

Kenya National Youth Policy

2006

**Ministry of Youth Affairs**

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## **MINISTER'S STATEMENT**

The National Youth Policy comes in the face of a myriad of challenges facing the youth in Kenya. Although the number of organizations dealing with young people has increased over the years, the lack of a comprehensive policy makes it difficult for these groups to effectively address these challenges.

The National Youth Policy is aimed at ensuring that the youth play their role, alongside adults, in the development of the country. The policy goal of the youth policy is to promote youth participation in community and civic affairs and to ensure that youth programmes are youth centred. The policy proposes guidelines and strategies that can be used to facilitate participation of the youth in national development.

The policy also spells out the strategic areas that must be addressed in order for Kenya's young people to effectively play their role in nation building. These are: Employment creation, health, education and training, sports and recreation, the environment, art and culture, the media and participation and empowerment.

The youth are classified into priority target groups to make it easier to tackle challenges unique to each group. The priority groups are: Youth with disability, street youth, youth infected with Aids, female youth, unemployed youth and out of school youth.

The implementation plan is to ensure that the policy becomes a reality. It suggests the formation of a National Youth Council to facilitate, co-ordinate, monitor, advocate and promote youth issues and youth-led initiatives, under the ministry in charge. The Institutional Framework will minimize duplicity and enhance efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery to the youth.

The policy will be reviewed every five years to align it with the said changing government policy.

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Minister of Youth Affairs

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CSO	Community Service Organisations
HIV	Human Immune-deficiency Virus
ICT	Information Communication Technologies
ILO	International Labour Organization
NCCK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
NGO's	Non-Governmental Organizations
NYP	National Youth Policy
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infections
UN	United Nations
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing

## **1.0. INTRODUCTION**

Kenyans in the age bracket 1- 30 years constitute 75% of the country's population, forming the largest source of human resource. However, they have remained on the periphery of the country's affairs and their status has not been accorded due recognition. They have been excluded from designing, planning and implementing programmes and policies that affect them.

Many of the youth who are productive and energetic remain unemployed, continue to suffer from poor health, and lack sufficient support. Some of them have special needs that require attention. These include those living on the streets, those living with HIV/AIDS, the girls and those with disabilities.

The responsibility of ensuring that the aspirations and hopes of the youth are met lies with a multiplicity of stakeholders. Everyone in the community, both young and old, must play their role.

The National Youth Policy recognizes that the youth are a key resource that can be tapped for the benefit of the whole country. Thus, the policy endeavours to address issues affecting young people by including broad-based strategies that would provide the youth meaningful opportunities to realize their potential. The policy provides a broad framework within which all stakeholders, including the private and civil society, will contribute to youth development. An implementation mechanism is inbuilt in the policy.

This policy is prepared within the context of existing sectoral policies, national development plans, international policies and charters to which Kenya is a signatory; as central to the holistic integration and inclusion of the youth in Kenya's development. Cognizance is given to the Charter of United Nations, the Commonwealth Youth Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations World Programme for the Youth to the year 2000 and beyond.

### **1.1. Definition of Youth**

The Youth are defined as persons resident in Kenya in the age bracket 15 to 30 years. This takes into account the physical, psychological, cultural, social, biological and political definitions of the term.

### **1.2. Youth Profile**

The youth in Kenya, number about 9.1 million, and account for 32% of the population. Of these, 51.7 % are female. The youth form 60% of the total labour force but majority are unemployed due to the country's high unemployment level.

Enrolment in primary school totaled 7.2 million in 2003 for children aged 6-13 years. Secondary school enrolment, by 2002, totaled 847,287 while university student were estimated to be 63,941 students in the 2002/03 academic year. Enrollment in private accredited and private unaccredited universities totaled 10,310 of which 5,354 (51.9%) are females.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic, among other diseases, has continued to negatively impact on the health of the youth. More than 75% of people infected with AIDS are aged 20 to 45 years. About 33% of all AIDS cases reported are of those aged 15-30.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE**

In the 1960s, the Government and other voluntary youth agencies did not target the youth in the development agenda. The Kenya Government started the National Youth Service, in 1964 and has supported it to date. Most other youth programmes are largely social and recreational in nature. In addition, they are urban-based.

The current Government has taken a keen interest in youth issues in its efforts o national integration.

The problem of unemployment has continued to be a big challenge. The third National Development Plan of 1974-78, while acknowledging the efforts made to address unemployment among the youth, warned that the problem would in future loom large.

Efforts to initiate youth development programmes have been made in other subsequent policy documents, such as Sessional Paper No. 2 of 1992 on Small Scale and Jua Kali Enterprises, the 1997-2001 Development Plan and the National Poverty Eradication Plan 1999-2015, among others.

But, despite these efforts, as well as an increase in the number of agencies dealing with the youth, problems affecting young people have continued. This situation has been attributed to the lack of a comprehensive policy to provide a blueprint for youth.

Youth organisations have come up with innovative programmes to address the youth's economic needs, health interventions, especially those aimed at reproductive health and alleviating the spread of HIV/AIDS among the youth, environmental programmes, character building programmes, literacy, vocational training, sports and recreational as well as social-cultural programmes. However, the following constraints have hampered their effectiveness in achieving their objectives:

- i. Pressure from the high population growth: The high population growth, currently standing at 2.5% (2005), puts pressure on available resources as the number of young people keeps on rising.
- ii. Lack of appropriate skills: The 8-4-4 education system and tertiary training institutions continue to release thousands of graduates, who are neither properly equipped for entry into the labour market nor possess the necessary life skills.
- iii. Unclear and uncoordinated youth policies and programmes: While a number of Government Ministries and youth organisations have their own programmes and sectoral youth policies, lack of a national youth policy and effective co-ordination mechanisms hamper their effectiveness.

- iv. Resource Constraints: Most of the youth programmes, run by both the Government and non-governmental agencies lack adequate funds and equipment, which limits their success.
- v. Low status given to youth: Existing structures and prevailing attitudes do not provide an enabling environment for youth participation in decision-making, planning and implementation processes.

### **3.0 ISSUES IMPINGING ON THE YOUTH**

#### **3.1 Unemployment and underemployment**

The economic growth rate has not been sufficient to create enough employment opportunities to absorb the increasing labour force of about 500,000 annually. Only about 25% of youth are absorbed, leaving 75% to bear the burden of unemployment. Furthermore, some of those absorbed in the labour market have jobs that do not match their qualifications and personal development goals.

#### **3.2 Health related problems**

The youth face a myriad of health related problems, including widespread malaria, malnutrition, HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs), drug and substance abuse as well as poor access to health services.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is more prevalent among the youth under 30 years of age. Available statistics show that the youth make up 33% of Kenyans infected with Aids.

Female genital mutilation and teenage pregnancy are unique to the female youth. Some of the consequences of these are dropping out of school and risks to life through unsafe abortions.

#### **3.3 Increasing school and college drop-out rates**

Many youth drop out of school and college due to the high cost of education and increase in overall poverty levels, poor returns on investment in education and lack of a re-admission policy for teenage mothers, among other reasons.

#### **3.4 Crime and deviant behaviour**

Due to idleness, especially after formal education, the youth become restless and try anything. Some end up in crime or with deviant behaviour.

#### **3.5 Limited sports and recreation facilities**

Sports and recreation facilities provide the youth with an opportunity to socialize and spend their time productively, strengthening and developing their character and talents. However, such facilities are scarce and, where they exist, they are sometimes not accessible to the youth.

#### **3.6 Abuse and exploitation**

Owing to their vulnerability, the youth are exposed to sexual abuse, child labour and other forms of economic exploitation under the guise of employment and support. There is currently little protection from the authorities.

### **3.7 Limited participation and lack of opportunities**

Despite their numerical superiority, youth are the least represented in political and economic spheres due to societal attitudes, socio-cultural and economic barriers, and lack of proper organization.

### **3.8 Limited and poor housing**

Many youth, especially those in the urban areas, do not have access to decent housing in environments that favour healthy living.

### **3.9 Limited access to information and communication technology (ICT)**

The youth cannot exploit career, business and education opportunities available because they lack access to ICT, due to unavailability especially in rural areas, and high costs.

## **4.0 VISION OF THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY**

The National Youth Policy visualizes a society where youth have an equal opportunity as other citizens to realize their fullest potential, productively participating in economic, social, political, cultural and religious life without fear or favour.

## **5.0 PRINCIPLES AND VALUES UNDERLYING THE NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY**

The National Youth Policy should be seen as a vehicle for prioritizing public actions aimed at creating an enabling environment for the youth to fully achieve their aspirations.

Comprehensive and multi-sectoral programmes aimed at supporting youth initiatives are, therefore, essential for national development. The policy is consistent with the country's national laws and development priorities.

The key principles that underlie the policy are:

### **(i) Respect of cultural belief systems and ethical values**

The policy respects the cultural, religious, customary and ethical backgrounds of the different communities and conforms to universally recognized human rights, without discrimination based on gender, race, origin, age, ethnicity, creed, political affiliation or social status.

### **(ii) Equity and accessibility**

The policy subscribes to the principles of equal opportunities and equitable distribution of programmes, services, and resources. It also endeavours to promote access to socio-economic opportunities for the youth.

### **(iii) Gender inclusiveness**

The policy underscores the need to promote a gender-inclusive approach to the development of youth. It seeks to promote gender equity and equality, including working to eliminate gender discrimination and violence.

#### **(iv) Good governance**

The policy seeks to promote the values of good governance, a just and tolerant society, promotion of transparency and accountability and a spirit of nationhood and patriotism. In addition, the policy serves as a channel to promote values of conscientiousness, inclusiveness, selflessness, volunteerism and pursuit of good conduct

#### **(v) Mainstreaming youth issues**

The needs, opportunities and challenges facing the youth are concerns for the whole society. The youth policy aims at ensuring that youth issues are reflected in all sectors of national development, at both the micro and macro levels, within the public, private sectors and civil society. It emphasizes affirmative action for the youth as a strategy of participation and empowerment.

### **6.0 POLICY GOAL AND OBJECTIVES**

The overall goal of the policy is to promote youth participation in democratic processes as well as in community and civic affairs, and ensuring that youth programmes involve them and are youth-centred.

The objectives of the policy are:

- i. To sensitize national policy makers on the need to identify and mainstream youth issues in national development
- ii. To emphasize, support and partner with positive and effective initiatives and programmes set up by associations, no-profits groups that help the youth to fulfill their expectations and meet their needs
- iii. To create proper conditions for the youth to empower themselves and exploit their potential
- iv. To identify ways of empowering the youth.
- v. To promote a culture of volunteerism among the youth
- vi. To explore and suggest ways of engaging the youth in the process of economic development
- vii. To identify constraints that hinder the Kenyan youth from realizing their potential
- viii. To propose ways of mentoring the youth to be just and morally upright citizens
- ix. To promote honest hard work and productivity among the youth.
- x. To guarantee employment for those willing to work.

### **7.0 RIGHTS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE YOUTH**

#### **7.1 Rights of youth**

The policy recognizes the importance of youth to enjoy their youthfulness. Irrespective of social status, sex, the youth have a right to

- i. Life
- ii. Meaningful education
- iii. Good health
- iv. Marriage at the legal age of consent
- v. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
- vi. Seek meaningful employment

- vii. Adequate shelter, food and clothing
- viii. Freedom of speech, expression and association
- ix. Participate in making decisions that affect their lives
- x. Protection from social, economic and political manipulation
- xi. Ownership and protection of property

## **7.2 Responsibilities and obligations of the youth**

The policy seeks not only to safeguard the rights of the youth, but also to help them to understand and fulfill their responsibilities, for the development of society. Towards this goal the youth will:

- i. Be patriotic and loyal to Kenya and promote the country's well-being
- ii. Contribute to social-economic development at all levels, including through volunteerism.
- iii. Create and promote respect for humanity, sustain peaceful co-existence, national unity and stability
- iv. Protect the environment
- v. Help to support and protect those who are disadvantaged and vulnerable
- vi. Promote democracy and the rule of law
- vii. Create gainful employment
- viii. Take advantage of available education and training opportunities
- ix. Develop a positive attitude towards work
- x. Avoid careless and irresponsible sex.
- xi. Take responsible charge of their lives

## **7.3 Obligations of adults and parents**

The strong family ties inherited from our traditional societies, which called for mutual respect between the various age groups, have weakened. As a result, signs of rebellion are visible among a number of youths. The policy spells out obligations for parents and guardians. They should:

- i. Promote responsible parenting
- ii. Provide positive role models for the youth
- iii. Provide equal opportunities and access to family wealth to the youth, regardless of their sex
- iv. Meet basic and material needs of the youth
- v. Provide guidance and counseling to the youth
- vi. Train and socialize the youth into different skills
- vii. Provide financial support to youth projects
- viii. Offer room for youth participation at all levels
- ix. Assist the youth to realize their goals and full potential.

## **7.4 Obligations of the State**

It is the obligation of the State to ensure that all its citizens are served to their expectation. It should carefully plan and be involved in developing the youth to be responsible and available to contribute to the current and future nation-building efforts. Specifically, the State should:

- i. Be the lead agent in supporting the implementation of the youth policy. This support should cover all the other areas, such as creation of sufficient employment opportunities for the youth, education and health facilities
- ii. Ensure that the youth enjoy their State rights

- iii. Provide the necessary framework for young people to fulfill their obligations
- iv. Create a mechanism and opportunities for involvement of youth in internship.

### **7.5 Obligations of the private sector**

The private sector shall take part in the overall job creation and employment of the youth; engage in entrepreneurial development; provision of information and transfer of technology and skills. As employers they should avoid exploiting young people.

## **8.0 PRIORITY STRATEGIC AREAS**

### **8.1 Employment creation**

About 500,000 youth graduate from various tertiary institutions every year, ready to enter the job market. However, due to the slow economic growth, corruption, nepotism and demand for experience by potential employers, most of the youth remain unemployed.

The unemployment crisis requires affirmative action to give the youth a chance. An environment that will enable the youth to pursue self-help initiatives for self-employment is also required.

This calls for the following interventions supported by the government:

- i. Reviewing the existing youth programmes to identify their level of operation with a view to making them relevant and responsive to the youth
- ii. Identifying and partnering civil society-owned programmes that are efficiently addressing the youth employment crisis
- iii. Facilitating the establishment of resource centres at the community level where the youth can get information, training, recreation and counseling on employment creation. The existing centres need to be made fully operational
- iv. Establishing, in partnership with relevant organisations, a high-level resource centre for technical support to youth income-generating activities;
- v. Initiating and promoting programmes that encourage youth initiative in credit management and involvement in the co-operative movement;
- vi. Reviewing employment and training policies to encourage companies to offer temporary employment, internship and volunteer opportunities to the youth to give them the experience they require to be competitive on the job market;
- vii. The private sector, CSO's and the Government should encourage and promote initiatives from youth groups by providing them with necessary skills (technical and financial assistance) to build their capacity;
- viii. Government, CSO's, Private Sector should support and initiate income generating activities by providing youth friendly micro-finance credit facilities;
- ix. The Government, CSOs and other developmental partners should allocate funds specifically for young entrepreneurs;
- x. Creating awareness on labour laws and workers' rights through civic education, especially through campaigns organized by youth organisations;
- xi. Prosecuting employers who exploit and underpay youths and speeding up the judicial process;
- xii. Promoting specialization of young people in diverse fields to create more job opportunities;

- xiii. Establishing minimum quotas for marginalized youths during recruitment in both public and private institutions;
- xiv. Establishing marketing departments to serve as centres for career development in all tertiary institutions;
- xv. Encouraging the establishment of agricultural production and cottage industries in rural areas to promote informal sector employment;
- xvi. Encouraging a culture of sacrifice, initiative taking, volunteerism and hard work for social and moral responsibility among the youth;
- xvii. Encourage the government and the private sectors to develop business incubators and provide mentorship to the youth.

## **8.2 Health**

The uneven distribution of health facilities in the country continues to widen disparities in affordability and access to medical care. Statistics indicate that 42% of the population has access to medical facilities within four kilometres and 75% within eight kilometres.

Medical personnel are also too few to sufficiently address the health needs of the population, let alone those of the youth. Currently there is one doctor for every 33,000 people in the rural areas and 1,700 in the urban areas.

Health has become a major issue among the youth. Apart from the traditional health problems like malaria, tuberculosis and the more conservative sexually transmitted diseases, the exponential spread of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse have become issues of major concern.

Reproductive health is one of the issues with the greatest impact on the youth. Some related problems and side effects include teenage pregnancies and abortion. Other common health problems are malaria and acute respiratory infections, which account for about a-half of out patient cases. Other diseases the youth grapple with include skin infections, intestinal worms and diarrhoea.

AIDS among the youth is also a worrying issue. Research has shown that a large percentage of new HIV infection occurs among the youth. Those most affected are young women aged 25-29 and young men aged 30-34 years. Yet this age group has the most productive people in the society.

The fact that many of the youth use pregnancy control drugs, which are available over the counter, makes them more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections. This is because they concentrate on prevention of pregnancy and overlook the risk of getting infected.

Current health facilities are not youth-friendly. There is a need for facilities that offer preventive and curative health services for the youth. Information on health should be made available to the youth.

The following strategic framework is proposed. The Government, private sector and civil society should:

- i. Incorporate representatives of the youth in efforts to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS in order to take into account the youth dimension to HIV/AIDS and target this group effectively;
- ii. Promote and support youth campaigns aimed at encouraging a change in sexual behaviour and discouraging drug and substance abuse, and negative peer influence;
- iii. Promote and establish home and community-based welfare programmes to help youth orphaned by HIV/AIDS;
- iv. Establish guidance and counseling units managed by the youth in all schools and other learning institutions;
- v. Establish affordable rehabilitation centres to help youth addicted to drugs;
- vi. Promote and enhance affordable or free counseling programmes on health-related issues, especially peer to peer counseling in faith based institutions;
- vii. Encourage parents to take a lead role in teaching and counseling their children on responsible sexual behaviour;
- viii. Promote and support programmes on personal hygiene and physical fitness and mental health;
- ix. Improve the technical and institutional capacity of youth organisations and CBOs to enable them to effectively advocate and promote health programmes for youth;
- x. Promote partnerships between the government, CSOs and the private sector to work with the youth;
- xi. Improve access to voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) services for all youth.
- xii. Enhance the youth's capacity in leadership and advocacy to enable them to manage youth health programmes.
- xiii. Promote research in youth health areas and make the findings accessible.

### **8.3 Education and training**

The 8-4-4 system of education was geared to imparting appropriate skills to enhance self-employment. However due to the high costs, poverty and lack of facilities, there have been high school drop-out rates. Most of the youth drop out of school or graduate without acquiring the skills necessary for self-employment. Many girls drop out of school due to pregnancy.

The country's training institutions are not only inadequate but also lack the essential facilities and technology to prepare students for the challenging market demands. And recently sub-standard colleges and other training institutions have mushroomed. These institutions have taken advantage of the shortage of training opportunities to exploit desperate youth.

In most cases, there is no linkage between the training institutions, like the youth polytechnics, and the informal sector. The youth who train in these institutions cannot, therefore, be immediately absorbed into the informal sector. The society's negative attitude towards the informal sector discourages many youth from venturing into it.

The following strategies will be applied to enhance education and training for the youth:

- i. Develop a curriculum that addresses the youth in their respective circumstances;
- ii. Advocate affordable and accessible quality primary, secondary and university education;

- iii. Identify, support and partner efforts of communities, groups, no-profit organizations , places of worship, especially in technical education;
- iv. Promote exchange of information, knowledge and human resources between the public and private institutions;
- v. Increase bursary provision for needy students;
- vi. Improve existing training facilities for the youth;
- vii. Provide adequate mobile schools for those youth in arid and semi-arid areas.
- viii. Establish enough special schools and rehabilitation centres to cater for the youth in special circumstances.
- ix. Promote non-formal education and in-service learning.
- x. Promote and encourage skills development of the youth through vocational training and imparting life skills;
- xi. Enforce the re-admission policy for girls who drop out of school due to pregnancy;
- xii. Strengthen civic education in schools.
- xiii. Develop links between training institutions and the employment market to ensure such institutions offer relevant skills.
- xiv. Protect informal sector innovations by patenting them.
- xv. Involve the youth in formulating and reviewing of the education and training policy.
- xvi. Scrutinize the private training institutions to ensure they meet the required academic and technical standards.
- xvii. Strengthen family life education in schools.
- xviii. Create linkages between educational institutions and the private sector through research, internship opportunities and financing.
- xix. Encourage the private sector to get involved in technical education.

#### **8.4 Sport and recreation**

Sport and recreation are important for the psychological and physical development of the youth. They also contribute to their personal development by promoting good health, personal discipline, and leadership and team skills.

Apart from providing enjoyment, engaging in sport helps the youth to make good use of their leisure time instead of being idle. Sport also promotes peace, unity and understanding among the youth.

Unfortunately, investment in sport and recreation has not reflected their importance. The sector suffers from inadequate funds and facilities while the sportsmen and women lack motivation and are often exploited by sports organisations.

Due to these constraints, it has not been possible to tap fully the talents of many of the youth.

To address these concerns, the society should:

- i. Establish and improve accessibility to recreation and sporting facilities in schools, communities and villages. These facilities should have trained personnel to assist in identifying and developing young people's talents;

- ii. Use sporting activities as platforms to advocate and campaign for behavioural change to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and drug abuse;
- iii. Liaise with youth organisations to protect sportsmen and sportswomen from exploitation by clubs and sports agencies;
- iv. Remunerate and honour sportsmen and women who represent the Nation in various competitions;
- v. Make the National Youth Development Programme more effective. The private sector, development partners and other stakeholders should be approached to support this initiative;
- vi. Promote traditional games for recreation and as a way of preserving culture.
- vii. Gazette sporting facilities and recreational spaces as a way of protecting them from being acquired by individuals.
- viii. Ensure the youth are represented on committees and bodies that make decisions on sports.

### **8.5 The environment**

Degradation of the environment, through pollution, poor waste management and deforestation, is a major challenge for Kenya. With the ensuing destruction of water catchments, depletion of fish and other marine stock, pollution of rivers and destruction of plants and animals, the youth cannot be assured quality life in the future.

The need to conserve the environment has become increasingly important and many youth organizations are engaged in activities to protect the environment such as tree planting, clean-up campaigns, bio-diversity conservation, wildlife preservation campaigns and agro-forestry.

The following strategies are recommended to address the problem of environmental degradation:

- i. Encourage use of alternative sources of energy to protect forests from destruction;
- ii. Promote environmental clubs for the youth;
- iii. Strengthen the involvement of the youth in environmental conservation programmes, especially representation in committees at all levels.
- iv. Establish linkages between environmental committees at district level with environmental clubs in schools;
- v. Improve access to information at the local level by setting up resource centres, providing vocational training and disseminating environmental research work.

### **8.6 Art and culture**

Art is an expression of a people's beliefs, values, appreciation, beauty and culture.

Culture, on the other hand, is a definition of a people - their lives, values, aspirations and beliefs. Culture reflects the livelihood of a people. It is by a culture that one can judge a community - their joy, pain, hope, beliefs and values.

Culture does not exist in a vacuum. It has to spread among a people and it has to have acceptable standards. Culture is dynamic.

The youth in Kenya find themselves at a crossroads between the Western culture and the remnants of traditional culture. Kenya, therefore, faces the challenge of preserving our culture to be passed on to future generations.

To help preserve and promote culture and art, the following strategies are proposed:

- i. Establish more cultural centres to promote material and non-material aspects of our culture;
- ii. Establish community resource centres to provide information on culture.
- iii. Facilitate forums for adults and the youth to exchange ideas and views;
- iv. Promote and protect local arts and culture;
- v. Lobby for more coverage of youth issues and of role models for the youth by the media;
- vi. Make theatres and cultural centres affordable and accessible to the youth;
- vii. Invest in training and empowering young artistes;
- viii. Enforce laws stopping proliferation of obscene literature and material.

### **8.7 Youth and the media**

The proliferation of radio and TV stations witnessed in the country in the recent past has not translated in commensurate information targeted at the youth. Little positive impact has been registered in terms of behavioural change. Campaigns against HIV/AIDS and drugs, and programmes addressing unemployment and other problems affecting the youth have not been strong and aggressive.

Instead, the youth have been exposed with music and film that only serve to perpetrate the Western culture. And while the Internet is a rich source of information, it has also served to expose the youth to pornography.

The youth have a right to access information that will improve their livelihoods, enabling them to effectively participate in development. This could be achieved through:

- i. Subsidizing the cost of production and airing of youth programmes that will spur socio-economic development nature;
- ii. Improving access to information for the youth.

### **8.8 Youth empowerment and participation in national life**

Youth empowerment is about facilitating the youth to forge partnerships with other groups in society; instilling a sense of ownership in the efforts to improve their well-being; and building their capacity to realize their aspirations and boost self-motivation.

Involving the youth in planning, implementation, and evaluation of programmes that affect them gives them a sense of belonging and ownership. This results in sustainability and success of such programmes.

Empowerment of the youth is based on the belief that the youth are the best resource for promoting development and they are agents of change in meeting their own challenges and solving own problems.

The youth are empowered when they acknowledge that they can make free choices in life, take action based on their decisions and accept responsibility for the action.

Empowering the youth requires an economic and social base; political will; adequate resources and a supportive legal and administrative framework; a stable environment of equality, peace and democracy; access to knowledge, information and skills and a positive value system.

Managers, leaders, teachers and parents should identify new ways of educating the youth about the future. The youth should no longer be taught what to learn, but how to learn, not what they are committed to but rather the value of commitment. Societal systems need to adopt open and flexible societal norms. Adults should change from working for the youth to working with the youth.

To address the issues of youth empowerment and participation in national life, the following strategies are proposed;

- i. Involving the youth at all levels of governance and in decision-making processes. Ensure that affirmative action for youth participation is in place at every level.
- ii. Encourage the youth to engage in debate on economic, political and social issues;
- iii. Establish micro-finance programmes to cater for the financial needs of the youth.
- iv. Encourage the youth to take up leadership positions.
- v. Provide training in entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills for the youth and their organizations.
- vi. Encourage the youth to stand up against all forms of injustice and discrimination.

## **9.0 PRIORITY TARGET GROUPS**

This policy document is a basis for developing opportunities for all the youth in Kenya. However, in addressing the needs of the youth, special attention shall be paid to certain groups because of their specific needs. In each of the target areas, the Government and organisations dealing with the youth will give special attention to:

### **9.1 Youth with disability**

For many youth a disability leads to rejection, isolation and discrimination, hindering their psychological and emotional development.

Young men and women with disability require specific strategies to ensure they participate fully in society. Special measures will be put in place to ensure that their needs are adequately addressed. The policy adopts a developmental approach to youth with disability where human rights, participation and inclusiveness are promoted. The policy advocates greater awareness of the issues faced by young women and men who are mentally or and physically, visually impaired or have a hearing impairment.

### **9.2 Street youth**

Due to the breakdown of the social fabric street families have continued to increase. From street boys and girls we now have street youth and families. These are people who live and or work in the streets, many of them due to homelessness.

The street youth are especially vulnerable as they lack protection, supervision or direction from responsible adults. The policy advocates re-integration and rehabilitation of street youth in the communities and strengthening of family systems.

### **9.3 Youth infected with HIV/AIDS**

The age group 15-30 has been affected the most by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The youth are exposed to the HIV/AIDS due to biological, socio-cultural and economic factors. The high rate of teenage pregnancies, abortions, school drop-out and sexually transmitted diseases confirm that the youth are engaging in sex early, increasingly being exposed to HIV/AIDS.

The policy advocates community-based care and positive living for this target group.

### **9.4 Female Youth**

The female youth constitute 52% of total youth. Sexual activity among the youth begins quite early in their life. Over 44% of girls between 15-19 years old have had sexual intercourse. Sex at this age has adverse effects on health, besides other socio-economic consequences. Studies have shown that most adolescent pregnancies (around 90%) are unplanned. High level of unprotected sexual activity exposes the female youth to the risk of contracting STIs, including HIV/AIDS.

The lower level of education for girls, coupled with social cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced early marriages, put the female youth at a disadvantage. They have led to low participation and representation of young women in decision-making. Traditional gender roles overburden the female youth, limiting their opportunities for progression and self-development.

### **9.5 The unemployed youth**

Unemployment brings along with it social ills such as crime and alcohol and drug abuse. Both the Government and non-governmental agencies must address this problem. The unemployed youth should be provided with access to services and support programmes and opportunities for further training.

### **9.6 Out of school youth**

The out of school youth have special needs in terms of access to socio-economic and other opportunities. The increasing disparity between the annual output of school leavers and the job creation in the economy has resulted in high unemployment levels among the youth.

Unemployment, which is mainly as a result of rapid population growth and increased pressure on land, is exacerbated by imbalance of skills among the youth caused by the education system and over-reliance by Kenya's industries on foreign technologies.

## **10.0 IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS**

The policy shall be implemented through an action plan detailing strategies, activities, target groups, time frame and the budget lines. Implementation will require involvement of all agencies dealing with the youth. These include Government ministries as the main agencies, non-governmental organisations, the private sector and various youth organisations. The Ministry responsible for youth affairs shall spearhead the overall policy implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review, in addition to mobilizing resources necessary for the implementation.

Partnerships within the different organisations will play a key role in achieving the policy's objectives.

### **10.1 THE NATIONAL YOUTH COUNCIL**

To ensure effective implementation, the policy recognizes the need to establish a National Youth Council through an Act of Parliament. Its mandate will include co-ordination of youth organisations, designing and continuously reviewing the NYP and developing an "integrated national youth development plan" in collaboration with the ministry responsible for youth affairs. The council will act as an advisory, research and policy institution on youth affairs in the country.

Primarily, the National Youth Council will:

- i. Promote and popularize the NYP;
- ii. Ensure structures are established and developed for effective implementation of the policy;
- iii. Design key performance indicators and mechanisms to ensure adherence to policy.

#### **Functions**

The National Youth Council will, among other functions:

- i. Mobilize, sensitize and organize the youth of Kenya under one umbrella for political, economic and socio-cultural activities.
- ii. (ii. Gainfully involve the youth in activities that are beneficial to them and the nation at large.
- iii. Mobilize resources to support and fund youth council programmes and activities.
- iv. Liaise with development organisations to ensure that they gain access to resources, services and programmes.
- v. Promote relations between youth organisations other bodies inside and outside Kenya with similar objectives or interests.
- vi. Inspire and promote the spirit of unity, patriotism and volunteerism in the youth.
- vii. Act as a voice and bridge to ensure that the Government and other policy makers are kept informed of the views and aspirations of the youth.

The policy also proposes the establishment of an inter-ministerial committee on youth comprising representatives of relevant ministries dealing with youth issues. The committee will monitor and review the youth activities carried out by various players in the Government as stipulated in the action plan.

The youth policy shall be reviewed at least once in every five years and in line with other government policy statements.

### **11.0 CONCLUSION**

The youth can no longer be termed as leaders of tomorrow. They must be seen as today's leaders. Planning cannot continue without involving the youth, especially those who are in difficult circumstances, in all the sectors of the economy. The youth have a right to participate in issues that affect their life and to exploit their full potential. They also have responsibilities that must not be relegated to the older generations.

This policy seeks to provide an opportunity for improving the quality of life for Kenyan Youth. It will cater for all categories of youth.

The policy seeks to promote youth participation in democratic processes as well as in community and civic affairs. It also advocates creation of a supportive social, cultural, economic and political environment that will empower the youth to be partners in development.