



Republic of Mauritius

Ministry of Youth and Sports

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY 2010 - 2014

Ministry of Youth and Sports
3rd Floor, Emmanuel Anquetil Building
Port Louis

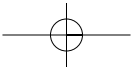
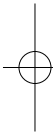
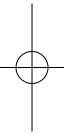
Printed by: Government Printing Department, August 2009

Youth on the move

National Youth Policy

2010 - 2014

Youth on the Move





*Prime Minister
Republic of Mauritius*



Message

I recall launching the First National Youth Policy in 2000. Since then, the needs and aspirations of young people have evolved and my Government is undertaking a thorough review of the existing policies regarding our youth.

The National Youth Policy is an important framework for tapping the energy and the creative drive of the youth for the development of our country. It endeavours to ensure that all young men and women are given meaningful opportunities to reach their full potential, both as individuals and as active participants in society. The policy addresses major concerns and issues critical to young persons and gives direction to the programmes and services provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations.

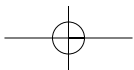
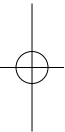
Our youth are our future and they are active contributors to the making of a dynamic and compassionate society. The National Youth Policy recognizes their role and responsibilities as key actors in the nation's life and aims to help them realise their aspirations.

I would like to congratulate everyone associated with this revised National Youth Policy. I am confident that our youth will realise their hopes and ambitions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Dr N. Ramgoolam'.

*Dr the Hon Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP
Prime Minister*

06 August 2009





Republic of Mauritius



Message from the Minister of Youth and Sports

It is with a deep sense of honour and satisfaction that I associate myself with the publication of the National Youth Policy for years 2010-2014.

The first National Youth Policy presented by my Ministry in year 2000 has been an important tool in valorizing and safeguarding the interests of our young people. After nearly a decade, the time is now ripe to overhaul the document to give a new orientation to our youth in the wake of changing needs, aspirations and inescapable challenges.

The National Youth Policy 2010-2014 therefore aims at identifying existing gaps and steering our youth in the right direction so that they assume their responsibilities and be a responsive partner in the strengthening of our society and the cementing of our democracy.

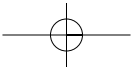
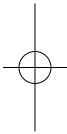
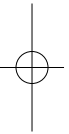
However, our youth cannot stand alone. They need the guidance of the elders and the support of all key players and stakeholders who should together intensify efforts to shape up our society keeping in mind the vibrance, talents and aspirations of our young women and men.

Let us all embrace this National Youth Policy and give life and meaning to the vision, goals and direction it has set.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Satyaprakash Ritoo'.

Satyaprakash Ritoo

6 August 2009





Republic of Mauritius



Message from the Permanent Secretary

The preparation of the National Youth Policy 2010-2014 has necessitated an extensive process of consultation with youth organizations and other stakeholders. With the participation of these groups in the policy formulation process, the new National Youth Policy has been designed to address the major needs, challenges and opportunities of young men and women.

I wish the National Youth Policy plays a major role in empowering young people and help them better contribute to the development of the country whilst taking initiatives which bring about their own personal development and fulfillment of their dreams and that of the Mauritian Society.

I would like to acknowledge the dedicated and tireless work of all those involved in coordinating the preparation of this document and express my appreciation and thanks to all stakeholders for their valuable contribution.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'N.K. Ballah'.

N.K.BALLAH
Permanent Secretary

6 August 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Message from the Prime Minister

Message from the Minister of Youth and Sports

Message from the Permanent Secretary

1. BACKGROUND

2. DEFINITION OF YOUTH

2.1 Youth Profile

2.1.1 Youth Clubs

2.1.2 Youth and Education

2.1.3 Youth and Health

2.1.4 Youth and Employment

2.1.5 Youth Population Trend

2.2 Youth Needs and Aspirations

3. CONTEMPORARY YOUTH CHALLENGES

3.1 Education and Training

3.2 Employment

3.3 Globalisation

3.4 ICT (Information and Communication Technology)

3.5 Gender

4. RIGHTS AND OBLIGATIONS

4.1 Rights of Youth

4.2 Responsibilities of Youth

4.3 Obligations of the State

4.4 Obligations/Responsibilities of Parents/Responsible Parties

4.5 Responsibilities of the Private Sector

5. PRINCIPLES AND VALUES

5.1 Human Rights

5.2 Gender Equity

5.3 Social Justice

TABLE OF CONTENTS — *continued***6. TARGET GROUPS**

- 6.1 In School Youth
- 6.2 Out of School Youth
- 6.3 Employed Youth
- 6.4 Unemployed Youth
- 6.5 Less privileged Youth
- 6.6 Youth at Risk
- 6.7 Less Able Youth (*Autrement Capable*)

7. GOAL AND YOUTH POLICY OBJECTIVES**8. STRATEGIC AREAS OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT**

- 8.1 Education, Training and Youth Participation in decision making
 - 8.1.1 Education
 - 8.1.2 Training
- 8.2 Youth Health Issues, Family Life Education and Counselling
- 8.3 Substance Abuse Prevention and Combating HIV and AIDS
 - 8.3.1 Combating HIV and AIDS
- 8.4 Youth Employment, Enterprise Initiatives and Agriculture
 - 8.4.1 Agricultural Sector
 - 8.4.2 Co-operative Sector
- 8.5 Information and access to ICT
 - 8.5.1 Information
 - 8.5.2 Access to ICT
- 8.6 Sports, Leisure and Literary Activities
- 8.7 Promotion of Artistic, Cultural and Historical Values
- 8.8 Civics, Citizenship, Spirituality and Human Values
- 8.9 Promotion for the Protection and Preservation of the Environment

9. IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISM**10. REVIEW****REFERENCES**

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

1. Background

The Republic of Mauritius conceived its first National Policy for young men and women at the dawn of this millennium after many months of consultations with all relevant stakeholders at regional and national levels.

The Government acknowledging the potentials of our young people provided a platform to their full development through proper empowerment programmes. The National Youth Policy was thus launched by the Prime Minister, Dr The Hon. N. Ramgoolam G.C.S.K, F.R.C.P in 2000.

The Government of the Republic of Mauritius has honoured its commitment taken at various international forums-and has shown its willingness to provide all young people with opportunities to develop to their full potential.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports is coming up with a revised version of the National Youth Policy to meet the ever changing needs and aspirations of young people.

2. Definition of Youth

The Policy defines 'youth' as a person between 14 and 29 years of age living in the Republic of Mauritius. The Policy, however, recognizes that all persons within this age group are not homogeneous. A number of subgroups exist depending on residence, religion, community, socio-cultural and educational backgrounds. Thus, the Policy acknowledges the different roles, needs and aspirations of these subgroups.

Young people belonging to the age range 14 to 29 deserve the attention of government and other stakeholders more than any other age group. Our young men and women are the assets of

this country. They are potential candidates on the labour market and represent a window of opportunity for economic growth and guarantors of future generations.

2.1 Youth Profile

The Republic of Mauritius situated in the South West of the Indian Ocean comprises the main islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues with a total area of 1,969 square kilometres. The population, estimated at 1.27 million as at the end of 2008 is multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-lingual.

The gender distribution shows that there were 628,105 males and 643,935 females in 2007. The growth rate in 2007 is estimated at 0.65% for the Republic of Mauritius and 0.73% for Rodrigues. The population density is estimated at around 620 persons per square kilometres.

The youth population comprising the age group 15 to 29 was estimated to be around 311,789 and represented 25% of the total population as at end of 2008. Among these 157,310 (13%) were males and 154,479 (12.14%) were females.

The Republic of Mauritius has continued to experience a high literacy rate, with over 85% of youth attending educational institutions. This is a reflection of the successful implementation of the current government policy of free and compulsory education up to the age of 16 years.

2.1.1 Youth Clubs

In 2008 young people were grouped into 537 youth clubs spread out across Mauritius and Rodrigues had 72 such clubs.

The youth clubs, with a membership of 25 and above, cater for various categories of youth aged between 14 and 29.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

The welfare of our youth is taken care in schools, in social welfare centres, community centres and youth centres, with the assistance of trained officers and youth leaders.

2.1.2 Youth and Education

In the field of education, the enrolment capacity situation of the youth of our country in the secondary, post secondary, vocational and technical sectors in the last 8 years is shown in Table 2.1.2

Table 2.1.2:

Youth and Education - Secondary

	2000	2006	2007
Males	46,399	55,136	56,097
Females	49,049	59,521	60,609
Total	95,448	114,657	116,706

Post Secondary

	2000/01	2006/07	2007/08
Males	4,422	6,939	6,781
Females	5,619	8,268	9,926
Total	10,041	15,207	16,707

Vocational and Technical

	2000	2005	2006
Males	4,684	5,929	5,883
Females	766	1,507	2,140
Total	5,450	7,436	8,023

2.1.3 Health

Table 2.1.3 below gives a brief indication of the evolution of the health situation of the nation reflected in the improvement in life expectancy in the last 18 years.

Table 2.1.3: Life Expectancy

	1990	2000	2007
Males	65.6	68.39	70
Females	73.4	75.35	76

2.1.4 Youth Employment Force

The percentage of young people to the total Mauritian labour force was 29.22% in 2007 as seen in Table 2.1.4.

*Table 2.1.4: Youth Employment Force
(Legal age for employment being 16)*

<i>Youth Contribution to Mauritian Labour Force 2007 (in thousands)</i>			
<i>Age</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Total</i>
16-19	12.2	7.2	19.4
20-24	34.8	24.8	59.6
25-29	51.1	30.3	81.4
Total	98.1	62.3	160.4
Total Mauritian Labour Force	353.6	195.3	548.9
% of Youth Contribution to Total Mauritian Labour Force	27.74	31.89	29.22

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

2.1.5 Youth Population Trend

Future projections concerning the youth population are provided in table 2.15:

*Table 2.15: Projection for future Youth Population
(15-29 yrs) in the Republic of Mauritius*

	2007	2017	2027	2037
Male	157,385	153,661	141,486	139,211
Female	154,804	150,015	136,704	134,807
Total	312,189	303,676	278,190	274,018

2.2. Needs and Aspirations

There is no doubt that a healthy youth population guarantees a flourishing society, and if youth is healthy and educated it provides the society with even better prospects for progress and prosperity. The profile of youth of the Republic of Mauritius is such that every effort towards ensuring its harmonious development and growth should be considered a priority.

Education is not an end in itself but a means to equip the younger generation with a set of values and principles to help them throughout life. Any educational system strives to form individuals who will be able to work towards the achievement of the objectives of the said society. They deserve the best and most appropriate education.

The participation of youth groups in understanding the inherent problems of society and their involvement in finding solutions to these should be encouraged as a means of improving both their knowledge and their commitment to care for the country.

In the last decades, Mauritius has witnessed rapid economic growth, which has improved the employment prospects for young people.

However, rapid industrialization has undoubtedly brought about some imbalance in the ecological system. The deterioration of the natural environment is of major concern to the Republic of Mauritius as it has direct implications on the well being of our youth and for sustainable development. Provision should be made in the school curriculum for teachers to educate young people on environmental friendly behaviour.

3. Contemporary Youth Challenges

Developing the capacity of the youth to participate fully in their development has a major positive impact on the long term socio economic conditions, the well being and livelihood of future generations. The youth as a major underutilised resource, with enormous potential must be empowered to effectively participate in the society.

3.1 Education and Training

Education and training are of paramount importance and top the priority list for government action. Youth is imbued with a lot of energy but at the same time they are vulnerable. Skills training need to be more than ever addressed in this era dominated by world economic recession.

3.2 Employment

Education and the rate of literacy play a vital role in the kind of employment young people would need. The level of education has a direct impact on employment. A lack of skill would debar young people from attaining certain jobs with special requirements.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

3.3 Globalisation

Globalisation, in this policy is seen as promoting cultural diversity in order to foster understanding and tolerance among young people worldwide. It further creates a huge opportunity for young people to exchange and accept views, share experiences, reflect and debate on salient issues and most importantly identify common preoccupations and problems.

3.4 ICT (Information and Communication Technology)

Young people of the Republic of Mauritius are both the major human resource for development and key agents for change in the economic development and technological innovation and advancement. The contribution of Information and Communication Technology is vital to their development in this and coming eras.

3.5 Gender

This National Youth Policy recognizes and acknowledges that all developmental programmes and strategies will integrate gender and no young person will be discriminated on the basis of sex or biological grounds. (Equal Opportunity Act)

4. Rights and Obligations

The National Youth Policy recognizes the fundamental rights and liberties which are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius and which emanate from the most important international and regional treaties on Human Rights that the Republic of Mauritius has signed and ratified, namely:

- ♦ The International Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights 1966;
- ♦ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966;

-
-
- ♦ The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women 1979;
 - ♦ The African Charter on Human and People's Rights 1981;
 - ♦ The Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989;
 - ♦ The African Youth Charter, 2006

The National Youth Policy recognizes that young persons, depending on their age and maturity, should not only enjoy their youth but also participate in the development of the country without any discrimination based on social and cultural origins, race, colour, religion, political or other opinion, sex, disability and socio-economic or other status.

4.1 Rights of Youth

The following rights are more specifically recognized to youth:

- ♦ The inherent right to life and security of the person;
- ♦ The right to a name, a proper identity and nationality;
- ♦ The right to live in an atmosphere of love and affection and to keep all family ties;
- ♦ The liberty of movement including the right to travel abroad and re-enter the natal land freely;
- ♦ The right to maintain the child-parent relationship;
- ♦ The freedom of opinion and expression;
- ♦ The freedom of thought, conscience and religion;
- ♦ The freedom of association;
- ♦ The right to privacy and non-interference in personal matters like correspondence;

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

- ♦ The right to be protected from libel, slander and defamation and all forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- ♦ The right to be protected from harassment, whether sexual or otherwise, as well as violence of any kind, including protection for cruel treatment or punishment, unlawful arrest or deprivation of liberty;
- ♦ The right to access to appropriate information;
- ♦ The right to choose love partners or spouses freely from the age of 16;
- ♦ The right to proper education and training;
- ♦ The right to equal opportunities in the employment sector from the age of 16;
- ♦ The right to adequate housing, health care, and social security;
- ♦ The right to leisure, cultural and sports activities and to live in a good environment

4.2 Responsibilities of Youth

Every right also entails a responsibility and that can only be exercised to the extent that it does not restrict the rights of others and/or the community as a whole. Like adults, youth also have specific responsibilities which can be summed up as follows:

- ♦ To promote peace, security and development;
- ♦ To respect public property and the property of others;
- ♦ To promote positive and dignified values, tolerance and great respect for ethics in all aspects of life;
- ♦ To promote respect for other young persons, for adults and the elderly;
- ♦ To give support to the community by helping in social and philanthropic work;

-
-
- ♦ To promote gender equality and respect for the rights and dignity of girls and women;
 - ♦ To discourage acts of violence, crime, exploitation and oppression of vulnerable persons or groups;
 - ♦ To give value to learning and training for oneself and others;
 - ♦ To promote respect for the environment;
 - ♦ To promote a healthy lifestyle free from disease, alcohol and drugs;
 - ♦ To consider sex as a life giving activity and not as a degrading violent form of abuse;
 - ♦ To seek information on health and more specially reproductive health;
 - ♦ To participate freely and fully in the social, economic, cultural and political life of the country;
 - ♦ To seek to acquire leadership skills and share knowledge and know-how with others;
 - ♦ To be ambassadors of the country abroad, and promote regional and international cooperation for a better world

4.3 Obligations of the State

Government has the prime responsibility to ensure that the youth can enjoy the State rights. It should also provide the necessary framework for young people to fulfil their responsibilities.

4.4 Obligations / Responsibilities of Parents / Responsible Parties

Parents/Responsible Parties have a key role to play in order to ensure the proper development and well-being of the youth, respect and promote their rights of youth and more specifically:

- ♦ To ensure that their child grow up in an environment of warmth and affection, security and stability;

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

- ♦ To promote his/her physical and psychological development;
- ♦ To ensure the protection of the child without overpowering them;
- ♦ To teach human rights, values and the need for greater social justice and gender equality to children and wards;
- ♦ To recognize the individuality of youngsters according to age and maturity and to allow, whenever possible, their choice of educational fields and career;
- ♦ To respect the privacy, choice of friends and partners of their child even those who are still under the family roof;
- ♦ To give counsel and support and help and ensure parental guidance, depending on the needs in particular cases;
- ♦ To act as positive role models;
- ♦ To recognize the capacities of young persons and to be sensitive to their real needs along with those of the parents themselves;
- ♦ To treat the young with respect and give them opportunities to contribute positively

4.5 Responsibilities of the Private Sector

The private sector which operates and progresses through its labour force has its obligations and responsibilities towards its employees, its immediate environment and society at large.

Besides safeguarding the right of its workers, the private sector should provide them with all the prerequisites for their personal and the companies' advancement. The private sector should:

- ♦ Respect gender equality and social justice;
- ♦ Recognise the right of the disabled;

-
-
- ♦ Respect labour laws and treat employees in such a way that they give their optimum;
 - ♦ Give all the training to the workers for effective delivery;
 - ♦ Provide a healthy and conducive atmosphere for optimum production;
 - ♦ Promote environmental projects especially in its immediate surrounding;
 - ♦ Contribute to community/social and philanthropic actions.

5. Principles and Values

The National Youth Policy is based on certain principles and values which are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius and which recognises the fundamental rights and freedom of the individual, the right to be a citizen of Mauritius and to enjoy all privileges.

This Policy seeks to promote multiculturalism, mutual understanding, unity in diversity, peaceful coexistence and tolerance, a sense of belonging and pride among youth of the Republic of Mauritius as well as to promote positive and dignified values, tolerance and great respect for ethics in all aspects of life. This policy will be based on the following core values:

5.1 Human Rights

This Policy recognizes that youth empowerment requires the development of a sustainable culture of human rights in the Republic of Mauritius, so that young men and women are able to enjoy their rights, while assuming their responsibilities. Human rights are those rights that are inherent in all human beings, like for example, the right to life and security of the person. They are universal, interrelated, indivisible and inalienable.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

The Policy recognizes that basic rights of youth should be protected without distinction as to race, sex, language, religion or any form of discrimination. Young people need to be made aware of the need to respect each other, to accept and understand each one's differences and to respect the fundamental rights and freedom of all people. Every decision, policy and programme has to be seen from the human rights' perspective before and during its implementation.

The Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural rights, ratified by Mauritius which is in force since 1976, mentions the need for constant improvement of living conditions for all and the need to have recourse to international cooperation to realize those objectives. More specific rights are required for the physical and mental health of all including the promotion of hygiene, and the proper control and treatment of epidemic and endemic illnesses, as well as special attention to professional and occupational hazards.

5.2 Gender Equity

This Policy acknowledges that gender is an important concept, which is also contained in the notion of civil and political rights, as well as social, economic and cultural rights, all of which are enshrined in several international treaties and are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius. Integrating gender in the Policy reflects the will of the nation to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on sex. Gender equity and the empowerment of young women including the handicapped are central to social and economic development of the country. It is crucial to develop harmonious gender relations in our society.

The Policy recognizes that any discrimination against young men and women on the basis of sex violates human rights. It therefore stands for elimination of gender discrimination in every sphere of life.

This Policy enunciates that:

- ♦ There will be no discrimination against young women;
- ♦ Negative cultural attitudes and practices against women will be eliminated;
- ♦ Young women should have equal rights and access to education, skill development, training and health services;
- ♦ Every form of exploitation and violence against girls and women will be eliminated;
- ♦ Women's rights will be promoted as human rights.

5.3 Social Justice

This Policy recognizes that social justice is another way of referring to social, economic and cultural rights. Economic deprivation and poverty constitute serious impediments to the empowerment of young men and women. The existence of poverty, especially in the deprived areas, hinders the full and effective enjoyment of human rights by young people.

One of the most basic social rights is the right to a decent quality of life, and more particularly to adequate food, clothing and housing, proper medical services, and social security especially for invalids and destitute persons. The right of youth to education and work are also most critical in the empowering process.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

Therefore, there is the need to understand the impact of any policy on all segments of young men and women and propose mainstreaming measures that include positive discrimination and promote human rights, gender balance and social justice.

6. Target Groups

The National Youth Policy aims at creating equal opportunities for all categories of young men and women of the Republic of Mauritius. The Policy will enable them to develop their potentials and build their experiences in order to act as responsible citizens.

6.1 In School Youth

Young men and women involved in the educational system (secondary, tertiary and vocational) have particular changing needs and aspirations. Their education should also take into consideration the need of the labour market.

6.2 Out of School Youth

Those school-aged youth above the age of 16 years who are not attending school must be provided with appropriate support to be integrated in society and in the mainstream of economic development. They should be given the opportunity to reintegrate the educational system, to continue their education and to engage in healthy activities.

6.3 Employed Youth

The number of young people among Mauritian labour force is constantly increasing. These working youth have specific needs which have to be met. It is essential to ensure that young people are not exploited in the work place.

The policy recognises that underemployment is a sensitive and salient issue which needs to be considered by both government and non government agencies. Furthermore, appropriate training has to be provided to working young people to promote ethical and professional behaviour at work and also to enable them to perform effectively.

6.4 Unemployed Youth

The right to employment is regarded as a fundamental human right. Therefore, the problem of unemployment is a sensitive issue, which should be managed with great care. Both government and non-government agencies have to devise ways to deal with the issue. Unemployment, if not properly tackled, may lead to a number of social problems and may threaten social, economic and political stability.

6.5 Less privileged Youth

Young persons, who for one reason or another, are limited in their experiences in the field of academic or vocational learning, must also be given the opportunity to participate fully in national development. It is therefore essential to devise specific strategies to give them access to more facilities so that they may enjoy all privileges meant for young people.

6.6 Youth at Risk

Youth at tender age is a period of uncertainty as they are in search of an identity. At this period, they are more vulnerable and tend to participate in high-risk activities such as alcohol consumption and drug abuse, unsafe sex, etc. The policy recognizes that such risky behaviour may lead to the problem of teenage pregnancy. Therefore, necessary preventive measures including counselling will be directed towards youth.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

6.7 Less Able Youth (*Autrement Capable*)

There are many young men and women who are physically and mentally handicapped. The Policy recognizes the need to provide them with additional assistance. This includes access to a type of education that will help them find employment suited to their abilities and to healthy integration in society. They should also be brought into the mainstream of sports and economic activities. They should have access to public buildings and other infrastructure.

7. Goal and Youth Policy Objectives

The goal of the National Youth Policy is to empower the youth of the Republic of Mauritius.

Youth empowerment is based on the belief that young people should play an active role in their own development and consequently, in national development.

Youth empowerment takes place when young people are given the freedom to choose, to take right decisions and be ready to accept the consequences of their decisions.

Empowerment also occurs when the appropriate conditions exist in the country so that the youth can participate in decisions affecting them and assume responsibility for those decisions. This includes education, knowledge, information and skills, access to health and other social services and employment opportunities.

The Policy recognises that youth deserves to play a major role in decision making processes in all areas concerning them. They must be active participants in the process and product of development. This can only be possible if youth is equipped with requisite knowledge and skills indispensable to assuming these responsibilities. Equipping young men and women with leadership skills is regarded as an important aspect of empowerment.

The National Youth Policy aims at ensuring that all young people are given equal opportunities to reach their full potential, both as individuals and as active participants in the overall social, economic and cultural development of the country.

Therefore, in order to empower the youth of the Republic of Mauritius, the Policy is geared towards:-

- ♦ Providing equal access to information on strategic areas and equal opportunities in all fields to different target groups;
- ♦ Supporting youth to be actively involved in national development;
- ♦ Emphasising principles and values enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius and developing positive attitudes which lead to the consolidation of a legitimate and harmonious society and;
- ♦ Setting up of appropriate structures and creating an environment conducive to the emergence of a healthy and responsible youth force.

8. Strategic Areas of Youth Empowerment

Youth empowerment is an attitudinal, structural and cultural process whereby young people gain the ability and authority to make decisions and implement change in their own lives and the lives of other people including youth and adults.

Youth empowerment occurs at home, at school, through youth organizations, government policy-making and community organizing campaigns.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

Youth empowerment, as such will enable the following:

- ♦ Providing youth with a conducive environment and a platform where they can assert their full potential;
- ♦ Building capacities of young people so that they can face challenges with more confidence;
- ♦ Recognizing young people as an asset to the society;
- ♦ Engaging young people in decision making as partners in democracy and development

8.1 Education, Training and Youth Participation in decision making

Learning needs are ever changing especially in a fast developing society and modern technological era. Learning is a never ending process and it occurs even outside the formal setting. Learning in an informal environment is as important where one is exposed to very many life skills.

The Policy advocates that researches should be carried out regularly to identify requirements and needs in the job sector so that training could be geared in that direction. Quality education and relevant training will make the nation more productive. Another prerequisite for optimum social and economic development is that education should be imparted to all of young people regardless of gender, class or creed. Strategies have to be devised to mainstream young people with disabilities.

Now many families are realising that the best investment they can make is in the education of their children. Public and private enterprises have opted for trained personnel for most effective delivery. On the other side Government has enforced law to make education compulsory for all up to the age of 16. These have definitely caused a pressure on the educational

system especially at the tertiary level. Universities and other institutions have had to increase their intake or diversify their mode of training. Distant education has become common these days.

Besides disseminating information and providing knowledge and skills, education and training should also aim at empowering young people, boost up their self-esteem, develop their capacity to think and analyse, make good judgement and right decision. Training should also be geared at encouraging young people to develop their sense of creativity and critical appraisal.

Youth Empowerment is also the partaking of the right information and the provision of the necessary guidance to the young people, but it implies that the final decision is theirs. They make the decision about any issues regarding their life.

The Policy lays down the following objectives:

8.1.1 Education

- ♦ To provide a more integrated educational system gearing towards a better academic and technical education that meets the needs of youth;
- ♦ To incorporate physical education sports, music and creative activities;
- ♦ To encourage the right education in science and technology to support industrial development;
- ♦ To ensure that youth express their concerns and make meaningful contributions to decision affecting them;
- ♦ To foster partnership with the private sector, educators and the community so that they play a more active role in educational development;

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

- ♦ To integrate career education in the school curriculum;
- ♦ To provide psychologists, counsellors, doctors and social workers in schools for pastoral care and counselling;
- ♦ To provide alternative modes of educational delivery for out of school youth;
- ♦ To ensure mainstreaming of youth with special needs;

8.1.2 Training

- ♦ To prepare special training programmes for the physically, mentally disabled;
- ♦ To ensure rehabilitation of young offenders;
- ♦ To provide teachers with the necessary training to deal with the new modules geared towards the labour market needs;
- ♦ To provide adult based education, leadership and good governance training for young adults;
- ♦ To provide more distance education opportunities to touch a greater number of young people to remote areas;
- ♦ To train young people in leadership and decision making skills;
- ♦ To give young people the right information about existing facilities and also about the danger they are confronted with so that they can take the right decision about their life;
- ♦ To provide training opportunities to enable youth to develop competencies in life skills, negotiating skills and assertiveness.

8.2 Youth Health Issues, Family Life Education and Counselling

World Health Organisation (WHO) defines 'health' as a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The general health status for the Mauritian population is good and has been improving steadily. Life expectation has increased from 70.2 years in 1995 to 73.0 in 2007 which reflects significant gains in public health and in access to primary health-care services.

However, issues like teenage pregnancies, sexual abuse, divorce, Sexually Transmitted Infections, HIV and AIDS, substance abuse, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and obesity are affecting more young people. The issue of bullying among students is also becoming a matter of concern.

The policy lays down the following objectives to:

- ♦ To use an aggressive approach towards the prevention of non-communicable diseases through education;
- ♦ To work with media to promote a health based culture;
- ♦ To give access to health information and services;
- ♦ To better protect and support the family, the basic unit of society;
- ♦ To train youth workers in youth health issues;
- ♦ To substantially reduce all adolescent/ teenage pregnancies;
- ♦ To create a safe and supportive environment within the family and in school;
- ♦ To equip young people with life skills/family life and parental education;
- ♦ To provide access to youth friendly counselling services in youth centres;
- ♦ To strengthen sexuality education in and out of school activities and in teachers' training;
- ♦ To train peer leaders to act as peer educators and counsellors;
- ♦ To improve health services to make them youth friendly;

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

- ♦ To secure the full involvement of youth in identifying their reproductive health needs and designing programmes that respond to these needs;
- ♦ To provide permanent psychological and counselling support to young people;
- ♦ To provide pre marital and couple counselling;

8.3 Substance Abuse Prevention and Combating HIV and AIDS

The Mauritius Institute of Health conducted a study on health risk behaviour among youth in Mauritius between April and May 2006 under the heading “Use of substance abuse by students and on school premises”. One out of 2 youth used cigarette and alcohol. One out of five used marijuana, heroin, white lady, psychotropic drugs and ecstasy.

Government has recently reviewed the Public Health Act which forbids the consumption of alcohol and cigarette in a number of public places.

The policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ To raise awareness among youth on the dangers of substance abuse, through partnerships with youth, youth organisations, youth task forces and the community;
- ♦ To initiate and develop sensitisation programmes in the family the schools, the work place and for out-of school youth;
- ♦ To develop peer to peer approaches to ensure guidance and support;
- ♦ To provide rehabilitation and counselling for young people abusing drugs so as to ensure their reintegration into social and economic life.

8.3.1 Combating HIV and AIDS

As at December 2008, the number of reported cases of Mauritians infected with HIV is 3671 out of which 2993 are males and 678 are females. One in every five infected person is between 15-24 years of age and 66% of those youth were infected through intravenous drug use.

A series of measures have been introduced like the needle exchange programme, methadone substitution therapy and setting up of the National AIDS Secretariat under the Prime Minister's Office.

The policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ To institute comprehensive programmes to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections and HIV by providing education, information, communication and awareness creation as well as making protective measures and reproductive health services available and accessible;
- ♦ To expand the availability and encourage the uptake of voluntary counselling and testing for HIV and AIDS;
- ♦ To provide timely access to treatment for young people infected with HIV and AIDS including prevention of mother to child transmission, post rape prophylaxis and anti-retroviral therapy and the creation of health services specific for young people;
- ♦ To provide support and care to young people living with HIV and AIDS
- ♦ To support the media and relevant organisations to put up effective campaigns to provide necessary information and combat substance abuse, HIV and AIDS.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

8.4 Youth Employment, Enterprise Initiatives and Agriculture

The promotion of youth enterprise is an important and significant strategy for fostering economic participation.

Training should be linked to emerging business opportunities and should aim to assist young people in overcoming the barriers they face to self employment;

Business skills training are required, especially in the fields of business planning.

The policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ Youth Employment
- ♦ To provide access to training to all young people to increase employability;
- ♦ To gear all schooling systems towards the needs of the labour market;
- ♦ To provide a one stop shop for information on career choices job structures, job profiles, job prospects, emerging employment trends and vacancies available;
- ♦ To encourage youth entrepreneurship with the collaboration of all stakeholders

8.4.1 Agricultural Sector

The agricultural sector generates substantial employment and income and affects the living conditions of a large number of people.

With the emerging technological changes, young people are confronted with new challenges at various levels. Adaptability to new methods of production, the commitment to achieve excellence and the need for additional and relevant training are the overriding priorities of both government and the private sector.

The policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ To recognize the potential for enterprise in agriculture compared to traditional activities;
- ♦ To promote a culture of entrepreneurship among youth;
- ♦ To provide facilities for access to agricultural lands for cultivation and farming;
- ♦ To consider tax exemption on agricultural tools and machinery;
- ♦ To create facilities for marketing and export of agricultural products;
- ♦ To help raise the status of young people involved in the agricultural sector;
- ♦ To promote success stories and create role models in agricultural enterprise;
- ♦ To disseminate correct information and provide advanced training for increased production in agriculture;
- ♦ To initiate and motivate young people in extra-curricular agricultural activities right from primary school level;
- ♦ To motivate and provide training incentives to young people in the field of agriculture, fisheries and entrepreneurial skills;
- ♦ To promote agricultural youth clubs with the support of stakeholders.

8.4.2 Co-operative Sector

- ♦ Encouraging youth to participatory approach, teamwork and co-operation in solving problems

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

- ♦ To integrate the “Co-operate Concept” in the secondary school curriculum;
- ♦ To consider the potential of co-operatives in the agricultural sector;
- ♦ To promote the co-operative form of doing business,

8.5 Information and access to I C T

8.5.1 Information

Youth Empowerment in a knowledge based community implies the creation of a well-organised information and research network to provide young people with all necessary and relevant information which is vital in determining choices and taking decisions. Youngsters should be sensitised through the provision of value-added information about the dangers and social ills that they are confronted with. Youth should also be briefed about all the existing facilities at their disposal and should be canalised towards these facilities.

The policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ To encourage young people to develop a strong information culture;
- ♦ To create the necessary network for information and research and to devise strategies for the proper dissemination of information relevant to young people;
- ♦ To enhance the quality of information through research to ease the decision making process of young people;
- ♦ To brief young people to be cautious when using information.
- ♦ To develop the analytical capacity of youth in receiving information

8.5.2 Access to ICT

In its endeavour to embark on a comprehensive reform programme to move to the next phase of development, government has decided to develop Mauritius into a Cyber-island and make the ICT sector the fifth pillar of the Mauritian economy.

In line with the Government vision, along with other institutions, all youth centres need to be fully equipped to prepare the youth to be participant in the development. An ICT culture needs to be encouraged among the youth through an improved ICT literacy level. It is also important to reach more and more young people all over the island with training programme in ICT and facilitate access to ICT materials.

Accordingly, the policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ To democratise access and the use of ICT among all categories of youth;
- ♦ To increase the level of ICT literacy among the youth population;
- ♦ To enable and enhance the creation and sharing of information in the community;
- ♦ To encourage the development of local content and creativity by identifying the application and use of ICT for social development and social mobility;
- ♦ To empower the youth community with ICT skills so as to increase their employability;
- ♦ To alleviate poverty within the community through the use of ICT and access to shared resources;
- ♦ To create a platform to enable the youth to formulate and implement its own development projects through online networking.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

8.6 Sports, Leisure and Literary Activities

The reviewed Policy stipulates that “young people shall have the right to rest and leisure and to engage in play and recreational activities that are part of a healthy lifestyle”.

Sports, leisure and recreational activities have a vital role in the full development of youth, a healthy lifestyle and the reduction of a stressful life among our youngsters. The physical exercise and habits associated with sports and recreation constitute an important input to young people’s health.

Sport has proven to be the only factor which unites everyone and creates a sense of belonging to the nation. Its practice is not limited to a specific group of young people. It has, rather, been devised in several disciplines in order to satisfy the needs of each and everyone. With sport, youth role models have been emerging. The country has been able to situate itself through the outstanding performance of our sportsmen and sportswomen.

Leisure time is now a right to be protected rather than a privilege to be earned or lost. It is imperative that all youths be given a wide range of opportunities for meaningful participation within the community, provided or facilitated by a multitude of organizations, institutions and programmes in all sectors.

Literary activities are very important for our youth as these help in the development of their intellectual critical and analytical skills. Such activities will also give the youth opportunities for research work, preparation and presentation of projects – enabling them to make use of services of institutions concerned and ICT tools.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has been organizing, in the past years, a wide range of literary activities for the benefit of young people from colleges, youth clubs and other youth associations – such as elocution contest, debate, orthography, scrabble, quiz, *des chiffres et des lettres*, essay writing, spelling, etc.

These activities should be continued with the collaboration of various stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, the English Speaking Union, *Centre Culturel d'Expression Francaise*, *Alliance Francaise*, Municipalities, District Councils, National Library, and other institutions.

With the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources as the leading institution, literary clubs should be set up in all secondary and tertiary Institutions. A detailed plan of action can be worked out together with these stakeholders for the coming five years with clearly defined objectives and roles of each institution. Representatives of the above institutions in a Steering Committee for National Literary Activities are recommended

The policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ To cater for the needs for leisure of each and every young people;
- ♦ To provide quality leisure time for the self development of youth;
- ♦ To ensure that young people, especially the less privileged ones, can afford to benefit from paid leisure;
- ♦ To allow working youth to have access to sports and leisure facilities as per their convenience;
- ♦ To make sports and leisure programmes more adapted to the less able youth population;
- ♦ To bring sports to the remotest corners of the island;

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

- ♦ To upgrade existing infrastructure and facilities for the practice of sports and leisure activities;
- ♦ To harmonise the participation of both male and female youth in sports and leisure programmes;
- ♦ To promote non-competitive sports and games “*Sport pour tous*” for a healthy youth population;
- ♦ To promote, recognize and reward young men and women who achieve excellence in sports;
- ♦ To make sports and leisure activities more youth-friendly against the social ills;
- ♦ To foster volunteerism among the youth through tailor-made leisure activities;
- ♦ To provide adequate sports infrastructural support and incentives to sports organisations for effective promotion of sports to all categories of youth including the less able;
- ♦ To reinforce and modernise youth and leisure activities;
- ♦ To promote literary and cultural activities for proper personal development;
- ♦ To promote a reading culture among young people;
- ♦ To promote literary activities in youth clubs

8.7 Promotion of Artistic, Cultural and Historical values

Culture forms an integral part of development; it includes the acquisition of values such as respect for democracy, human rights, tolerance and a culture of peace among others. As for arts, it is an expression of people’s beliefs and values. Through arts and culture, young people are able to express their personal and collective views on society and the world. Arts and culture promote creativity.

The policy recognises the positive role of arts and culture in the holistic development of young men and women. Arts and culture can be powerful means of communicating, educating and informing people. The policy also recognizes that young people need to be sensitised to the heritage of the Republic, to ancestral values and traditions that each component of our society has brought, transmitted, shared and preserved.

The policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ To facilitate the promotion of arts and culture among youth;
- ♦ To ensure young men and women have a sound understanding of the national culture and heritage with a view to contributing further towards nation building;
- ♦ To ensure that young people are aware of the need to respect and understand one another and appreciate our cultural differences;
- ♦ To use youth centres which are youth friendly for young people to express their talents and creativity
- ♦ To facilitate forums for adults, youth and the elderly to exchange their ideas and views;
- ♦ To provide career guidance to young persons who are seeking employment opportunities in the field of arts and culture;
- ♦ To promote and decentralise artistic, cultural and historical activities gearing towards professionalism and better cultural identity

8.8 Civics, Citizenship, Spirituality and Human Values

Citizenship involves ourselves within society and acknowledges the fact that we are all one, that we are all connected to each other and to our beloved land. The pride of being a citizen of the Republic of Mauritius must reflect in the attitudes, character

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

and behaviour of every citizen. Young people should be encouraged in voluntary social work and be role model for other youths.

The policy acknowledges that the sense of civics, respect for human values and understanding of rights, responsibilities and obligations of citizens are the key elements in the process of nation building. Furthermore, the policy recognises that empowering young men and women means developing in them a sense of patriotism and feeling of belonging and pride that will enable us to consolidate the social fabrics of our society and contribute to inculcating good citizenship and national cohesion.

The Policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ To develop self-awareness and a sense of belonging, purpose and direction of life of young men and women;
- ♦ To inculcate a firm belief in human values and feeling of solidarity with others;
- ♦ To enable young men and women to enjoy the rights of citizenship, that is freedom of conscience and religion, freedom of expression, association, movement, confidence and privacy;
- ♦ To develop a sustainable culture of human rights in young women and men;
- ♦ To promote self discipline, civility, courage, patriotism, honesty and compassion for the needy;
- ♦ To promote respect for rights of other individuals, respect for law, and respect for others' beliefs;
- ♦ To involve young men and women in the promotion of world peace and of a just economic order and to cultivate an international understanding thereof
- ♦ To sensitise and educate young people on human values, peace and intergenerational understanding

8.9 Promotion for the Protection and Preservation of the Environment

Our environment is our natural asset, it provides resources to promote economic development and human well-being and above all it sustains life on earth through its numerous roles.

Environmental deterioration is a very serious challenge and youth are all particularly concerned with this problem, since it impacts directly on their well-being. Youth must take the lead in making the right choices and adopt a sustainable lifestyle that will help the preservation of our natural resources and the protection of the environment as a whole...

Youth should therefore be educated and sensitised on environmental issues and be encouraged to engage in environmental programmes designed to conserve, protect and manage the environment.

The policy lays down the following objectives:

- ♦ To promote environmental education through co-curricular and extra-curricular activities;
- ♦ To develop awareness campaigns on sustainable consumption and lifestyles, through inter-alia, education, public and consumer information, advertising and by making maximum use of media;
- ♦ To strengthen the participation of youth on the protection, preservation and improvement of the environment through sustainable activities;
- ♦ To ensure that youth are consulted and take part in the decision-making processes regarding their role in environmental protection;

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

- ♦ To instil a strong sense of responsibility in our youth towards the environment and promote the concept of environmental citizenship;
- ♦ To inculcate ecological values in young people,

9. Implementation Mechanism

The policy recognises the importance of the close collaboration of all stakeholders involved in the implementation of youth empowerment programmes in order to realise policy goals and objectives as well as to achieve efficient and optimum utilization of resources. The policy therefore puts in place the following institutional mechanism for implementation.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has the overall responsibility for the coordination of the policy implementation, monitoring, evaluation and the review. It will do this in collaboration with other Ministries, NGO's and other stakeholders. The policy will be implemented through an action plan, which will provide details on strategies and activities.

The policy also recognises the existence of the National Youth Council which is a major implementing, supervisory and facilitating agency for the youth development programmes. The National Youth Council will be reinforced and expected to play the following roles:

- ♦ To coordinate youth activities and initiatives;
- ♦ To serve as special interest group both for the youth organizations and for young people in general;
- ♦ To ensure democratic participation of young men and women in their own organizations and the society as a whole;

-
-
- ♦ To encourage the participation of young people in the development process of the country;
 - ♦ To take care of the interests of youth organizations, asserting their views and needs;
 - ♦ To ensure that youth rights and responsibilities are fulfilled;
 - ♦ To advise Government on issues affecting the youth;
 - ♦ To provide young people with a platform for practice in democratic governance;
 - ♦ To mobilize resources from government and other sources for youth development programmes and activities

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every five years.

NATIONAL YOUTH POLICY

REFERENCES

1. Action Plan, Strategic Areas 2007 – 2010, Youth Section Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2007
2. African Youth Charter, 2006
3. *Etat de la population mondiale 2008*, UNFPA, 2008
4. *Les Adolescents dans L'Océan Indien, Nouveau Contexte, Nouveaux Enjeux*-ODEROI (*Observatoire des Droits de L'Enfant de la Région Océan Indien*), April 2008
5. Making Commitments Matter; a tool kit for young people to evaluate national youth policy, United Nations, 2005
6. Mauritius in Figures, Central Statistics Office, 2007
7. National Multi sectoral HIV and AIDS Strategic Framework (NSF) 2007 – 2011, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life , Republic of Mauritius, August 2007
8. National Youth Policy, Empowering youth in the new millennium, 2000 - 2004,, Ministry of Youth and Sports, 2000
9. National Youth Policy, Youth growing with the nation, Namibia
10. The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment, 2007 – 2015, *Commonwealth Youth Programme*, 2007
11. Youth Development Network, Analysis of Employment policies in Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia and Tanzania as it pertains to Youth Development, September 2007