



منتدى الشباب حول السياسات الشبابية
Youth Forum for Youth Policy

The Document of the Youth Policy in Lebanon

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I. Synopsis on youth in Lebanon

The youth age bracket in Lebanon has been defined to be 15- 29 years old, in reference to an agreement between the Ministry of Youth & Sports (MOYS), the civil society organizations in Lebanon, and the United Nations agencies operating in Lebanon, based on social and economic criteria. This age bracket constitutes 27% of the total population in Lebanon.

On one hand, Lebanese, namely politicians and social and educational institutions, acknowledge that youth are active, dynamic and agents of change, and they determine “what the country will be”. On the other hand, some of those Lebanese cancel the role of youth in the present time, considering that youth should be recipient to knowledge and experiences only, disregarding the fact that if youth do not act and take initiative today, they will not be active citizens tomorrow. Part of the adults’ community does not trust the capabilities and potential of young people, which resulted in having a segment of young people who lack trust in their capabilities in being active and influential in the public life.

There are many laws that discriminate against youth, namely the legal candidature and voting age in the elections law; the legal age to form and join associations... these laws reflect the society’s view towards youth.

The amendment of legislation that discriminate against youth is the correct entry point to enhancing real youth participation, treating youth as citizens with full rights, and redressing the development process in Lebanon. It is important to look at youth, not as a physical force only, but as a brain that is characterized by its openness to newness.

II. Defining the youth policy

The youth policy is the declaration by the State of its commitment to youth issues; it is a comprehensive document that includes the vision of all the actions the State intends to take in order to improve the living conditions of young people, and ensure their access to welfare and other services, and to create an enabling environment to access decision making positions in the public life.

Also, youth policy:

- Is multi-sectoral and requires inter- ministerial collaboration on youth issues
- Is based on scientific research, credible statistics in all sectors affecting youth
- Includes youth needs and ambitions into the overall public policy framework, and allocates financial resources to achieve balanced youth development at the national level.

- Should, after being recognized by the government, be reviewed periodically, to keep abreast the changing needs of youth and society.

III. Youth Forum for National Youth Policy

1. Definition and membership:

The youth Forum is formed of youth organizations and youth wings in political parties, and it is recognized by the Lebanese government as per the Council of Ministers' decree # 80/2007. The Youth Forum operates in partnership with the Ministry of Youth & Sports with the aim to have national youth friendly policies in Lebanon.

The Youth Forum is a space where Lebanese youth coming from different backgrounds meet and engage in dialogue over youth issues.

2. The relation between the Youth Forum and the youth policy:

In addition, the youth forum aims to influence youth policy, through monitoring, and contributing to:

- The developing youth policy recommendations based on youth needs and ambitions
- Lobbying for the acknowledgment of the youth policy document by the Council of Ministers
- Monitoring the implementation of the youth policy in various ministries through issuing specific legislation, ministerial decisions, among others
- The evaluating the youth policy after 5 years of its implementation with the aim to improve it.

Youth involvement in this process ensures the presence of a youth perspective and spirit; it also contributes to building a real partnership between the government and youth, and renews the confidence of youth in their capabilities and role on the one hand, and in the government on the other hand. It also reinforces youth status and credibility in society.

3. The role of the Youth Forum in youth policy and others:

The first role of the “Youth Forum for National Youth Policies” is to achieve youth participation in decision making processes inside their own organizations when it comes to youth policy in the overall frame of the civil, political, and social rights, and taking into account the variances in mentalities and traditions across the various Lebanese

communities, and the political and economic contexts in the country. The second role is to raise young people's awareness over existing laws and policies that discriminate against them. The third role is to work towards incorporating the youth policy recommendations into the Lebanese constitution and laws. The fourth role is to contribute to its evaluation after some years of implementation with the aim to improve it. The fifth role is to enhance civil peace among all Lebanese citizens. Moreover, the Youth Forum can play additional roles to its essential role. It could be a Forum that gathers Lebanese youth from the various colors of the political spectrum in Lebanon. It could create an incentive for youth to raise youth issues, through:

- Advocating youth friendly policies. The collective work of youth within the Forum creates a wide base of support and a lobbying force that facilitates the process of amending legislation that discriminate against young people.
- Networking among youth NGOs and youth wings in political parties, which help in reaching out to new stakeholders. This also facilitates the process of accessing information that is relevant to youth. It is noteworthy here that the Youth Forum premise (when available) should be connected to the internet to follow the flow of information rapid pace. All this helps in enhancing the awareness over the importance of having a youth policy, and accelerates the support for it.
- Youth gathering regularly, which helps in updating information on youth needs and ambitions; this is a basis for any youth policy.
- Finding a space for dialogue aiming at bringing youth together, away from political polarizations, and focusing dialogue around young people's common needs and ambitions, and not over their political differences, which is a legal right, and should not lead to disagreements, hatred, and cut of communication among them. The Youth Forum can organize rational political dialogue among youth and make them appreciate diversity, if a proper developmental and right-based approach is followed. This is a key stone to the youth policy in Lebanon, as youth need to know each other well and have dialogue on this basis.

4. The structure of the Youth Forum

It is useful if the Youth Forum has a youth like identity, meaning that the organigram is dynamic, not pyramid like, cooperative, not competitive, and reflecting youth spontaneity and their way of thinking. This way, youth are the decision makers in the Youth Forum, which creates an incentive for them to be active.

The presence of youth from NGOs and political parties in the youth Forum is richness. This is because NGOs tend to work on developmental topics and practical skills, whereas political parties focus on mass mobilization and lobbying. In addition, both have a common agenda. This way, the relationship is complementary.

5. The working mechanism inside the Youth Forum

The Youth Forum is formed of:

- Five specialized Task Forces (TF): they propose youth policy recommendations, plan and implement lobbying activities around these recommendations. The TFs work around 5 sectors: demographic characteristics and migration; labor and economic participation; education and culture; health; social integration and political participation.
- Coordination group: it is formed of the coordinators of TFs; it ensures full coordination and complementarities in the work of the 5 TFs.
- General Assembly: it is formed of member youth NGOs and youth wings in political parties; it is responsible of decision making related to the vision and public policy of the Youth Forum.
- Secretariat: it ensures management, coordination and secures funding for the Youth Forum, under the supervision of the General Assembly; to ensures quality work and sustainability.

IV. The background of the work on youth policy in Lebanon: “the Youth Advocacy Process- YAP”

The work on youth policy in Lebanon started in 2000 in the frame of the “Youth Advocacy Process- YAP”, by a group of youth NGOs, the United Nations Youth Task Force, and the then newly established Ministry of Youth& Sports, with the overall aim to put in place a youth policy that allows youth meaningful participation. The work methodology was based on: identifying youth needs; categorizing them into sectors; and forming task forces in each sector; developing youth policy recommendations in each sector; presenting these to the Ministry of Youth& Sports; lobbying various decision makers to acknowledge these recommendations.

This collective, systematic and cumulative work, in partnership with the Ministry of Youth& Sports and the United Nations Youth Task Force, has paid off and led to the development of a well researched and credible youth policy document, which gained the consent of Lebanese youth through its validation in 14 workshops with youth across the Lebanese areas, round table discussions with experts. These workshops aimed at sensitizing young people, NGOs, political parties, relevant ministries, municipalities, universities, schools, and activists on the content of the youth policy document and gain their support for its acknowledgment and implementation. Today, the Youth Forum is collaborating very closely with the Ministry of Youth& Sports to have the youth policy document acknowledged by the Lebanese Council of Ministers.

V. Youth policy recommendations by sector:

The youth policy recommendations below summarize all the work done by civil society since 2001, in addition to discussions with representatives of all party youth organizations and youth associations, and with civil society activists in Lebanon, in the framework of 14 workshops that were organized throughout Lebanon in 2009. These recommendations were also reviewed and discussed with experts during 5 roundtables in 2009. Furthermore, 12 ministries involved in youth issues reviewed them and gave their observations in 2010, namely: Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Ministry of Social Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Transportation, Ministry of Public Health, Ministry of Labor, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, and certainly The Ministry of Youth and Sports. A final revision of this paper was made at the Youth Forum on Youth Policies and the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

The recommendations below are considered to be the demands of the participating youth associations and party youth organizations. Although they do not necessarily agree on all the points included in this paper, these associations and organizations consider them to be a comprehensive basket comprising youth issues on which it is important to work in various forms and according to the context of each issue.

General Recommendation

To activate the **National Consultative Committee for Youth Policies** so that it continues its role in supporting the ratification of the youth policy paper at the Council of Ministers and promoting the youth policy at the various concerned ministries, with the aim of implementing it at the level of ministries, while preserving the principle of a comprehensive and integral youth policy.

1. Demographic Characteristics and Migration

“In order to address some of the concerns related to migration of youth, young people need to have viable alternatives to remain in their countries. This means addressing root causes such as poverty. It also requires that young people are provided, through education and skills training, with the knowledge and confidence to become successful participants in the labor markets of their own countries.”

UN World Youth Report 2005 – Report of the Secretary-General, p. 27

Lebanon suffers from high rates of migration from the periphery to central cities due to the divergence in development among areas. Moreover, there is an ever-increasing high rate of potential migrants in Lebanon due to (a) the deteriorating economic situation and the lack of productive economic and financial planning; (b) the civil war that paralyzed the state institutions and destroyed the country; (c) the repeated Israeli aggressions since 1948. Furthermore, there is a high number of university graduates among Lebanese migrants, with the main reason behind migration in general – including the youth – being the improvement of living conditions. Studies show that most of the migrant youth do not intend to return to their homeland. Hence, the youth consider it necessary to deal with the problems related to migration from the periphery to central cities, and to work on reducing migration rates and setting the groundwork for the return of young brains in order to benefit from their skills and experience in the national development process.

A. Regional disparity in development in Lebanon plays a decisive role in increasing the severity of migration from the rural and remote areas to the cities, or migration abroad. Hence, it is necessary to establish a Ministry of Planning and entrust it with preparing studies for projects related to installations and development, and then working on their execution in cooperation with the various state administrations and public institutions in the framework of the policy of fair regional developmental balance. This is in addition to giving a role to local communities on the level of consultation, coordination, and participation in execution. Perhaps the main relevant issues are as follows:

- Drafting an agricultural-industrial-commercial master plan covering the entire Lebanese territory, providing alternative crops, adopting a farmer’s almanac, fostering agriculture and the agricultural industry, and offering incentives regarding the taxes of these sectors, thus positively affecting youth employment in the regions;

- Fostering subsidized agricultural loans through the existing concerned institutions;
- Establishing developmental projects in the regions, according to the available resources, that would involve scientific, academic, and industrial institutions, and agricultural and agro-industrial schools;
- Activating administrative decentralization through the establishment of proper infrastructure and the achievement of fair development in all the regions, thus contributing to stop internal migration;
- Taking all the necessary measures to adopt a demographic policy that would include the following: the rationalization of the building of dwellings in accordance with demand, the amendment of real estate laws and taxation to serve this purpose, and the provision of subsidized housing loans to the youth;
- Adopting a plan to develop the public transportation network and its access from all regions, including special rates for the youth; also, providing transportation in rural areas, thus contributing to prevent these areas' inhabitants and youth from migrating (coordination between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Public Works and Transportation);
- Setting a database about youth employment in Lebanon and abroad that includes statistical and non-statistical data which helps in the processes of diagnosis, policy-making, and monitoring and evaluation;
- Classifying agricultural land and preventing their use for non-agricultural projects (this is the responsibility of Urban Planning);
- Reforming the land property systems (Ministry of Finance);
- Providing sources of water, energy, heating, as well as a sewage system (Ministry of Energy and Water, and Ministry of Public Works and Transportation);
- Providing health and social security to the farmers, including the youth (Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Labor).

These issues and projects have a direct effect on demographic stabilization and hence the reduction of migration rates.

2. Labor and Economic Participation

“Labor force participation rates for young people decreased in the world as a whole by almost four percentage points between 1993 and 2003. This is mainly the result of an increase in the number of young people attending school and staying longer in the educational system, and because some young people drop out of the labor force as they lose hope of finding work.”

UN World Youth Report 2005

Young people constitute 41% of the labor force¹, while they constitute only 27% of the population. This indicates the importance of this category in the production of economic development. The unemployment problem in Lebanon is chronic, and involves young people *par excellence*, as studies show that 66% of the unemployed are young people². An essential problem pertaining to the unemployment of youth is the duration of the search for jobs of those who want to enter the labor market for the first time. Also, young people face challenges related to work permanency, fair wages, and protection from exploitation. Hence, planning should be made to reduce unemployment and offer young people decent working conditions.

A. Among the most serious problems faced by young people on the labor market in Lebanon is the dearth of information about job opportunities and the skills required, due to the lack of planning and organization on the labor market. Hence, the opportunities of youth participation on the economic level must be improved and the labor market must be developed through the achievement of the following objectives:

- Establishing a permanent taskforce among the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, Labor, Economy, and Finance, to monitor and evaluate the labor market and its requirements. This would be followed by the creation of a unified database on the labor market, which would freely be available to everyone, especially job seekers and employers, through all available means. This database would include details about all specialties and their relation to the labor market;
- Promoting the dissemination of information about vocational and technical training and linking it to higher education with the aim of changing the negative outlook towards this type of education;
- Promoting harmony between professional and academic life through stimulating the private sector to offer flexible working hours, and the

¹ Dr. Riad Tabbarah, Draft Study on the Lebanese Youth Condition, 2010

² Dr. Riad Tabbarah, Draft Study on the Lebanese Youth Condition, 2010

educational institutions to take into account workers' needs while programming educational activities;

- Promoting and activating the role of the National Employment Office to include all regions, and broadening the scope of its work to include the private sector in addition to the public sector;
- Supporting all other relevant means, such as the job fairs organized by universities at the end of the academic year, and other activities aiming to get young people acquainted with the available job opportunities, and thus reduce the duration of the job-seeking period. Such a role must particularly be entrusted to the Lebanese University;
- Establishing and activating professional and academic guidance offices in universities, especially the Lebanese University;
- Establishing a network for job vacancies in the local market and the young unemployed people through a website designed to this effect.
- Allocating priority for youth in relation to investing and working in recently discovered oil and gas in Lebanese shores, through providing tax reductions and others, as this will mitigate youth migration.

B. The Lebanese economy does not currently offer sufficient job opportunities to cover the demand of young people entering the labor market annually. Hence, appropriate attention should be given to the most promising and job-offering sectors in light of the changes in the internal and external labor markets, and measures that stimulate the various sectors should be taken, through:

- Adopting an employment policy that is directly related to the economic policies;
- Working on linking investments in infrastructure and public development projects to the employment of young local labor;
- Issuing periodic studies and statistics on unemployment (its causes and types) in collaboration with the Central Administration of Statistics, with the aim of finding adequate solutions and reducing its rates based on the specificities of each region;
- Raising the awareness of the Lebanese youth on the importance of manual labor and crafts, and encouraging employment in this sector; and striving to create job opportunities in new sectors such as culture and IT;
- Spreading idea incubators and financial support institutions for the economic initiatives of young people;
- Supporting innovations and inventions by young people;
- Adopting competence and specialization standards in the public sector employment;
- Performing an in-depth study on professional training of university students based on the “no wages no work” principle.

C. The mobility of labor and its flexibility in rapid adaption among the various sectors and regions according to the circumstances of labor markets play an

important role in reducing the high unemployment rate among young people and their wish to migrate for work purposes. Hence, professional orientation must be implemented starting the primary cycle, through:

- Visiting several professional rehabilitation centers for school dropouts;
- Encouraging private institutions to provide training programs for young people that would be mandatory in universities for all specializations;
- Establishing career guidance programs for the secondary cycle in schools;
- The adoption by schools of modern methods such as tests that match the skills and interests of students with the academic specializations that are more suited to them;
- Adopting experience exchange programs between university students and secondary school students for the selection of academic specializations.

D. When young people obtain a full time job, this does not necessarily imply that they obtained full rights in the workplace, as focus should be made on the working hours and work conditions at a deeper level, in addition to the problems faced by the young people who did not reach university-level education and who entered the labor market at an early age, through:

i. The Legal Aspect:

- Enhancing the knowledge of the youth of their rights and obligations and related legal texts through the inclusion of civic education in school and vocational learning curricula;
- Putting an end to the contracting policy in the public sector in order to ensure continuity and workers' rights, as this policy has proved to be inefficient;
- Developing the labor laws to provide the necessary protection to the young people who have unregulated jobs;
- Providing mechanisms that ensure the protection of young people with part-time jobs in regard to working conditions and social security;
- Providing lawyers on the expense of the Bar Association and hastening the process of settling cases of arbitrary dismissal of young people;
- Activating the laws pertaining to the employment of minors, and protecting them from all forms of exploitation;
- Activating the role of inspection in the different sectors; verifying the implementation of the Labor Law, especially in large companies; and forcing companies to implement this law through holding them accountable by equipping inspectors with the necessary tools. This helps protect young people from risks and exploitation.

ii. Syndicates:

- Activating the role of syndicates to ensure youth participation and represent their interests;
- Remunerating internships with no less than the minimum wage.

iii. Working Conditions:

- Giving special interest to young female workers, especially those working in the unregulated sector, through improving their working conditions, providing them with social security coverage, ensuring their right to be represented in international organizations, and protecting them from discrimination, sexual harassment, etc.;
- Taking all the necessary measures to implement the decree regarding the provision of health and safety requirements at the workplace for all workers;
- Providing an adequate and equipped workplace for people with special needs, and activating the work of the Ministry of Labor's Commission for Activating the Rights of the Handicapped in the Workplace;
- Continuing to issue application decrees in regard to Law # 220/2000 pertaining to the work of people with special needs in the concerned ministries and implementing them strictly;
- Promoting harmony between professional and family life, especially through encouraging the workplace to establish nurseries in view of facilitating the work of young women and protecting their right to motherhood through the implementation of the laws in effect;
- Promoting the creative abilities and skills of young people working in the unregulated economic sector, and helping them turn to regulated work.

3. Education and Culture

“Education has long been regarded as the primary solution to poverty. The World Declaration on Education for All, launched in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, established the commitment of the international community to universalize primary education and massively reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade. The World Program of Action for Youth adopted education as the first of 10 priority areas for youth development. The Dakar Framework for Action, adopted at the World Education Forum in 2000, identified six major goals for education, two of which became Millennium Development Goals later that year: (a) to ensure that by 2015, all children will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling; and (b) to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education by no later than 2015.”

UN World Youth Report 2005 – Report of the Secretary-General

The education sector in Lebanon suffers from high costs and a high rate of school dropouts. Also, the educational system does not provide the necessary learning and living requirements, and its curricula do not correspond to the labor market requirements. Hence, the youth consider it is important to work on two axes: (a) the educational system, and (b) the cultural life and youth participation in it.

A. Young people aspire to have an educational system that provides them with the necessary learning and living requirements and prepares them to participate in all aspects of society as active citizens. Such expectations require:

- i.** Overcoming all obstacles that prevent the enrolment of young people in educational institutions and pursuing primary, secondary, and higher education; ensuring equality in obtaining this right among all regions and social classes; fighting the phenomenon of school dropouts, which still represents the main obstacle to the education of young people, through:
 - Implementing the law of compulsory and free primary education in public schools until the age of fifteen, and helping needy parents to enroll their children in educational institutions with regular attendance;
 - Developing education in all regions in the framework of activating administrative decentralization;
 - Amending educational curricula to correspond to life requirements based on the importance of students in the educational process and their participation on all levels, reducing the overload of information, and adopting empirical learning and summer activities;

- Adapting education and private and public schools to people with specific needs, and finding systems that enable them to pursue their education without any form of discrimination;
 - Removing the legal constraints against the enrolment of undocumented children in private and public schools, or their participation in official exams;
 - Taking all the necessary measures to reject physical, psychological, verbal, or intellectual abuse in schools, and considering the hitting of a student to be a violation, even if for disciplinary purposes;
 - Adopting a modern method of scientific evaluation in schools, not for the sake of accountability, but rather in view of developing the learning process and of including students, teachers, and curricula;
 - Supporting educational scholarships and providing subsidized educational loans at the level of both the private and public sectors, in collaboration with private institutions, in view of helping limited-income young people to enroll in higher education institutions;
 - Reviewing the equivalence system of foreign diplomas.
 - Including the subject of oil and gas in educational curricula through the various cycles at schools and universities, especially in public schools and the Lebanese University.
- ii.** Developing and training the teachers in public schools, and enabling them to play their role in the empowerment of young people and their participation in learning and education, in addition to defining the standards and laws that regulate teaching in general, through:
- Implementing Law #444 that stipulates that teachers must be holders of a university degree, with a preference for holders of an educational degree, in order to ensure the ability to convey proper teaching to students;
 - Developing and training the teachers, particularly in regard to modern methodology and dealing with young people;
 - Reinforcing the teaching staff with young members.
- iii.** Developing teaching curricula so that schools become a place that offers intellectual, cultural, health, and social benefits to students, in an atmosphere of fun and safe interaction, through:
- Developing students' critical thinking and teaching them the methodology of research;
 - Introducing history of arts to academic curricula and giving more importance to arts classes;
 - Giving more importance to sports as well as civic education, and including to the latter citizenship and daily life conduct;
 - Strengthening national culture in academic curricula, including the people's right to protect their land and defend it against aggressions;
 - Eliminating discriminatory terminology from the curricula, particularly those that are derogatory towards women and people with special needs;

- Teaching the culture of civilizations in public and private schools;
 - Setting an equivalence system for university specializations in order to facilitate the transfer of students between private and public universities;
 - Activating the state's supervision over the private educational sector, including tuition fees, and respecting students' rights, especially in schools that prevent their average students from sitting for official exams for marketing purposes;
 - Introducing to the academic curricula the subject of life skills, such as project management skills;
 - Training health and social workers and nurses in schools, and activating their roles;
 - Finding a space for political, intellectual, and social dialogue among school students;
 - Providing infrastructure, particularly in public schools, in accordance with the new curricula, such as playgrounds, theaters, laboratories, libraries, computer labs;
 - Providing the necessary equipment and materials for laboratories, especially in public schools;
 - Providing a computer lab with an internet connection in every school, including public schools;
 - Introducing active learning in schools.
- iv. Spreading and activating student committees and associations in the public and private sectors, whereby educational institutions turn into training places for decision-making, active participation, and democratic behavior, in addition to issuing laws that govern the work of such committees and ensure the students' right to take part in them, as well as in all the administrative and academic decisions of the educational institutions.
- v. Developing the infrastructure in schools and educational institutions, and applying clear standards that regulate the establishment of these institutions to ensure the availability of all the necessary resources, which include books, modern information technology, playgrounds, laboratories, etc. This offers students an empowering environment in compliance with modern and comprehensive learning.
- vi. Supporting the Lebanese University and strengthening its role as the national university through allocating larger budgets for the development of its infrastructure, providing all the necessary equipment for the learning process and scientific research, and training teachers on modern scientific methodology. This is in addition to establishing an office for university development that constantly evaluates the university's needs and links them to society's needs, and monitoring the latest discoveries that can be used academically.

B. Outside the framework of education, there is an urgent need to facilitate the access of young people to cultural sources and to let them take part in its richness and diversity, especially that a large part of them are outside the

educational institutions either because they are pursuing their studies, or because they entered the labor market or they are school dropouts. Hence, there is an urgent need to promote cultural, artistic, social, and scientific life, which requires the following:

- Encouraging youth to participate in cultural life in all its forms, and giving proper care to young people with special needs;
- Encouraging youth to participate in cultural production in all its forms;
- Encouraging youth to be acquainted with modern information and communication technology, as well as scientific culture;
- Encouraging young researchers to participate in activating scientific life;
- Providing the necessary funds to the competent ministries and thus enabling them to support the cultural projects pertaining to youth;
- Strengthening the public library network to encourage reading and activating cultural work, in addition to reviving the national library, with activities and programs that target the youth;
- Encouraging the media to support cultural programs and thus offer the opportunity for youth to have cultural activities.

4. Youth and Health

“Youth health programs and policies should be interdisciplinary and reach beyond the health sector. Governments should include, in the curricula of educational institutions at the primary and secondary levels, programs focusing on primary health knowledge and practices.”

UN World Youth Report 2005

The youth, just like other categories in society, suffer from general health problems that require solutions within the framework of a public health policy to be implemented by the state and the civil society. Moreover, compared to the other categories, the youth are more prone to certain health risks, such as those related to reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), drugs, smoking, nutrition, and car accidents, which we need to reduce and for which we need to find adequate prevention solutions.

1. The youth consider that the public health policy must include the following:

- i. Raising the awareness of all the parties concerned on the comprehensive health concept, which includes the physical, psychological, mental, and sexual health;
- ii. Developing health centers, such as hospitals and dispensaries, and distributing them equally among the regions, in addition to developing their equipment and ensuring that everyone obtains preventive medical care through the following:
 - Taking the necessary measures to broaden the scope of the primary health care package to meet the needs of the youth;
 - Having a mandatory health card for all school and university students in both public and private establishments;
 - Having all the workers that are legally authorized to work to be registered on social security without any age discrimination;
 - Providing social security coverage to workers in the unregulated sector and part-timers;
 - Setting reduced rates for all hospital services for youth;
 - Providing free support for chronic diseases.
- iii. Supporting and increasing special programs that aim to spread health awareness and preventive education, including “risky behavior”, particularly to young people who are the most at risk, such as non-working women and youth in rural areas, according to the following:
 - Adopting the “from youth to youth” methodology in schools and universities as well as in youth clubs (outside the scope of schools and universities) in order to raise awareness in the health sector in addition to other sectors;

- Raising parents' awareness on the importance of referral to a doctor for all health issues;
- Activating the role of youth clubs in the health awareness process, focusing on local health awareness programs, and turning these clubs into specialized clubs, particularly in villages and remote areas;
- Adopting the free periodic vaccination and health exam programs, thus helping the youth with health prevention;
- Having the mandatory presence of a therapist/social worker in schools, universities, and hospitals;
- Raising awareness on the risks of early marriage and kinship marriage;
- Taking care of mouth and teeth diseases and eyesight problems of the youth;
- Unifying security funds (NSSF, Employees' cooperative) and treating all their beneficiaries equally.

2. Regarding the health problems that affect youth in particular, it is necessary to establish special health centers that offer rapid and permanent support services to young people, in regard to guidance, psychological support, culture, orientation, and prevention, along with the continuous training of these service providers. Furthermore, it is necessary to offer support to the social services centers in setting special programs for preventive and therapeutic interventions for the various youth categories, particularly to the young people who neither go to school nor work, as well as young mothers, according to the following:

- i. Adopting accurate distinction in the law between drug user, drug dealer, and drug merchant; and considering the drug user a victim of this industry and to the circumstances it might impose on him/ her; and to ensure his/ her re-inclusion in society, his/her rehabilitation, and ensuring awareness raising and guidance for drugs' victims and society alike. Also adopting the last paragraph in the 2 clauses 127 and 130 in the penal code, as a basis for punishment. Also including:
 - Adopting the harm-reduction policy in regard to drugs;
 - Establishing free rehabilitation and treatment centers for drug addicts in all the regions;
 - Fighting the social stigma of addicts to facilitate their treatment;
 - Strictly monitoring the sales of medicine and drugs, and ensuring they are not sold without prescription; and launching awareness campaigns on the hazards of drug misuse.
- ii. Drafting legislation that limits the promotion of harmful substances to young people and children, particularly cigarettes, narguileh, alcohol, drugs, and fast food.
- iii. Ensuring the enforcement of the law that forbids the proportion of herbal medicine and medicine for the purpose of losing weight that are not motored by the ministry of public health.

- iv. Establishing special programs that aim to raise the awareness of young people on sexual education and reproductive health, in addition to:
- Raising awareness on erroneous sexual information in the media;
 - Raising parents' awareness on sexual health;
 - Establishing free treatment centers for AIDs patients and fighting the social stigma against them;
 - Launching awareness campaigns on STDs.

5. Social Integration & Political Participation

“Nevertheless, obstacles to the full participation of youth in society remain. Too often, youth participation in adult-organized or political activities may be tokenistic or symbolic. Approaches to engaging youth are frequently shaped by the expectations of adults, which limits the input of young people. Although many avenues for participation are available through youth organizations, many lack funding and other resources. Coordination across these organizations is also often weak or lacking.”

UN World Youth Report 2005

Young people consider that confessional and sectarian divisions constitute an essential obstacle that prevents their active participation in the various life aspects, which is crucial in their practice of their full citizenship rights. Hence, it is necessary to work on encouraging social integration and eliminating all legal and administrative obstacles that marginalize the role of youth in life.

- 1. The primary requirement of social integration is to open the way for social interaction among young people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, through:**
 - Broadening the scope of public and shared spaces, supporting them and enhancing their diversity. This includes education, entertainment, and cultural institutions and youth associations. Encouraging educational institutions, municipalities, civil society organizations, public administrations and institutions, and the private sector to support youth clubs so they offer different services to young people, including short-term housing;
 - Finding spaces for cultural and entertainment activities to enhance opportunities of youth interaction and mingling, such as the twinning of clubs, exchange or joint visits to archeological sites, or the organization of joint seminars or parties.

- 2. There are many flaws in the value and cultural system in Lebanon that have contributed in aggravating all forms of social discrimination. This leads to various preconceived ideas and renders social integration difficult. Hence, young people consider it necessary to work on changing this system through:**
 - Taking all the necessary measures to amend all laws in order to ensure full equality between men and women in rights and responsibilities.
 - Adopting accountability measures for sectarian incitement in the media;

- Promoting the role of youth media, and supporting the cultural media programs and activities addressed to young people;
- Facilitating the production of media programs that are prepared, managed, and hosted by young people;
- Promoting alternative media among the youth;
- Raising the awareness of society on people with special needs, particularly in all regions and among the categories that consider handicaps as shameful, as parents refuse to disclose them or deal with them in a normal manner. This leads them to imprison the people with special needs inside the house.

3. In addition to social values, discrimination before the law plays a negative role in social integration. Hence, young people consider it necessary to work on ensuring equality before the law for everyone as a primary condition for building citizenship through the following:

- Taking all the necessary measures for the amendments of all laws in order to achieve full equality among Lebanese youth, males and females, and eliminate discrimination among Lebanese youth that is based on religious or political belief, or geographical belonging or others. Also eliminate discrimination against youth and children that is based on age, as this is a false criteria.
- Ratifying application decrees in regard to Law # 220/2000 pertaining to the education and work of people with special needs, implementing sanctions on the violators of these laws, and finding mediating institutions that take care of special needs people;
- Ensuring the right of women to give the Lebanese nationality to their children and husbands in a manner that is in compliance with the risk rule of (Palestinian) settlement;
- Improving conditions in penitentiaries and juvenile prisons, and establishing special psychological, educational, and entertainment programs, in addition to taking care of the prisoners' cultural and health aspects;
- Issuing a youth card for discounts in transportation and culture for example, easy access to information sources, and easy integration in public and social life.

4. Activating youth participation in public life is considered to be essential to design a youth policy and make it successful, particularly in regard to encouraging social integration. Hence, it is necessary to ensure the rights of the youth to participate in all forms of civil actions and political activity, and encourage this participation through:

- Reducing the minimum age for founding associations and joining them in Law #1909 at the Ministry of Interior and Law #2004 at the Ministry of Youth and Sports to the age of fifteen, in accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) that was ratified by the Lebanese State;

- Ratifying the law for reducing the voting age in parliamentary and municipal elections to the age of eighteen;
- Ratifying the law for reducing the age for running in parliamentary and municipal elections to the age of twenty-one;
- Reviving the student union of the Lebanese University with periodic elections and the autonomy of the work of committees in the various branches;
- The financial support of the State to youth associations to enable them to actively participate in public life;
- Amending Law #629/2004 of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and its decrees in compliance with the general principles stipulated in the Constitution and international covenants pertaining to the freedom to establish associations;
- Activating the role of the Ministry of Youth and Sports in regard to the youth development sector and the sports sector;
- Reviving the Lebanese youth union and deriving lessons from the experience of the past years. This union would comprise all the party youth associations and organizations in Lebanon.

This document was drafted in the framework of a partnership between the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the “Youth Advocacy Process- YAP”, and the “Promoting Lebanese Youth Participation and Empowering” project by the UN Youth Task Force.