

INVESTING IN YOUTH POLICY

Sharing good practices to advance policy development for young people in the Asia-Pacific region



PREFACE

Investing in Youth Policy advocates for governments and civil society to put young people on the policy agenda. It makes the case for the importance of developing and implementing policies that deliver on the rights of adolescents and youth within the Asia-Pacific region. It also describes good practices in seven case study countries. *Investing in Youth Policy* can be used at all levels of government and civil society:

- As evidence to make a case for developing and implementing policies that deliver on the rights of young people
- To promote working with and for young people in developing policies that affect them
- To share good practices in developing and implementing evidence-based policies in the region
- To demonstrate the increasing commitment of governments in the region to honour their responsibilities to meet the needs of young people

Investing in Youth Policy has been produced in the International Year of Youth 2010-2011 by the Asia-Pacific Interagency Group on Youth. It recognizes the importance of 'dialogue and mutual understanding' in reaching agreed directions for young people.



International Year of Youth

State of the World's Children 2011: Adolescence: An Age of Opportunity

Asia-Pacific Interagency Group on Youth

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ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome	SPC	Secretariat of the Pacific Community
APYouthNet	Asia-Pacific Knowledge Network on Youth Employment	STI	sexually transmitted infection
DYS	Department of Youth and Sport	UN	United Nations
GDY	General Department of Youth	UNCT	United Nations Country Team
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ILO	International Labour Organization	UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
INGO	international non-government organization	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
MoET	Ministry of Education and Training	UNHQ	United Nations Head Quarters
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
MoH	Ministry of Health	UNRCO	United Nations Resident Coordinator Office
NGO	non-government organization	UNV	United Nations Volunteers
NTWG	National Technical Working Group	WHO	World Health Organization
NYPFF	National Young People's Planning Forum	WTO	World Trade Organization
PICTs	Pacific Island Countries and Territories	YFHS	youth friendly health services
PYC	Pacific Youth Council	YCC	Youth Council of Cambodia
RH	reproductive health	YKAP	young key affected population
SAVY	Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth	YWG	youth working group
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency		

WHO ARE YOUNG PEOPLE?

Many countries struggle with the idea that resources should be directed to people just because they are young. This is all the more challenging in resource-poor countries with many competing demands. Young people are the future of the Asia-Pacific region and they make up a significant proportion of the population, with many countries experiencing a 'youth bulge'. Understanding the needs and aspirations of this young population is an important factor in policy development. Young people are experiencing very different lives to those of previous generations and their needs for resources are as varied as the diversity of their population. This chapter builds a picture of young people in the Asia-Pacific region.





Young people are not a special interest group

61% of the world's young people live in the Asia-Pacific region.¹ Young people account for 30-50% of the total population, and youth around 20%.²

Young people are not a homogenous group

Young people have differing aspirations and needs. Young people who are well resourced, educated and well-informed about risk behaviours and who have good opportunities to enter the job market do not need the same level of support as those who are poor and vulnerable to exploitation or lack access to education, employment and health services.

While the majority of young people in the region may be able to participate productively in society, many others experience poverty, gender inequality, limited access to education, poor health including disability, insecure housing, violence, and risks from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV.

Age definition

The UN defines *adolescents* as those aged 10-19 and *youth* as those aged 15-24. *Young people* is a term used to include both and refers to those aged 10-24.

Many countries deviate from this definition, with age ranges between 12 to 40 years. Countries often have a legal age limit for adolescents of 18 years. However, many countries do, and all countries should, designate the age bands to allow for the inclusion of adolescents and all young people who are experiencing the transition stage from childhood to adulthood.

“Failing to invest in our youth is a false economy. Conversely, investing in young people will pay great dividends for all.”³

*Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary General,
United Nations*

Young people in the Asia-Pacific region

The majority of young people in the region are living very different lives to that of previous generations: they generally have better access to health and education; they live in large cities in increasing numbers; they are ‘growing up global’ with increasing access to new media and exposure to values and images from around the world; and for many young people there is an increasing gap between their expectations and the opportunities available to them.⁴

Regional conflicts in recent times involving young people – such as those in Timor-Leste and Nepal – reinforce the idea that young people are ‘problems’ in Asia-Pacific societies. The increasingly vocal and visible presence of young people who live their lives outside accepted cultural norms is also seen as problematic. Young people can be regarded as the embodiment of the challenges that rapid development poses to traditional values and social relationships.

Young people in hierarchical societies, which focus on strong respect for elders, may have few pathways for their voices to be heard. However, there is a growing recognition in the region of the need to involve young people in decisions that directly affect them. Similarly, despite limited acceptance of social and sexual diversity – which contributes to inequities, restricts the rights of young people and marginalizes them in policy frameworks – some countries are directing resources to and developing policies for at-risk young people.



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International Youth Year 2010-2011

Young people have rights *and* responsibilities

An important focus of international development agencies is the individual rights of young people to education, health, participation in policy formulation, decision-making, leadership, freedom of expression, and protection from all forms of abuse and violence. In many Asia-Pacific cultures, a collective value prevails and young people are also expected to meet their responsibilities in promoting peace, security and development; respecting adults; committing to family values, gender equality and tolerance; protecting and preserving the environment; and serving the country.

Focusing on both rights and responsibilities can be mutually supportive.

“The UN focus on young people’s rights, including empowering young people to know and assert their rights to participation, leadership, and freedom of expression is not an automatic inclusion in Asia-Pacific youth policies. The cultural understanding and rights language in many countries is intricately linked to responsibility. The two do not exist separately – the right to education, for example, demands the responsibility to learn.”

*Margaret Sheehan,
Regional Adviser Adolescent
Development, UNICEF*

Young people are a resource

The Asia-Pacific region faces many, often overlapping, social, political, environmental and economic challenges and has seen a number of emergencies in recent years. Partnering with young people is a key strategy to addressing these challenges effectively and sustainably.⁵

Young people have ‘talents, dynamism, imagination, ideals, considerable energies and vision’.⁶ They can also be the most affected when a crisis hits. It is young people who often suffer the most in times of economic downturn; for example, when companies need to lay-off staff, it is often young people who go first. Young people’s open-minded attitude to technology, and their different perspective, vision and motivation can contribute to practical solutions.



*How Youth Drive Change, UNESCO
BBC World Service Trust Cambodia*

“Normally when we need to know about something we go to the experts, but we tend to forget that when we want to know about youth and what they feel and what they want, that we should talk to them.”

Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary-General



Young people and media

WHAT IS A YOUTH POLICY?

A youth policy creates a framework for a country to provide resources, support and services that will allow young people to fulfill their potential and contribute to social, cultural and economic growth. This chapter provides a definition for youth policies, their status in the region, and how young people are perceived in terms of the policy development process.



Policies, when they are supported by successful implementation strategies or plans, make the relationship between a country's vision and the concrete activities to support that vision clear and self-evident¹



National youth policy

A national youth policy is a policy written and owned by a country – government, young people and other key stakeholders. It demonstrates that country's commitment to, and strategic directions for, promoting and progressing the wellbeing and participation of young people. Ideally, it has a vision and objectives to create opportunities for young people to become 'skilled, healthy and productive members of society';² and specific strategies to translate policy into action.

Youth policies in the region

A review of youth policies from the Asia-Pacific region shows a variety of approaches to developing and implementing policies about and for youth.³ Countries may have:

- One national youth policy that looks at all significant issues relating to young people
- A number of sector-specific policies which target young people such as health, education, youth employment, or alcohol and drug prevention
- Youth issues mainstreamed through existing national policies such as national injury prevention or drug and alcohol policies, and those addressing gender and reproductive health
- Policy practices situated in strategy documents or legislation

Young people in the policy environment

The push for countries to have a national youth policy steps beyond addressing a single-sector issue – it is a move towards acknowledging youth as an integral and valuable part of society⁴

When social, cultural and other influences shape national understanding of young people as a **problem**, the policy environment, government priorities and resource allocation will reflect this. Implementation will generally be focused on ‘troubled’ young people, for example, young offenders and the policing of street gangs, or the vulnerable who are seen to be in need of protection. In such an environment, there is often little cross-sectoral cooperation: policies work in isolation and may be punitive or based on a deficit model.⁴

A country that understands its young people as a **resource** approaches policy development in ways that build supportive environments; for example, health and leisure services. Policies developed with this approach encourage the active participation of all young people, including those who are vulnerable, at-risk or marginalized, and empower young people to reach their full potential.

A well-coordinated and inclusive development process that values its young people as assets takes a good deal of time and investment. It needs commitment from the highest political level and it needs to be matched with adequate resources. It takes an approach and a belief that young people are valuable, not only as economic assets, but for their contributions to social and cultural capital.



WHY DEVELOP A YOUTH POLICY?

When good processes are followed, there is no question that the development of a national youth policy is of great value to any country. However, in the context of competing budgets and multiple priorities, governments and civil society sometimes need to be convinced about the importance of youth-specific policy. This chapter provides six important reasons why governments and civil societies should push for the development of youth-specific policies.



Youth policy:

1. Makes economic sense
2. Brings sectors together
3. Drives priority issues
4. Creates successful programmes
5. Supports and commits to young people
6. Honours regional and international commitments



Why should we invest in youth policy?

Download the slideshow

1. Youth policy makes economic sense

Missed investments in young people's intellectual and human potential are costly to reverse, both for youth and for society¹

Youth-focused policies can do a lot to strengthen future growth and investment, and protect existing industries and sectors. For example, a cross-sectoral policy could aim to provide services and incentives for young people that support them to remain in rural communities and be actively engaged in the rural economy. This might include the provision of better rural health services, programmes to keep rural youth in schools and provide them with appropriate vocational training, strong rural-urban transport links to open up markets, and the provision of youth-specific agricultural extension services or small loan start-up programmes.

Youth policies that create effective long-term programming save money. Improving health, education and employment outcomes for young people reduces the need for access to services;² and increases opportunities for young people's productivity and contribution to economic growth.



Youth policy reaches across many policy areas, providing a point of coordination that creates dialogue across ministries, and between governments, civil society and the private sector

2. Youth policy brings sectors together

Good youth policy will encourage key agents and ministries to work together, particularly in the areas of employment, health, education, poverty reduction, arts and culture, and gender issues. For example:

- An education policy will need support from the health sector in providing life-skills curriculum; women's affairs in developing strategies designed to keep girls in school; or the employment sector in considering vocational training
- An injury prevention policy requires action from different sectors concerned, for example, with adolescent risk-taking on motorbikes, unsafe work environments for young people and violence
- A drug prevention policy will make use of research which shows that young people's opportunities to participate in sports and be connected to community youth organizations provide a protective impact against experimentation with illegal drugs³

Such strategies inevitably require a cross-sectoral approach to implementation. A commitment to cooperation and coordination across sectors is a way to share resources, prevent duplication, increase efficiencies and ensure all relevant sectors take responsibility for young people.



3. Youth policy drives priority issues

A youth focus drives areas of development that require urgent action in the region. When prioritized by governments, the key issues that affect youth move these debates forward and – when based on solid evidence – can lead to policies that have the potential to significantly impact on concerns that are typical in the region. Policy in this case can create frameworks that reinforce the interconnectedness within a single issue, ‘for example reinforcing the connection between policies that help to both prevent unwanted pregnancy and prevent HIV/STI infection’.⁵

Youth priorities can connect to international movements and debates about improving the health, welfare and education of young people.

In the region, major and pressing youth-focused issues can be translated through policy into common areas of strategic implementation (or policy pillars):

- **Poverty and inequality**
- **Education and vocational training**
- **Employment**
- **Health**, particularly reproductive health and HIV



The view of young people as critical assets for lifting economies and societies out of poverty offers the most potential for change, yet it has gained the least attention⁴

Case for Investing in Young People, UNFPA
Education for Adolescents, UNICEF
Girls’ Education Initiative, United Nations
Youth Employment Programme, ILO
APYouthNet, ILO
K4 Health Youth Policy Tool Kit, USAID
International Technical Guidance on
Sexuality Education, UNESCO

4. Youth policy creates successful programmes

To make the best use of scarce public funding, policy makers need to invest in programmes and activities that, based on empirical evidence, have proven to be successful in achieving their intended goals⁶

Most countries in the region have some type of youth programming, some of which are not interconnected. Many programmes exist without a policy framework. Policy has an important role in creating the links and frameworks needed in order to establish the resources, strategies and funding to support young people's needs and rights. Successful programmes rely on policy frameworks.

Policy frameworks must operate within legislative frameworks, but they also influence laws and legislation, providing protection to programmes for young people. Policies ensure ongoing commitment. When a government changes, programmes for young people may be vulnerable to closure if no laws or policies exist to protect them.⁷

In some countries, legislation on its own is considered sufficient to address the needs of youth. However, laws can be inaccessible and difficult to interpret at a practical level. Laws on youth, which may protect youth rights, are often not operationally defined to develop or support programmes. And some laws with good intentions may end up limiting young people's access to services, including those which require parental or guardian consent.



5. Youth policy supports and commits to young people

An estimated 1.8 billion young people aged 10 to 24 years-old constitute more than a quarter of the world's population, with just under 90% living in developing countries.⁹ These young people need the support and commitment of governments, civil society and the private sector to fulfill their potential and navigate the challenges of their transition from childhood to adulthood.

Young people's particular challenges should be addressed in the policy environment and supported with focused strategies and investment:

- Adolescents and youth – especially girls – face daunting reproductive and sexual health problems including unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion, maternal mortality and morbidity, violence, exploitation (such as exchanging sex for food or money), and discrimination
- Young people represent 40% of new HIV infections worldwide, and are disproportionately represented among key affected populations (people injecting drugs, sex workers and their clients, men who have sex with men and transgender people) in many settings in Asia-Pacific¹⁰
- Unemployment rates for young people are three to six times the rate for adults, and informal, low-wage and insecure work is the norm¹¹
- Many young people have to drop out of school because fees are too much of a financial burden on households or because they must earn income for their families; about 70 million adolescents in East Asia and the Pacific are out of school and have not completed their primary school education¹²
- Migration rates tend to peak, for both men and women, in the 15-24 age range making them vulnerable to exploitation¹³
- Young people, particularly young men, are at greater risk of dying of external causes (accidents, suicide and violence) than people of older ages¹⁴

Youth deserve our full commitment – full access to education, adequate healthcare, employment opportunities, financial services and full participation in public life⁸



Policy gives direction to a country to provide the things they want for their young people: education at a level that matches their aspirations; employment opportunities; food and nutrition; good health and protection from disease, addiction and violence; human rights and equal opportunities; participation in decision-making processes; and places for culture, recreation and sport¹⁵

6. Youth policy honours regional and international agreements

Countries in the region have made commitments to international and regional agreements that aim to advance the situation of young people. These agreements and conventions support the development of workable and relevant policies that can be translated into practical strategies and programmes that are protective and promoting of the interests and rights of young people.



- High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth¹⁶
- Millennium Development Goals (for United Nations Member States)
- World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond¹⁷
- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989
- CEDAW Convention for Development of Women 2003
- UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS 2011
- International Conference on Population and Development 1994



Triggers that might lead to the development of a youth policy

There are a number of warning signs that singularly or in combination provide compelling reasons for governments to develop youth policies. These include:

- No clear policy context to situate programmes
- Governments find they are reinventing the wheel every time they invest in the development of programmes for young people
- New or existing legislation is not attached to a policy framework
- Policy exists but it is based on punitive measures and appears outdated and not in line with other more positive strategies or programmes
- Strong need for data or evidence where none or little exists
- Data results push the policy development process
- Policies are not fulfilling international or regional commitments
- Committed enthusiastic people see the need and advocate for policy

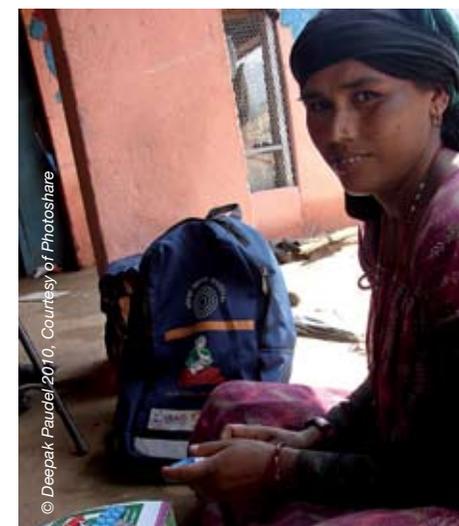


Making special efforts for adolescent girls

Investing in girls is the right thing to do on moral, ethical, and human rights grounds. Perhaps no other segment of society globally faces as much exploitation and injustice, and we owe girls our support as integral, yet overlooked, members of the human family¹⁸

In many countries in the region life chances, health and well being, and the enjoyment of human rights are determined by gender. It is increasingly recognised that ‘millions of adolescent girls live in poverty, are burdened by gender discrimination and inequality, and are subject to multiple forms of violence, abuse and exploitation, such as child labour, child marriage and other harmful practices’.¹⁹

The United Nations has made adolescent girls a priority area, emphasizing the need to focus efforts on enabling adolescent girls to claim their full rights. In 2010, the UN released a joint statement on accelerating efforts to advance the rights of adolescent girls, with a focus on five priority areas: education, health, protection from violence, leadership and data collection.



Gender inequality is a reality in the region and should take a central place in any youth policy discussions in order to direct resources to the young women and girls who need them the most

Many adolescent girls in the region are invisible in policies and programming. The position of young women in relation to the important issues of education, employment, participation and sexual behaviour remains hidden when data on young people is not disaggregated and analyzed by sex. The evidence-base – and the youth policies that use this evidence – must be gender-responsive in order to suggest urgent actions that can reduce the inequality between young women and men.

Focusing on gender as a cross-cutting area in youth policy is critical. Gender is not a stand-alone issue requiring one stand-alone policy. Gender should be considered and mainstreamed across all areas of policy including health, education and social protection.



UN Joint Statement on Advancing the Rights of Adolescent Girls

Coalition for Adolescent Girls

The Girl Effect

United Nations resources on gender equality



Adolescent girls in Nepal

HOW TO DEVELOP GOOD POLICIES

Although policy must be owned and developed by government, other key stakeholders require meaningful opportunities to participate in policy development, including all members of parliaments and national assemblies and, most importantly, young people themselves. Comprehensive consultation, along with the use of a locally-generated evidence base, creates a strong foundation for policy development and implementation strategies. The process itself is arguably as important as the final document, given the opportunities it creates for building capacity and relationships, fostering ownership and making commitments to funding.



Key ingredients

Regardless of the approach, four key ingredients are essential to initiating good youth policy development processes. These ingredients are discussed in the following chapters, using case studies from seven countries as examples of good practices.



Coordinate the approach

Most of the issues confronting young people are deeply inter-related and best addressed through cross-sectoral collaboration, fostering partnerships and consultation with all key stakeholders.



Collect and use data

Policy and programming implementation should be based on a locally-generated evidence-base, which highlights the issues requiring policy attention, guides implementation, and answers the questions of ‘why’ and ‘how’ a particular strategic policy or intervention would be adopted.



Involve young people

There are enormous benefits to countries when they support the meaningful and active participation of young people in the structures, processes, debates and environments that shape their lives.



Put policy into practice

Implementation gives life to a policy document and successful implementation relies on clear strategic plans, sustainable political commitments to putting policy into practice, support for funding, and mechanisms to reflect on and evaluate the policy and action plan.



Appendix: Case Study Summary



COORDINATE THE APPROACH

This chapter uses a case study from **Cambodia** to illustrate the importance of engagement and coordination across sectors and ministries, and broad consultation in policy development; and a case study from **Pacific Island Territories and Countries (PICTs)** to illustrate the importance of mobilizing resources at both policy and programming levels for single issues, in this case youth employment.

Most of the issues confronting young people are deeply inter-related and best addressed through cross-sectoral collaboration. A strong process will engage all key relevant government sectors as well as non-government partners, the private sector, civil society and young people themselves. It will involve senior levels within these organizations and leverage the skills of technical staff. It will prioritize working well with others to foster ownership and cooperation. This process results in evidence-based policies that governments can confidently state are based on broad consultation from all relevant key stakeholders.

CASE STUDY Cambodia

Governments drive coordination

Challenges for young people in Cambodia are interrelated: issues related to youth employment are inextricably linked to access to education and skill training; health status and access to health care are linked to income, gender and education.¹ The engagement and coordination of all key sectors – including government, civil society and youth organizations – was prioritized in the development of Cambodia's National Policy on Youth Development. Mechanisms to ensure successful cooperation included the establishment of a National Technical Working Group, the assurance that one agency was responsible for policy development, and the recruitment of the UN-appointed National Youth Policy Liaison Officer. Broad consultation, particularly with young people in Cambodia, meant that the policy was inclusive and comprehensive of all youth issues. These processes were an essential way for the Government to ensure that young people's needs and rights were translated into meaningful and supportive programmes.



Young people in Cambodia

Cambodia has the highest proportion of young people among countries in South-East Asia.² Young people (aged 15-30 years) make up 33% of the population of 14.8 million.³ The total fertility rate in Cambodia in 2009 was 2.9 live births with a population growth rate of 1.7%.⁴

The majority of Cambodians (83%) live in rural areas, with 60% working in agriculture.⁵ Migration to urban areas by young people in recent times has significantly reduced the young rural population. Although the quality of health has risen in Cambodia in recent years, there are still significant issues for young people in reproductive health and STIs including HIV.

Young males (15-24 years) have a literacy rate of 89% compared to 86% for young girls.⁶ An estimated 300,000 young people leave school every year to search for work.⁷ Many are ill-equipped to enter the labour market, lacking the necessary skills in language, computers, negotiation and communication that are demanded. Though the majority of young people are working, many are underemployed. Employment – particularly the transition from school to work – is an important challenge for many young Cambodians and more so for those from rural and poor families.



Cambodia statistics
Education in Cambodia



© UNICEF Cambodia 2009



© UNICEF Cambodia 2009

Launch of the Situation Analysis of Youth

The need for evidence

The process for creating a national youth policy began in 2004, coordinated by the [now-titled] General Department of Youth (GDY) of the Ministry of Education Youth and Sport (MoEYS). By 2008, after two consultations supported by the UN, a second draft of the policy was presented, but it was agreed that the policy needed to be informed by stronger evidence and broader consultation.

At the same time, the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in Cambodia identified a compelling need to have access to a comprehensive analysis of Cambodian youth-focused data and, with this in mind, undertook a Situation Analysis of Cambodian Youth.

The Situation Analysis was based on findings from existing quantitative survey data, large and small scale qualitative research, a national mapping, and focus group discussions with youth and parents. It highlighted the multiple factors that influence outcomes for young people: schooling, relationships and sexuality, alcohol and drug use, gender, family income, and ethnicity.

The Situation Analysis established a convincing evidence-based national profile of Cambodian youth to be used first and foremost as a tool by the UNCT to inform their programming and frameworks particularly for the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.⁹ Once complete, the UNCT saw the opportunity to utilise the Situation Analysis to engage in meaningful dialogue with the MoEYS to advance development of the national youth policy.



*Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
United Nations in Cambodia*

There is a need for a comprehensive multi-sectoral national youth policy to address inequalities [for young people] and to help guide public and private sector investment in the areas of education, vocational training, health services and information.¹⁰

A multi-sectoral approach

The findings of the Situation Analysis highlighted the many interrelated issues affecting young people in Cambodia, as well as the large numbers of NGOs and partners involved in various ways with youth. It focused attention on the need for a coordinated government-led response. In 2009, after discussion between the UN and MoEYS – and a commitment from the UN and other partners to support the process¹¹ – mechanisms were established to ensure the coordinated and collaborative development of the National Youth Policy.



© Heng Sovannava 2011, UNICEF



National Youth Policy development

National Technical Working Group

In 2009, the National Technical Working Group (NTWG) was established, with 14 members from technical departments of the MoEYS and UN Youth Focal Points,¹² selected on the basis of their technical skills and representation from areas that impact on youth. The NTWG was coordinated by the General Department of Youth, led by the General Director of Youth, and reported directly to the Minister and senior management of MoEYS.

The NTWG played a practical and important role in creating an outline for the National Youth Policy, giving clarity to the vision and defining stakeholder involvement. This included ensuring that ministries with an interest in youth affairs were included and engaged: Education, Labour, Women's Affairs, Health, Social Affairs, Justice, Culture and Fine Art, and Economy and Finance. They reviewed the draft policy, invited comments from stakeholders and facilitated ongoing consultations. The group was also involved in the drafting of a five-year National Youth Policy Action Plan to support policy implementation.¹³ They played an advocacy role in promoting the importance for all key stakeholders to work together, and they modelled collaboration through the many steps of consultation that took place.



Liaison Officer

The UN National Youth Policy Liaison Officer provided technical support and coordination between government and development partners. The Officer was based in the GDY of the MoEYS, and acted as a focal point and resource person for the process. The Officer organized regular meetings, kept everyone informed and talking to one another throughout the process, and mobilized technical assistance when it was required. The ‘go-between’ nature of the role meant that information was willingly shared, and the overall transparency of communications helped to build trust between partners.



“It was so beneficial for us to have the strong engagement from the United Nations, particularly the technical assistance provided by the UN Youth Focal Points through the good coordination from a National Youth Policy Liaison Officer. Before the UN made this investment, we committed and struggled in our attempts to develop policy. We wanted to get it right and we wanted everyone to have a say so it had to be coordinated. The officer gave us technical support and it made all the difference to our processes – we have now finalized our Policy, and we are very proud of the results.”

Chek Lim, Deputy Director General, GDY, MoEYS

UN Youth Advisory Panel

In addition to support for the Liaison Officer, the network of youth focal points across UN agencies was activated to ensure linkages in every relevant agency. In seeking ways for the UN to engage young people in providing programme advice and youth perspectives on development priorities and the work of the UN, the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC), on behalf of the UN Country Team in Cambodia, established a UN Youth Advisory Panel consisting of 11 young males and females under the age of 24 selected because of their particular expertise and interest with youth organizations or networks. The role of this group included providing feedback on the national youth policy, within the scope of their role as a 'go to' group for comment on all youth-related issues, reporting to the UN Country Team and coordinated by the Office of the UNRC. The Liaison Officer had a particular role in coordinating inputs from UN youth focal points and the UN Youth Advisory Panel.



“Throughout the entire development of the National Youth Policy, the UN Youth Advisory Panel was actively engaged to give input based on our field of interest and expertise. It was encouraging to know that our efforts were being included in the drafting process... particularly the outcomes from the national consultation workshops which had a significant impact on the final draft policy.”

Chhay Chansopheaktra, former member of UN Youth Advisory Panel, representing the Youth Council of Cambodia

Broad consultation

In 2009, a third consultation was organized with the participation of the Minister for Education, Youth and Sport, Secretary and Under-secretary of States, UN Resident Coordinator, members of the UNCT and 135 representatives from all relevant ministries, UN agencies, youth-led organizations, youth representatives from municipalities and provinces, and the private sector. The fourth and final consultation in 2010 presented the final draft Youth Policy, and reviewed the draft Action Plan,¹⁴ focusing on potential and existing youth-focused programmes and additional research areas.

The consultations involved all partners, and were inclusive and meaningful. They not only served to ensure that the National Youth Policy was comprehensive and inclusive of all youth issues and all sectors, but also that it was technically accurate, and that issues like gender equality, volunteerism, information technology and the arts were included. The consultation allowed for dialogue and debate, and some advocates made their case to seek greater profile or importance for certain issues. The need for an evidence-base to support all strategic implementation areas ensured that rhetorical statements and individual agendas were not included in the final policy. Consultation meetings ensured that theory and evidence was incorporated into policy statements, and that the presentation of cultural aspects of Cambodian history was discussed, debated and agreed upon.

Participants in a Pharmaciens Sans Frontieres maternal nutrition discussion, Stung Treng province



Facilitating technical expertise

Technical expertise and valuable relationships with state and civil society were leveraged rather than imposed. In particular, UN partners combined their financial support to fund the Liaison Officer position, and to ensure that the process was collaborative and inclusive, and that dedicated time could be given to the important policy writing task. The collaborative efforts of UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, ILO, UNV, UNESCAP, the World Bank, and the Office of the UNRC provided vast contextual knowledge of Cambodia and strong technical capacity in issues specific to youth throughout the process. This was significantly supported by regional youth advisers from both UNFPA and UNICEF.

National Youth Policy Writing Retreat

An innovative approach to the policy development process was the National Youth Policy Writing Retreat held in 2010 at the final stages of the drafting process. The two-day retreat brought together technical expertise from the GDY and the UN to finalize the draft policy's concepts and wording, identify technical gaps, ensure the policy had equivalent meaning in both English and Khmer, and retain the good practice elements. The retreat ensured the policy was well-structured and comprehensive, with content clearly defined and gender equality mainstreamed across all aspects of the report.



© Khut Somrindi, 2010

“While any youth policy must be owned by the government (and the young people), as this was the first ever youth policy, the Ministry highly appreciated the technical advice from the UNICEF Adolescent Adviser... it gave us confidence about what to prioritize, how to include conceptual definitions of youth and to compare our key policy implementation areas with other progressive countries in the region. The Minister was keen to have high quality advice – but we made the final decisions.”

H.E Tauch Choeun, Director General of Youth, MoEYS



Sirors, a 16 year-old peer educator¹⁵

Putting gender on the agenda

One member of the National Technical Working Group worked with UNDP, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and an existing Gender Working Group, to look at gender issues in the Youth Policy. In earlier drafts of the policy, gender had been mainstreamed throughout. The Gender Working Group – comprised of gender-focused NGOs and development partners, and chaired by MoWA – thoroughly reviewed the draft youth policy. They made a strong recommendation that gender should have its own area in the policy in addition to being mainstreamed in all other areas.

A letter was sent from the Minister for Women's Affairs to the Minister for Education, Youth and Sport, making suggestions for inclusions of key issues to ensure the situation of young women and gender issues was well-reflected in the policy document. These proposals and comments were very well accepted and resulted in the strong positioning of gender in the policy.

Implementation

The result of all this coordination is a policy that the government is proud of and which they can confidently state is based on an evidence-base and broad consultation from all relevant key stakeholders. In 2011, the National Policy on Youth Development was officially approved at the Council of Ministers, chaired by the Prime Minister.

Cambodia has given serious consideration to the implementation phase to ensure continuing commitment and coordination. Responsibility for the government's coordination of the National Policy on Youth Development has shifted to the National Council for Youth Development. This inter-ministerial group is situated in the Prime Minister's office, along with the Councils for Child Development and for Women. This coordinated structure and positioning ensures that all ministries have some responsibility for financing and implementing the strategies of the policy – and that one body will coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the National Action Plan. Shortly after the approval of the policy, the UNCT met with the MoEYS to confirm its commitment to continuing to support the government.

Cambodia will likely continue to face challenges in coordinating across sectors. Some policy areas will be coordinated by specific ministries, such as volunteerism by the Ministry of the Interior. But some objectives and strategies with cross-sectoral priorities (such as issues of labour, vocational training and health) will require more sophisticated coordination support. The National Action Plan and the Master Matrix address these challenges by presenting detailed specific actions: 'a practical statement on implementation for relevant institutions'.¹⁶





Establish a leader **who is recognized and accepted**

In Cambodia's case, the fact that the development of the policy was situated and had authority in one department (the GDY), with a senior minister engaging partners in the process, was integral to effective coordination. Ensuring that one agency leads the policy has been demonstrated time and again as the driver for success, just as the lack of a leadership body has been identified as a barrier to progress. In Cambodia, the leadership of MoEYS as designated by the Prime Minister – under the Minister for Education, Youth and Sport – ensured a high level of commitment and ownership by government, as well as fostering an environment where multi-sectoral cooperation could flourish.

Seek support **from the highest levels**

Although the NTWG's members were selected for their technical expertise rather than seniority in their sector, links were established early to involve and encourage support from senior levels of government. The Chair of the NTWG was the General Director of the GDY, with direct links to the Minister of Education, Youth and Sport. Consultations involved senior representatives and policy makers from relevant ministries, including the Minister for Education, Youth and Sport and the UNRC in Cambodia. The Cambodian National Policy on Youth Development was signed by the Prime Minister, signifying the highest level of support and endorsement possible.



Be practical **about what can be achieved**

Policy development can be a long process requiring dedicated support from many stakeholders. Finding good creative mechanisms and leveraging existing relationships was a key strategy in Cambodia in achieving results. For example, membership of the NTWG was contained within the various departments of the MoEYS that were directly associated with young people. This was consciously done for practical reasons – it reduced time and directed resources effectively. Members of the NTWG were assigned to work with a line ministry and a UN agency. This was an extremely useful model for ensuring access to and support from available experts.

Involve young people **from all levels**

In Cambodia, the engagement and participation of youth organizations was the main conduit for policy input from provincial and grassroots levels. Dedicated staff members from a range of NGOs took every opportunity to help build a strong policy. The National Youth Policy Network¹⁷ was formed to participate in the process, and organized consultations using different platforms to outreach to young people particularly in rural areas. Funds to initiate these consultations were self-generated. NGOs made great use of radio and television to raise awareness of the youth policy's importance, and fed results back to the GDY through meetings and preparation of national youth policy position papers. This was a rich and positive NGO and government partnership, which ensured the local voice of young people was considered in the policy dialogue.



Document **the process**

The extensive process and investment of so many groups in Cambodia indicates how complex participatory and consultative policy making processes can be. A change of government before policy is completed; loss of institutional memory; and change of staff in supporting partner organizations can disrupt and delay the process at any stage – and present risks to the finalization of policy and its successful endorsement, wasting precious time and resources. Documenting the youth policy-making process in Cambodia will hopefully inspire others to undertake collaborative policy development in the future, and provide opportunities to take note of the lessons learned.

CASE STUDY The Pacific

Youth employment

Developing a single-sector policy is one step towards tackling the multiple needs of young people. In the Pacific Island Territories and Countries (PICTs), youth employment is a priority issue, with governments and civil society beginning to mobilize resources at both policy and programming levels. In a region of limited resources and economic development, young people are further disadvantaged by the lack of youth-specific support mechanisms, a traditional focus on elders as leaders, education and training that does not match them with labour market needs, and too few opportunities for employment. There is an increasing desire to direct resources towards data on youth unemployment; promote coordination across sectors; increase youth participation and leadership; and facilitate dialogue between government, civil society and the private sector.



© Caroline Duaibe 2010, UNICEF Pacific



Rapid growth in urban areas due to high birth rates and migration has led to a sharp increase in the number of urban youth who are living in poor and vulnerable conditions in neighbourhoods without basic services, housing or security¹

facebook



Young people in the Pacific

There are 22 small island countries and territories in the Pacific,² home to 8 million people scattered across a vast area covering one fifth of the world's surface. Twenty percent – 1.6 million – are young people aged 15–24 years.³ With the exception of Papua New Guinea, population sizes range from as low as 1,400 in Niue and Tokelau to 850,000 in Fiji. The average population growth rate of 2.2% per annum will more than double the population in the next 30 years in some Melanesian countries.⁴ However, outmigration, especially of young people, may influence population dynamics, and some countries, like Niue and Tokelau, are experiencing depopulation.

The Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) are an extraordinarily culturally diverse region hosting literally thousands of different languages. Young people – usually officially defined as those aged 15 to around 35 years⁵ – live in societies that value elders, often limiting the opportunity for them to have a say in their own development and that of their communities. Options for young people are further hampered by the region's limited resources and under-performing economies. School dropout rates are high.⁶

UNICEF Pacific

The State of Pacific Youth 2011

Pacific resource materials, UNFPA



Many young people are underemployed in seasonal or temporary work where they have few future prospects and little opportunity to further their skills



Youth employment in the Pacific

Geographic isolation, inadequate infrastructure and resources, and limited domestic markets make youth employment one of the most pressing issues in PICTs.⁷ Young people face numerous obstacles specific to their age: lack of support mechanisms⁸, restricted access to capital, education and training approaches that are not matched with labour market needs,⁹ and, primarily, too few opportunities for employment. In Samoa, 4,000 youth enter the labour market every year but only 500 will land a job; in Vanuatu the ratio is 700 jobs to 3,500 job seekers.¹⁰

Jobs in the informal sector are not well-supported, especially in non-family agricultural and rural industries. Conditions can be poor, and legislative and union protection weak.¹¹ Land ownership is often communal and traditionally owned, causing complications for individual enterprise. Many young people exist on subsistence living because they have no other choices. Young people in PICTs that can access international labour markets commonly migrate for work.¹²

Migration for work

How many are unemployed?

It is hard to get accurate figures for youth unemployment in PICTs.¹³ Data may not be age-disaggregated, or it may not take into account the informal sector where young people's work is often located. Data does not count young people whose only option is subsistence living in mainly rural areas because there is no paid work.

Using evidence-based estimations, it is possible to make approximate calculations. The 2005 State of Pacific Youth Report highlights a trend in the region that youth unemployment rates are double that of the entire workforce.¹⁴ For Fiji, based on the figure of 11.8%¹⁵ for the entire workforce 15-64 years, this would set an estimated unemployment rate for 15-24 year olds in Fiji of around 23%. However, a 2009 estimation of the ratio of youth-to-adult unemployment rates in the Pacific Islands of 3.9¹⁶ would set the unemployment rate at 46%.



There is a strong need for accurate data that reflects the reality of unemployment for 15-24 year olds and which will ensure appropriate government action



We need change



Knowledge management and capacity development for labour, youth and other relevant ministries on youth unemployment is a pressing and urgent need, as is more multi-sectoral cooperation¹⁷



Working across ministries

Labour ministries often have little capacity and insufficient knowledge to deal with youth employment issues. Few labour ministries engage with and take responsibility for the youth employment agenda. More commonly, their mandated approach is to address the labour force as a whole, rather than to focus on a specific youth cohort. However, when they have been given information about the issues, there is much greater responsiveness.

There are few precedents for a multi-sectoral approach in the Pacific, so it is not often that dialogue takes place between ministries concerned with youth affairs. However, a good example can be found in the Solomon Islands, which decided to take a mainstreaming approach to their youth policy. All ministries that have connections to youth issues have signed a commitment to the policy and its actions.¹⁸

APYouthNet

Government commitment

There is a strong rhetoric by government to address the issue of youth employment, but resource allocation has not matched the proclaimed commitment.



In the face of reduced growth in the domestic market, political leaders have openly suggested that only three options exist for young people – volunteerism, migration or entrepreneurship. This attitude is understandable when governments and civil society do not have a policy framework for youth employment with specific actions that create more options.

While a specific youth employment policy may be desirable for PICTs, policy direction can come from a variety of sources. Being opportunistic, and interpreting statements and commitments with creativity, is one strategy employed by countries in the Pacific.

Youth unemployment and underemployment are priority issues in PICTs, visible in communities and difficult to avoid in any policy arena addressing social or economic concerns¹⁹



Asian Decent Work Decade



There is increasingly more solidarity among Pacific Island leaders about youth employment issues



Regional cooperation

PICTs have a history of regional cooperation in matters of common interest in economic and social development, and this has resulted in some mutually-agreed strategic directions that can guide governments and civil society at the country level to develop specific youth employment policies. These include the Pacific Plan,²⁰ Asian Decent Work Decade initiative,²¹ Pacific Action Plan for Decent Work,²² and the ILO's Decent Work Country Programmes (DWCP).²³

At the Commonwealth Pacific Region Conference on Investing in Youth Employment held in 2011, Governments made a commitment to allocate investments in youth employment that will lead to the formulation of a Pacific-wide youth employment strategy and a youth employment network. Governments at the regional level intend to work in partnership with institutions like the Commonwealth Youth Programme, the Pacific Youth Council and the ILO. While this regional strategy can help to unite PICTs, Governments are also aware of the need to make individual commitments in each country to raise and deliver on the youth employment agenda.

*Commonwealth Pacific Region Conference
Secretariat of Pacific Communities*

Regional initiatives

Significant youth issues were tabled at the Pacific Island Leaders Forum, 2011, including youth involvement in crime due to their marginalization²⁴ and youth employment. ILO, UNICEF and the Secretariat for Pacific Communities (SPC) are contributing technical assistance to the advisory committees of the marginalized youth study²⁵ and the youth employment policy briefs.

The youth employment initiative is led by the Pacific Youth Council (PYC), an umbrella body of the national youth councils in 10 countries in the Pacific. The PYC aims to have its role formalized as the focal point for youth engagement at the regional level, with a mandate to take on the issue, set up a structure to develop the strategy, be a regional point of contact for young people, provide national and regional representation of young people, engage with youth and involve other youth stakeholders.

In the context of youth unemployment, the policy recommendations from the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting that took place in Auckland in 2011 also consider training and education, in particular to broaden the criteria for curriculums to become less academically focused and more relevant to the labour market; to change attitudes towards vocational training, which is currently seen as a 'drop-out' option and often excludes young women; and to improve the transition from school to work by, for example, including more life skills development in curriculums.



At the Pacific Youth Festival²⁶



Pacific Youth Council

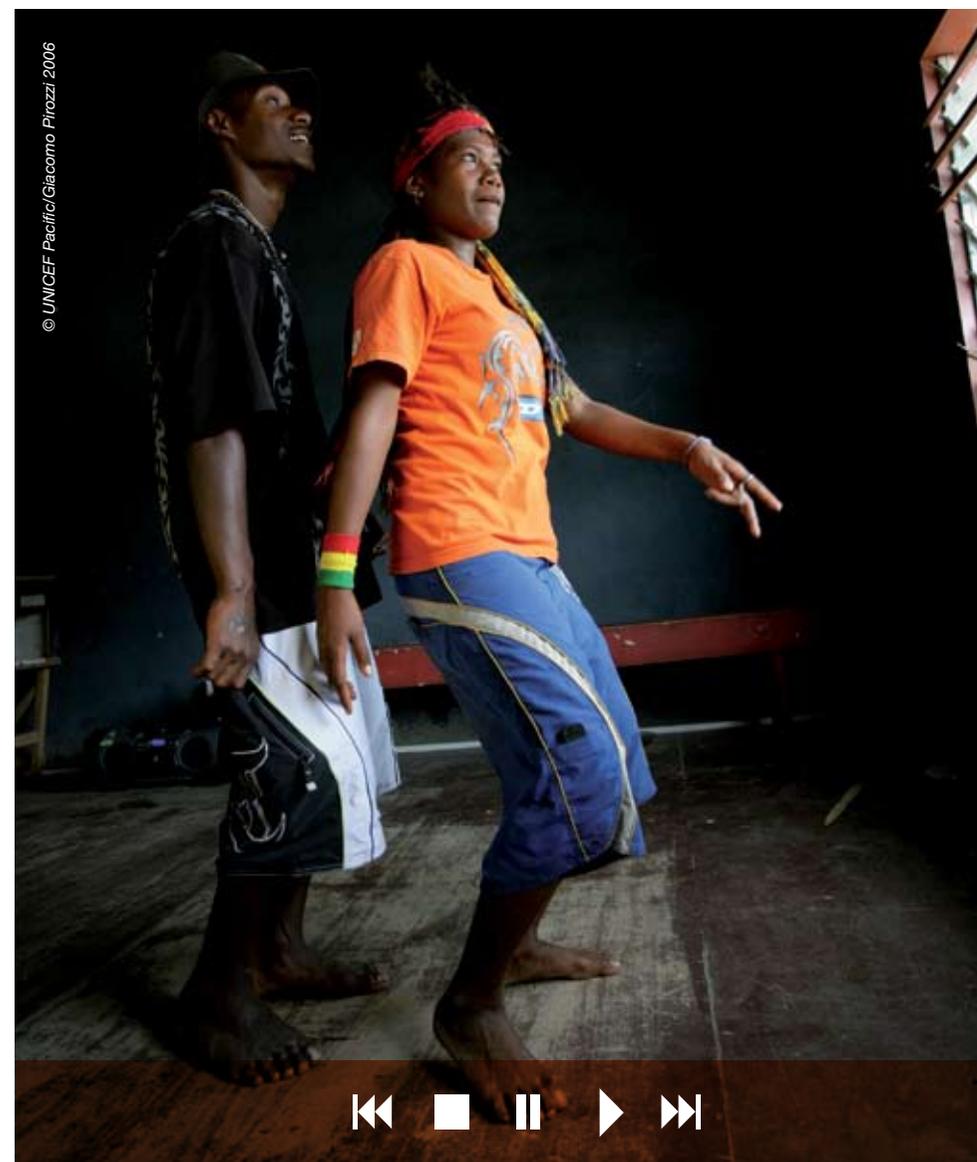
42nd Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting Youth Council

Pacific Youth Strategy

The Pacific Youth Strategy²⁷ (2006-2010) provided a framework for PICTs to guide progress towards more youth focused policies and programmes, including those related to employment, with specific targets around skills training and the development of sustainable livelihoods. The strategy included promoting volunteerism as a pathway to employment.

A new strategy for the next five years is in the early stages of development. The review recommends a broader regional approach, with less focus on themes and activities, and more focus on regional coordination, support for governments in key areas and ways to engage young people in the policy development process. At the national level, countries will then plan their policies to reflect the real situation on the ground: a bottom-up approach. Policy development at the national level has been encouraging.

In their 2007-2010 National Youth Policy, the Cook Islands included strategic interventions to promote young people's participation in two of their main economic industries: fishing and pearl farming. They provided training to young people in fishing methods, maintenance, and accounting and marketing skills.



Life for young people in PICTs



Options and strategies for young people

Although employment options for young people are limited in the Pacific, there are optimistic signs that the policy environment, in addressing this issue, will trigger the creation of effective regional and national strategies. These strategies may consider:

- Labour market opportunities, for example, what industries can do to create more jobs for young people and what adjustments could be made in new industries that would improve opportunities for young people
- How young people can be supported in traditional career options
- How entrepreneurship schemes could be improved to benefit young people
- Measures to protect and encourage the return of those young people who migrate for employment

“There are ways to foster industries and sectors that would really benefit young people in the Pacific. Young people have good skills in sports. Many Fiji rugby players play for other countries all over world, but there is little formal sports training in the Pacific region. They have great musical abilities, but again there is little investment in the music industry. Singing is regarded as just a hobby on the side rather than a viable employment opportunity. There are many ways the music and entertainment industry could be linked to the Pacific’s thriving tourism industry. Young people could also do very well in cultural and creative industries, like furniture-making and handicrafts that don’t require long-term formal skills training but could potentially generate good incomes for many young people.”

Mereia Carling, UNICEF Pacific

Labour market opportunities

Government and the private sector are considering recommendations that would improve opportunities for young people in new industries, such as the sports or creative industries, and in traditional sectors such as agriculture. This approach is not just about developing infrastructure and providing resource support to industries, but also about supporting specific opportunities for young people, who at present are competing with more experienced adults in the labour market, with little backing and little attention paid to utilizing young people’s talents.

The private sector has the potential to create more opportunities for young people’s employment. In particular, foreign companies that are being encouraged to situate their business in the Pacific, such as telecommunication call centres, could, for instance, take on quotas for employing young people as tax incentives. Within the



*Private Sector Toolkit for Youth
Tana Umaga speaks about youth sport
UNICEF Pacific*





Career options in traditional sectors

Agricultural work is not seen as a viable option for most young people in the Pacific Islands. The sector is precarious – due to both economics and geography – but it also has a low status, particularly when higher wages from migrant work are very visible in communities. Young people are actively discouraged from an early age to go into farming by families and schools. Comments from young people who participated in the Youth in Agriculture Strategy²⁸ data collection process indicated that ‘the school system often contributes to instilling negative perceptions by using agricultural activities as a means of punishment or discipline’ and ‘from a young age we have been programmed to think that a job in town or a job in an office is the ultimate aim’.²⁹

The Youth in Agriculture Strategy Report found that many young people are engaged in agricultural work, but their efforts go unacknowledged, and often into the communal pot usually because land is communally owned. Young people said they need a supportive environment for their participation in agriculture especially from their families, communities and churches to give status and permission for young people to have a career in agriculture. Their interest in farming depends on the possibilities they see in terms of work, wages and livelihoods. The Report recommends strategies that will encourage young people to regard farming as a good professional option, and which will hopefully increase the numbers of young people who engage consistently in farming.³⁰



Youth in Agriculture Strategy 2011-2015

Small business entrepreneurs

Though entrepreneurship schemes are available in the Pacific, none are targeted to young people. Young people may have ideas but they have nowhere to take them. Banks will not loan them money. They are in competition with more experienced adults both in the business environment and in trying to find places in entrepreneurship schemes. This is an unfair playing field when adults have so many more resources – capital, tools, business experience, contacts, networks and even a fixed abode. Small businesses start-ups – such as handicraft or furniture making – do not provide easy entry for young people, even though they may be very appropriate industries for the next generation. The Pacific Youth Strategy recommends young entrepreneurs are given incentives and support, including bank loan schemes, business small-grant schemes, tax breaks, and the establishment of technical advisory and support units.³¹

The high failure rate of new small businesses in the Pacific – most close after one year – is of great concern when governments are recommending entrepreneurship as a viable option for young people



Policies for employment migration

Migration for work is a short-term solution to the issue of youth employment. Although the inflow of remittances from working abroad has benefits to the economy, and skills development can be encouraged by the incentive to work abroad, it is difficult for young people on higher international salaries to return and invest back into local economies; for example, to start their own farms or bring much needed medical skills to local hospitals. There are social consequences from the absence of family members, often fathers, for long periods of time. Labour migration can leave local communities without the sustainable investments they need from the next generation.³²

The migration for work issue has received little attention in the policy environment. It is not included as an issue in the Pacific Youth Strategy, or indeed other countries in the Asia-Pacific region where youth labour export is an issue or is prevalent. It is not comprehensively addressed in the Pacific Action Plan for Decent Work, though this has an outcome for all migrating workers to receive comprehensive pre-departure training/ orientation; and an output to undertake a cross-country comparison of labour migration policy and legislation in sending and receiving countries. There is no indication that either of these strategies would include a youth-specific focus.

Any employment schemes related to migration for work should operate within a policy framework that will enable regulation and support a youth focus. Young people will generally be more vulnerable in these settings, and care and attention should be paid to long-term strategies to increase professional and skills-development in the country of origin, gain opportunities for better-qualified jobs, increase awareness of their rights and entitlements, and provide incentives for their return to local communities.

There are many potential supporting objectives and strategies that could be developed within employment-related policies that will minimize the costs to the Pacific of migration for work. For example, data on migration for work could lead to the development of a database on employers who will give young people a fair deal.



Build an evidence-base

In the Pacific, census data has been used to quantify the situation for youth and their livelihoods in both the formal and informal sectors. But there is a pressing need to create data on basic labour market information and ‘data that reflects the reality on the ground...the daily struggle of young people who are underemployed, working under minimum wage and in vulnerable conditions’.³³ One positive initiative from the SPC, based on a request from regional Ministers of Agriculture, was a 2009 survey of young people in agriculture. The survey gave young people a voice to express their relationship with farming³⁴ and provided data to develop the Youth in Agriculture Strategy.

Support involvement and leadership

The Pacific Youth Festival, held every two years, attracts hundreds of young people from across the region who participate in a week-long programme of skills training and information sharing on issues like health and climate change. The Festival results in a declaration by its young participants which becomes a document used by governments and civil society to represent the voice of young people. The Suva Declaration³⁵ from the festival held in Fiji in 2009 will be used in the development of the next five-year Pacific Youth Strategy. This is a great achievement in a society where cultural norms make it difficult for young people to express their views openly, and where there are few opportunities for young people to have leadership roles in government, or forums for young people to participate in decision-making at the local level.³⁶



Create opportunities for dialogue

The different perspective that is brought to the policy development table by governments, civil society and the private sector creates a dialogue that can result in creative solutions to the youth employment challenge. For example, an option that could create long-term solutions for youth employment in local communities is to tap into previously unconsidered potential markets or sectors that have shown domestic growth, such as tourism.³⁷ As well as from the Pacific, good examples can be found in Indonesia, the Philippines and Viet Nam, where government, civil society and the private sector – who are not often in dialogue – have found forums to communicate and build trust.

Protect young people's rights

Young people – through inexperience and the need for income – are especially vulnerable to exploitation. Approaches to youth employment should be protective as well as supportive. Legislation and the involvement of trade unions can create better working conditions for young people. The ILO is working in eight Pacific countries to strengthen the technical capabilities of the Pacific Countries' trade unions to promote better opportunities for young men and women to obtain productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.



Close the gap **between education and work**

There are many and varied approaches to ensuring a smooth transition from school to work, addressing in particular the labour market needs on the one hand, and the need for young people to have skills and career counselling support to find decent and fairly paid work on the other. One creative approach has been taken at Tutu College in Taveuni, Fiji with a farming programme which aims to train young people to achieve self-employment on the land. It addresses the need for farmers to manage their own land and profits, which sits contrary to the more typical communal farming environment in Fiji.³⁸



COLLECT AND USE DATA

This chapter uses a case study from **Viet Nam** about the collection and use of the Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth to illustrate the importance of a locally-generated evidence base, and a case study from **Bhutan** to illustrate the importance of creating evidence on specific groups of young people who may need policies the most.

Gathering valid, disaggregated data from and about young people is an essential pre-requisite for developing policy. Data creates an evidence-base on young people that is owned by countries and used by governments and civil society to inform cross-sectoral youth policy and programming. It should be reflective of a diverse range of young people and collected over time to account for changing contexts. Evidence becomes a valuable advocacy tool, drawing attention to specific issues, reviewing the most cost-effective intervention, ensuring the intervention is appropriate to local conditions and demonstrating improvements.¹

The evidence-base cycle

Youth policy draws on an evidence-base in three key ways:

Policy development is not necessarily a linear process: policy and programmes can, and usually are, implemented at the same time and in some cases policy follows practice. The development of a youth policy accelerates the need to gather more strategic information and more targeted data in order to make the case for funding or special resource allocation for youth initiatives

1. **Justifying why policy is needed:** Data should include information about the knowledge, behaviours, attitudes and experiences of adolescents and youth which provides a platform of evidence to highlight issues requiring policy attention.
2. **Working out how policy should be developed:** While knowing the reasons why young people are situated or behaving as they do is one type of data – for example, why young people drop out of school – what can be done to prevent or enhance the situation of young people is another – for example, what would be the best way of keeping young people in school? Data needs to be able to answer not only ‘why’ a particular strategic policy or intervention would be adopted but also ‘how’ it should be done.
3. **Guiding implementation:** Evidence about what has worked in the past (and equally important, what has not worked) should guide policy implementation. This includes consideration of the strategies that already exist and which may help or hinder any strategic interventions.

Of course, these programming experiences continue to contribute to and build on the evidence-base. What ideally results is a cyclic well-documented learning process which ensures the constant reflection on and improvement to policy and programming responses.

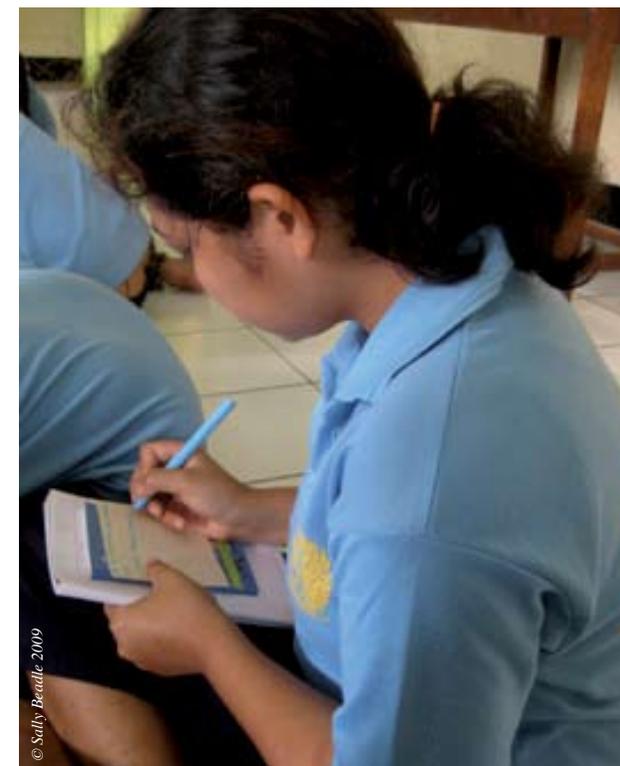
A need for accurate data

Accessing the evidence about the real situation for young people is limited by the availability of accurate age- and sex-segmented data. If the tools available to measure the population are not inclusive of young people – such as household demographics and whole of population data – they are of little worth to youth policy development.

For example:

- Employment figures provide only a partial picture if they do not take into account the large numbers of young people living on subsistence farming, young migrant workers, or those working in informal settings
- Household surveys do not include at-risk and vulnerable youth who live on the street, and who may need services the most
- When the issue is sensitive, data may not be collected or shared; for example, unmarried adolescents who are not recorded as disaggregated user groups in reproductive health services
- Data in areas such as employment, health and education that is not disaggregated by sex cannot reflect an accurate picture of the options available for young women and girls

The main issues for young people can only be identified by asking young people. This often requires the use of more creative and innovative approaches rather than conventional survey and interview techniques



CASE STUDY Viet Nam

Linking policy and data

Viet Nam made an early and high-level political commitment to creating evidence on the social life, attitudes and aspirations of Vietnamese young people that could be used to direct and shape youth policy. The Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth explored education, employment, health, relationships and risk behaviours across a massive sample of participants. The data generated by SAVY meant that Viet Nam better understood the risks and vulnerabilities faced by youth, the protective mechanisms that existed, and the important issues that needed to be addressed. SAVY provided enough evidence for governments to be able to answer the question: how do we decide what to fund and what do we prioritize?



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College students in Can Tho pretest communication materials from the Center for Community Health Research and Development



Center for Community Health Research and Development adolescents pretest, Can Tho, Viet Nam

Young people in Viet Nam

After decades of war and struggle, Viet Nam now has one of the best performing economies in the region. Viet Nam is expected to achieve many of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.²

With a population of 85.8 million, Viet Nam is ranked the thirteenth most populous country in the world.³ As with other countries in the region, Viet Nam currently is experiencing a youth bulge, with young people aged 15-24 the largest demographic segment, representing 19.5% of the total population.⁴

Life for young people in Viet Nam today is vastly different to that of 25 years ago when Viet Nam restructured its economy through Doi Moi (renovation). Young people expect to live longer, healthier and more prosperous lives than those of their parents, understandable in the context that this is the first generation for many decades not to have known war. The literacy rate for 15-24 year olds is 97%, with 96.2% of young people 14-25 years reporting attendance at school at some time in their lives.⁵ The overall quality of health in Viet Nam is regarded as good, with a 2009 life expectancy of 76 for women and 72 for men.⁶

The good news for young people generally does not extend to those living in remote rural areas, from ethnic minority backgrounds,⁷ or who are poor and/or living in vulnerable or at-risk situations. Many issues remain for young people in Viet Nam. The unemployment rate may be low for the country overall,⁸ but 64% of young people 14-25 years consistently reported that it was difficult to find a job.⁹ Extremely high numbers of young people report that they had wanted or did want to go to university, in stark contrast to the actual numbers that can.¹⁰ A massive 98.6% of 14-25-year olds reported that they can easily obtain alcohol.¹¹

 [Viet Nam overview](#)



© Binh Khac Vu 2005. Courtesy of [WorldShare](#)

Nam Xe village, Lai Chau, Viet Nam



© UNFPA Viet Nam 2009

There was recognition that the earlier draft national youth policy was not based on strong enough evidence

The need for accurate data

In 2001, WHO supported the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Institute of Sociology to host a large scale adolescent health and wellbeing forum.¹² This marked the beginning of an agreement between a number of partners to support greater coordination and investment towards a national youth policy, a youth survey and youth programming.

Timing was key. The country was at a significant stage of its development, with a strong desire to join the World Trade Organization (WTO) and demonstrate its commitments to improving the economic and social life of its people on the international stage. The MDGs that were concerned with improving the health of young people were viewed as essential commitments by government. In addition, some significant project work took place in the adolescent reproductive health area especially through the work of UNFPA and the European Union. However, there was little available data to advance the broader adolescent health agenda or to understand the social and cultural lives of young people.



Ministry of Health

The adolescent health agenda

In the early 2000s, adolescent health and development was appearing as an issue on the international agenda as part of important movements to address this significant population in developing countries. WHO discussed the importance of acquiring baseline data to inform policy with the MoH. There was a clear understanding that, by using an evidence-based health policy, a submission could be made to target funding for adolescent health, non-existent before 2003.

Government and UN staff were committed to the issue, with other UN and international agencies and local researchers offering support. There was excitement about creating evidence on the social life, attitudes and aspirations of Vietnamese young people that could be used to direct and shape youth policy and programming across sectors.

“Something was different in 2003. The adolescent area became of great interest to the country. Viet Nam was ready to acknowledge the fact that more progressive countries had youth policies. The partners were more determined and UNICEF and WHO committed funds. The time was right for a change. There was great excitement...”

Khuat Thu Hong, Director, Institute for Social Development in Society



WHO statistics

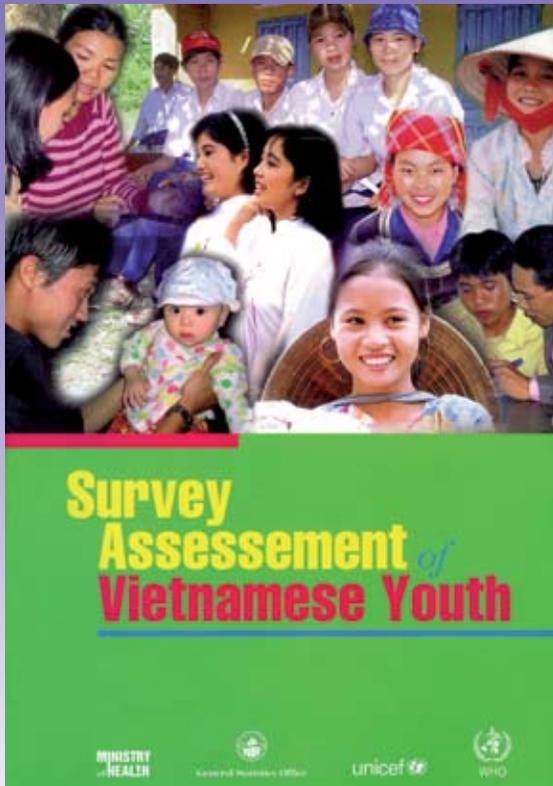
Relationships and responsibilities

As in many countries, no single Ministry in Viet Nam believed that a national youth policy – and the collection of evidence to support it – was situated within their domain, even though Ministries did incorporate youth issues into their agenda. For example, the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) continued to make policy decisions that affected adolescents both in and out of school, and the MoH included young people in their Reproductive Health Strategy and national programme.

The solution to deciding authority for the first survey came from an approach by the then Head of WHO in Viet Nam to the Minister of Health, requesting the Ministry to take leadership on SAVY. The Minister of Health agreed and wrote to other Ministries inviting them to nominate a senior person to join an Inter-Ministerial Steering committee on the survey. Partnerships were then established between and within agencies to create broad ownership and provide essential technical support. This process ensured that while one agency was in charge of keeping the process moving, diverse technical expertise was represented.

The Government's willingness to coordinate extended to creating broad representative support across ministries,¹³ the Youth Union and the Women's Union in what was then an unusual approach. Bilateral support and funding came from the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and International Non-Government Organizations (INGOs).¹⁴ Partnerships were made with UN agencies (including the establishment of the UN Youth Group) and national research bodies.¹⁵

When reflecting on the processes for policy development, the role of personal relations, trust between people and the leadership of individuals are important factors that influence the story



Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth

The Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth (SAVY 1)¹⁶ was first carried out in 2003, with coordination through the MoH, the General Statistics Office (GSO), WHO and UNICEF. The 7,584 participants from households were drawn from cities and 42 provinces, giving a massive coverage of two thirds of the country. Participants were males and females, married and unmarried, Kinh and ethnic minority, and aged between 14-25 years. Five years later, SAVY 2 explored changes and emerging issues.

Both surveys included questions on education, employment, physical health, sexual and reproductive health, marriage and family relationships, friendship and love, risk behaviours, use of addictive substances (alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs), accidents, injuries and violence. The data was analyzed and in-depth policy briefs were prepared on targeted topics as a basis for developing policy, starting programmes and measuring outcomes.



Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth

“The survey of youth, the first of its kind in Viet Nam, represents an important collaborative partnership between many Government and international agencies and young people. The information collected will be used to direct and shape youth policy in Viet Nam and to promote the healthy development of young people across the country.”¹⁷

Dr Tran Chi Liem, Vice Minister of Health

Evidence informs strategic interventions

SAVY data meant that Viet Nam better understood the risks and vulnerabilities faced by youth and the protective mechanisms that existed. The country was able to prioritize job creation schemes, increasing educational opportunities, reducing risks associated with legal drug use (alcohol and tobacco), improving knowledge about sexual and reproductive health, changing attitudes and behaviour on condom use, and reducing the risk of traffic accidents. There were also clear indicators of the need to target vulnerable young people, especially ethnic minorities.

Although rich data on young people was provided in SAVY 1, the MoH did not see their role as a leading one for a National Youth Policy. Instead, in line with their mandate, they developed the *Master Plan on Protection, Care and Improvement of Adolescent and Youth Health 2006-2010*. In line with SAVY 1 findings, key areas of focus included reproductive health, prevention of HIV, injury prevention, drug use and mental health. Other Ministries and the Youth Union followed the course of the MoH and developed their own strategies and frameworks using SAVY 1 data as their evidence-base.

According to SAVY, the majority of Vietnamese young people are hardworking, strongly connected to their families, optimistic about the future and generally satisfied with their situation... There are however clear gender differences, with more males involved in risk behaviours, notably smoking, drinking, unsafe sex, motorbike racing and violence. A small but significant group of young people face other risks, such as early school drop-out, because of economic inequalities.¹⁸

Advocacy workshop at commune level, Viet Nam





Encouraging HIV testing



SAVY 2

As for SAVY 1, SAVY 2 was jointly implemented by many organizations, international and national specialists, and young people. SAVY 2 had a broader coverage and sample size drawn from a subset of the GSO household living standards survey. The survey was conducted with the participation of 10,044 respondents aged 14-25 years living in households in 63 provinces. Results were released in 2010.

SAVY 2 evidence demonstrated that many young people had been exposed to television advertisements and media campaigns on issues affecting young people, including a campaign developed to raise awareness of HIV and the need for utilizing Voluntary Counselling Testing (VCT).

Mass media campaign to reduce HIV



HIV IQ test

The results showed that, though behaviour had not changed significantly, there was an awareness of the issues and an intention to change behaviour. For example, SAVY 2 showed a very significant change in positive attitudes to condoms (30%), compared with SAVY 1 where young people were not positive towards the use of condoms.

Other uses

SAVY was an important document in informing the development of the Viet Nam Youth Law, strengthening the legislative and policy framework to promote and protect young people's development. SAVY gave a push to the development of *National Guidelines on the Provision of Adolescent and Youth Friendly Health Services*, with 20 provinces developing plans of action. SAVY 2 has been used for the Plan of Action on Condoms Comprehensive Program 2011-2020 and the National Strategy for HIV prevention

SAVY data was also used to support evidence for the development of the National Strategy on Population and Reproductive Health Care 2011-2020. The National Strategy has very specific objectives for improving the reproductive health (RH) of adolescent and young people (Objective 7), including:

- Reducing the adolescent pregnancy and abortion rate by 50% between 2010 to 2020
- Ensuring that at least 75% of establishments providing RH care services will become youth friendly RH care services with programmes of action on the improvement of RH care for adolescents, young people and other specific target groups



Outreach to young migrant workers



Reproductive health in Viet Nam

Translating data

SAVY created evidence and baseline data on the need for YFHS: it told the government what to look at. But in reviewing how services operated, evidence was created on how the government could deliver effective services; it told the government how to do it

SAVY provided enough evidence for governments to be able to answer the question: how do we decide what to fund and what to prioritize? It enabled the Government to take the evidence cycle forward to implementation and evaluation phases.

A good example can be seen in the pilot phase of the Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) implementation. One health service in Hanoi met a number of criteria for YFHS; for example, their opening hours were appropriate for young people, confidentiality was assured and staff were trained to work with young people. However, despite the match to criteria, the service was not being fully utilized and its outreach programme was not effective. The pilot evaluation created data that led to better social marketing of services and increased usage.





Center for Community Health Research and Development adolescents pretest

Evaluation

The next step – evaluation of the implementation phase – poses several challenges. Evaluating the effectiveness of complex programmes such as YFHS is not as straightforward as simple correlation studies, for example the effect of bed-nets on malaria. Evaluating policy effectiveness is complex and requires multiple tools. It includes analyzing strategic information and reviewing other countries' practices. Good policy and programme development processes can only be put into action when links are made between the evidence for what is needed and the evidence for what does and does not work.



Gain high-level political commitment

Political commitment from early in the process can be an extremely effective driver for policy change and implementation, particularly if there are individual leaders who champion the need for policy. High-level commitments encourage input: people are more likely to attend meetings, make good on their promises and stick to deadlines. In Viet Nam, the Minister for Health was very engaged in the process, writing to other ministries requesting involvement in SAVY. This fostered shared ownership of the data, and cooperation across sectors leading to agreements where all ministries involved signed-off on the survey, and specific agreements, for example with the MoET to survey adolescents in schools.

Mobilize people-power resources

The workload was heavy and the process was slow, so it was important to mobilize people in order to move operations and facilitate coordination. These tasks were shared by UNICEF, WHO and the Department of Maternal Child and Adolescent Health of the MoH. A 'core group' was available to support and provide expertise in the development of the policy through established mechanisms. The presence of an adolescent health specialist in the country during the development process was a positive advantage for SAVY, as was a strong research interest and talent in this emerging area. International relationships were also important with support from the East West Centre, Hawaii and Johns Hopkins, Baltimore. Examples of good practice from other countries were used and technical support from United Nations Head Quarters (UNHQ) motivated the process, and gave legitimacy and an international context. The process was further resourced by ensuring that timelines were realistic, thus giving those involved adequate time for input and reflection.



Drive further **activities**

An evidence-base can show a clear need for funding to be directed to programmes that will be the most effective or for further data needs to be addressed; for example, the base-line results from SAVY 1 helped secure the resources and support for SAVY 2. The existence of a policy document or evidence-based master plan also has the capacity to generate resources. SAVY provided evidence for programme costings, which led to the proposal and eventual approval of a dedicated youth budget within the MoH budget. SAVY 1 provided the evidence for the policy, and the policy drove the Youth Health Master Plan which recommended the development of Guidelines for Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services.

Issues change **over time**

Data collection is an on-going process. Data collected at any given time can contribute to the evidence-base for a certain population at a certain time. But over time, or following significant events, the picture will change. Viet Nam's investment in data collection was ongoing from SAVY 1 through to SAVY 2. In addition, data collection in one area often identifies the need for further data collection with a specific group – such as young women who are not attending school or young people from ethnic minorities. When planning and budgeting, the fluidity of the youth population as well as the specific characteristics of certain groups cannot be ignored.



Use data for programming and evaluation

Viet Nam used SAVY data across sectors, to highlight and identify issues for adolescents, and to show disparities between specific groups of young people, such as urban/rural, rich/poor or in/out of school. Identifying this data, and comparing them with, for example, morbidity and mortality data, enabled the government to gain a picture of youth behaviour and therefore map the areas and issues where they needed to intervene: reproductive health, mental health, youth friendly services, accidents and injury, alcohol and other drugs, and, as a cross-cutting issue, marginalized and disadvantaged young people.

For example, based on the data, they looked at developing youth friendly services, and realized that, with budgeting constraints and the fact that the data suggested specialist youth services were underutilized, they would focus on making existing services friendlier to young people.

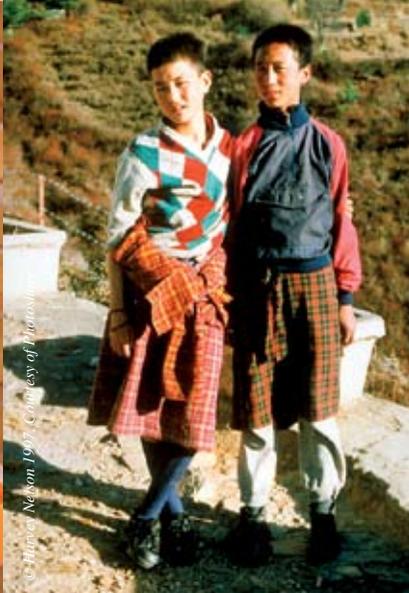
Accurate data was also drawn from local, regional and international policies and interventions that were proven to be effective. This helped to determine how the policy was implemented into cost-effective and successful programmes. A cycle of creating and drawing on evidence gives governments the opportunity to make decisions about which programmes should be prioritized and implemented, and how those programmes should be delivered.

CASE STUDY Bhutan

Developing inclusive policies

In preparations to develop a National Youth Policy, Bhutan recognized the need for data to inform and direct policy areas, with a particular gap in the literature on vulnerable and at-risk adolescents. In a proactive step, the government undertook a study focused on these adolescents to better understand the range of risks and vulnerabilities they face. The baseline assessment resulting from the study has given government and civil society a tool to inform the development of youth policy and programmes that recognize the fact that vulnerable and at-risk young people need special attention. In collecting data about a specific target group, and in ensuring that young people actively participated in the data collection process, Bhutan has an understanding of the situation of young people who need the most support.





Young people in Bhutan

Bhutan is a unique country whose traditional rural society was isolated from the world until 1961. Bhutan is proudly protective of its culture and environment: traditional national dress is compulsory in formal settings and tourism restricted. The Bhutanese monarchy promotes the philosophy of Gross National Happiness to guide its citizens towards a balance between the spiritual and the material.

The population of around 708,000 has an average age of around 24 years.¹ The last census found that 56% of the population is under 24 years of age² and this is expected to increase given the fertility rate of 2.6.³ The economy is one of the world's smallest and least developed, with the majority of the population relying on agriculture and forestry to provide livelihoods. The number of young people who attend and finish secondary school is high and, in urban areas, English is very widely spoken.



Young people in Bhutan

Women and children in Bhutan



Students of Taktse Middle Secondary School



The literature review painted a positive picture for the majority of Bhutanese young people, but recognized a gap in the literature on vulnerable and at-risk adolescents

National Youth Policy

In 2009, UNICEF provided support to the Department of Youth and Sports (DYS) of the Ministry of Education (MoE) for the development of Bhutan's first National Youth Policy. Factors contributing to their readiness for this policy step included: a significant and increasing young population; rapid economic development particularly in urban areas where increased population mobility has impacted on young people; the lack of a strategic policy framework to inform programming; and the need to strengthen coordination among partners working on youth issues.

To establish the evidence and data to inform and direct policy areas for programming, a large scale literature review was undertaken, including a review of adolescent and youth research. The review documented a number of areas that could potentially be included in the policy, including vulnerable and at-risk adolescents.

WHO statistics on Bhutan

“Young people are not a homogenous group. They have varying and distinct needs. If we don’t collect data on vulnerable adolescents and young people, we don’t take into account increasing numbers in the region of the young poor and unemployed, ethnic minorities, or those living in rural areas on subsistence, or on the street.”

*Dan Toole, UNICEF Regional Director
South Asia Office*



Vulnerable and at-risk adolescents study

Bhutan had begun to record the first cases of HIV, with signs of over-representation of young people in HIV infections. They needed to know their epidemic so resources could be directed effectively to halt the spread through targeted interventions.

In a proactive step, based on the HIV data and the recommendations of the literature review, the MoE undertook a study focused on vulnerable and at-risk adolescents aged 13-18. The study aimed to better understand the range of risks and vulnerabilities faced by Bhutanese adolescents, including those behaviours and environments that put young people at-risk of negative social and health outcomes. The study was coordinated by DYS and aimed to provide data that could feed into the National Youth Policy and the National HIV Strategy.



Department of Youth and Sports



A young professionally trained counsellor at Trongsa Middle Secondary School

Methodology

A mixed-methods study design used quantitative (cross-sectional survey collecting behavioural data via an interviewer-administered questionnaire) and qualitative (focus-group discussions validated by subsequent interviews) research methods.

The questionnaire was administered to just under 400 vulnerable and at-risk adolescents capturing demographic information, living situation, income, age, gender and location. It asked young people for information about sexual behaviour and drug use, and also knowledge about the risks associated with sex and drug use, including knowledge of STIs including HIV, and, for young women, pregnancy and abortion. Issues relating to violence and mental wellbeing were explored. The assessment also captured experiences of participation in youth activities, services accessed by young people, what they wanted from services, and what they felt was useful to improve their own life experiences.

Networks within DYS and partners working with at-risk adolescents were utilized to recruit adolescent males and females perceived to be using drugs and/or involved in transactional sex for participation in the focus groups

Creating dialogue

Involving senior Ministry officials in the process served to increase the feeling of ownership and provide credibility to the results of the study. A senior officer from DYS shared her experience of the focus groups where she learned of alcohol use and street violence from a boarding-school adolescent.



“We heard directly from some of the young people who were interviewed as part of the research on the situation for vulnerable young people in Bhutan. I was moved and surprised by some of the stories that the young people told us. We do not often have the opportunity to hear from young people directly, especially these particular groups of young people.”

Senior officer from Department of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education and Training

Some data results

While many young people in Bhutan appear to transition well through adolescence benefiting from the opportunities that education brings, a number go unnoticed without the services and support they need, while facing challenges caused by poverty, migration, homelessness, family breakdown, disability and social exclusion. These young people are at higher risk than others of sexual exploitation and violence, drug abuse, accidents and injury, STIs including HIV, incarceration and unplanned pregnancies.

The results show a strong association between risk and health-harming behaviours, and unsupportive physical environments. The findings also demonstrate the prevalence of simultaneous multiple risk behaviours. Being at-risk was associated with having low and no education, being male, and being poor. Conversely, being in-school emerged clearly as a protective factor for adolescents.

The data also gave clear indications of the differences between the mainstream population and those living at-risk: when data were compared between vulnerable and at-risk adolescents and adolescents in schools, there was a vast difference in behaviours. For example, the prevalence of sexual activity and rates of smoking were lower in those adolescents in schools.

Strategies based on data

The baseline assessment gives government and civil society a tool to inform the development of youth policy and programmes that can target or be inclusive of young people who are vulnerable and at-risk. This includes training staff, making services friendlier to adolescents who need help, providing outreach in remote areas and strengthening legislation about adolescent girls in entertainment venues.



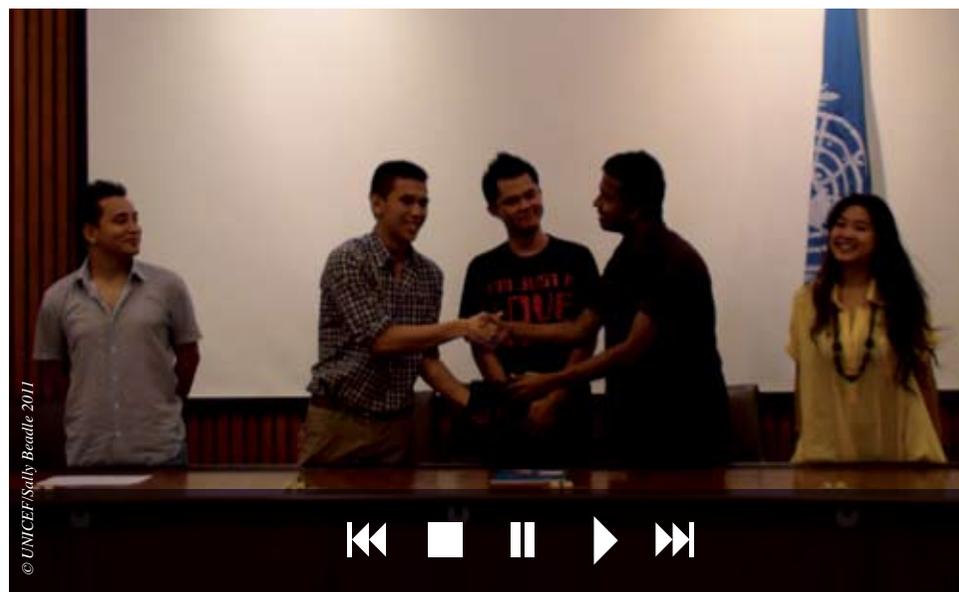
Bhutan Youth Development Fund



A student at the Central Bhutan Basic Health Unit

NewGen Asia

Creating supportive environments and leadership opportunities are strategies that have been proven to build confidence and capacity in vulnerable and at-risk young people. NewGen Asia is a regional initiative that builds and strengthens young people's leadership through training and mentoring. As part of this initiative, the Asia Pacific Interagency Task Team for Young Key Affected Populations is developing a participatory short course to develop leadership, communication, social networking and advocacy skills in young people from or working with YKAPs using participatory learning methodologies including young people from Bhutan.



The development of NewGen Asia



The NewGen Asia mentoring program has engaged two young women from Bhutan who are both well connected to organizations working with young key affected populations in Bhutan. Through the programme, the young women from Bhutan are being mentored by senior female officials from the Ministry of Education. Young people from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, the Pacific, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Indonesia, China, Brunei, Korea and Nepal are also participating in this initiative.

An exciting and progressive initiative from Bhutan is the establishment of Laksam, the first peer-support group for people living with HIV. Laksam is increasingly gaining support and is trying to connect with more young members. It is hoped that this network will connect to the NewGen Asia Initiative so that more young people will have a chance to build skills and contribute effectively to HIV prevention and response. These partnerships work to decrease stigma and discrimination, demonstrating that all young people matter and that HIV-positive young people have an important role to play in HIV prevention work.

NewGen Asia includes a mentoring programme in which young people are partnered with well-established leaders in their communities in order to develop their skills



Recognize young people **are not a homogeneous group**

Young people represent a diverse demographic with differing needs for support. A young girl living in a rural low-income household who is not attending school will need very different interventions to improve outcomes from that of a young urban man in school. An understanding of what kinds of interventions and programmes are needed for specific targeted groups of young people can only come from the evidence. In collecting data about a specific target group, Bhutan has generated an understanding that can be used for strategic actions that will positively affect outcomes for young people who need the most support.

Involve young people **in data collection processes**

In Bhutan, some of the young participants in the focus groups were invited to train as research assistants for the quantitative phase. These young people had considerable training in order to administer the questionnaires, answer questions and manage confidentiality issues. Their participation not only built capacity for the trainees, but created a supportive environment for questionnaire participants. Young people's participation gave credibility to the data and a commitment to the engagement of young people in the data collection process.



Manage the data results

It is understandable that some governments may not know or want to know about the situation of vulnerable and at-risk young people; either because these populations are invisible in the policy process or because this kind of knowledge can reflect badly on the commitment and progress of the government. It is important that the findings from research on vulnerable and at-risk youth are well managed and should be positioned as the action of a responsive and responsible government which wishes to provide appropriate and necessary services to all their young people, not just the most fortunate. Caution is needed to avoid sensational media reports, apportioning blame to the government for all problems, providing information that identifies the research subjects, or reporting data that suggests all young people are vulnerable and at-risk. It is therefore a reflective and responsible government that agrees to research these sensitive but highly important areas.

Consider confidentiality **and ethical data collection**

The assessment followed ethical data collection practices, with an important emphasis on confidentiality issues which were of particular concern to those vulnerable and at-risk young people participating in the survey. Data collection was based on informed consent, ensuring transparency of how the information would be used. The training provided to the young people administering the survey meant they were able to answer questions about confidentiality, make participants feel relaxed, avoid stigmatization, and use appropriate language to communicate with the target group.



Demonstrate a commitment to the needs of the vulnerable and at-risk

Vulnerable and at-risk adolescents and young people are arguably most in need of a policy approach which is well-informed about their needs and provides a guiding framework for government and service providers to reduce risk and vulnerability. Poor and inadequate nutrition means at-risk adolescents and young people get sicker more often, they are not in school so they miss out on education, they are unemployed or underemployed in informal unregulated jobs, and they may live on the streets and are therefore vulnerable to exploitation.

Special efforts are needed to reach these populations who are often hidden or extremely marginalized. Bhutan created up-to-date data to give priority to at-risk young people because they are the most in need of special services. Often, data collection tools do not reach the most vulnerable, therefore undertaking targeted data collection such as this – and creating a policy platform that can channel funds to vulnerable and at-risk young people – is a matter of equity.



INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE

This chapter uses a case study from **Timor-Leste** to illustrate the importance of creating permanent and officially acknowledged mechanisms to support young people's participation and leadership; and a case study from **Philippines** to illustrate the importance of involving the young people who will be directly affected by policy or programming decisions.

The importance of involving young people in all stages of the policy development process cannot be overstated. In the Asia-Pacific region, there is a great need for structures and permanent, officially acknowledged forums which promote youth participation and leadership. If resourced, these kinds of forums and structures are a focus for young people and a good resource for governments to further their understanding of youth issues. Involving young people helps governments make policy decisions that are based on the aspirations and realities of young people's lives and are therefore more likely to succeed.



Youth Parliament selection process

Meaningful participation

There are enormous benefits to countries when they support the meaningful participation of young people in the structures, processes, debates and environments that shape their lives. For example, if the evidence (including evidence from young people themselves) shows that there is a need for youth-friendly health services, it makes sense to develop processes and mechanisms that can be used to consult with the young people who will be using these services. These young people can provide expert advice on making the service relevant and accessible, leading to better services that are used and valued, and ultimately better resource allocation.

Participation by young people must be meaningful. All too often the value young people bring to policy development is disregarded, and they are seen by adults, and especially decision-makers, as lacking the expertise and experience needed to feed into important youth-focused decisions, even when these decisions directly affect their lives.

Despite these barriers, **there are increasing examples of government's supporting the right of young people to participate in decision making**, and build the capacity of young people to make more meaningful civic and social contributions to broader development processes, as well as to their own wellbeing.



Why youth should be engaged in policy-making, ILO

CASE STUDY Timor-Leste

Creating mechanisms

Despite the challenges in a country that has one of the youngest and poorest populations in the region, Timor-Leste is an excellent example of a government creating mechanisms which ensure that young people have a voice in the development of their nation. Timor-Leste developed their National Youth Policy using a youth-focused evidence-base and working with youth organizations. It discusses rights and duties, and the need to 'promote the civic participation of young people'. These policy strategies led to the formation of the Youth Parliament of Timor-Leste, a unique participation platform for young people. The Parliament represents the interests of young people, providing a pathway for their voices to be heard in national decision-making processes, and significant leadership and civic participation opportunities.



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Youth Parliament leadership training

Young people in Timor-Leste

Timor-Leste has one of the youngest and poorest populations in the region, with approximately 41% of the population aged between 10-30 years.¹ The 2010 fertility rate of 5.7 births per woman of childbearing age is one of the highest in the world,²

Young people³ mainly live in urban areas, with nearly 50% of 10-24 year olds living in the capital of Dili.⁴ There is a 43% unemployment rate across the country for young people, including graduates, twice as high as that for adults and increasing to 58% in Dili.⁵ 10,000 new job seekers enter the job market every year, with few opportunities in both government and private sectors. Many young people participate in agriculture-based livelihood activities.⁶ Literacy rates are low and school drop-out rates high.⁷

Timor-Leste continues to suffer from the aftermath of a 24-year struggle to gain independence from Indonesia which displaced thousands of its people. In 2002, Timor-Leste became an independent republic but this was further tested when civil unrest erupted in 2006. Democratic elections in 2007, a strong UN presence, government commitment to social development and indicators of economic growth have contributed to the country's current stability.



Gaining data from young people

Several data collection and consultation exercises took place to create evidence for the National Youth Policy, including a National Youth Survey, an analysis of existing studies including data from the 2004 Census, and an assessment of the organizational capacity of youth associations.⁸ Young people did not participate in the development or delivery of the data tools, but their input into the survey ultimately guided policy development.

National Youth Survey

The 2005 Survey was based on a random sample of 1,100 young people, including evidence from young women and rural young people. The Survey asked young people to rate their access to economic, social, political and information-based assets, their perceptions of personal security, the quality of their education, and their assessment of current and future prospects.⁹ The questions were constructed within a positive framework designed to challenge the stereotypes of young people as a 'problem'. For example, young people were asked to agree or disagree with statements such as 'compared with my parents I think my economic prospects are better'.¹⁰

Focus groups were also held in Dili and in all major regional centres. They highlighted concerns the questionnaire could not – particularly how girls and young unmarried women were 'viewed and treated by the community and the constraints these views imposed on their options'.¹¹



© UNICEF Timor-Leste 2009
Youth Parliament consultation



Evidence clearly showed that, when young people felt secure, they believed they had an important role to play in the wider community, but that a mechanism to do this was greatly needed¹²

Results

Results showed that young people had a strong attachment to their local community, a willingness to work together, and a high awareness of avenues for participation in youth sports, social and support organizations. However, the assessment of youth organizations 'showed a series of deficiencies in relation to their governance structures, their capacities and management practices, programme implementation and their relationship with other organizations'.¹³



Young women, education and sport



Working with youth organizations

The policy development process, including six national consultations, was driven by the Secretary of State for Youth and Sports, and a strong partnership with the National Youth Council (Conselho Nacional da Juventude de Timor-Leste [CNJTL]). CNJTL's role as co-implementer of the policy created platforms for meaningful youth participation, not only building capacity within their organization, but also reinforcing ownership of the Policy by young people. CNJTL were an important resource to the process: they have representation in each sub-district and they believe strongly in youth participation.

As with many youth organizations in the region, particularly in post-conflict countries, Timor-Leste has an ageing youth leadership. The young leaders who were heavily involved in the Timor-Leste struggle and who were behind the formation of the youth council are now no longer young. However, there is an awareness of this issue and a desire for the council to become truly young, though the age definition for youth in Timor-Leste remains at 16-30 years.

The Policy

The SSYS, CNJTL and stakeholders commenced drafting in 2006. The policy environment for young people's issues at that time was characterized by a lack of youth focus and the difficulty of gaining essential cross-sectoral cooperation. As is the case in many countries, the Secretary of State for Youth and Sport was perceived both publicly and within government as a junior ministry and had limited resource allocation.

Significantly at this time, internal civil unrest broke out. A key role was played by youth gangs and one of the most visible elements was the involvement of youth in widespread violence.¹⁴ Young men and boys, some as young as 12 years, played very visible roles in destructive activities including house burnings, stone throwing, and serious crimes.¹⁵

The civil unrest created a sense of urgency in government about reducing the conflict and harnessing young people's energy in more positive ways. Supporting young people to become meaningfully involved in the development of the country became a priority, and the development of the Youth Policy was seen as an important vehicle to take this forward.



Youth Parliament Melbourne study tour 2010

Policy Vision: To live in a society where young men and women have access to education, health, vocational courses and are endowed with the moral values of citizenship for a responsible and healthy life¹⁶



Youth Parliament selection

The Timor-Leste youth policy implementation is now due for its first review and there are plans for both localized and national review mechanisms allowing for the participation of all stakeholders including young people

Great efforts were made to make the policy meaningful by involving young people in its development and implementation including linking with youth organizations and setting up mechanisms for sustained participation. The drafting and endorsement process was supported by UNICEF with funding, advocacy and technical advice.

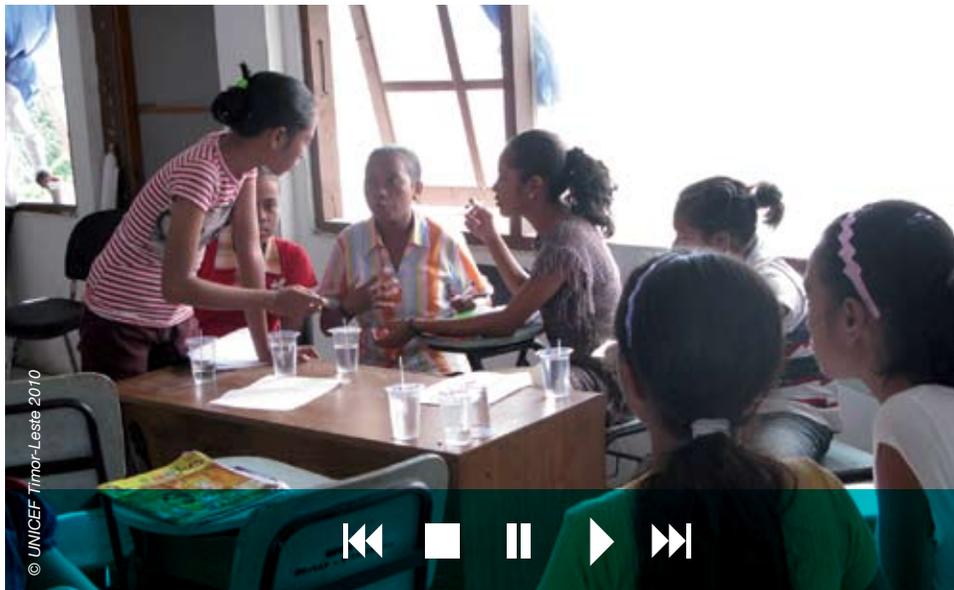
The main focus of the Policy, endorsed in 2007, is the promotion of a holistic and integrated approach to the development of young people, with an emphasis on fighting poverty, and increasing education and civic participation opportunities. The Policy discusses the rights and duties of young people, and provides key strategies to ‘mobilize young people to serve their communities’ and ‘promote the civic participation of young people’, in addition to encouraging youth organizations to ‘help more needy young people through rewarding volunteer work’.¹⁷

The policy highlights the importance of government support for young people’s collective endeavors, how government can work together with young people, and the role of young people in contributing to nation building. A very significant outcome of the thinking reflected in the policy was the establishment of the Youth Parliament.

Youth Parliament

Parlamentu Foinsa'e Nian – the Youth Parliament of Timor-Leste – is a unique participation platform involving 130 young people between the ages of 12 and 16. In 2009, a resolution to establish the parliament was passed by the Council of Ministers. This was an extremely positive move in the nation's efforts to involve young people, and gave legal recognition to the vital role of young people in nation building for this young country. The Secretary of State for Youth and Sports nominated CNJTL to support the Youth Parliament's implementation, with technical assistance from UNICEF.

Youth parliamentarians were identified by a rigorous community selection process undertaken in over 440 sucos (villages) country-wide.



© UNICEF Timor-Leste 2010

“I was able to raise the education concerns of young people by sharing the situation of education in my home district. I have been able to learn public speaking as well.”¹⁸

Jonia Colho Soares, 16, Youth Parliamentarian 2010



Youth Parliament selection process

Leadership training

“It has been a very exciting process as we see Timor-Leste’s leaders creating an institution that will ensure the voices of youth are heard and youth participate in developing and uniting the country.”

Jun Kukita, UNICEF Representative in Timor-Leste, 2010

Each sub-district selected two youth parliamentarians with an average age of 14 years who participated in leadership training.¹⁹

Some Youth Parliamentarians have also had opportunities to attend training overseas, with a study tour to Melbourne, Australia in 2010 and attendance at the World Youth Day in Spain in 2011.



Youth Parliament Leadership Training



© UNICEF Timor-Leste 2010

The Parliament was inaugurated in 2010. It gives young people a chance to have their voices heard in national decision-making processes, to place the interests and concerns of young people before national leaders and decision makers, consult with their local communities, as well as providing significant leadership and civic participation opportunities.²⁰ Although the Parliament does not have decision-making power, youth parliamentarians do make inputs and raise issues and questions about policies and debates which affect youth.

During the first sitting, the young parliamentarians were able to raise significant issues. The Deputy Speaker of the National Parliament was so impressed that he invited the members to attend a parliamentary sitting. The Youth Parliament was also invited by the national Parliament to witness part of Timor-Leste's budget discussions. Their impressive start resulted in a government allocation of \$300,000 towards Youth Parliament activities over the following two years.²¹



The President sends a message to the people of Timor-Leste encouraging boys and girls to participate in the Youth Parliament selection process



'Viva Viva Parlamentu Foinsae', the official song of the Youth Parliament



UNICEF Asia-Pacific



Second sitting of the Youth Parliament



Creating the Youth Parliament

At their last two sittings parliamentary review of various issues affecting young people has been critical. For example, the Youth Parliamentarians held a session in 2011 to coincide with the launch of State of the World's Children Report; and their review of the youth situation in Timor-Leste on reproductive health as an issue prompted them to ask questions about free health services for youth.

The Parliament is designed to be non-political: young people in Timor-Leste can vote from the age of 17 and they leave the parliament at this age. Each parliamentarian represents their local area for a period of two years. During this time, they will also learn leadership skills and contribute to the national dialogue on issues that concern them. Timor-Leste's Youth Parliament is supported by UNICEF and the Secretary of State for Youth and Sports.



Support the idea that young people are experts in their field

At all stages, young people were given opportunities to have a say in the development of the National Youth Policy, and more recently in its implementation. The Youth Parliament is a significant step forward in recognizing young people's expertise. Apart from the official recognition, public feeling was supportive and the parents of the young parliamentarians were very proud. There are still steps to take: in some areas of the country, public perception towards participation rights of young people is still low. But official recognition in forms like the Youth Parliament will contribute to a change in perception and raise the profile of the contributions young people can make.

Involve and extend ownership to non-government youth organizations

Timor-Leste's government and stakeholders had close links with the National Youth Council, so they utilized an existing organization that enabled them to gain representation from larger groups of young people. Obviously this set up support for the implementation of the policy because these young people felt it was 'their policy'; they were able to speak well of the policy, promote it and use it for advocacy, budgeting and evaluation of programmes. Technical and financial support to participate was an important part of involving youth organizations, who may not have the experience or resources to present information, attend meetings, work cooperatively with government or pay for transport from remote areas.



Ensure appropriate funding for youth participation

The Peace Building Fund, as part of the implementation phase, pools resources and funding across sectors. It is managed through the Ministry of State Administration and Territory. The Secretary of State for Youth and Sports has further allocated funds for the rehabilitation and reinvigoration of district based youth centres across the country. The youth centres provide space at district level for youth activities. These kinds of initiatives are not only needed to support programming but they are a public endorsement of the importance of young people and a good sign of the government's commitment. They also serve to foster the cross-sectoral cooperation that is so important in the implementation of youth policies.

Encourage participation at national, regional and local levels

With the support of the National Youth Council, participation in policy development was assured at all levels, but more importantly, implementation has occurred at these levels through the Youth Parliament, regional youth centres, and specific projects aimed at the local level, such as the establishment of young people's local sporting associations and centres. Creating permanent structures and mechanisms at all levels, such as the endorsement by a resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Youth Parliament, ensures future financial and technical support despite political changes. It also builds capacity for young leaders.



Create multiple spaces for youth participation

The clashes between martial arts groups fuelled the violence in 2006, and the government has particularly engaged with young people involved in these groups. For example, a martial arts commission has channeled the focus into organized sporting competitions. Other platforms provide opportunities for more participation in sports and therefore the community, such as the Tour de Timor bicycle race.

One of the key activities in the Policy is to encourage young people's associations, but particularly those involved in sport, to participate in a collective manner in programmes for poverty reduction and community development, for example to distribute bed nets for a malaria-reduction campaign. There has also been increased funding to establish district-level youth centres all around the country with space to dialogue on issues, and space for social services.

Along with the Youth Parliament and National Youth Council, these kinds of activities increase the opportunities for a broad range of young people, including those who are hard to reach, to participate.

CASE STUDY the Philippines

Involving target groups

Though the HIV prevalence rate in the Philippines is less than 1%, a recent rise in new HIV infections in young people prioritized prevention interventions for adolescents and young people who are most at risk to HIV. In this context, the government and civil society supported widely-representative participation by young people in the national HIV response. They created a forum to institutionalize young people's participation in deciding appropriate actions for young people and their communities to address HIV and AIDS.





The First National Young People's Planning Forum (NYPPF) was held in 2008. Fifty young people were selected as delegates with wide geographic representation across cities and 13 provinces, and a diversity of experiences in designing and/or implementing HIV and AIDS prevention, treatment and care programmes. The delegates came from student organizations engaged in HIV prevention education; most-at-risk populations reached by faith-based and community-based organizations or groups; national and local governance units; and young peoples' media groups in schools, communities and networks engaged in the production and dissemination of information on HIV prevention. They joined government, national and international NGOs, members of national coordinating committees for the HIV response and the media.

During the forum's discussions, young people raised issues such as improving negotiation skills around condom use, adolescent-friendly approaches and techniques to promote safe sex awareness, participation of the community and other service providers in outreach activities, use of appropriate motivation and tools to continue the change in behaviour, and systematic feedback and monitoring of the HIV-related media.

“The second NYPPF was held in 2009, with a third forum planned for 2011. It’s really something which has caught on with government, civil society and young people as something useful to have on a regular basis”

Gudrun Nadoll, UNICEF Philippines

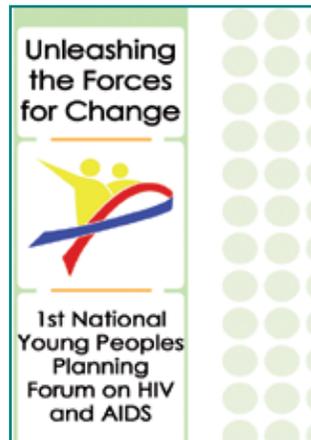
Documentation and reporting

The Forum generated a report – Unleashing the Forces for Change¹ – and a Statement of Commitment which embodies elements of active and meaningful youth participation. The Forum’s recommendations were used to shape the Philippine National AIDS Council’s Operational Plan 2009-2010 and will also be incorporated into the strategic plan of the Committee on Children.

The forum’s documentation was an innovative picture book produced by young participants using photographs taken by young people as an alternative to minutes.



[Unleashing the Forces for Change Report](#)



[View picture book](#)



LESSONS LEARNED IN the Philippines



Target participation **by those most affected**

Delegates to the Forum were recruited from those vulnerable and at-risk of HIV infection and young people who worked in HIV and AIDS education, media, community groups, and national and local governance. These young people – who will be directly affected by policies on HIV and AIDS – had the opportunity to have their voices heard and make meaningful contributions to the development of the National AIDS Council's Operational Plan.

Ensure broad representation **at local and national levels**

Youth-focused organizations, including non-government agencies, can be important allies in gaining representation from a diverse range of young people. Participants in the Forum came from urban and provincial areas, with good representation from girls and boys, and a diverse range of experiences, skills and networks.

Support youth involvement **at a high level**

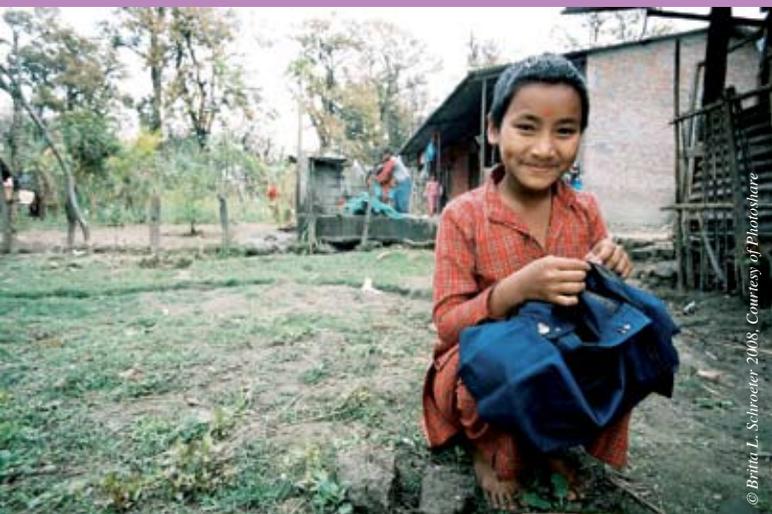
It is very important to seek support for youth involvement from the highest levels of government. The support from government for young people's active participation fostered recognition of their potential which filtered down to their active participation at the grassroots level.



PUT POLICY INTO PRACTICE

This chapter uses a case study from **Nepal** to illustrate the ways in which policy can be translated effectively by using key indicators for government accountability, allocation of responsibilities and the provision of funding.

Implementation gives life to a policy document and successful implementation relies on clear strategic plans, sustainable political commitments and funding, and mechanisms to reflect on and evaluate policy and action. Broad ownership of a youth policy encourages a shared sense of responsibility and is a key factor to guaranteeing implementation. Implementation needs to be sensitive to specific needs and should benefit those who need programmes the most, including young people from rural areas. Evaluating the implementation process adds to the evidence which will in-turn, inform future policy and implementation.



The oldest girl at the Harka Self-Sustaining Orphan Home, Sirjana will pass along the skills she acquires to the younger girls at the orphanage

Implementation and legislation

Notions of how young people should behave and how they should be protected influences policy direction in the region. However, in some cases policies that have the intention of protecting young people create barriers and work against their intended outcomes when implemented. For example, health policies or legislation which mandate an age of consent, can create a situation where young people cannot receive sexual and reproductive services, including contraception, or screening tests for pregnancy, and STIs without the consent of their parents. This creates enormous difficulties for young people living on the streets, or who for reasons of confidentiality must attend services on their own, or those whose parents are inhibited through lack of money or transport to attend with them.¹

Dealing with the factors that pose a danger to young people – like tobacco – may be better served through legislation and policy interventions that are issue-based rather than age-based. An estimated 150 million young people use tobacco which is expected to be a major cause of death for all males in the Asia-Pacific region in the coming 30 years. Evidence shows that banning and reducing access (for example via taxation) are the two most important strategies to reduce tobacco consumption for all age groups. It is therefore important for countries to consider which implementations require special legal or policy intervention and which should be integrated and mainstreamed with other areas.

CASE STUDY Nepal

Committing to implementation

In Nepal's case, the National Youth Policy presented challenges for implementation, given the lack of clear and concrete objectives, activities and budgets. However, the policy document itself has become only one step in the process of achieving more effective programmes to improve the lives of young people. Nepal has attempted to creatively interpret their Youth Policy document and given it an evidence-based strategic direction for the implementation phase. Nepal's Implementation Plan includes indicators for government accountability, allocation of responsibilities and the provision of funding. It has been supported by a political and civil society commitment to be responsive to youth programming, particularly in considering the importance of reaching the local level and in improving outcomes for adolescent girls.

A community health volunteer pretests materials for the distance education Radio Health Program²



Young people in Nepal

With a population close to 29 million, 25% of whom are below the poverty line,³ Nepal is the poorest country in South Asia.⁴ Young people make up 39% of the population, defined in Nepal's National Youth Policy as those aged 16-40. Using UN definitions, youth make up as much as 20% of the population.⁵

Over 80% of Nepal's population lives in rural areas.⁶ The lack of income-earning opportunities in these areas is a central cause of widespread poverty. Unemployment rates in Nepal overall are relatively low (about 4% in 2008) because most people depend on subsistence agriculture for their livelihoods. However, youth unemployment is relatively high (about 6%) and this figure increases to 16% for young people in urban areas.⁷ Unemployment forces increasing numbers of rural young people to leave home in order to seek work in Nepal's towns and cities, in India and further afield.

Over the last decade Nepal has made considerable progress in reducing poverty and addressing the MDGs despite its internal conflict and vulnerability to climate change.⁸ The decade-long conflict, which formally ended in 2006, led to political unrest,⁹ but the current situation is one of relative stability, with a Coalition government, elected Prime Minister, a new constitution in draft and some attempts to create a meaningful policy environment for new ministries such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports (MoYS).

A maternal and child health worker counsels a young mother in the remote village of Mukli



Policy development process

Data was not gathered specifically to inform the policy, and there is little evidence-based content in the final document

Nepal had initiated three youth policy development processes before drafting the current National Youth Policy in the post-conflict period. It was prioritized as an issue by the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), who supported the establishment of the MoYS in 2008 and the development of a policy to support the Ministry's work.

A 24-member Drafting Task Force was given responsibility to write the Youth Policy, the majority of whom belonged to Youth Wings, the student representative bodies that affiliate themselves to one of the several political parties in Nepal.¹⁰ The remaining two members of the Drafting Task Force were members of youth NGOs.

The Government did hold regional consultations, but these were organized by the student wings and attracted only small numbers of 50-60 people, most of whom were affiliated with the major political parties. Representation from the two NGO networks on the Drafting Task Force and the feedback that was facilitated by the UN focal points, UN agencies and their civil society partners was not reflected in the Policy's final content.

However, during the prior five years, a number of research initiatives were undertaken and findings about young people's needs and situation were documented. This bank of data did provide some strategic information to inform the National Youth Policy development process and suggest priority areas for investment, albeit not comprehensive enough.

The National Youth Policy of Nepal

The policy was endorsed in February, 2010. It discusses the 10 original strategic areas of the World Programme of Action for Youth (now expanded to 15) and the MDGs, and this is a significant step in the document's role in gaining coverage of those issues that are important to young people. However, the policy has few specific objectives and, more importantly, strategies to achieve these objectives. It is not clear which sectors or Ministries would be responsible to initiate and fund programmes for young people. Because the content is not specific, it can be interpreted in many different ways, creating a number of loopholes for commitments to youth programming.

In addition, the age range of 16-40 years means that it is hard to give strong credence to the specific needs of adolescents and young people, given the differing needs between people aged 16-24 and those aged 25-40. Although there is considerable debate about this issue in Nepal, many youth leaders are in the older age category and this has influenced decisions of definitions of age in the policy.¹¹ Data from three surveys available in early 2012¹² may provide comprehensive information to support a review of the definition of young people, and help to situate the policy in the age group that needs it the most. At present, however, the policy has the potential to cover three generations of the same family.

Choose your future class in Mahottari, Central Nepal



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Creative interpretations

These limitations in the policy development process have not prevented the Youth Policy from functioning as a practical document for implementing and funding youth programmes. A strong political commitment to be responsive to youth programming and inclusive of young people has mitigated the policy's lack of strategic direction. The MoYS, supported by UNFPA and in partnership with other Ministries, UN agencies and stakeholders have taken a creative approach to interpreting the Policy so that it becomes relevant, specific and accurate in its intentions for young people.

Strong partnerships with civil society youth organizations were fostered, and the need for consultation, cross-sectoral cooperation, developing a plan and addressing budgeting issues was identified



A community medicine student carries out a study on family planning methods

Consultation and cooperation

The consultant hired by the MoYS to gather more data for a strategic approach to implementing the policy was highly skilled in working with young people. A number of consultations were held with various youth leaders, both civil and political, in addition to discussions with the Youth Focal Points in 17 ministries.

The UN was consulted in order to see what existing structures and technical assistance could be leveraged. This included liaison with the Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare in regard to Child Clubs, and discussions with UNICEF about hosting an orientation on the Youth Policy for 14 to 16 year olds. It became very clear that the policy had to be adopted through a multi-sectoral approach with a clear plan for implementation.



A community medicine student carries out a study on family planning methods

Implementation Plan

The development of an Implementation Plan for the National Youth Policy has been key to ensuring that the Policy becomes meaningful and relevant. The Plan has detailed indicators for government accountability, allocation of responsibilities and the provision of funding: who will do what, how they will do it, and how much will it cost.

Seventeen Ministries have been involved in the plan, with numerous consultations and opportunities for feedback, and the intention of consulting with development partners to discuss technical requirements and funding.



The MoYS is very supportive of the plan, particularly in its aim to assign specific responsibilities and the inclusion of broader youth participation

Young girls using IEC materials in a Youth Friendly Center in Dang, Mid-West Nepal



The Implementation Plan supports what the government is already doing, building on existing services and programmes

Wherever possible the Plan merges with other existing policies, such as Health. For example, the Plan directs its attention to Youth Friendly Health Services, which were started in the early 2000s by organizations such as the Family Planning Association of Nepal (FPAN). These Services, which have been managed by local and international NGOs, provide sexual and reproductive health services for young people specifically focusing on young married couples in rural areas. District Health Officers (DHO) in rural areas have built relations with Youth Friendly Services, by facilitating referrals or, in some districts, incorporating the services into their health offices.

The services have been incorporated into the reproductive health section of the Implementation Plan, with objectives to merge some services to make them more geographically appropriate to young populations. The Plan in this way aims to be complimentary to what the government has achieved so far, without the need to advocate, in some areas, for the establishment of new systems or structures.

Coordinating the Plan

The Youth Working Group (YWG) comprises 19 organizations including the MoYS, UN and donor agencies and international and local NGOs. This group supports the MoYS in an advisory role, for example if the MoYS had an issue or problem; and as a resource point, for example if the MoYS needs information on current development partner projects.

On the advice of the YWG, the MoYS established a National Committee on Youth consisting of representatives of MoYS, the National Planning Commission, the Ministry of Finance, youth political leaders and youth organizations,¹³ UNFPA (representing the UNCT) and the Association of INGOs. This multi-sectoral committee makes strategic decisions, for example on the hiring of consultants. It has more of a decision-making role than that of the YWG and more of a role to play in the development of the framework for the Implementation Plan and a Youth-Responsive Budgeting System.



Youth-Responsive Budgeting System

The government has initiated a process to develop a Youth-Responsive Budgeting System, which will systemize allocation and responsibilities for technical and financial resources for young people's programmes through a software package. The Joint Secretary at the MoYS is coordinating the process, working with the Ministry of Finance. The software will be used across ministries, with – it is hoped – a quota allocated for young people, similar to the Gender-Responsive Budgeting System of a 19% allocation of the Government's total budget to be used for women's programmes.

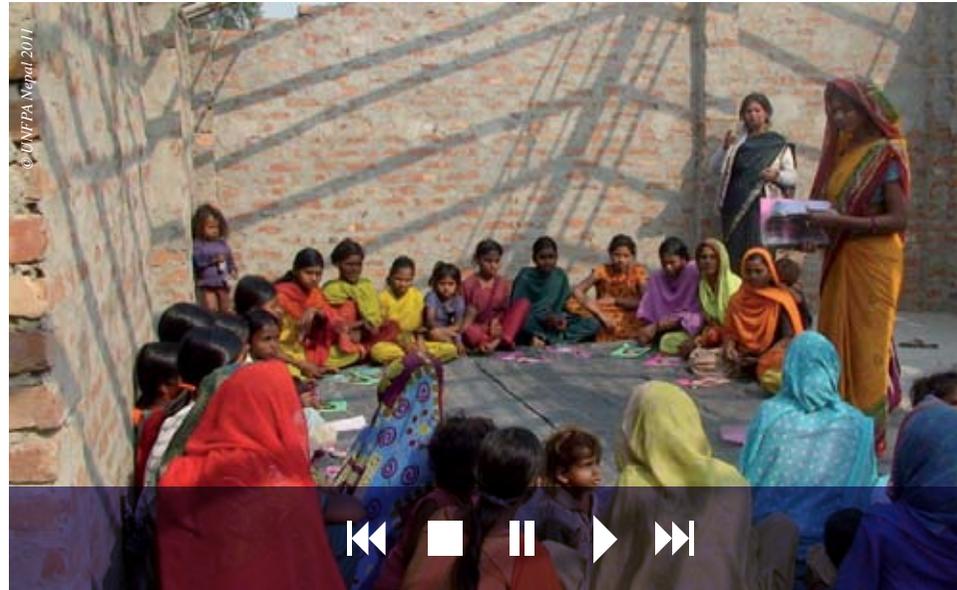
Systems like this will ensure continuing government commitment as Nepal develops more evidence, resources, issue-specific policies, and strategies to improve the health and wellbeing of their young people.



Adolescent girls in Nepal

Almost three million adolescent girls live in Nepal. Two thirds of these girls live in poverty, are burdened by gender discrimination and inequality, and are subject to multiple forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation, such as child labour, child marriage and other harmful practices. Nepal has a determination to break the cycle whereby girls leave school early, are married young and face reproductive health issues, abuse and poverty.

Nepal wants to invest in educated, healthy, skilled and empowered girls that are equipped with the tools to reinvest back into their families and communities



Adolescent girls need priority in Nepal

Significant initiatives have occurred to accelerate reproductive health efforts for girls, including the establishment of Youth Reproductive Centers (YRC) and the development of information and education materials, including a communications strategy. However, a more recent focus on marginalized adolescent girls looks beyond reproductive health to the five priority areas of education, health, protection from violence, leadership and data collection established by the UN Adolescent Girls Task Force.

Due to their initiatives in focused research and programming implementation, Nepal has been selected as a global champion country for the Task Force's Adolescent Girls Initiative. This initiative will target marginalized regions where adolescent girls face multiple issues such as early marriage, limited access to education, lack of access to health services, increased vulnerability to HIV and exposure to traditional harmful practices such as chaupadi, badi and deuki.¹⁴ The strategy prioritizes 10-14 year old girls as well as considering older girls.



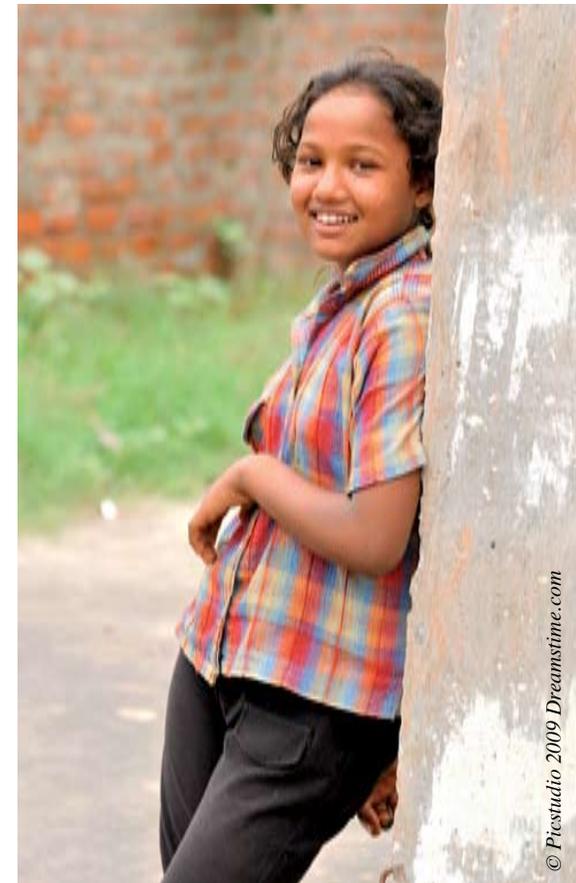
*The Adolescent Girls Initiative, World Bank
Coalition for Adolescent Girls*



Making special efforts for adolescent girls



The Girl Effect



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LESSONS LEARNED IN Nepal



Think of the policy document as part of a process

In Nepal's case, the National Youth Policy presented challenges for implementation, given the lack of clear and concrete objectives, activities and budgets. However, the policy document itself is only one step in the process of achieving more effective programmes to improve the lives of young people. Nepal has creatively interpreted their Youth Policy document and given it an evidence-based strategic direction for the implementation phase. In keeping the document relevant for the future, the MoYS with support from other stakeholders will consider the establishment of a review process.

Keep coordination and ownership on the agenda

Multi-sectoral cooperation, both within government and between key stakeholders, is just as important in the implementation phase as the policy development stage. Measures to involve as many organizations as possible, such as the National Committee on Youth, ensure a wide ownership of the strategy which will be crucial to guaranteeing implementation. During the development of the Implementation Plan, 17 Ministries were consulted and given opportunities for feedback. They in turn have facilitated a flow of information about the plan within their own ministries, and there is a sense of commitment and ownership of the Plan across sectors.



Focus on finance and budgets

For a youth policy to be effective, it must have an assigned and active budget line that is shared across ministries. A structure and mechanism to support this has been a priority for the MoYS in the form of the Youth-Responsive Budgeting System. There is a move to be inclusive of young people within the budgeting system so that young people can have a say in what kind of projects and activities come to their communities and how these will be funded.

Be realistic about what can be achieved

In a country like Nepal, there will always be challenges for youth programming and implementation. Political commitment exists, but the vision of the Policy in achieving a 'creative, competent and capable' population of young people will be hard to achieve. The Implementation Plan takes the approach of building on what the government is already doing and improving what already exists. This includes the Youth Friendly Services model, Child/Adolescent Friendly Schools that include life skills curriculum, young women's entrepreneurial skills, gender equity programmes, efforts to reduce child marriage, youth radio and child/youth clubs across Nepal.



Consider the local level

There is little point in achieving an active regional and national policy process or programme if this does not reach the local level. Local communities will feel the most effect from a successful policy. Placing UN staff in District Development Committee offices with a focus on ensuring that the ICPD mandate is delivered has provided more opportunities to respond to issues at the local level. Creating links between government and the UN has had the same effect.

The Association of Youth Organizations Nepal, a network of 76 member youth organizations, is also an extremely valuable resource for government as they provide the capacity and resources to tap into networks which reach out to 75 districts. These have been important steps, given that it is 'very often the local level that can take immediate action to improve the situation of young people most urgently'.¹⁵

CONCLUSION

Investing in Youth Policy provides strong evidence of the increasing number of positive initiatives occurring across the region. It describes a new era in terms of greater commitment to coordination and broad consultation, attention to the evidence-base as an integral part of building and directing policy, the recognition of the need for young people to have a role in policy development, and the importance of creating strategies that will put policy into action.

In the last ten years, governments have gained an understanding of the economic benefits that investing in young people offers to countries, and an increased awareness about young people's right to be part of decisions that affect their lives. There is more attention being paid to the core policy and programming pillars that impact directly on young people: poverty and inequality, gender, health, employment and education.

In the next 10 years, we need to strengthen government and civil society commitment and move to mainstreaming youth issues across all areas and sectors. We should seek to expand good practices in the region, making the innovative concepts discussed in the case studies standard practice across all sectors. The fact that young people are involved and considered in policy must become part of the overall government strategy for all countries in our region.



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While the content of this document was informed through consultation with UN agencies engaged in the process of supporting youth policy development, in particular through guidance and support by the Asia-Pacific Interagency Group on Youth, the opinions expressed here are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of UNICEF or the United Nations more broadly.

The [Asia-Pacific Interagency Group on Youth](#) is made up of youth focal points from regional representatives of United Nations and other international agencies including UNESCAP (chair), FAO,

ILO, IOM, PLAN International, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNMC, UNODC, USAID, UN Women and WHO. The group supports the regional implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth, Millennium Development Goals and international conventions and legal instruments impacting on young people, by working with governments, development partners, other stakeholders and young people themselves.

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APPENDIX Case study summaries

Cambodia: The engagement and coordination of all key sectors – including government, civil society and youth organizations – was prioritized in the development of Cambodia’s National Policy on Youth Development as an essential way of ensuring that young people’s issues are prioritized and resourced.

Pacific Island Countries and Territories: Developing a single-sector policy is one approach to tackling the issues for young people. In the Pacific Island Territories and Countries, youth employment is one of the most pressing issues, with governments and civil society beginning to mobilize resources at both policy and programming levels.

Viet Nam: The data generated by the Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth meant that Viet Nam better understood the risks and vulnerabilities faced by youth, enabling the government to develop important strategic interventions and programming.

Bhutan: In collecting data about specific groups of vulnerable and at-risk young people, Bhutan has generated understanding that can be used for strategic actions that will positively affect outcomes for young people who need the most support.

Timor-Leste: Despite the challenges in a country that has one of the youngest and poorest populations in the region, Timor-Leste is an excellent example of a government creating mechanisms which ensure that young people have a voice in the development of their nation.

The Philippines: The participation of young people in developing policies and strategies for adolescents and young people most at risk to HIV was fully supported by the Philippines government and civil society.

Nepal: The implementation of a policy comes with its own set of challenges. In the case of Nepal’s Youth Policy, the Implementation Plan, including key indicators for government accountability, allocation of responsibilities and the provision of funding, was key to putting the policy into practice.

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- 7 A UNESCO study of policy, legal and planning frameworks in 28 countries in Asia-Pacific found that 'there are still significant gaps across the region in terms of legal and policy frameworks...laws and policies provide the legal basis for action, [and] addressing these should receive urgent priority'. The study also notes that 'Strategies and frameworks are often in place even in countries where the corresponding legal and policy frameworks do not exist...There does appear, however, to be some correlation between countries that have reasonably strong policies and laws, the strategies/plans that are in place, and what happens at implementation level.' UNESCO (2011 forthcoming). Review of policies and strategies to implement and scale up sexuality education in Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Education.
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- 9 UNFPA, Statement on Fertility, Reproductive Health and Development by Dr Babatuned Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA at the 44th Session of the UN Commission on Population and Development. New York, 11 April 2011
<http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2011/osotimehin-openingstatement.pdf>
- 10 <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs345/en/index.html>
- 11 United Nations, Secretary-General's Remarks to General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Youth, New York, 25 July 2011
<http://www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=5432>
- 12 UNICEF, 2010. Education for Adolescents: UNICEF EAP Strategic Framework
http://www.unicef.org/eapro/Education_for_Adolescents_strategy_framework.pdf
- 13 WHO, Young People: Health Risks and Solutions, Geneva, 2010 <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs345/en/index.html>
- 14 Ibid. More than 1.8 million young people aged 15 to 24 die each year, mostly due to preventable causes

- 15 UNESCO, Empowering youth through national youth policies, Section for Youth of the Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO, Paris, 2004
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001345/134502e.pdf>
 - 16 Resolution of the General Assembly: Outcome document of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Youth: Dialogue and Mutual Understanding. A/RES/65/312. <http://ddaccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N11/432/09/PDF/N1143209.pdf?OpenElement>
 - 17 Adopted 1995 and 2007 by the UN General Assembly and including 15 priority action areas
 - 18 Levine, R, Lloyd, C, Greene, M and Grown, C. Girls Count: A global investment and action agenda. Center for Global Development, 2009
http://www.coalitionforadolescentgirls.org/sites/default/files/Girls_Count_2009.pdf
 - 19 UN Adolescent Girls Task Force 'Accelerating Efforts to Advance the Rights of Adolescent Girls' UN Joint Statement, 2010.
http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/news/2010/joint_statement_adolescentgirls.pdf
- The UN Adolescent Girls Task Force is made up of six UN agencies: UNICEF, UNFPA, ILO, UNESCO, UNIFEM and WHO

COORDINATE THE APPROACH

Cambodia

- 1 General Department of Youth, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Summary: Youth Situation Analysis in Cambodia. Taking the Youth Situation Analysis forward into Action: Workshop 17th February, Phnom Penh, 2009
- 2 These are countries that are situated geographically south of China, east of India and north of Australia: Cambodia, Laos, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, Viet Nam, Peninsular Malaysia, Brunei, East Malaysia, Timor-Leste, Indonesia, the Philippines and Singapore
- 3 Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, Draft Cambodian National Youth Policy 2011, Phnom Penh, 2011 (figures based on 2008 data)
- 4 Ibid
- 5 UNCT Cambodia, Situation Analysis of Youth in Cambodia, Phnom Penh, 2009
- 6 <http://data.worldbank.org/country/cambodia>
- 7 Ibid
- 8 Garment workers watch Cambodian NGO Phare Ponleu Selpak's prevention troupe perform an HIV/AIDS skit at a factory in Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- 9 UNCT Cambodia, 2009
- 10 The UN Development Assistance Framework 2011-2015 (UNDAF) is a programme document between a government and the United Nations Country Team that describes the collective actions and strategies of the United Nations to the achievement of national development

- 11 A number of UN agencies with strong youth priorities joined with the Office of the UN Resident Coordinator to combine resources that would provide joint support to the policy development process, including UN Youth Focal Points, UN Youth Advisory Panel and the appointment of a short-term Youth Policy Liaison Officer.
- 12 Members of the NTWG were drawn from UN agency Youth Focal Points, General Department of Youth, Department of Planning, Department of Legislation and the Department of Non-formal education.
- 13 The National Youth Policy Action Plan gives strategic direction and commitment for the implementation of the Youth Policy. It includes a master matrix of priority action points that served as a guide to the development of the Plan.
- 14 General Department of Youth, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, with the United Nations in Cambodia and JICA, Report on the 4th National Consultative Workshop on the development of Cambodian National Youth Policy, Phnom Penh, 29 April 2010
- 15 The National Youth Policy Network (NYP-Net) is a formal network of more than ten youth-led NGOs coordinated by the Khmer Youth Association
- 16 Sirors is 16 years old and has been working as a peer educator with the Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC) in the Kampong Cham Province of Cambodia for the last year. She provides young people in her village with reproductive health information and referral for healthcare services. She wants all parents to understand the importance of providing young people with sexual and reproductive health information and supporting her work in the community.

Pacific

- 1 Secretariat of Pacific Communities
- 2 Including 14 UN Member States: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu
- 3 Secretariat of Pacific Communities, Pacific Youth Bureau, Pacific Overview on Youth, Numea
http://www.sidsnet.org/pacific/spc/Youth/youth_overview.html
- 4 UNFPA Pacific Sub-Regional Office, Population Indicators, Suva http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/pacific/2010/06/10/2305/population_indicators/
- 5 There is a vast difference across PICTs in how adolescents and young people are defined, with few adopting the international definition of young people and some countries having no recognition of the adolescent group.
- 6 UNICEF Pacific, 'New HIV/AIDS baseline reports show alarming trend on vulnerability among young people in the Pacific', March 2011, http://www.unicef.org/pacificislands/media_15454.html

- 7 Youth employment is a pressing issue across the Asia-Pacific region. While only 20% of Asia Pacific workers are aged 15-24, these young people account for almost half Asia Pacific's jobless: International Labour Organization: Asian Decent Work Decade Resource Kit: The youth employment challenge, Bangkok, International Labour Office, 2008
http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/lang--en/docName--WCMS_098144/index.htm
- 8 Support in the form of increasing access to markets for young people or agriculture sector business development is not available.

COLLECT AND USE DATA

Viet Nam

- 1 Ferguson, J. The Research and Evidence for Investing in Adolescent Girls. Presentation to UNFPA, UNESCO, UNICEF Regional consultation on adolescent girls. WHO, Geneva, July 2011
- 2 UNICEF, At a Glance: Viet Nam, New York, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Viet_Nam_statistics.html
- 3 The Viet or Kinh people account for 86% of the population and dominate the political, economic and cultural life of this communist country. The remaining 14% of the population is made up of 54 ethnic minority groups. (UNICEF, At a Glance: Viet Nam, New York, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Viet_Nam_statistics.html)
- 4 UNFPA, Profile of key youth-disaggregated indicators from the Viet Nam population and housing census 2009
- 5 Ministry of Health Viet Nam, General Statistics Office Viet Nam, UNICEF and WHO, Survey Assessment of Vietnamese Youth (SAVY), Ha Noi, 2005 p 27 http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/media_2383.html
- 6 UNICEF, At a Glance: Viet Nam, New York, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Viet_Nam_statistics.html
- 7 In 2008, nearly 50 per cent of the country's ethnic minorities were living in poverty, compared to 8.5 per cent of majority Kinh people. (UNICEF, At a Glance: Viet Nam, New York, http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Viet_Nam_statistics.html)
- 8 6.6% according to World Bank data <http://data.worldbank.org/topic/labour-and-social-protection>
- 9 Ministry of Health Viet Nam, et al., 2005, p 33
- 10 Ministry of Health Viet Nam, et al., 2005, p 9
- 11 Ministry of Health Viet Nam, et al., 2005, p 11
- 12 Led by the Institute of Sociology and the Ministry of Health and supported by WHO, with participation from many UN agencies, bilaterals, government bodies including the Youth Union, Ministries, INGO and NGO, academics
- 13 Including that from the MoH, MoET, the Ministry of Culture and Information, Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MoLISA)

- 14 Including Pathfinder, Ford Foundation, Save the Children US, PATH, World Population Foundation, MSI, Plan, Population Council; funding for the Master Plan development, printing and dissemination was shared between SIDA, WHO and Save the Children US
- 15 The Ha Noi School of Public Health and the Institute of Sociology, Centre for Health Information and Education in Ho Chi Minh City
- 16 UNICEF Viet Nam, 'Landmark Youth Survey launched in Viet Nam', http://www.unicef.org/Viet Nam/media_2383.html, 2005
- 17 Ibid
- 18 Ministry of Health Viet Nam, et al., 2005 p 13, <http://www.unicef.org/Viet Nam/PART-1-Chapter-1.pdf>

Bhutan

- 1 The average age of the population is 24.8 years according to the CIA World Fact Book
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bt.html>
- 2 Office of the Census Commissioner, Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) (2005) Results of Population & Housing Census of Bhutan 2005, Thimphu, RGoB
- 3 The adolescent (aged 15-19) fertility rate is 35 births per 1,000 women <http://data.worldbank.org/country/bhutan>

INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE

Timor-Leste

- 1 Timor-Leste Census 2010
- 2 DHS 2009-2010
- 3 Young people are defined in Timor-Leste's Youth Policy as those aged 16-30; however Youth Parliamentarians are aged 12-16
- 4 Timor-Leste Census 2010
- 5 World Bank, Timor-Leste's Youth in Crisis: Situational Analysis and Policy Options. World Bank, Washington, 2007
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTIMORLESTE/Resources/youngincrisienglish.pdf>
- 6 Timor-Leste Labour Force Survey 2010. The LFS used a 'relaxed' definition of employment encompassing the formal and informal sectors, and cautioned against using its results for policy dialogue; thus its employment/unemployment rates have not been referenced.
- 7 Ligoo, J, Politika Nasional ba Foinsa'e Timor-Leste, Presentation to the Asia-Pacific ADAP meeting, 23-26 June 2009, Bangkok. UNICEF, 2009

- 8 Ostergaard, L with Savio, D and da Conceicao, A, Timor-Leste: Youth Social Analysis Mapping and Youth Institutional Assessment. Final Report. World Bank Country Office, Timor-Leste
- 9 Youth-policy.com, Better Policy, Healthier Youth, an interview with Dr Richard Curtain on the National Youth Policy of Timor-Leste, 2009
- 10 Ligoo, J, 2009
- 11 Curtain, R with Taylor B, Viewing Young people as Assets in the Development Process: key findings of a national survey in Timor-Leste <http://www.etan.org/etanpdf/2006/National%20Youth%20Survey.pdf>
- 12 Youth-policy.com, 2009
- 13 National Youth Policy of Timor-Leste, Dili, 2007
- 14 National Youth Policy Timor-Leste
- 15 World Bank, 2007
- 16 National Youth Policy Timor-Leste
- 17 UNICEF EAPRO, Timor-Leste turns attention on its youth and approves its National Youth Policy, Media Release, UNICEF, December 2007 http://www.unicef.org/eapro/media_7680.html
- 18 UNICEF Timor-Leste, Youth Parliament Commences in Timor-Leste, Dili, 2010 http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste_57229.html, December, 2010
- 19 UNICEF, Emerging leaders: Timor-Leste inaugurates young parliamentarians. UNICEF At a glance: Timor-Leste. September 2010 http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/Timorleste_55866.html
- 20 Pereira, A, Timor-Leste: Investing in Youth, Securing the Future, East Timor Law and Justice Bulletin, Dili, 2009

Philippines

- 1 First National Young People's Planning Forum, Unleashing the Forces for Change http://www.unicef.org/philippines/NYPPF_Report_final_lowQ.pdf

PUT POLICY INTO PRACTICE

- 1 The Philippines is considering changing this law; Thailand is in process to change this law led by the medical profession; Bhutan is also reviewing the age of consent from its current 18 down to 16.
- 2 Launched in March 2004, the 52-episode Radio Health Program (RHP) Distance Education (DE) Sewa Nai Dharma Ho ('Service is Religion') for Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) and the 52-episode Drama Serial (DS) Gyan Nai Shakti Ho ('Knowledge is Power') for the general public aims to promote key behaviors related to Family Planning and Maternal Health in Nepal.
- 3 Central Intelligence Agency, The World Fact Book: Nepal
- 4 World Bank, Nepal Country Overview 2010, Washington, <http://www.worldbank.org.np/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/NEPALEXTN/0,,contentMDK:22147453~pagePK:141137~piPK:141127~theSitePK:223555,00.html>
- 5 United Nations, Remarks by Robert Piper, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Nepal on the occasion of International Youth Year 2010-2011, 12 August 2010
- 6 United Nations Development Programme, Nepal
- 7 International Labour Organization, School-to-work transition: Evidence from Nepal. Employment Working Paper No.10. Employment Policy Department, International Labour Organization, Geneva, 2008
- 8 Department for International Development UK, Where We Work: South Asia: Nepal , London, <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Where-we-work/Asia-South/Nepal/>
- 9 The fertility rate in Nepal is 2.8 births per woman: Source: World Bank, World Development Indicators
- 10 Most of the young people involved in the 2006 action were members of Youth Wings.
- 11 The UN Definition of young people refers to those aged 15-24.
- 12 Data from the Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, the National Population and Housing Census, and the National Adolescent and Youth Survey will be available by early 2012.
- 13 The youth organizations are represented by two members from Youth Wings and two members from the Youth Network.

14 Chaupadi is the practice of isolating girls and women who are menstruating

[http://www.careinternational.org.uk/news-and-press/latest-news-features/1598-chaupadi-pushing-women-into-isolation-nepal-\)](http://www.careinternational.org.uk/news-and-press/latest-news-features/1598-chaupadi-pushing-women-into-isolation-nepal-)

Women from the Badi sub-caste have traditionally practiced sex work as a means of livelihood <http://advocacynet.org/page/badi>. 'Deuki is an ancient custom practiced in the far western regions where a young girl is offered to the local Hindu temple to fulfill an earlier made promise to gain religious merit.

The girl is supposed to offer service to the god or goddess of the temple but owing to their age and lack of skills, often end up as sex workers at the temples'

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deuki>.

15 Denstad, 20

Investing in Youth Policy was produced by the Asia-Pacific Interagency Group on Youth to share good practices in youth policy development. It provides evidence-based case studies of positive initiatives from seven countries in the Asia-Pacific region in a user-friendly flipbook that includes short films, slideshow presentations and useful links.

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