

2012

TURKS AND CAICOS ISLANDS NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY



MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION, YOUTH, SPORTS
AND CULTURE

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FOREWORD

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PREAMBLE

The National Youth Policy of the Turks and Caicos was developed in 2006, however, according to stakeholders the policy was not used as a framework for youth development work in the islands. Recognizing the importance of a guiding policy and plan of action, the Department of Youth in 2008 conducted a series of consultations and developed a Strategic Plan for the period 2008 to 2011.

Although attempts were made to implement the Strategic Plan, very few of the objectives were met due to the political and economic situation facing the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI). Despite the challenges faced by the Department of Youth in implementing the Strategic Plan, a decision was taken in 2011 to move ahead by conducting a review of both the policy and plan.

Following the participatory method for drafting of youth policies, consultations were therefore held with youth and stakeholders involved in youth development. A questionnaire was designed and used to gather pertinent information from youth and youth leaders and ultimately informed the revised policy and action plan.

The revised Turks and Caicos National Youth Policy 2012 highlights the needs, concerns and aspirations of the youth. It promotes the empowerment of young people by creating the enabling conditions and opportunities for their holistic development. It seeks to encourage Government and Non Governmental Organisations to give priority to youth development.

The Policy defines a youth and underscores the historical and contemporary issues affecting them such as drug abuse, unemployment, crime, violence, and teenage pregnancy. The document profiles the youth of the TCI and highlights their vision

The policy provides a framework for youth development recognizing the importance of empowering young people to be active participants in national development. It outlines three strategic focus areas: Youth and Employment, Youth Participation and Representation and Youth Health and Wellbeing.

Mindful of the socio-economic and political situations facing the TCI, the Policy seeks to pull together available resources to establish an implementation mechanism that brings together key stakeholders in the process of Youth Development.

RATIONALE

At their meeting in Edinburgh in 1997 Heads of Government in the Commonwealth endorsed thirteen Action Points¹ for Governments, stakeholders in youth development and the young people. These points were developed on the basis that young people are assets which must be harnessed and used for national development.

In 1998 at the World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, Ministers gave a commitment to the development and implementation of National Youth Policies to guide the process of youth development². At the third World Youth Forum that said year, a deadline of 2005 was set for every country to develop a National Youth Policy with an accompanying action plan³.

Like in other Commonwealth countries, young people in the TCI have immeasurable potential, talent and energy. They are a great asset and are well poised to play a key role in the sustainable development of the islands. They are capable of influencing the socioeconomic and political landscape of the country.

Having regards to the aforementioned it is fundamental that emphasis be placed on their strengths and abilities, understanding also that they are one of the most vulnerable sectors of society.

Failure to address their challenges can prevent them from reaching their fullest potential and meaningfully contribute to national development.

¹ Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2008-2015

² Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes

³ Braga Youth Action Plan

DEFINITION OF YOUTH

Throughout the world there is no one definition for youth. The Commonwealth Youth Programme (CYP) defines a youth as a person between the ages of 15 and 29 while the United Nation definition refers to persons between the ages of 15 and 24⁴. In the TCI a youth has been defined in the National Youth Policy 2006 as a person between the ages of 10 to 35⁵.

According to the views expressed during the consultations, the period from 10 to 29 years is considered a crucial time for young people, as they experience significant changes and challenges which make them most vulnerable.

Although not in the majority, a large number of persons were of the view that the age for youth should be reduced to 8 years since this is the age of criminal responsibility.

However it was generally accepted that under the age of 10 years, a person would generally receive tremendous support and protection and are least exposed to destructive social elements.

On the other hand persons above 29 years would have generally overcome most youthful challenges and enter into a more stable period of their development. The experiences and the lessons learnt during the earlier years help to shape them making it easier to cope with the challenges of adulthood.

For the purpose of the implementation of the revised National Youth Policy 2012, youth will therefore refer to those persons between the ages of 10 and 29 years.

While this definition captures the main target group referred to as youth, it does not imply that persons outside of this age group will not benefit from the programmes advocated for in the policy. It simply means that priority attention will be given to persons within this age range.

⁴ Youth and Employment: a Public Policy Perspective

⁵ National Youth Policy of the Turks and Caicos Islands

COUNTRY PROFILE

The Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) are a British Overseas Territory which consists of two groups of islands located in the Caribbean. It is a former dependency of Jamaica but became a crown colony when Jamaica gained its independence in 1962.



The islands are geographically contiguous to the Bahamas, but are politically a separate entity with a total land area of 196 sq miles.

Although a British Territory the currency in the TCI is the United States Dollar.

The official language of the people, who are is English and over 90% are of African descent.

Culturally, the islands are most well known for ripsaw music, sailing and fishing.

The popular sports on the islands are football and basketball. Turks and Caicos cuisine is based primarily around seafood, especially conch.

The main agricultural products include maize, beans, cassava and citrus. Fish, conch, lobster and vegetables are the only significant export. The islands import food and beverages, tobacco, clothing, manufacture and construction materials, primarily from the United States.

The Economy experienced growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 2003 to 2007. However the country has been experiencing decline in its GDP since then. According to the Survey of Living Conditions in 1999, over 25 per cent of the population was estimated to be living in poverty.

The Population of the TCI continues to expand. The 1990 census documented the population of the islands at 12,350 persons, the 2001 census showed that the population increased to 19,886.⁶ After a 20% growth in 2003, the population was estimated to rise from 34,864 in 2007 to 36,605 in 2008.

The growth pattern of the population continues to be heavily impacted by the increasing number of foreign nationals who migrate to the country for job opportunities, and retirement. Non-belongers as they are often referred to accounted for 65.4% of the total residents in 2007 and 66% in 2008.⁷

In August 2009, the United Kingdom suspended the Turks and Caicos' self-government after allegations of ministerial corruption. The prerogative of the ministerial government and the House of Assembly was vested in the islands' incumbent Governor, Damian Roderick Todd, for a period of up to two years. The suspension was further extended in 2011.

YOUTH PROFILE

Youth Vision & Aspiration

The young people of the Turks and Caicos are proud of their islands. They boast of the hospitality of their people, the beautiful beaches, rich heritage and culture, their success in sports, the relatively low crime rate and the community spirit which still exist in many communities. However, they are extremely concerned about the historical and contemporary issues that they face which stifles their development and empowerment.

One hundred percent of the youth responding, during the consultative process were positive in their vision for their country and for young people. Generally, they want to see a prosperous and peaceful nation in which young people have a voice and are making positive contributions to development. However, they are worried about negative social trend and its attendant problems. As a result, they want immediate steps to be taken to create change.

⁶ Draft Social Indicators Trends and Statistics 2007 & 2008

⁷ Draft Social Indicators Trends and Statistics 2007 & 2008

Youth population

According to figures from the Population Estimates 2008 compiled by the Department of Economics Planning and Statistics (DEPS), persons between the ages 10 to 30 accounted for 29% of the total population. Persons ages 10-19 totaled 4,428 (12.1%); while ages 20-24 totaled 2,004 (5.5%) and ages 25-30 amounted to 3,263 of the total population (11.2%).

Education

Education is critical for the TCI youth as it is a sure way out of poverty and a way of ensuring that they are able to access employment opportunities. For citizens, education is free in all Public Schools and is mandatory from ages 5 to 16. The TCI Community College offers higher education to students who have successfully completed the secondary education.

Enrolment in public schools in the 2006/07 school year to 5,602 students from 5,257 students in the 2005/2006 school year. Over 60% of all students in 2006 attended public schools many of which are now experiencing problems of overcrowding.⁸

Information from the Draft Social Indicators Trends and Statistics 2007-2008 indicates that the two most important indicators in student performance are performance in Grade Six Achievement Tests or GSAT (taken by all primary school leavers before entrance into secondary school) and the Caribbean Secondary Education Council or CSEC taken regionally by secondary school leavers.

In the 2006 GSAT exam 65.22% of the candidates scored the pass mark of 50% or higher. In the CSEC exams there have been declines in the overall performance. Declines were also seen in overall performance in key subject areas such as English A and Mathematics.

⁸ Draft Social Indicators Trends and Statistics 2007-2008

Drugs Use

In the 2006 National Secondary School Survey, of the percentage of students indicating that they had smoked cigarettes, 30% of use had been initiated by age 9 years. For alcohol, 34% had consumed by age 9. About 39% of tranquilizer and 32% of stimulants use was initiated by age 9.

A notable higher proportion of inhalant use was initiated by age nine or before (40%). Initiation of marijuana use was lowest at age 9 years or before (20.7%). The highest proportion took place at age 12 or 13 years (33.7%).⁹

The highest prevalence of use overall for any of the drug categories was alcohol. Seven out of every 10 student indicated having tried alcohol in their life time. Marijuana was by far the most used illicit substance (not including inhalants), About one in every 4 students (26%) had tried marijuana.

Importance of Religion

The Secondary School Survey further reveals that the majority of the respondents (74.3%) said that religion was very important in their life. 19% said it was fairly important and 3.3% said it was not very important, 3.3% indicated that it was not at all important.

Family Activities

Students in the Survey were asked to indicate on an average weekend how much time they spend engaged in family activities. Most respondents (36.5%) said some time, 28.7% said very little time, 19.7% indicated a great deal of time and 14.9% said a little time. Significantly, a higher number of females than males indicated spending very little time in family activities.

⁹ National Secondary School Survey Turks and Caicos Island (forms 2 through to 6) 2006

Involvement in Youth Groups and Activities

The survey also indicated that a little less than half of the respondents said they belonged to a youth group (47.5% said yes and 52.5% said no). Significantly more females than males said yes (55% females and 45% males).

During the consultative process most young people raised concerns about the lack of resources, facilities and activities to engage them at the community and national levels.

Sexual Behaviors

With reference to sexual behaviors the survey revealed that 24.7% of the respondents had sex. Of those who reported having sex, 72% were males and 18.6% were females. 76% of those who reported having sex had done so by age 14.5 years. 8.1% of the respondents in the 12-13 years age group and 27% of those 14-15 years old reported having sexual intercourse. 72% were over 16 years old.

Among those sexually active respondents (those having sex within the last year), 75% said they used a condom at last sexual encounter. Among those reported having sex in the last month, 60% reported having two or more partners while 40% reported having one partner. Of the less than 50% who was sure or who remembered their partner's age, 44.5% said the partner was the same age or younger and 55% gave an age that was 16 years and older. The mean age of sex partners overall was 16 years and the ages ranged from 14 to 43 year.

Employment

According to the Social Indicators Trends and Statistics 2007-2008, the total number of persons employed in the country was estimated at 17,442 in 2005. In 2008, employment expanded by 9.7% percent to about 21,493 persons with about 1,945 persons still out of work. Of the total employed only 5,510 persons were between the ages of 15 to 29; 437 persons were between the ages 15-19; 1,870 persons were between ages 20-24; and 3,203 persons were 25-29 years.¹⁰ The private sector continued to be the largest employer.

¹⁰ Labour and Employment Summary Indicators 2004-2008

Health

According to Social Indicators - Trends & Statistics 2007-2008 there was an increasing trend in the number of live births in the TCI from 2003 to 2008 while the number of deaths was fluctuating.

In 2008 a total of 65 persons died. Of that amount 28 were females and 37 males. Of the total deaths 4 were between the ages of 10 to 29 years; 3 males and 1 female. The causes of death were external causes (1 male and 1 female), symptoms and ill defined conditions (1 male), and disease of the respiratory system (1 male).

Information from the Social Sector Situational Analysis Report indicates that one of the major health problems faced by the country is the massive increase in chronic disease, which is caused by the change in life style, eating habits and the general lack of exercise. A significant percentage of the population is obese and obesity is emerging as a problem at a very early age in the population.

HIV/AIDS

There was a rapid increase in HIV/AIDS cases in 2007. The number of cases increased to 136 compared to 19 cases reported in 2006, bringing the cumulative total up to 421 cases since 1986. However in 2008, there was a major decrease in the number of reported HIV Positive/ AIDS cases. A total of 112 new cases were recorded, bringing the cumulative total to 533.

Information from the Social Indicators - Trend and Statistics 2007-2008 revealed that the total deaths resulting from HIV/AIDS in 2008 was 49. Of that amount, 2 were females between the ages of 15 and 24, and 5 between the ages of 25 and 34. Males accounted for 3 within the age band 25-34.¹¹

Crime

Age of criminal responsibility in the Turks and Caicos is 8 years. Two Thousand One Hundred and Nine (2,109) crimes were reported in 2008. Over 60% of all persons arrested and charged with offences are locals/belongers.

¹¹ Social indicators - Trends and Statistics 2007 -2008

In 2008, there was an increase of 38% in the number of juveniles arrested and charged with offences. In 2007 a total of 21 juveniles were arrested and charged (12 belongers and 9 non belongers); all being males. In 2008, 29 juveniles were arrested and charged (27 belongers and 2 non belongers); of that amount 27 males and 2 females. Non belongers accounting for 2 females and 2 males)¹²

Drugs

According to the Drug Sub-Committee of the National Development Policy, the number of drug addicts has grown by over 50 per cent over the past two decades, owing to an increase in the use of alcohol and other readily available drugs. In 2008 a total of 89 persons were arrested for drug offences; 7 were between the ages 15 and 19 (7.87%) 20 were between the ages of 20 and 24 (22.47%); 20 were between the ages 25 and 29 (22.47%).

Gender

In the TCI women outlive men and infant mortality rates are higher for boys than girls. There are more women than men in the younger population.

At the educational level, women are out-performing men, but this is not reflected in their representation at the higher levels in the society. Women are still under-represented in decision-making positions. Women, especially young women, experience a slightly higher unemployment rate than men.

The major issues faced by the TCI in respect of gender are gender disparities and the institutional structures to address them.¹³

It must be noted that there is very limited statistics on Youth in the Turks and Caicos and most of those available are outdated. This situation should improve in the near future as a National Census is underway and is expected to be completed in the first half of 2012. Additionally, the Youth Department is seeking to partner with the DEPS to begin a project to collect and compile statistics on youth.

¹² Social indicators - Trends and Statistics 2007 -2008

¹³ NSCDPF Social Sector Situational Analysis Report

HISTORICAL AND CURRENT ISSUES AFFECTING YOUTH

The historical and contemporary issues affecting young people are limiting their opportunities and stifling their development. These were articulated in the consultations. According to the National Development Socio-Economic Framework (NDSEF), youth in the Turks and Caicos face the challenge of growing into adulthood in a society undergoing rapid social change. The relatively homogenous society of three decades ago has become a highly plural society.

Population Issues

According to the Draft Social Indicators Trends and Statistics - 2007 & 2008 non residents accounted for 66% of the population, an increase from 52.0% in 2001.

The significant inflow of immigrants has been triggered by the huge demand for labour in the Construction and Service sector. This has created lopsided development not only in the economy but also in society. It has contributed to decline in social conditions putting a strain on national resources. Native belongers are now forced to compete with non belongers to access educational opportunities, health services and adequate housing.

This phenomenon has resulted in social exclusion and the terms “belongers” and “non belongers” regularly used to differentiate those who are citizen or were born on the island from and those who were not. The professional non-Belonger is grudgingly accepted because he or she possesses a skill that is not prevalent in the country, while the non-Belongers who are not considered professionals are more blatantly reminded of their non-Belonger status. This group comprises mainly of Haitians.¹⁴

It must also be noted that the lack of available funding, institutional support and resources for youth programmes means that seriously addressing these issues will remain another major challenge. Meanwhile, young people continue to feel hopeless as they look at the deteriorating social conditions, the weakening of institutions and support mechanisms. They fear the possibility of becoming strangers in their own land.

¹⁴ NSCDPF Social Sector Situational Analysis Report

The Demand for Housing

A high demand for housing in the Tourism sector is pushing upwards the price of lands and the cost of building houses. It is becoming more and more difficult for locals in the middle and lower income categories to access or build their own houses. Additionally, the economic development on the islands over the years and the consequent increase in imported labour has also resulted in a shortage of affordable housing for those in the categories referred to above.

This situation will obviously affect the young people who are attaining independence and as such are seeking to build, buy or rent a house.

Law and Order

The increase in drug abuse, uncontrolled illegal immigration, robberies, and other aggressive crimes is an indication of some of the challenges faced by the law enforcement organisation. As a result of inadequate human resource the police service is unable to provide the quality response needed to combat crime. They are therefore forced to adopt a more reactive rather than proactive approach.

The lack of rehabilitative programmes for persons who are sentenced to prison, results in high recidivism. At the prison there is no separation of juveniles from other offenders.¹⁵

Education and Training

The Ministry of Education desires that in every school there should be adequate classrooms in which to learn, teach and work. According to the Education Policy 2005, teachers and parents have voiced concerns about overcrowding in public schools.¹⁶ The concern is that the increasing number of enrolment can affect the quality of education delivered to the nation's students.

Concerns are also raised about the steady decrease in funding for scholarships. However there is an obvious lack of interest among young people to pursue tertiary education. It appears that they are not making full use of the scholarship

¹⁵ NSCDPF Social Sector Situational Analysis Report

¹⁶ Education Policy 2005

opportunities provided. There is also the view that suggests this is due to a culture among the native youth that “*belongs are first*” and as a result they are not motivated to develop themselves or to compete for employment opportunities.

Changing Economic Circumstances

Since July 2010 the economy of the Turks and Caicos Islands has been experiencing a meltdown, posing greater challenges for young people who were hopeful of a growing economy. The economic boom which the islands experienced came to an abrupt end with the onset of the 2007 financial crisis.

The onset of the economic decline abruptly halted the super-rich property development and affected the tourism industry and its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The collapse of the primary revenue sectors of the country brought public finance to deficit in 2008 and 2009 from surpluses in previous years. The collapse of one of the country's leading locally-owned banks signaled the severity of the Turks and Caicos economic standing.¹⁷

This situation has resulted in increased unemployment, social problems and significant reduction in Government spending on social programmes.

Drug Abuse and Violence

Although statistics were not available to confirm this it was generally felt that there is a growing increase in drug abuse, crime and violence among young people. Persons involved in the consultative process suggested that the breakdown in families, low self esteem, peer pressure, influence of foreign cultures, social and economic change and the lack of opportunities are the key causes for these apparent increases.

¹⁷ The Caribbean Centre for Money and Finance July 2010 - Newsletter : Volume 3, No. 7

OTHER RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment

The National Youth Policy recognizes and promotes the asset-based approach to youth development outlined in the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (PAYE). Through the PAYE Commonwealth Youth Minister and heads of Government have endorsed the view that young people are empowered when

- they acknowledge that they have or can create choices in life, and are aware of the implications of those choices;
- they can make an informed decision freely and can take action based on their decision accepting responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

Empowering young people means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms rather than at the direction of others.

The policy subscribes to the four broad categories of youth empowerment outlined in the PAYE:

- *Economic and social base*
- *Political will,*
- *Adequate resources allocation and supportive legal and administrative frameworks;*
- *A stable environment of equality peace and democracy and access to knowledge, information and skills and a positive value system.*

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

As a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Turks and Caicos has committed to respecting the rights of all persons who are under the age of 18 years.

The Convention sets out these rights in 54 articles and two Optional Protocols. It spells out the basic human rights that children everywhere have: the right to survival;

to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life.

The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child. Every right spelled out in the Convention is inherent to the human dignity and harmonious development of every child. The Convention protects children's rights by setting standards in health care; education; and legal, civil and social services.

The Youth Policy promotes and supports the rights of the Child as rights of young people.

National Socio-Economic Development Framework (NSEDF) 2007-2017

This developmental framework outlines the vision for the TCI. It states “Turks and Caicos will be a balanced, diversified and competitive economy which provides a high standard of living for all in a safe and secure environment where environmental protection is a cornerstone of all our development efforts.”

The framework sets out six priority areas namely

- *People and Workforce*
- *Education and skills*
- *Business and Enterprise*
- *Quality living*
- *Protecting the Environment*
- *ICT and Infrastructure*

The key Strategic areas of the National Youth Policy are in keeping with the developmental priorities of the NSEDF.

The National Sports Policy

The National Sports Policy promotes sports, physical education and physical recreation to combat chronic diseases related to sedentary lifestyles, substance abuse, crime, juvenile delinquency and social dysfunctionality. It sees sports as an important means of building and developing the character of the individual as well as that of the community and country.

In this regards, and based on the recommendations emanating from the consultations, the National Youth Policy endorses the promotion of sports as a vehicle for youth development.

The Education Policy

The Education Policy 2005 highlights the journey of the Turk and Caicos Islands from a background in which education was considered as something for the children of the privileged few to a right of every child.

The Policy embraces the fundamental principle that human resource development is the key to the social and economic advancement of its people. It seeks to ensure that people of the TCI are well poised to access the opportunities and a quality life through education.

Scholarship Policy

Cognizant of the need to avoid marginalization of the national labour force, and the need to provide opportunities for individuals who are both qualified and desirous of pursuing tertiary education, the Scholarship Policy seeks to:

- Ensure the ownership and effective participation of Turks and Caicos Islanders in the growth and development of the nation's economy
- Increase the earning power of Turks and Caicos Islanders
- Assist with the alleviation of poverty

PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

The principles and values on which The National Youth Policy has been formulated and will be implemented are as follows:

Access

The enabling conditions for youth empowerment will be created so that young people can realize their fullest potential. The National Socio-economic Development Strategy 2008-2017 of the Turks and Caicos commits to empower and improve the livelihood of all citizens, with economic and social opportunities to achieve their full potential, irrespective of social origin.

Equality

Young people must also have equal access to opportunities and resources that can facilitate their holistic development regardless of their gender, geographic location, social, cultural or economic circumstances.

Participation

Young people must be active participants in the building of their society and in their overall development. The National Socio-economic Development Strategy 2008-2017 of the Turks and Caicos commits to the maintaining of a society that would ensure the fullest participation of all in the development of the country and in the sharing of the benefits of its growth.

Responsiveness

The policy is a response to the needs of young people. It takes into consideration the challenges they face.

Responsibility

Young people must take responsibility for their choices and decisions and must make full use of the opportunities provided for their advancement.

VISION STATEMENT

Young people in the Turks and Caicos Islands at the centre of national development; with adequate resources and opportunities to realize their fullest potential and effectively contribute to sustainable national development.

POLICY OBJECTIVES

The National Youth Policy of the Turks and Caicos emphasizes the priority and attention that the TCI intends to give to youth development. It provides guidelines for Government and Non Governmental organizations in the planning and implementation of programme and activities for young people promoting and facilitating youth participation and empowerment.

The policy defines a common vision and framework for youth development and encourages cooperation among stakeholders to meet the needs of young people under three strategic areas: Youth Employment, Youth Participation and Representation and Youth Health and wellbeing.

The following are the Policy Goals and the related Objectives:

GOAL 1: To create more opportunities for young people to be employed on a sustainable basis and to increase their ability to access those opportunities

Related Objectives

- To strengthen and develop Career Guidance and Job Readiness training Programmes for all unemployed youth and all students in school within 5 years.
- To establish a programme to create appreciation, awareness and culture for business and entrepreneurship targeting all students and those who are unemployed.
- To provide access to financial assistance for at least 20% of unemployed youth to start-up/scale up businesses

- To establish private sector-public sector partnership to increase employment among youth by at least 20% in five years.
- To implement a National Technical, Vocational and skills training programme to increase youth employability
- To promote music, art, dance and information technology as non-traditional career options
- To increase scholarships by 20% in the next 5 years and make them more accessible
- To strengthen programmes aimed at reducing illiteracy among young people

GOAL 2: To provide opportunities to young people for their views to be heard and for them to contribute effectively to community and nation building

Related Objectives

- To strengthen the leadership capacity of young people through leadership training programmes
- To establish Student Councils in each school and a National Youth Council by year two, to give youth competence in self-government and democratic behaviours
- To promote national pride and the participation of young people in environmental protection, and cultural preservation
- To create an Annual Award Scheme in year two, to recognize excellence in youth achievement and provide opportunities for creative, cultural and expression of talents
- To advocate for youth representation in national decision making processes

GOALS 3: To create opportunities for all young people to develop healthy behaviors and life styles and to improve their social and emotional health and wellness

Related Objectives

- To facilitate the establishment of programmes in schools that promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing
- To establish a National Counseling Programme for youth
- To establish a youth sexual and reproductive health programme
- To strengthening the peer educators community advocacy and outreach programmes to deal with issues such as drugs, teen pregnancy etc
- To enhance parenting skills so that parents can better help young people with their values, life style issues and coping skills
- To the engage the church to play a more proactive role in addressing issues affecting young people
- To strengthen and expand a social inclusion/ second-chance programme for youth at risk
- To implement youth focused crime prevention programmes in all school and communities within three years

YOUTH RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Youth in the Turks and Caicos are aware of their rights which they believe are sometimes overlooked. On the other hand, stakeholders are concerned that young people are not fully aware of their responsibilities. Every effort must therefore be made to promote both the rights and responsibilities of young people.

The TCI is a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child which clearly articulates the fundamental rights of every child under the age of 18 years.

The following is a summary of the main rights as stated in the Convention:

- The right to life
- The right to an identity
- The right to freedom of expression
- The right to protection from all forms of abuse
- The right to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development
- The right to education
- The right to basic healthcare

The PAYE encourages youth to take responsibility for their choices. The following were identified by young people and stakeholders as some of the key responsibilities of young people in the Turks and Caicos:

- To play an active role in national development
- To play an active role in youth development
- To set personal goals and work towards achieving them
- Take their education seriously
- To make informed decisions
- To take full advantage of opportunities provided that can help in their development
- To show respect for themselves and other
- To be role models

KEY GOALS AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 1

To create more opportunities for young people to be employed on a sustainable basis and to increase their ability to access those opportunities

Key Strategies/Activities

- Establish a memorandum of understanding with the private sector for implementing a Youth Enterprise and Job Readiness/Mentorship Programme
- Design Entrepreneurship Programme for students and unemployed youth
- Conduct research to determine positions occupied by work permit holders (skilled/professionals) and provide relevant training opportunities for locals
- Establish skills training programmes for young people
- Advocate for increase private sector contribution to scholarship fund
- Strengthen and expand Literacy Programmes

GOAL 2

To provide opportunities to young people for their views to be heard and for them to contribute effectively to community and nation building

Strategies

- Develop guidelines and training materials in leadership and democracy
- Conduct regular leadership training workshops in schools and communities
- Establish a National Youth Council
- Establish student councils in all schools
- Establish and community youth organisations
- Institutionalize the Youth Parliament
- Hold annual Award for recognizing outstanding youth in various fields
- Uses media, school activities and the social network to promote national pride
- To advocate for youth representation on national boards and committees

Goal 3

To create opportunities for young people to develop healthy behavior and life styles and to improve their social and emotional health and wellness

Strategies

- Commission research on health and wellbeing issues affecting youth
- Design training modules
- Conduct training sessions in schools and communities
- Design and develop youth-friendly and youth sensitive material on health and wellbeing
- Hold train the trainers seminars
- Strengthen and expand national peer education programme
- Design programme for high-risk youth
- Establish a youth hotline
- Use media to disseminate information on good parenting
- Advocate for a National Parents' Association
- Hold parenting seminars in communities
- Strengthen and expand crime prevention programmes in schools and communities

PRIORITY TARGET GROUPS

Students

Concerns were raised by stakeholders and students themselves about the growing incidences of student involvement in violence, drug use and other antisocial behaviors that. Additionally, education officials are concerned about the large number of students leaving school ill-equipped for the world of work.

Teenage mothers

Young mothers need the requisite support to ensure that their children turn out to be asset to the society. The stigma attached to teenage pregnancy inhibits their growth and development. In most instances young women who become pregnant during their teenage years do not pursue their academic goal.

Unemployed

Since unemployment can lead to a number of other social problem such as crime, violence and drug abuse, it is important that employment opportunities are more easily accessible. While opportunities for employment are available, in many cases there is a lack of interest among young people since the available jobs are considered to be menial for a 'belonger'. However, many of them do not possess the necessary qualifications or skills to fill vacancies they desire.

Young Men

Statistics show that young men are under performing compared to women in education. Men also largely outnumber women in criminal activities.

Young Women

While female perform better than males in school, they are treated second place when they compete for influential positions in society. Women are victims of domestic abuse and seem not to be sufficiently empowered to participate in decision making processes.

Youth with Mental and Physical Disabilities

Young people with disabilities are largely stigmatized and excluded from the everyday programmes and activities available for youth.

IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION MECHANISM

The successful completion of a National Youth Policy can be considered a great achievement, however, it will be much more fulfilling to move from a document to the actual execution of the plans and programmes. This requires a collaboration of all stakeholders. The following outlines the stakeholders collaborating to effectively implement the Policy.

Government

The Government will lead the implementation process of this policy through various Ministries and Departments as stated in the Youth Policy Action Plan. The ministry of Youth will be responsible for coordinating the process. The successful implementation of the policy is largely hinged on the willingness of Government to provide the necessary financial and technical support.

Non Governmental Organisations and Institutions

Non Governmental Organisations involved in youth work will reference the National Youth Policy to guide their planning and implementation of programmes and projects and will work parallel with the Ministry of Youth to achieve the objectives of the policy.

Private Sector

The private sector will provide support to those involved in the implementation of projects and programmes for young people in the interest and national development

National Youth Organisation

The Ministry of Youth will support the establishment of a National Youth Organisation but after its formation will serve as an independent organisation representing the views of young people in every community. It will also use the Policy as a guide to implement programmes and projects for and on behalf of young people but will serve as a medium through which young people can articulate their views.

Policy Monitoring & Review Committee

A cadre of persons selected from among stakeholders will serve as a monitoring and review committee. It is advised that they meet at least on a quarterly basis to review the process and make the necessary recommendations. The policy will be reviewed every five years.

Policy Implementation Committee

Due to the present political and economic situation in the TCI and the challenges facing the Youth Department a special Policy Implementation team will be formed comprising staff of the Youth Department and representatives of key stakeholders. Their role will be to facilitate the implementation of the Policy.

Young people

The active youth participation in the development of the policy was deliberate. Young people know the issues affecting them and are also aware of what can be done to bring about positive change. They must therefore take ownership of the policy and make full use of the opportunities and the programmes.

CONCLUSION

A National Youth Policy is intended to be the guiding framework to foster youth development and requires an action plan which will ensure the successful implementation. A participatory methodology, primary and secondary research informed the content of the revised National Youth Policy 2012.

It is imperative therefore, that a collaborative approach be considered in the implementation of the Policy. Government, Private Sector and Non- Governmental Organisations must appreciate the immediate and long term benefits to be derived from investing in young people. All parties must therefore make a commitment of the necessary resources and must make the necessary sacrifices so that the socio-economic and political benefits can be realized from youth empowerment.

Youth Participation is critical and must be fully encouraged so that young people will take ownership of the policy and the process, and will be motivated to play an active role in the implementation.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

<i>TCI</i>	<i>Turks and Caicos Islands</i>
<i>GDP</i>	<i>Gross Domestic Product</i>
<i>DEPS</i>	<i>Department of Economics, Planning and Statistics</i>
<i>GSAT</i>	<i>Grade Six Achievement Tests</i>
<i>CSEC</i>	<i>Caribbean Secondary Education Council</i>
<i>HIV</i>	<i>Human Immunodeficiency Virus</i>
<i>AIDS</i>	<i>Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome</i>
<i>NSEDF</i>	<i>National Socio-Economic Development Framework</i>
<i>PAYE</i>	<i>Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment</i>