have taken part in the project expeditions to Asian countries including China and India. Thirty-eight teams of youth were sent to Sri Lanka in 2005 to help in the tsunami reconstruction efforts. MYCS is committed to encouraging Singaporean youth to be engaged in overseas volunteering and in the sector to deepen collaborations and build up its capacity.

Ship for South-East Asian youth programme

The Ship for South-East Asian Youth Programme (SSEAYP) is an annual event sponsored by the Japanese Government and supported by the member countries of ASEAN. The programme brings together about 300 youth from ASEAN countries and Japan, providing them with the unique opportunity to interact on board the ship Nippon Maru for 50 days. The aim of SSEAYP is to foster friendship and greater understanding among youths from Japan and ASEAN. It also seeks to broaden their international outlook. In Singapore, SSEAYP is coordinated by the National Youth Council together with the SSEAYP International Singapore, the alumni body of ex-SSEAYP Singapore participants.

SHINE: Festival to celebrate youth

SHINE is a festival for youth to showcase the diverse talents and skills of young Singaporeans, highlight their contributions to the community and profile role models for youth. Informal groups of friends, youth organizations, community groups – all are encouraged to organize activities and events for other youth as part of the SHINE festival. MCYS provides financial and logistic support to facilitate this opportunity for profiling and celebrating youth.

YOUTH.SG: Youth portal

The Youth Portal is a first-stop virtual meeting place and resource centre for youth to share their views, put their ideas into action and start their own community projects. Youth are involved in the design, development and eventually the administration and management of the Portal. A Youth Portal Project Group has been formed to work with MCYS on developing the Portal.

Scape – Youth community space in orchard

A 1.2 hectare land space next to Orchard Cineleisure has been set aside as an iconic community space for youth. The space is a hub for youth cultural and community activities. Youth are involved in the design and development of the site, and eventually in organizing and running activities such as sports events, arts performances and community programmes in Scape.

Award schemes

1. Singapore youth award

This is the highest national youth honour in Singapore. This is an annual ceremony that confers national honour upon youths in Singapore who have significantly achieved excellence and contributed to the society. These are youths who have brought prestige to the nation in the field of arts and culture, community and youth services, entrepreneurship, science and technology, and sports and adventure.

2. Outstanding youth in education award

The Outstanding Youth in Education Award is presented by the National Youth Council and supported by MOE. This award honours the achievements of young educators who have a passion and commitment to teaching, inspiring and nurturing their students.

3. Youth ambassador scheme

The Youth Ambassador Scheme identifies well-recognized home-grown talents with notable achievements to inspire youths.

H. Challenges

There is a need for a platform to promote common understanding and facilitate a more integrated approach to developing the youth of Singapore in line with the common vision.

There is an increasing call to upgrade the skills and knowledge of youth workers, particularly when the youth of today are growing more complex with the greater diversity of interests.

Singapore education is making changes and refinements within a system that is already recognized for its strength so that it continues to keep in step with the future. It provides students with greater choice, in a more diverse and flexible system and redoubles its emphasis on a broad-based education to develop critical life skills from young. It nurtures among students the habit of questioning as they learn and being willing to learn independently and think in new and original ways. Teachers are given further support to reflect, develop themselves and be innovative in their teaching. While it is important to place a strong emphasis on educational achievements, there should be recognition of multiple intelligences in developing youth potential and well-rounded development that celebrate different areas of success. Recognition should also be given for the processes involved and effort put in, in addition to the outcomes and success indicators. A range of role models are required to inspire youths with different interests and backgrounds. On the other hand, the over emphasis on educational achievement may lead to low-esteem among those who do not perform as well.

A large section of the youth in Singapore considers that the youth development programmes and community service activities do not attract their peers because of lack of fun. Experiential learning should be incorporated into such programmes so that learning could be interesting and youthful. It is important for the youth organizations to develop innovative programming and promote pooling of resources in order to reach the majority of the youth population who has not shown an interest in activities organized by them. The current interests of youth could be used as a reference to expand the scope of current activities that the youth organizations provide. They could also be the means to promote exciting activities and programmes. Publicity of community projects and other youth programmes could also raise the public awareness and participation rates among youth.

Lack of self-esteem is often highlighted as a major issue affecting young people which often start during the formative years of childhood. It becomes a bigger problem when youth are seen as lacking the initiative to handle responsibility or to pursue their dreams. It is also an impediment towards communicating effectively and keeping an open mind to new ideas. There is a perceived lack of interaction and integration among youths with different learning abilities in Singapore. Leaders of youth programmes are often over-represented by high academic achievers. There is also a need to promote multi-sectoral cooperation among the youth service providers. This would allow the sharing of resources, exchanging ideas, best practices and professional expertise which would in turn greatly enhance the scale and outreach of projects.

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