

YOUTH AND DEVELOPMENT

18.1 INTRODUCTION

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is currently witnessing developmental progress in the different social, economic and cultural aspects of life. Youth represent an important factor in this development. They are the generation with high enrolment rates in education and low illiteracy rates, and, hence, are a more influential forces in the labour market. Moreover, they are the group most amenable to accepting change and assimilating developments and the most able to interact with and respond to scientific and technical progress. However, this energy remains latent unless society succeeds in creating an enabling environment for taking advantage of it through appropriate policies and programmes.

Within a comprehensive framework that considers youth issues as a developmental unit whose elements integrate to ensure developed youth status, the Eighth Development Plan witnessed positive advances in all youth educational, health, social, cultural and sports aspects.

In this context, the Ninth Development Plan constitutes a qualitative step towards addressing youth issues from a holistic perspective involving economic, social and cultural dimensions of development, taking into account the various roles played by young people as well as their needs.

This chapter addresses the current conditions of the youth sector, explains developments under the Eighth Development Plan, and reviews the key issues and challenges that must be addressed under the Ninth Development Plan, and it highlights the future vision, objectives, policies and targets for the sector envisaged by the Ninth Development Plan.

18.2 CURRENT CONDITIONS

18.2.1 Demographic Profile of Youth

For several reasons, 'youth' refers here to the 15–24 years age group. Apart from being consistent with international usage, this definition guards against extending the limits to such an extent that the group becomes so heterogeneous as to hinder effective planning and implementation of development programmes. Nevertheless, there is a need for taking into account sub-categories that need special programmes, such as adolescents (15–18 years), or the higher sub-category for which issues of marriage and employment have priority.

The age distribution of the Saudi population is such that in 2009, the number of youth in the 15–24 years age group was about 3.9 million, accounting for about 21% of total Saudi population and about 35% of population of working age. The median age is 19 years, i.e., half the population are under this age. The proportion of the population under the age of 25 years was in 2004 about 61%, but decreased to 58.4% in 2007.

Young people are more or less evenly distributed by gender. In 2007, the number of young women in the age group exceeded that of young men by about 40 thousand. However, disparities between the two subgroups are evident in education, employment, health, marriage, place of residence, and family type.

The marital status of young people affects their lives dramatically and has implications for youth policy. It is common to deal with young people first and foremost as non-married. However, the data of Table 18.1 shows that some 96% of females in the 15–19 age group are unmarried, while 39.3% of the 20–24 age group are married. Likewise, 99.7% of males in the 15–19 age group are unmarried, while 12.2% of the 20–24 age group are married women. In 2007, the average age at marriage was 27.2 for males and 24.6 for females.

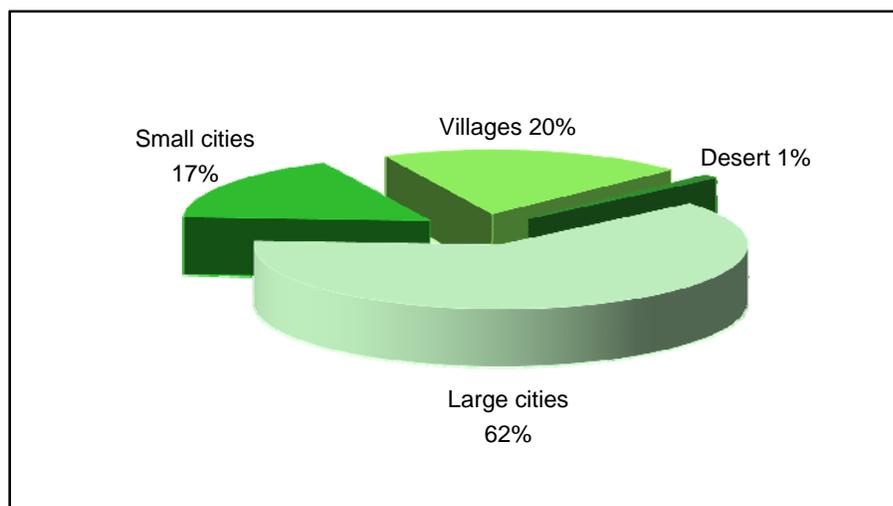
Place of residence is important to consider when addressing youth issues and the development programmes and activities required. It may be classified into major cities, small towns, villages and desert. Figure 18.1 shows that 62% of young people live in large cities (100 thousand inhabitants or more). Development plans seek to match distribution of facilities and programmes and spending to the distribution of the youth according to place of residence, in addition to seeking a balance in terms of quality, since programmes and facilities suitable for villages and the desert are different in nature from those that are suitable for large cities where large facilities and equipment have priority.

Table 18.1
Distribution of Young People
by Marital Status 2007

Age group	Single		Married		Divorced		Widowed		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
15–19	99.7	96.0	0.3	3.9	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.0	100
20–24	87.7	59.9	12.2	39.3	0.1	0.7	0.0	0.1	100
15–24	93.9	78.6	6.0	20.9	0.1	0.4	0.0	0.1	100

Source: Central Department of Statistics and Information, Results of the 2007 Demographic Survey.

Figure 18.1
Distribution of 15–24 Year Olds
by Place of Residence
2004



Source: Central Department of Statistics and Information, General Census of Population and Households, 2004.

Employment is an important aspect in analysing youth issues (Table 18.2). The majority of young people are enrolled in schools and universities, with the ratio for the 15–19 years old age group amounting to approximately 86%; 89.8% of young men and 81.3% of young women. However, the ratio drops to almost half for the 20–24 years old age group, and difference between genders narrows significantly; 41.3% of young men and 39.2% of young women. Of the 20–24 years old age group, the proportion of young males in the labour market is 57.2%, with their ranks increased by dropouts from the education system, while 46% of young women in the same age group are devoted to domestic work, and only 14.5% are engaged in the labour market.

Table 18.2
Distribution of Young People in and out of the Workforce
2004

(%)

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Age Group	In workforce		Out of workforce						Total
			Student		Full-Time Domestic Work		Other		
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
15–19	9.5	3.1	89.8	81.3	0	15.2	0.7	0.4	100
20–24	57.2	14.5	41.3	39.2	0	46.0	1.5	0.3	100
15–24	30.7	8.3	68.2	62.1	0	29.2	1.1	0.4	100

Source: Central Department of Statistics and Information, General Census of Population and Households, 2004

18.2.2 Institutions Concerned with Youth

□ General Presidency for Youth Welfare:

Since its inception, the General Presidency for Youth Welfare has been keen on providing its services to Saudi youth in all regions of the Kingdom. It concentrated on sports, as well as cultural and social activities to ensure balanced development across all youth activities.

Royal Order No. A/2 of 2003 entrusted cultural activity to the Ministry of Culture and Information. Hence, the Presidency focused on overseeing clubs and agencies involved in youth sports and social

activities. Services of the Presidency cover more than 107 towns and villages through 123 government facilities, and extend to all areas of the Kingdom through cooperation and coordination with relevant governmental bodies, particularly the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The General Presidency for Youth Welfare is the government agency currently responsible for sports and social activities, civil-society organisations working in this domain, and the establishment of sports facilities. Table 18.3 presents the facilities of the Presidency that provide services to young people, broken down by region. The Table indicates the importance of expanding sporting services and activities to ensure coverage of all regions of the Kingdom.

Table 18.3
Care Services for Youth
by Administrative Regions
2009

	Riyadh	Makkah	Madinah	Qasim	Eastern Province	Asir	Tabuk	Hail	Northern Border	Jazan	Najran	Baha	Jawf	The Total
Sports Cities	2 ^(*)	3	1	1	4	1	1	1	1 ^(*)	1	1	1	-	18
Youth Hostels	5	3	1	2	3	1	1	1	-	2	1	1	1	22
Sports Centres	8	3	3 ^(**)	4 ^(**)	7	1 ^(**)	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	29
Public Squares	4	-	-	-	3	2	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	13
Sports Stadiums	3	1	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6
Gymnasiums	2	2	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8
Head Offices	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	13
Sub-Offices	5	2	-	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	10
Sports Federations	29	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29
Permanent Camps	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Private Clubs	43	12	6	14	32	10	6	9	3	6	3	4	5	153

(*) Under implementation (Wadi Al-Dawaser, Arar).

(**) Under implementation (Uhud, Abha, Al-Raed).

Source: General Presidency for Youth Welfare.

Data on the numbers of beneficiaries indicate that only a limited number of young people attend these facilities. Hence, there is a need for studying the causes and suggesting appropriate programmes and mechanisms to ensure wider participation, and coordinating this effort with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and other relevant authorities.

□ *Other Agencies*

The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education are the two main authorities that provide services to young people. Both concentrate on academic and educational preparation and qualification of young people through the various stages of formal education. However, in addition, both sponsor a comprehensive range of extra-curricular scientific, cultural, and sports activities enabling youth to make use of their free time in ways that serve educational ends. Moreover, some universities established research centres specializing in youth issues, such as the National Centre for Youth Research, which was established at King Saud University in 2007 to conduct research on various life concerning issues in the life of youth.

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Within the context of labour force development through training, the Technical and Vocational Training Corporation focuses on training of youth, in an effort to increase their technical and professional proficiency in response to labour market needs. Interest in this effort has been reflected in the expansion of the capacities of training institutions.

The Ministry of Health provides health services to young people as part of the population in general. However, given the large size of this category of population and its particular health requirements, especially in health awareness (of the harm done by smoking, unhealthy diet, or drugs) and medical tests before marriage for both young men and young women, the direct role of the Ministry of Health in this regard is expected to increase over the coming years.

The Ministry of Social Affairs offers a wide range of programmes with a social content addressing young people. It supports rural and sports clubs, summer camps, free-time programmes, cultural and sports competitions, and training courses. The Ministry is also responsible for taking care of juveniles at risk, through the role of social guidance houses, as well as for care and correction of juvenile delinquents of both sexes, through social observation homes and young women's welfare institutions. In addition, the Ministry coordinates with the General Directorate of Cultural Activities of the General Presidency of Youth Welfare the organization of joint cultural encounters for the youth of the rural clubs run by rural development centres registered at the General Presidency of Youth Welfare.

The Ministry of Culture and Information undertakes cultural development activities through accredited cultural clubs that young people can frequent. There are 16 literary clubs, with more than 3 thousand members; 13 branches of the Saudi Arabian Society for Culture and Arts, in addition to its headquarters in Riyadh; and 3 branches of the Philatelic Society, in addition to its headquarters in Makkah, with around 4,200 members.

The Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs provides services to youth, through the municipalities, which establish municipal arenas and walking tracks and which offer theatre productions and art exhibitions aimed at young people. One example is the initiative of the Riyadh Municipality to establish 100 municipal arenas in various districts of the city over 2007–2009, with the aim of creating amenities for young people where they can enjoy sporting activities within their residential neighbourhoods.

Apart from government agencies, the private sector plays an important role in the care for young people, with 153 authorized sports clubs. This sector also supports charity projects that offer financial and in-kind assistance directly to young people, such as projects that help young people to get married and others that cover costs of study in private schools and colleges.

Moreover, some private-sector companies, institutions and banks facilities the entry of young graduates of various educational backgrounds to the professional, technical and administrative labour market. This is done through training programmes ending in employment, support for small projects, and helping people with special needs by providing them with job opportunities; in addition to supporting sports activities in more than 550 private-sector sports centres in all regions.

18.2.3 Achievements

Chapters of the Ninth Plan (for example, on education, training, and health) detailed the progress made in achieving the objectives of the Eighth Development Plan related to youth. For its part, the General Presidency for Youth Welfare achieved much. It completed the construction of several facilities: Jeddah Stadium, Al-Fatah Club, the Gulf Club, and the Onaiza Stadium in Qassim. It also completed some 40% of the two sports cities in Arar and Wadi Dawaser, and it established 9 public yards in various regions of the Kingdom. In sports activities, the Kingdom participated in 1765 international competitions, and more than 2820 domestic sports competitions were organized, while there were 796 sports-for-all competitions. In addition, 15,000 young people were trained. Moreover, the Presidency has contributed significantly to social activities, having organized 776 recreation camps, 15 work camps, 398 trips, and 520 public-service activities.

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18.3 ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

18.3.1 Social Issues

❑ *Social changes and the family*

The family is a key element of society and social dynamics and is affected by social developments and changes. The Ninth Development Plan aims to keep pace with social dynamics, contributing to economic and social development of the family and its multifarious roles, so that it provides a psychological, educational and social environment in

which a young man or woman could build a strong, balanced, creative personality and contribute to the development of society.

Hence, the agencies concerned with social issues should make a joint effort to develop the family and its role, with the aim of gradually expanding areas of interaction and dialogue within the family, among all its members: between both sexes of the same generation, and between children and parents. Certainly, development of the role of the family is indispensable in mitigating the generational conflict and the conflict between globalization and identity, as well as for keeping children away from excess and harmful behaviour. However, this can be achieved only on the basis of acceptance by families and policy makers of more flexible family relationships, geared towards achieving the common goals of parents, children and the community alike.

❑ *Marriage and family formation*

Data on marriage reveals a trend towards delaying the marriage age, with its average rising from 25.3 years for young men and 20 years for young women in 1979 to 27.2 years and 24.6 years, respectively, in 2007.

Large dowries and the high costs of marriage ceremonies, acquiring reasonable housing, equipping and furnishing the marital home are factors contributing to reluctance of many young people to get married or delaying marriage for years, or marrying non-Saudi women, which in turn contribute to increase the rate of women who have never been married.

The rising cost of marriage and the difficulty of securing adequate housing require a systematic approach to addressing these societal problems by adopting measures for facilitating marriage; otherwise, the financial burden is likely to tax the economic resources of the family after marriage.

❑ *Free time*

Free time is that time when a person may occupy himself or herself with whatever he or she desires outside study or work commitments. It

is a time for developing one's personality and enjoying one's hobbies. However, this cannot be achieved without an enabling environment; otherwise, free time is waste.

Youth of both sexes suffer from the lack of means for utilizing their free time and from appropriate recreation facilities. Several studies suggest that many young people have 4 to 12 hours a day of free time. Mostly, this time is not utilized fruitfully; a situation that carries with it educational and social risks, as it generates anxiety among young people and among these responsible for them. Hence, efforts are needed to provide appropriate recreational activities for young people.

❑ *The problem of drugs*

In today's world, the problem of drugs is faced by all societies. Youth are the group most targeted by drug producers and dealers, with the results that abuse of drugs is found among them more than in the rest of society.

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Drug abuse is due to a combination of reasons, the most important of which are, perhaps, the following: access to drugs, ample purchasing power, influence of peers, family breakdown, and lack of useful means of spending free time. Such factors generate social and psychological pressure, primarily on the youth who resort to drugs as a form of escapism. Drug abuse, though limited, is a cause for concern, lest it spreads, particularly since it reflects individual and social crises that require prevention, awareness, and treatment.

18.3.2 Educational Issues

In 2007, enrolled students amounted to about 31.4% of the total Saudi population. Students have a special relationship with the educational institution in which they are enrolled. After all, they spend in it long hours, most days of the year, for many years. And this relationship does not affect the student alone, but extends to his or her family, directly and indirectly. Thus, after the family, education is the second most important element in the social development process of youth.

Hence, the relationship between educational institutions and society does not only hinge on the outputs of education meeting the needs of the labour market, but also on schools and universities being where students qualify for life in society. Young people expect educational institutions to provide them with knowledge, life skills and the means to achieve their aspirations. Furthermore, educational institutions are expected by parents, the State and society to prepare young people to conduct their social and economic work as producers and active citizens. Balancing these multiple functions is required from the educational institutions of the Kingdom.

18.3.3 Economic Issues

Two young age groups need to be distinguished in reference to employment and unemployment: the 15–19 years-old age group, most of whom would be enrolled at educational institutions, and the 20–24 years-old age group, whose members choose between further study and entering the labour market.

The main issue for young people is not merely to escape unemployment. Finding an appropriate job is an important cornerstone of the life project of young men and women. Indeed, this is an issue that preoccupies all young people who seek a job that provides a suitable income, have a recognized social value, and agrees with personal inclinations.

However, another aspect of the work culture among some young people is worth noting. Relative abundance of resources in the Kingdom and the tradition of the state bearing responsibility for providing services have produced a special kind of social culture, with young people becoming dependent on the state to provide employment opportunities, particularly in the public sector, without making a parallel effort on their part to improve their qualifications and skills. Nonetheless, one should not be tempted to generalize. Some young people and citizens achieved excellence, even at the international level, as in medicine and complex medical operations and others.

18.3.4 Health Issues

Health issues and problems faced by young people are many, largely due to lifestyle, notably:

- **Nutrition and lifestyle:** The community in general, and youth in particular, have adopted unhealthy nutrition and lifestyles. Young people consume too much fast food and soft drinks, while having a sedentary lifestyle devoid of physical and muscular effort. This results in numerous health problems, such as obesity, diabetes, incidence of early cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure, and quick fatigue. Hence, there is a need for addressing these health issues through prevention, advocacy, exercise of oversight on the quality of food products, and promotion of good health habits.
- **Traffic accidents:** This a major issue. According to official statistics, during the Eighth Development Plan the average number of deaths caused by traffic accidents amounted to about 6 thousand annually, while the average number of injuries amounted to 35.5 thousand cases a year. Casualties are heavily concentrated among young males, with traffic accidents being the primary cause of death among young people and the most important source of disability. This requires immediate action that is not limited to regulating traffic and imposing harsher penalties on violators of regulations, but extends to organization of a relentless national awareness campaign.
- **Reproductive health:** Youth is a biological transition and maturation phase resulting in specific health problems and needs that cannot be overlooked. Adolescents and young people need sources of reliable, comprehensive knowledge about general health (nutrition, exercise, personal hygiene, and reproduction). The family, the school and agencies of the Ministry of Health should provide appropriate information and advice for young men and young women, in candour that has always characterized our society and Islamic culture and traditions. This would achieve two interrelated goals. The first relates to preventive health. The second is social-cultural, since dealing directly in a healthy manner with the

needs and problems of young people guards against the risk of individuals searching for information from unsound sources, with all the attendant health and unacceptable social behaviour risks.

18.3.5 Issues Concerning Young Women

Young women have specific circumstances and needs, requiring particular attention by youth policies. Such consideration ought to be integrated into general youth policy. However, equally importantly, there is a need in some areas for specific policies and interventions in the interest of young women.

The following are noteworthy in this regard:

- Youth policies and services are concentrated on sports (football, in particular) and activities geared specifically towards young males. The strategy based on professional sports; league clubs; large and central sports cities; games competitions; and camps is evidently geared towards males, not females. However, current thinking calls for the expansion of athletic opportunities for females within the appropriate framework of the social values of the Kingdom.
- Family, social and cultural constraints still limit the study, work or hobby choices available to young women, and they restrict their societal participation. However, such participation increased under the Eighth Development Plan.

These are some issues concerning young women. They point to the need for adapting youth policies and programmes to render them more flexible, less centralized, and more responsive to the needs of young women; along with socially acceptable special programmes, facilities and activities suited to their inclinations and hobbies, offered in their places of study or close to their homes.

18.4 DEMAND FORECASTS

Analysis of demand is based mainly on the data from the current

experience of the General Presidency for Youth Welfare, but also on data on non-sporting services and activities dealt with in other chapters of this Plan.

18.4.1 Youth Activities

The General Presidency of Youth Welfare provides services to youth through a variety of programmes and sports and social activities. Table 18.4 estimates the demand for youth activities for the Presidency under the Ninth Plan.

Table 18.4
Demand Forecast for Youth Activities
Ninth Development Plan

Activity	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total Increase
International Competitions	1765	1820	1875	1930	1985	2040	275
Domestic Competitions	2820	2920	3020	3120	3220	3320	500
Sports for All	796	826	856	886	916	946	150
Sports Training	15000	15750	16537	17365	18173	19081	4081
Recreation Camps	776	809	842	875	908	941	165
Work Camps	15	16	17	18	19	20	5
Trips and Visits	398	418	438	458	478	498	100
Community Service	520	547	574	601	628	655	135

Source: Ministry of Economy and Planning.

18.4.2 Sports Facilities

The Presidency aims for its services to reach a broad base of young people. Hence, it needs to build more sports facilities, especially in areas not covered with youth services, where population density and growth rates are high. The services of the Presidency cover mainly the 15–24 years-old age group, but also the 12–14 years-old age group. The Presidency envisages focussing on building public yards in

neighbourhoods and small towns, including at least 20 sports arenas, in addition to 2 sports cities in regions where there is none. It also aims to provide at least 5 sports facilities for private clubs and 4 permanent youth camps. This expansion should be in concert with addressing the causes of the reluctance of young people to frequent youth facilities (Table 18.5).

Table 18.5
Demand Forecast for Sports Facilities
Ninth Development Plan

Facility	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total Increase
Sports City	18	18	18	19	20	20	2
Sports Facility for Club	29	30	31	32	33	34	5
Public Yard	13	17	21	25	29	33	20
Permanent Camp	2	3	4	5	6	6	4

Source: Ministry of Economy and Planning.

18.5 DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

18.5.1 Future Vision

To inspire generation of young people with educational, physical and life abilities and skills, acting responsibly towards themselves, family, community and country, and effectively participating in the development process.

18.5.2 Objectives

- Achieving the social integration of young people and expanding their participation in the various areas of youth activity.
- Combating drug abuse among young people, and other types of behaviour that are harmful to their physical and psychological wellbeing.

- Reducing the gap between what schools offer to students and youth perception of their need for life skills and information that help them live better and build their future.
- Improving the lives of young people and meeting the special needs of young people in low-income families.
- Providing young people with job opportunities that are consistent with their dispositions, abilities and competencies, increasing their participation in the workforce, and combating unemployment among their ranks.
- Fostering a generation of young people enjoying good physical and emotional health.

18.5.3 Policies

- Developing family counselling services for youth and parents.
- Addressing the problem of large dowries and high costs of marriage ceremonies.
- Establishing sports facilities in all regions in a balanced manner and in accordance with specific criteria.
- Establishing more small and medium-sized sports facilities in neighbourhoods and using school sports facilities in youth sports activities.
- Providing the requirements for involving persons with special needs in various youth activities, and organizing their own activities when needed.
- Supporting drug-abuse prevention programmes, expanding treatment of drug addiction and smoking cessation programmes.
- Widening participation of pupils and students in school and university activities, and effectuating the concept of making the school more connected to society.
- Spreading the culture of productive work, reducing excessive reliance on the state for securing employment, and combating consumerism among young people.
- Promoting a healthy lifestyle in nutrition and behaviour.

- Reducing the spread of harmful, dangerous behaviour, especially reckless car driving, smoking, and drug abuse.
- Intervening preventatively to address some social problems and provide support and treatment for the special groups that need them.
- Adopting the methodologies and procedures necessary for achieving the highest levels of social integration of persons with special needs.
- Promoting volunteerism and community participation of youth in all areas.
- Enabling young people to enjoy their hobbies through sports, cultural, social and recreational activities of their choice, consistent with social values and their preferences and interests.

18.5.4 Targets

- Launching awareness campaigns and advice addressed to parents on caring for children educationally, intellectually, and behaviourally, and providing advice to family members through schools, centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs, television programmes and other media.
- Designing a package of prototypical activities aimed at enhancing family cohesion.
- Mapping the distribution of sports and youth facilities against the geographical spread and population distribution in the regions and governorates.
- Design a comprehensive system for the use of school facilities, playgrounds and halls in youth activity, with the participation of parents and in coordination with the concerned authorities.
- Providing places of youth activities with the equipment necessary for enabling persons with special needs to participate in various activities.
- Studying means for advancing the developmental role of schools, training needs, and forms of cooperation with local bodies.

- Planning a joint campaign by government agencies, the media, educational institutions, and the private sector to influence social culture and the culture of Saudi youth, instilling values of productive work in ways commensurate with the needs of society.
- Designing a special programme of vocational guidance in general education schools including work value concepts.
- Implementing a study of the health of young people, and using the results in policy-making and in awareness campaigns.
- Introducing awareness-raising materials on preventative health, nutrition and healthy behaviour in school curricula and school activities in a permanent systematic manner and at an early age.
- Launching a national campaign to combat excessive speeding and traffic accidents among young people.
- Launching a continuous campaign to combat smoking and drug abuse among young people.

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18.6 FINANCIAL REQUIREMENTS

Under the Ninth Development Plan, the financial requirements for implementing the programmes and various activities of the youth sector (the General Presidency for Youth Welfare) amount to SR7.2 billion.